

2017

# Strategies for Reducing Employee Absenteeism in Retail Stores

Patricia Miller Manning  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Patricia Manning

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Strategies for Reducing Employee Absenteeism in Retail Stores

by

Patricia Miller Manning

MBA, Florida A & M University, 1989

BA, Edward Waters College, 1988

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2017

## Abstract

Employee absenteeism results in annual productivity losses of approximately \$74 billion and reduced profits for some retail stores. The purpose of this single case study was to explore the strategies used to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness at a retail store in northwest Florida. The targeted population included managers who had success with minimizing absenteeism and enhancing productivity in the retail store. Herzberg's 2-factor theory was the conceptual framework, and semistructured interviews with 5 participants were the primary data collection technique. The secondary data sources included employee absence data and gross profit reports for 3 years (2014 through 2016), publicly displayed goal charts, and the absence policy that employees sign to document receipt and understanding of the policy. Methodological triangulation was established by analyzing and comparing data from the semistructured interviews with the company documents. Based on the NVivo coding tool used to identify word frequencies and thematic analysis, 3 primary themes emerged: leadership support and comradery, effective communication, and competitive compensation. The implications for social change included the potential to provide retail managers with the tools needed to decrease absenteeism, enhance productivity, increase organizational effectiveness, increase profitability in retail stores, and develop quality customer service to improve living conditions.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my former pastor and friend, Cyrus Fells Flanagan. He believed in me and spoke this fate into my life before I believed it was possible. I continued to lean on the affirmations he spoke over my life when times were tough, and I wanted to quit. During times of frustration, I remembered that he called me Dr. Miller (my maiden name) before I started this journey. I know he is sitting high, looking low, nodding, smiling, and saying, "I told you that you could and would do it!" Nothing about this accomplishment would surprise him. Because I promised him that I would do this, I had to complete the journey. I also dedicate this study to my beautiful daughters, Danielle and Jean. I thank you for sacrificing time with mom and allowing me to focus on my studies. I also thank you for reminding me that nothing is too hard for God and that God predestined me for success. I love each of you for life! Additionally, a special thank you to my father and mother, the late Alexander and Maggalene, for raising me and instilling confidence, dedication, and commitment to my life. I wish you were here to witness this milestone in my life. I miss you daily. I would not have attained the DBA without each of you!!! I know Rev. would say, "Who's surprised?"

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Employee absenteeism is a major factor in productivity losses due to absenteeism. Absenteeism has contributed to productivity losses due to a disruption in daily workflows and an increase in health care costs to organizations (Kocakulah, Kelley, Mitchell, & Ruggieri, 2016). Lally (2014) estimated that organizational leaders experienced \$74 billion productivity losses due to employee absenteeism. Various researchers discovered that sickness (Asay, Roy, Lang, Payne, & Howard, 2016; Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2015; Crush, 2013; Kocakulah et al., 2016); burnout (Jourdain & Chênevert, 2015); presenteeism (Pohling, Buruck, Jungbauer, & Leiter, 2016); an imbalance of personal and work life (Pawar, 2013); and an unhealthy workforce (Dabrh, Gorty, Jenkins, Murad, & Hensrud, 2016) contributed to a high level of employee absenteeism and productivity losses. Technology leaders have focused on increasing job satisfaction to reduce absenteeism and enhance productivity (Kivipõld & Ahonen, 2013). Bukchin and Cohen (2013) and Singh and Monga (2013) found that organizational leaders who offered flexible work schedules, telework opportunities, and work-sharing arrangements saw a decrease in absences. Because sickness is a major factor in employee absenteeism, applying elements of Herzberg's (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) motivational factors to identify ways to minimize employee absence can reduce losses in employee productivity, decrease absenteeism, and minimize employer-funded health care costs. Further research was needed to gain a deeper understanding of strategies that retail managers use to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity for organizational effectiveness.

## **Background of the Problem**

Employee absenteeism results in major productivity losses and organizational ineffectiveness. During the period from 2010 to 2015, retail store managers experienced an estimated \$74 billion in productivity losses due to employee absenteeism, which results in organizational ineffectiveness and negatively affects profit margins (Lally, 2014). According to Johnson (2014), the food service, travel, consulting, and technology industries, and Tlaiss (2013) asserted that the finance industry most negatively impacted by absenteeism. This study was developed to address the gap in research addressing the strategies retail store managers used to minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity on organizational effectiveness. Ghazi, Shahzada, and Khan (2013) emphasized that the achievement of hygiene factors identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) impacted employee motivation. Selvarani and Chandra (2015) explained that increased job satisfaction led to greater employee commitment and organizational productivity. Also, Kocakulah et al. (2016) noted that employee absences disrupted productivity due to decreases in daily workflows and increases in organizational costs resulting from the need to pay additional employees to complete the work of absent employees. Researchers indicated that absenteeism was the result of employee health (Asay et al., 2016; BLS, 2015), burnout (Jourdain & Chênevert, 2015), presenteeism (Pohling et al., 2016), and anxiety and insecurity related to new or expanded technology (Bamber & Lansbury, 2013). This study included a focus on exploring strategies retail managers use to reduce absenteeism and improve productivity.

### **Problem Statement**

Absenteeism in the United States is a primary concern for business owners, who have experienced annual productivity losses of approximately \$74 billion (Lally, 2014). Of the \$74 billion productivity losses, stores in the retail industry experienced a 30% increase in absenteeism during the period from 2010 to 2015 (BLS, 2015). The general business problem was that organizational managers risk high productivity losses when employees are absent. The specific business problem was that some retail managers lack strategies to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore how some retail managers reduced absenteeism and increased productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness. The target population consisted of retail store managers within one retail store in northwest Florida. The sample included five managers who had experience applying strategies to reduce absenteeism to increase productivity outcomes. According to Lally (2014), retail managers experienced \$74 billion in productivity losses, which, according to BLS (2015), included a 30% increase in absenteeism during the period from 2010 to 2015. Therefore, a retail store population was suitable for this study. The results of this study may effect positive social change by contributing to sustainable employment, thus improving the quality of employees' families' lives, increasing opportunities for both employees and employers to enhance economic contributions to

community organizations, and establishing quality customer services for improved living conditions.

### **Nature of the Study**

Montero-Marín et al. (2013) shared that a researcher uses a qualitative research method to describe the participants' perspectives and experiences and to explore strategies concerning a bounded issue, such as decreased absenteeism and increased organizational productivity levels. Additionally, Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) indicated that a qualitative researcher might ask open-ended interview questions for interviewees to provide in-depth responses that are not allowed using a quantitative research approach. A qualitative approach supported the nature of the current research topic. Bishop and Lexchin (2013) posited that a researcher uses a quantitative research method to test predetermined hypotheses and examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The intent of this study was not to test theories or the relationship among variables. Further, a mixed methods approach includes qualitative and quantitative processes, which would not satisfy the objectives of this study.

I considered various qualitative research designs such as phenomenology, case study, and ethnography. Yin (2014) indicated that ethnography research includes a particular cultural group over an extended period. Ethnography involves an observation of day-to-day activities of a specific group (Yin, 2014). A phenomenological research design includes documenting the lived experiences of a particular phenomenon from the participants' perspective. A researcher, using the single case study research design, conducts an in-depth inquiry of a social phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Therefore, neither

phenomenology nor ethnography was the appropriate design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of successful strategies managers used to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness.

### **Research Question**

The central research question was as follows: What strategies do retail managers use to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies have you used to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity?
2. What process did you use to develop the strategies?
3. How did you communicate the strategies throughout the organization?
4. How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity?
5. Are there strategies that you would modify? Please explain.
6. What additional strategies would you like to implement in your organization?
7. What outcomes have you experienced that support the reduction of absenteeism and the increase of productivity on organizational effectiveness?
8. What other information would you like to share concerning the strategies used to reduce absenteeism for increased productivity?



## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was the Herzberg two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), which includes the following five motivational factors: (a) achievement, (b) growth and advancement, (c) responsibility, (d) recognition, and (e) the work. Additionally, there are four hygiene factors that include (a) salary, (b) working conditions, (c) supervision and leadership, and (d) policy and administration (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg developed a two-factor theory to identify motivation and hygiene as factors to explore job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959), which was appropriate given the focus of this study. For example, Herzberg et al. (1959) interviewed accountants and engineers to gain an understanding of factors that resulted in job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among employees. Kuster, Orth, and Meier (2013) shared that conflict in the workplace can be a source that results in higher rates of absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, low employee retention rates, and loss of productivity. I used the Herzberg two-factor theory as the lens through which I explored the strategies retail store managers use to minimize absenteeism.

## Operational Definitions

*Absenteeism:* The absence of an employee from work due to reasons such as illness (Gosselin, Lemyre, & Corneil, 2013).

*Employee engagement:* Employee engagement is an increase in the commitment an employee expresses towards their specific job responsibilities, manager, or the organization, which generally result in an increase in work productivity (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013).

*Hygiene factors:* Hygiene factors are extrinsic job factors such as rate of pay, job security, and company policies (Herzberg, 1974). These factors only result in short-term results on the employee's job performance (Herzberg, 1974).

*Job satisfaction:* The emotional gratification resulting from an individual's review of one's job as accomplishing the identified job values (Lu & Gursoy, 2013).

*Motivation factors:* Intrinsic factors that include achievement, recognition, and advancement (Arifin, 2015). Herzberg (1974) noted that these factors result in long-term results on the employee's job performance.

*Organizational effectiveness:* The extent to which resources and results are equalized through a combination of internal practices and external drivers to accomplish predefined goals and objectives (Willems, Jegers, & Faulk, 2016).

*Presenteeism:* The result of an individual attending work but not fully engaged because of sickness or other reasons that result in productivity loss (Gosselin et al., 2013).

*Productivity:* The volume of output produced by combining particular input resources (Ramendran, Raman, Mohamed, Beleya, & Nodeson, 2013).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions include unconfirmed statements that researchers use to support and justify the study. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) described assumptions as statements the researcher accepts without verification. Kirkwood and Price (2013) posited that researcher assumptions are not verifiable, but that the assumptions may affect researcher

biases and research results. The first assumption was that a qualitative research approach was appropriate to explore the dynamics related to the study phenomenon. Montero-Marín et al. (2013) opined that researchers use qualitative research methods to describe the participants' perspectives and experiences, to explore strategies concerning a bounded issue such as decreased absenteeism, and to increase organizational productivity levels. A second assumption was that answers to the interview questions would provide information to answer the overarching research question. To help increase the trustworthiness of participant responses, I shared that community leaders can use the study results to understand the influence of absenteeism on productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness. An additional assumption was that participants would provide honest responses to the interview questions. To enhance the probability of participants responding, I ensured that participants were aware that the identity of participants would remain confidential in a locked filing cabinet maintained in my home.

### **Limitations**

Research study limitations are inescapable deficiencies that are beyond the control of researchers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Limitations and weaknesses exist in all research studies (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) shared that single case study designs lack generalizability of the study's results. The study participants for the current research were limited to managers who worked in retail stores. To minimize this limitation, future researchers should replicate the study in other industries. Another limitation was that participants might have withheld pertinent information due to the fear of retaliation by organizational leaders. To minimize the limitation of participants withholding

information, I developed a relationship with participants to enhance my trustworthiness as a researcher, and I ensured the protection of the participants' identities and the information shared by the participants.

### **Delimitations**

Delen, Kuzey, and Uyar, (2013) described delimitations as limitations imposed by the researcher. In this study, I incorporated the following three delimitations. The first delimitation was that I limited the study to one retail store located in northwest Florida. The second delimitation was that the study only included participants who satisfied the following eligibility criteria: (a) managers currently employed at the targeted retail store, (b) managers willing to share experiences and perceptions of absenteeism in retail stores, (c) managers who fluently spoke English, (d) managers employed in a management position at the retail store for at least 1 year, and (e) managers who were over the age of 18. I only interviewed managers who satisfied the eligibility criteria. The third delimitation was that I restricted the study to an exploration of the strategies used by managers at one retail store to minimize absenteeism and their effects on productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness. Future researchers should replicate the study in other industries and geographical locations, expand the eligibility criteria for participant selection, and explore additional strategies that may impact organizational productivity.

## **Significance of the Study**

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The results of this study might help leaders better understand the factors that contribute to high absenteeism, identify how absenteeism affects the workplace, and offer ways to minimize the effects of absenteeism on organizational productivity. Managers may use the findings and conclusions from this study to identify strategies to increase job satisfaction, employee engagement, and productivity. Additionally, reduced workplace productivity could result in declined business profitability (Ahn, Lee, & Steel, 2013). Leaders may use the strategy findings to recognize the factors that affect employee satisfaction and apply these strategies to attract, motivate, and retain employees, which may advance the organization's competitive position and enhance productivity.

Many leaders fail to implement successful strategies to minimize the effects of employee absenteeism on organizational productivity. Ahn et al. (2013) concluded that frequent employee absences significantly affected an organization's ability to maximize profits and productivity. Retail leaders may consider the findings of the study significant in business practice by providing retail managers with information to develop and identify effective strategies to reduce absenteeism and improve organizational effectiveness. Using the conclusions and recommendations of this study, organizational managers may gain additional knowledge about organization–employee relationships to minimize the effects of absenteeism on workplace productivity in the retail industry and potentially inspire improvements to the retail industry absence policies.

## **Implications for Social Change**

Absenteeism and workplace productivity are concerns for organizational leaders and members of the society. A reduction of absenteeism may result in an increase in the continuity of services to members of society. Employees consistently attending work might result in an increase in disposable income that employees can use to invest in the communities. Workers who maintain employment could serve as an example for the younger generation of future workers. An increase in productivity may result in an increase in organizational revenues, and the revenues may provide opportunities for organizational leaders to reinvest in the surrounding communities through scholarships to students and donations to social organizations. For example, Bill and Melinda Gates established a foundation that provides students with free textbooks, scholarships, and an opportunity to participate in the summer reading program in the Seattle area (McCoy, Kembhavi, Patel, & Luintel, 2009). The foundation also provides annual grant payments of more than \$3 billion to address the eradication of malaria and polio and to minimize the expansion of tuberculosis and HIV in less fortunate countries (Levine, 2016; McCoy et al., 2009). Leaders and other individuals who possess supervisory responsibilities could also use the study results to develop strategies to decrease absenteeism and increase productivity to maximize the quality of life for the employees and the surrounding communities. Data from this study might provide leaders with the foundation necessary to develop strategies to create employment stability to maximize the quality of life for the surrounding communities.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that retail store managers use to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity and organizational efficiency. Derby-Davis (2014) posited that Herzberg's factors of motivation and hygiene are important to satisfy employee expectations and minimize employee dissatisfaction. The motivational factors Herzberg et al. (1959) identified include (a) achievement, (b) growth and advancement, (c) responsibility, (d) recognition, and (e) the work (Herzberg et al., 1959). Additionally, the four hygiene factors include (a) salary, (b) working conditions, (c) supervision and leadership, and (d) policy and administration (Herzberg et al., 1959). The literature review provided a foundation for continued research addressing absenteeism and factors that contribute to absenteeism such as job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction, performance, and productivity.

The literature review is organized by themes. The themes include theories related to the conceptual framework, contributing absenteeism factors, productivity and performance, and strategies to minimize absenteeism. The literature review includes sources published between 1959 and 2016, and 89% were peer-reviewed. The literature review includes 73 published sources such as journals, periodicals, and books. Sixty-seven of the sources had publication dates between 2013 and 2016. The primary search engine and databases used included Google Scholar and databases such as ProQuest Central, ABI/Inform Complete, and Business Source Complete/Premier through the Walden University Library. Keyword searches used in Google Scholar and the identified

databases included *absenteeism, productivity, motivation, intent to leave, turnover, job satisfaction, presenteeism, and employee satisfaction.*

### **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory/Overall Conceptual Framework**

Multiple sources impacted an employee's job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) also referred to as the motivation-hygiene theory, provided the conceptual framework for this study. Herzberg, who initially created the two-factor theory for recruiting and training employees at AT&T, recognized hygiene and motivation as elements to study job satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). The five motivational factors include (a) achievement, (b) growth and advancement, (c) responsibility, (d) recognition, and (e) the work. Additionally, the four hygiene factors include (a) salary, (b) working conditions, (c) supervision and leadership, and (d) policy and administration (Herzberg et al., 1959). Sankar (2015) posited that extrinsic (hygiene) factors may impact job dissatisfaction and can result in an increased level of absenteeism. Herzberg's two-factor theory included an identification of factors that can be used to maximize job satisfaction and minimize job dissatisfaction among employees.

The two-factor theory includes standards that leaders may use to enhance job satisfaction. Herzberg et al. (1959) argued that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction comprise two distinctive phenomena. Building from Herzberg et al., Arifin (2015) described motivation factors as intrinsic and include elements such as achievement, recognition, and advancement. Herzberg et al. also expressed job satisfaction through the identification of motivational factors such as achievement, job interest, and responsibility



and job dissatisfaction through the expression of hygiene factors such as rate of pay, job security, and company policies. Similar to Herzberg (1974), Sankar (2015) stated that the absence of hygiene factors resulted in demotivation or job dissatisfaction. Herzberg maintained that an employee in a work environment that included the presence of hygiene elements could remain dissatisfied with the job. Strategies that incorporate motivation and hygiene factors can help leaders increase job satisfaction while decreasing job dissatisfaction.

Motivation and hygiene factors differ in many ways and can have varying results on employee job performance. Herzberg (1974) asserted that motivators had long-term influences on an employee's performance while hygiene components only possessed short-term results on the employee's job performance. According to Herzberg, job satisfaction related to job content, the byproduct of organizations that apply the values of recognition, achievement, and job growth, which results in happier employees. Catania and Randall (2013) stressed the importance of leaders obtaining an understanding of what motivates employees to minimize dissatisfaction and employee absenteeism. Job dissatisfaction was associated with work context, factors such as compensation, working conditions, and physical security in an organization (Herzberg, 1974). Motivation and hygiene factors impact employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction in multiple ways.

Employees who participated in defining specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-focused goals expressed a higher level of job satisfaction. Herzberg et al. (1959) emphasized that employee accomplishment, or excellent performance, was a significant factor in the level of satisfaction. Employees who satisfied their established goals and

performed above expectations had a higher rate of job satisfaction. Hyun and Oh (2011) indicated that leaders must understand and apply intrinsic (motivation) and extrinsic (hygiene) factors to the job to enhance employee job satisfaction. Herzberg et al. (1959) associated superior performance with an employee's job satisfaction and posited that it results in positive behavioral characteristics towards the job. Additionally, feedback based on the employee's performance plays a vital role in the level of employee satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Therefore, employees who take an active role in establishing goals receive job recognition, obtain the opportunity for growth, and have a higher level of job satisfaction and performance.

Employees who possess the authority to establish goals achieve a high level of job satisfaction and employee accountability. Herzberg et al. (1959) maintained that employees would accept responsibility when they possess the authority to communicate, establish schedules, and control resources effectively. Employees achieved satisfaction when leaders provided employees with the tools necessary to achieve established goals and objectives (Herzberg et al., 1959). Kim (2015) asserted that it was important for organizational leaders to balance the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to cultivate an environment to maximize employee satisfaction and minimize absenteeism. Growth and advancement, another one of Herzberg's motivational factors, was a key to enhanced job performance (Kim, 2015). The proper training enabled employees to ascertain new ideas to expand the employees' knowledge and skills (Herzberg et al., 1959). Therefore, employees who received proper and sufficient training were more satisfied and exhibited a high level of job performance.

**Findings from using Herzberg's two-factor theory.** Many researchers in various fields shared differing outcomes that resulted from Herzberg's two-factor theory. Using Herzberg's two-factor theory, Lumadi (2014) attempted to explain an employee's job satisfaction and motivation by focusing on factors to explore circumstances that resulted in teacher dissatisfaction in the implementation of a new school curriculum. Lumadi discovered that (a) curriculum change process, (b) job security, and (c) training influenced the teachers' job dissatisfaction. Applying Herzberg's two-factor theory, Lumadi shared that empowering employees minimized the resistance to change and increased effectiveness of the implementation of the new curriculum. Unlike Herzberg et al. (1959), Lumadi included the involvement of employees in the change process. Lumadi suggested that leaders involve employees in the change process decisions to reduce resistance. Sacchetti and Tortia (2013) published research that included suggestions of motivational strategies that managers use to support the organization. Based on Lumadi's findings, as employee satisfaction increased, the resistance decreased, which also reduced absenteeism.

To address employee absenteeism, leaders should identify factors used to enhance employee satisfaction and reduce dissatisfaction. Researcher Derby-Davis (2014) used Herzberg's two-factor theory to explore job satisfaction and employees' intention to remain on the job. Derby-Davis posited that Herzberg's identified factors of motivation and hygiene are important to satisfy employee expectations, minimize employee dissatisfaction, and reduce an employee's intent to leave the job. Within the education arena, Ghazi et al. (2013) used Herzberg's theory to measure the level of employee

satisfaction and motivation among employees. Ghazi et al. posited that organizational leaders must set hygiene factors as a priority to realize a high level of employee motivation and satisfaction to improve employee performance. The researchers concluded that employee motivation depended on the achievement of hygiene factors identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory.

Enhanced job satisfaction occurred when employees felt valued through management recognition and worked in a rewarding position that included opportunities for advancement. To identify factors needed to increase job satisfaction and minimize dissatisfaction, Islam and Ali (2013) incorporated Herzberg's two-factor theory on private sector university instructors. Islam and Ali discovered that motivators including (a) advancement, (b) recognition, (c) responsibility, (d) achievement, and (e) the work itself had an impact on employee satisfaction for the study's participants. The researchers revealed that the majority of participants shared that achievement and work itself motivated them more than the other identified factors (Islam & Ali, 2013). However, after conducting multiple studies, Islam and Ali found that the study participants were most dissatisfied with the organization's policies, employee pay received, and opportunities for growth in the organization. More compelling, based on the study's results, Islam and Ali rejected Herzberg's view that hygiene factors added very little to job satisfaction. Islam and Ali concluded that hygiene factors might significantly add to job satisfaction. Similarly, Mumanthi and Gachunga (2014) shared that the motivating factors of achievement, recognition, increased responsibility, challenging work, growth, and development resulted in enhanced worker performance in the national police service.

Similar to Islam and Ali, Selvarani and Chandra (2015) posited that increased job satisfaction leads to greater organizational productivity and employee commitment, while Flores and Subervi (2013) contended that the motivating factors of growth and advancement help the manager maintain worker satisfaction. Multiple researchers concluded that the presence of various motivational factors influenced employee performance and job satisfaction.

**Conclusions drawn using the two-factor theory.** Various researchers shared many outcomes that resulted from the application of the two-factor theory of employee engagement. Although Islam and Ali's (2013) study results refuted Herzberg's view on the role of hygiene factors in the two-factor theory, they limited their research to one private university in the district of Peshawar in Pakistan, and the sample size was small. To increase the generalizability of the study's results, future researchers could replicate the study in more geographical areas, additional university sectors, and include an expanded sample size. Managers may use the study results to increase employee performance and improve the learning opportunities provided to the organizational team members.

Several researchers conducted additional studies to support Herzberg's two-factor theory and the influence of the motivation and hygiene factors on employee job satisfaction and performance. Mumanthi and Gachunga (2014) used the two-factor theory to determine whether motivation impacted employee performance at the National Police Service in Kenya. Mumanthi and Gachunga concluded that employees who were intrinsically motivated performed well and accepted additional responsibilities.

Conversely, employees who were extrinsically motivated resisted the tendency to perform at a higher level (Mumanthi & Gachunga, 2014). Similar to Lumadi (2014), Mumanthi and Gachunga recommended inviting employees to participate in the change process, claiming employees who felt valued were more motivated to perform. Future researchers should replicate this study to address additional factors that impact employee performance in other industries in other geographical locations. The researchers' conclusions supported Herzberg's theory that the motivating factors of achievement, responsibility, and recognition lead to job satisfaction.

**Competing theories.** In 1943, Maslow developed Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow predicated the theory on the assumption that people are motivated when five needs are satisfied in the order of (a) physical, (b) safety, (c) social (belongingness), (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization (Rahman & Nurullah, 2014). Maslow based the theory on the foundational principle that lower-level needs must be satisfied before an individual can achieve a higher-level need (Maslow, 1943). The individual, for example, must satisfy the physiological need for food, shelter, and clothing before they can satisfy the need for physical protection (safety). As the individual moves up the pyramid, an increase in motivation is the result (Maslow, 1943). Though Maslow established a hierarchy, each of need correlates with one another. Maslow described physiological needs as the basic needs of food, water, and air. Maslow further defined safety needs as security and protections.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs lists the order in which individuals should address needs. Maslow (1943) and Herzberg et al. (1959) emphasized the importance of

managers identifying employee needs and determining to meet the needs and increase employee motivation. In applying Maslow's theory to an employee's satisfaction and performance, once an individual feels safe on the job, the individual can move to the next level to satisfy the need for acceptance in their organization or team (Maslow, 1943). Maslow associated the next level of need with gaining respect and recognition from others (social), which leads to an increase in self-esteem (esteem; Maslow, 1943). When the employee has satisfied all other needs included in the pyramid, the individual will grow in realizing personal potential (self-actualization; Maslow, 1943). Sandrick, Contacos-Sawyer, and Thomas (2014) articulated that an unmet need may negatively impact employee behavior. Based on Maslow's theory, to reach the goal of self-actualization employees must satisfy each level of need before they can move to the next level of need.

Another theory explored was the existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory. Alderfer (1972) compared his theory to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory by comparing existence to Maslow's physiological and safety needs. Alderfer also compared relatedness to Maslow's social and esteem needs, and growth to esteem and self-actualization. Alderfer separated esteem needs into two categories: internal and external. Unlike Maslow (1943), who indicated that individuals must satisfy a lower-level need before addressing a higher-level need, Alderfer argued that the need for existence, relatedness, and growth can be simultaneously addressed. Alderfer's ERG theory was similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory in many ways; however, Alderfer asserted that individuals could simultaneously satisfy needs on multiple levels.

Following Alderfer and Maslow, researchers developed additional motivation theories. Hackman and Oldham (1976) developed the motivation-hygiene theory, which is also known as the job characteristic model. Although the Maslow and Hackman and Oldham models included frameworks to address employee and customer satisfaction, the theorists' approaches differed. Unlike Maslow, Hackman and Oldham used job characteristics to address employee satisfaction and motivation. Hackman and Oldham posited that the following three psychological conditions impact the main job components: (a) significance of work, (b) accountability for the results, and (c) knowledge of the conclusions (Kanten, 2014). While Maslow focused on the hierarchy of needs, Hackman and Oldham focused on the job task in addressing employee satisfaction and motivation. The job characteristics model includes a focus on the task and is grounded in the idea that tasks are the basis for employee motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Hackman and Oldham identified the job characteristics of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback as the areas that impact psychological conditions. The psychological conditions could yield positive and negative outcomes. The researchers concluded that the characteristics of skill variety, task identity, and task significance correlate directly with the psychological state of the importance of work. Kanten (2014) challenged the researchers, arguing that the characteristics of autonomy and task significance did not directly correlate to the job design. Further, the characteristic of job autonomy relates to an employee's accountability for the results. In addition to the impact feedback has on the knowledge of the conclusions, together, job characteristics and psychological conditions could lead to high employee motivation.



The job characteristics directly impact psychological conditions of employees in many ways. Hackman and Oldham (1976) shared that the work must be meaningful to the employee if the employee is required to use a suitable variety of skills to accomplish the job. This process enables the employee to identify tasks as necessary and useful and helps the employee understand how their tasks satisfy the expected result. Further, researchers maintained that employees were more willing to accept responsibility when they were provided with a level of autonomy to make decisions, work independently, and schedule the tasks to be accomplished (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Employees exerted a high-level of satisfaction in positions where they are allowed to use diverse skills and where they receive an acceptable level of job autonomy.

Hackman and Oldham (1976) also shared that the more feedback provided to employees, the more knowledgeable employees are about how effectively they are performing. Hackman and Oldham theorized that leaders should incorporate the following four components in designing a job: (a) vary work to allow skill variety; (b) assign work to groups to enhance the group's significance to the end product; (c) allocate tasks that allow job autonomy, which results in the willingness of employees to accept responsibility for the tasks; and (d) connect the employees to the expected outcomes and customers to allow consistent feedback to enhance knowledge. Hackman and Oldham (1976) identified: (a) job characteristics that needed enhancement, (b) jobs that may help employees become more motivated, and (c) job components that either work or do not satisfy expectations. The researchers' job characteristics model includes various strategies managers may use to address employee and customer satisfaction.

### **Strengths and challenges of competing theories of the conceptual framework.**

Contemporary researchers asserted that the identification and use of Maslow's hierarchy of needs might assist managers in improving employee satisfaction to minimize absenteeism. Sacchetti and Tortia's (2013) application of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to examine work motivation, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction revealed that the higher order needs result in higher employee motivation and job enrichment. Sacchetti and Tortia divided the hierarchy pyramid into two categories (a) deficiency and (b) growth needs. The employee's need to think creatively may satisfy the highest growth need of self-actualization (Sacchetti & Tortia, 2013). The lower-level needs, defined as deficiency needs, included the basic needs of food, water, and shelter (Deci & Ryan, 2014). The higher order needs were identified as growth needs and included the feeling of belonging, self-esteem, recognition, and self-actualization (Deci & Ryan, 2014). Managers may use what they learned about the higher-order, and lower-order needs to enhance employee job satisfaction.

Once managers identify the needs that enhance satisfaction and minimize dissatisfaction among employees they can develop strategies to decrease employee turnover, absenteeism, and dissatisfaction. Lester (2013) shared, managers can use the growth needs spectrum to identify which needs increase motivation and employee satisfaction. Cao, et al. (2013) shared that managers may use Maslow's hierarchy of needs to recognize the significance and benefits of satisfying the identified employee needs to ensure the organization's sustainability. Jackson et al. (2014) also revealed that Maslow's hierarchy of needs included information that indicated a manager was

responsible for satisfying the employee's deficiency needs such as providing a safe environment and adequate wages. It is critical to understand that to implement Maslow's hierarchy of needs; leaders must address higher-order and deficiency need to maximize job satisfaction and employee motivation while minimizing employee dissatisfaction.

Some researchers shared differing conclusions concerning how the lower- and higher-order needs impact employee performance and motivation. Taormina and Gao (2013) posited that Maslow's higher- and lower-order needs result in the same level of satisfaction. However, Adiele and Abraham (2013) concluded that if an individual has a low-level of satisfaction in each of Maslow's pyramid hierarchy of needs, the employee's performance and motivation were affected. Neither author, however, addressed the level at which the lack of any of the lower or higher-order needs impact employee performance and motivation. Nor did the authors examine how these factors could be used to enhance the strategies needed to minimize the negative effects of employee performance and motivation. Additional research is needed to determine the strategies managers can use to minimize the impact of a lack of lower- and higher-order needs to enhance employee performance and motivation.

Leaders may use job characteristics information to enhance employee and customer satisfaction. Hackman and Oldham (1976) theorized that five core job characteristics could help leaders determine how likely a job will impact an employee's behavior and attitude: (a) skill variety, (b) task identity, (c) task significance, (d) autonomy, and (e) feedback. Kanten (2014), who applied the job characteristics model to four five-star hotels in a specific city, posited that enhancing the job components that

work can increase employee motivation, attitudes, and job performance. Kanten concluded that the job characteristics of skill variety and feedback together were successful in creating a job to satisfy the needs of customers. Usage of the job characteristics model demonstrates a direct correlation between employee job satisfaction and enhanced customer service.

Maslow focused on the hierarchy of needs, while Hackman & Oldham focused on the job task in addressing employee satisfaction and motivation. Hackman and Oldham (1976) claimed the task was the basis for employee motivation. Instead, Kanten (2014) concluded that it was the characteristics of skill-variety and feedback that related to the job design. Kanten advised that research participants needed to possess a variety of skills to feel that they significantly contributed to the organization's effectiveness. Additionally, feedback concerning the employee's performance enhanced the employee's assurance that the customer's needs were sufficiently satisfied (Kanten, 2014). The emergence of the job characteristics model injected the understanding that in addition to understanding a hierarchy of employee needs, job characteristics play a significant role in determining the level of employee satisfaction and motivation.

**Examples of research using Herzberg's two-factor theory.** The conclusions drawn from applying Herzberg's two-factor theory to employee motivation resulted in varying outcomes for different researchers ranging from agreeing with motivational factors to disagreeing with the idea that hygiene factors only had a minimal impact on job satisfaction. Islam and Ali (2013) agreed that motivational factors reinforced Herzberg's assessment of job satisfaction and hygiene factors of pay and administrative policy and

sustained Herzberg's view of dissatisfaction. According to Islam and Ali, hygiene factors of supervision, leadership, and working conditions correlated with job satisfaction for many research participants (Islam & Ali, 2013). Ghazi et al. (2013) concluded that teachers from a sampled university were content with both motivation and hygiene factors. However, the researchers posited that only the fulfillment of hygiene factors motivated the participants (Ghazi et al., 2013). Islam and Ali indicated a high level of satisfaction with supervisory practices, interactions with leaders, and work conditions (Islam & Ali, 2013). The results of the studies included varying levels of agreement with Herzberg that hygiene factors impact employee satisfaction.

Though Islam and Ali's research was limited to one organization, the research was useful in understanding the impact of various motivational and hygiene factors on employee satisfaction. Islam and Ali (2013) focused the study on private universities in various provinces in Pakistan. They also used a small sample to generate their findings. As a result of the limitations, Islam and Ali's results were not generalizable to all private universities in Pakistan, other countries, or regions. The researchers provide an opportunity for future researchers to expand the sample size and broaden the geographical scope of the study to increase participants' job performance and enhance the student learning.

**Reasons not to choose other theories of the conceptual framework.** Because Herzberg's two-factor theory was most-related to identifying the factors that lead to employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction, I adopted the theory to explore how some retail managers reduced absenteeism and increased productivity outcomes for organizational

effectiveness. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), Alderfer's ERG theory (1972), and Hackman and Oldham's job characteristic model (1976) were not effective as a theoretical spectrum to address this study's business problem that some retail managers' lack strategies to reduce absenteeism. The competing theories focused on foundational principles that fundamentally differ from Herzberg's two-factor theory. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, an individual cannot pursue higher levels of need until lower-level needs are satisfied. However, contemporary researchers such as Başlevent and Kirmanoğlu (2013) found that employees are concerned with the needs that directly affect them, which are not always in the order identified by Maslow. Başlevent and Kirmanoğlu examined data from the fifth round of the European Social Survey to examine five different job attributes and their effect on employee job attitude. The study findings support the conclusion that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is valid in the context of job attitudes. Future researchers should replicate the study across additional job attributes across multiple industries and geographical locations.

Alderfer's ERG theory, similar to Maslow's theory is also not appropriate for this study because Alderfer posited that managers must address one need at a time to motivate employees. Although Alderfer reduced Maslow's five levels of needs to three categories (a) existence, (b) relatedness, and (c) growth. Alderfer further theorized that the hierarchy of the needs might vary for different individuals (Alderfer, 1972). Alderfer's application of the ERG theory is ineffective for this study because it would be challenging for a manager to focus on one need at a time to successfully reduce absenteeism and increase productivity to sustain an organization.

Additionally, Hackman and Oldham's jobs characteristics model was not the most appropriate model for this study. Hackman and Oldham (1976) focused on the fact that the task itself is a primary determinant of employee motivation. Hackman and Oldham identified five core characteristics that impact three psychological states to achieve established work outcomes. However, because absenteeism involves more than focusing on job characteristics, Hackman and Oldham's theory would not integrate completely with this study's focus on the exploration of effective strategies to decrease absenteeism.

Herzberg's two-factor theory was most related to identifying the factors that lead to employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The concept of Herzberg's theory was most appropriate to explore the strategies retail managers use to lower absenteeism rates, minimize job dissatisfaction, increase employee retention rates, and reduce productivity losses. As described in the study completed by Mumanthi and Gachunga (2014), Herzberg's theory was used to determine that strategies that include the factors of achievement, recognition, increased responsibility, challenging work, growth, and development resulted in enhanced worker performance at the National Police Service in Kenya. Additionally, Lumadi (2014) used the two-factor theory to show that as employee satisfaction increased, absenteeism reduced. I will use the Herzberg two-factor theory to explore the factors contributing to minimal absenteeism in the retail industry in northwest Florida.

### **Contributing Absenteeism Factors**

Many factors may impact employee motivation and productivity. Absences due to illness, injury, or medical appointments (BLS, 2015), employee burnout (Jourdain &

Chênevert, 2015), and anxiety from the implementation of new technologies (Bukchin & Cohen, 2013; Singh & Monga, 2013) are factors that may contribute to an increase in employee absenteeism and a reduction in productivity and organizational efficiency. In 2015, the BLS (2015) estimated that approximately 3.5 million workers were absent either part of the workday or the entire work day due to illness, injury, or medical appointments. The BLS also contended that due to colds or the flu, the rate of illness-related absences increased each year during the winter months of December through March. The rate of absenteeism related to sickness, injury, and medical appointments indicates a need for organizational leaders to enhance strategies to improve the health and wellness of the employee population. Asay et al. (2016) stated that employees are absent due to chronic diseases for an average of 1 to 2 days per year. Because sickness is a major factor in employee absenteeism, applying elements of Herzberg's motivational factors to identify ways to minimize employee absence can reduce losses in employee productivity and minimize employer-funded health care costs.

Having a healthy workforce will reduce productivity losses associated with employee absenteeism. Kocakulah et al. (2016) identified employee absences as a major factor that disrupts productivity because of a decrease in daily workflows and an increase in costs within the organization. The BLS (2015) reported that during the 2010 to 2015 period, stores in the retail industry experienced a 30% increase in absenteeism, which, per Lally (2014), resulted in \$74 billion annual productivity losses. Additionally, Asay et al. (2016) compared the average per hour, per employee costs associated with absenteeism and found that the costs for small employers ranged from \$16 to \$18, while the cost for



larger employers ranged from \$17 to \$286. Ensuring a healthy workforce will decrease absenteeism and minimize productivity losses.

Though employees report illness as a reason for absence, leaders find it challenging to develop precise strategies to reduce absenteeism because leaders cannot always verify whether sickness is the cause of an employee's absence. To enhance the health of employees and reduce productivity losses, Crush (2013) suggested that leaders explore reasons for absences and use the information to develop policies designed to reduce absenteeism. A reduction in productivity from absenteeism prompted leaders at Starbucks to develop policies to reduce cost and minimize unnecessary absences (Crush, 2013). To lessen the cost of employer-paid sick leave and decrease causal sick days, Starbucks leaders established a policy that included a tiered approach to sick pay based on the amount of time absent. The policy included a stipulation not to pay wages for the first day of absence due to sickness (Crush, 2013). According to Crush, the tiered method would save the company a considerable amount of income typically lost on annual sick pay. McCaughey, DelliFraine, McGhan, and Bruning (2013) explained that work-related injuries and illnesses might result in a high level of job dissatisfaction and decrease employee attendance on the job. Cocker, Martin, and Sanderson (2013) indicated that employees who experience job stress and mental illness also have a higher rate of absenteeism. Leaders who develop strategies to identify reasons for employee absenteeism and address the identified factors may minimize organizational productivity losses and the level of absenteeism in the organization.

In addition to reported illness, burnout may also contribute to employee absenteeism. According to Jourdain and Chênevert (2015), there is a direct correlation between burnout and employee absenteeism. Employees who feel burnt out may come to work but may jeopardize optimal productivity, which can also lead to injury. Further, Jourdain and Chênevert, as well as Pohling et al. (2016) posited that workers who engage in the act of presenteeism, attending work while sick, may lead to counterproductive behaviors and increase the exposure to a high level of stress, which results in burnout. Not offering sick leave is also counterproductive to reducing absenteeism and improving employee productivity. According to Jourdain and Chênevert, employees who do not receive the opportunity to take paid sick days at work may tend to come to work sick because they cannot afford to take care of family responsibilities without payment. Leaders who foster an environment where employees adopt a sense of cynicism or a detachment attitude towards the job as a coping mechanism for not receiving sick leave during periods of burnout.

Employees who attend work while sick may result in organizational productivity losses. Jourdain and Chênevert (2015) limited research to a single organization and individuals in the organization self-reported the survey results. Pohling et al. (2016) agreed that there was a relationship between lost productivity and employee presenteeism due to increased workplace pressures. Pohling et al. also indicated that productivity losses associated with presenteeism outweigh the costs for absenteeism. To protect the organization, minimize productivity losses, and show support for employees, leaders

should identify signs of burnout, clearly define alternatives for employees, and institute strategies to address each of the factors identified.

Organizational leaders should explore the financial costs associated with health-related employee absenteeism. Asay et al. (2016) asserted that absenteeism due to several chronic conditions cost organizations more than \$2 billion per year. Asay et al. analyzed absenteeism from 2008 through 2011 using data obtained from the Market Scan Health Risk Assessment and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey. In the study, the researchers focused on the number of days missed from work due to sickness or injury. Devonish (2014) asserted that though managers cannot eliminate absenteeism, employees were more motivated in organizations where leaders supported health and wellness programs. Asay et al. concluded that wellness programs might provide resources needed to improve employee health and organizational productivity, as well as reduce workplace absenteeism. Asay et al. suggested that wellness centers could improve the health and wellness of employees in many ways, including weight loss, physical fitness, and a reduction of stress. Based on their findings, wellness programs may enhance the levels of exercise, increase the overall attention to healthy habits and attitudes, decrease health-related absenteeism, and, in turn, reduce health care costs for the organization and the employee.

Wellness programs may enhance the health of employees and minimize absenteeism in organizations. Dabrh et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine if the establishment of wellness programs was an effective way to raise the health consciousness of employees and reduce absenteeism. Dabrh et al. used a 36-item

wellness survey to evaluate health habits of employees of a large medical center in Minnesota and compared the survey responses to national population data. Researchers used random sampling to select the study participants from the population of employees who took part in the wellness program, stratified by facility membership. Dabrh et al. concluded that employees who participated in the wellness program increased their levels of exercise and reduced short-term sickness-related absenteeism at the organizations. Though the study included limitations such as assessing participants' use of wellness programs at a single facility in one geographic location, the research findings may contribute to social change through the sharing of information to enhance the understanding of the role of wellness programs on improving employee health and reducing absenteeism.

In addition to sickness and burnout, employee tenure may impact the rate of employee absenteeism. Dello Russo, Miraglia, Borgogni, and Johns (2013), stated that during the early stages of employment, as employee tenure increases absenteeism also increases. The rate of absenteeism, however, did not proportionately increase with tenure for medium or long-termed employees (Dello Russo et al., 2013). Garland, Hogan, Kelley, Kim, and Lambert (2013) concluded that U.S. prison employee personnel's tenure did not impact the rate of absenteeism. In this population, employees with advanced education and employees with a low number or no children exhibited more absenteeism. Based on the results of the research studies; employee tenure may impact employee absenteeism; however, the results may vary among industries, geographical locations, and organizational types.

Researchers have also found that implementation of new technology can also contribute to anxiety and insecurity, which may contribute to employee absenteeism. Bamber and Lansbury (2013) determined that technology applications may result in a temporary loss of productivity because of not retraining employees who feel they lack an understanding of the new technology product. They further explained that implementation costs increased organizational costs and interrupted the employees' understanding of the benefits of the new technology (Bamber & Lansbury, 2013). With the demands of new technology implementations, employee morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and employee wellness may lead to low employee morale (Bamber & Lansbury, 2013; Knani, 2013). Bamber and Lansbury's study demonstrates the negative effects of technology implementations on the organization. The increase in job responsibilities associated with a company's implementation of new technology may also lead to an increase in employee absenteeism, presenteeism, and stress. Knani (2013) posited, however, that the impact of the confusion and increase in job responsibilities on employee absenteeism decreased as employees become familiar with the new technology. The advancement of technologies results in temporary productivity losses due to increased absenteeism, anxiety, and employees attending work while sick. As employees become more familiar with new technology and obtain proper training, employee absenteeism, job satisfaction, and productivity are enhanced.

Job demand and job control interventions impact the rate of absenteeism and organizational productivity. Williams-Whitt et al. (2015) conducted a systematic review of research published between 2000 and 2012, about the effects of job demand and

control interventions on employee absenteeism and organizational productivity.

Williams-Whitt et al. concluded that interventions were focused on the reduction of job demands or the increase of job control reduce employee absenteeism and increase organizational productivity. Researchers limited the inclusion of reviews to those that satisfied the defined criteria, including the following: (a) the review included the effects of interventions that occurred or managed in the workplace, (b) the review was centered around individual workers or those seeking work who were 15 years of age or older, (c) the researchers included a review of absenteeism, productivity or economic outcomes, and (d) the researchers included a discussion of the risks of disability-related absenteeism. Additionally, future researchers may include psychosocial characteristics and their interaction with individual elements to identify the causal effects of the established variables. Therefore, leaders may use job interventions to manage employee absenteeism and minimize productivity losses.

Because work anxiety and stress play a vital role in employee absenteeism, organizational leaders can benefit from studying strategies used to ease employee anxiety due to the implementation of new technology. Bukchin and Cohen (2013) and Singh and Monga (2013) found that organizational leaders who offer flexible work schedules, telework, and work-sharing arrangements saw a decrease in absences when using these mechanisms to balance work-life during the implementation of new technologies. However, Maruyama and Tietze (2012) warned that while telework arrangements may minimize absenteeism, this arrangement might minimize the visibility of employees in the workplace and thus lead to turnover due to a lack of career development opportunities

within the organization. Flexible work, telework, and job-sharing opportunities may increase the ability to minimize productivity losses due to present employees taking on the responsibilities of absent employees. These opportunities may also increase employee satisfaction, which will also minimize health costs due to absenteeism. While new technology advances may maximize organizational productivity, leaders should assess the costs and benefits of the arrangements to maximize the impact on the organization and the employees, especially as it relates to reducing absenteeism.

Employee anxiety and stress can also lead to absenteeism when a major change occurs in the workplace. Hwang, Lee, Park, Chang, and Kim (2014) expressed that dissatisfaction with the level of pay, a lack of managerial support, organizational culture, and the unfair treatment of employees lead to job stress. Based on Hwang et al., of the sources of stress identified, the unfair treatment affects motivation and absenteeism the most. Fairest (2014) posited that organizational leaders who include employees in the planning related to change might experience a lower level of absenteeism due to job dissatisfaction. Fairest examined a single company in Canada to discuss how to engage employees when organizations implement change. Fairest discussed the change in the context of physical space, not necessarily from an operation's perspective. Fairest asserted the need to identify the plan for a change early enough to commence early engagements with employees. The organizational leaders developed internal surveys to determine the success of the change effort. The survey yielded 88% satisfactory responses. Fairest also noted that the process led to an achievement of 0% attrition rate after implementation. Fairest attributed the successful change implementation to critical

factors including (a) communication, (b) engagement of employees as change agents, (c) training targeted at culture and behavior, and (d) putting together a strong team. Applying the researchers' study results to multiple organizations across other industries and geographical locations will enable future researchers to generalize the results to other organizations, regions, and industries. Future researchers should test the research results.

An imbalance of work and personal life may also lead to anxiety and frustration for employees and lead to a higher level of absenteeism and a decrease in organizational productivity. Pawar (2013) asserted that an imbalance of work and personal life might negatively affect an employee's job satisfaction and performance. Further, Van der Berg and Martins (2013) posited that employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs might negatively influence other employees and cause a decrease in productivity for the organization. However, Ko, Hur, and Smith-Walter (2013) and Kowsalyadevi and Kumar (2013) determined that leaders who develop innovative policies to support maximizing work-life balance benefit both the employee and the organization, thus leading to higher job satisfaction and lower absenteeism. Likewise, Rama Devi and Nagini (2013) concluded that employees who possess a high rate of job satisfaction tend to have a higher level of organizational productivity, which minimizes productivity losses. Although Stout, Awad, and Guzmán (2013) indicated that, based on the perception of work-life benefit program, many leaders were reluctant to promote family-friendly policies and initiatives. Research includes information that indicates that leaders who provide flexibilities to enhance work-life balance may help the employee, the organization, and experience a lower level of absenteeism and productivity losses.



## **Productivity and Performance**

Employee absenteeism may negatively impact an organization's productivity and performance. Eswaramurthi and Mohanram (2013) and Bukchin and Cohen (2013) shared that a reduction of staff resources minimizes organizational effectiveness and productivity. In some organizations, replacement personnel may help to minimize productivity losses and maintain work performance for absent employees (Siukola, Nygård, & Virtanen, 2013). However, these practices may result in an increase of absences for the missing worker (Siukola et al., 2013), which disrupt the workflow and increase organizational health care costs due to lost workdays (Kocakulah et al., 2016). By adhering to these findings to address the issue of absenteeism on productivity and performance, organizational leaders can develop procedures to address the practice of using replacement personnel to perform the duties of absent workers to avoid employee burnout for replacement workers.

As organizations continue to expand, managers expect employees to maintain or enhance productivity and performance. Thirulogasundaram and Sahu (2014) stated that low job motivation is the foundational cause of employee absenteeism. Thirulogasundaram and Sahu conducted a qualitative study to explore the impact of motivation and job satisfaction on absenteeism. Morgan, Dill, and Kalleberg (2013) added that extrinsic rewards such as pay and promotion result in increased job satisfaction. The authors focused on the following seven extrinsic factors associated with job satisfaction relative to absenteeism: (a) pay, (b) work, (c) promotion, (d) supervision, (e) co-workers, (f) working conditions, and (g) fairness.

The results of the survey included multiple levels of importance for the identified factors. Of the seven factors examined, respondents indicated the importance of the factors in descending order of relevance to motivation and absenteeism: (a) working conditions; (b) work interest with flexibility and feedback; (c) pay; (d) supportive supervisor; (e) fairly treated; (f) promotional opportunities; and (g) friendly co-workers (Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014). Based on the survey results, respondents indicated that if the working conditions include a safe, clean, and comfortable environment, employees tend to possess a higher level of job satisfaction and minimal absenteeism (Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014). Similarly, Choo, Mat, and Al-Omari (2013) shared that leaders must recognize and provide employee recognition and appreciation to increase employee satisfaction. Thirulogasundaram and Sahu (2014) concluded that pay had a significant impact on job satisfaction and absenteeism (Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014). Respondents indicated that fairness of pay had more impact on satisfaction and absenteeism than the actual level of pay. Additionally, 66% of respondents reported that they agreed that there is a link between job satisfaction and the level of absenteeism experienced. Though the results showed varying levels of impact of the extrinsic factors reviewed, the authors stressed the importance of understanding that multiple factors, personal and professional, impact the rate of employee absenteeism (Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014). Therefore, the study results supported varying degrees of importance for factors that impacted participant satisfaction and absenteeism.

Researchers expanded the knowledge of how the identified extrinsic factors impacted absenteeism and job satisfaction. Although Thirulogasundaram and Sahu

(2014) limited the study to one organization located in Trichi, Tamilnadu, future researchers can replicate this study with an expansion of the extrinsic factors in other organizations, industries, and countries, increasing the generalizability of the study results. Future researchers can also expand the study to explore the impact of intrinsic factors on job satisfaction and absenteeism, keeping in mind that self-reported questionnaires require researchers to assume that respondents honestly responded to the questions.

Implementing cultural diversity programs and practices may also positively impact the rate of employee absenteeism experienced in various organizations. Peretz, Levi, and Fried (2015) conducted a study to examine the effects of organizational diversity programs across cultures on absenteeism, turnover, performance, and innovation. The authors analyzed data from more than 5,000 organizations in 22 countries. Peretz et al. sent questionnaires to a sample of organizations with more than 100 employees. Peretz et al. obtained information on the cultural values and practices from the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness study. Peretz et al. hypothesized that national cultural practices would moderate absenteeism when diversity programs supported cultural practices. The study results revealed that the higher the cultural diversity and cultural practices are in an organization, the lower the absenteeism and turnover are in the organization (Peretz et al., 2015). Chua (2013) concluded similar findings to indicate that employees in organizations with high levels of cultural diversity tend to result in lower levels of employee creativity and a higher absenteeism and turnover index. Organizational leaders who ensure congruence between

cultural values and practices that support diversity programs may experience a lower level of employee anxiety, frustration, and absenteeism.

Researchers continued to explore the impact of flexibility on employee productivity, job satisfaction, and employee productivity. Ramendran et al. (2013) launched a study that focused on flexibility factors including (a) wage, (b) functional, (c) work time, and (d) numerical. Ramendran et al. concluded that flexible human resource practices combined with congruency in cultural values and practices resulted in a more skilled and satisfied workforce. Ramendran et al. illustrated that an investment in the functional and work-time flexibility practices enhanced organizational productivity as well as net income. Ramendran et al. further concluded that functional flexibility and work time flexibility also helped organizational leaders maintain the organization's competitive position in the industry.

In line with focusing on employees' concern for personal matters, leaders can assess the impact health-related absences may have on organizational performance and productivity. Bankert, Coberley, Pope, and Wells (2015) conducted a study at three health insurance employers to introduce a new approach to estimating the indirect cost of absences due to illness. Bankert et al. used an output per labor hour-based approach that assumed other employees completed the work of the absent employee. The Well-Being Assessment survey included a question to address how many days of work employees missed in 28 days due to physical or mental health (Bankert et al., 2015). The authors also used monthly data from the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index to determine the numerical productivity loss. The number of participants at the three selected health care

organizations was 646, 319, and 310. The authors concluded that the per employee output productivity loss ranged from \$1,370 to \$4,604 for the three sampled organizations. The total employer-level productivity loss ranged from \$0.4 million to \$9.2 million. The results of this study indicate the importance of quantifying productivity losses derived from health-related absences.

Bankert et al. (2015) limited the study to three health insurance companies located in the United States, and the authors did not quantify the other benefits derived from the development of strategies to minimize absenteeism. The newly developed model of Regional Productivity Loss differed from results using the Human Capital Approach (HCA) and was more complex. The HCA model included a quantification of other areas of the organization that would benefit from mitigating absenteeism programs (Bankert et al., 2015). Because the model is new, the authors did not have previous study data to estimate the percentage of employee substitution for absent employees (Bankert et al., 2015). Future researchers should replicate this study in other industries, locations, and companies to create a baseline to enhance the results and compare them to the results using the HCA model. As researchers use the HCA model, leaders might develop policies and programs that could mitigate absenteeism and its impact on organizational productivity.

Job demands may increase the occurrence of presenteeism, which may also result in higher levels of absenteeism. Deery, Walsh, and Zatzick (2014) conducted a study at one emergency call center located in the United Kingdom to examine the relationship between job demands, presenteeism, and absenteeism. The authors used the Job

Demands-Resources Model as the framework to measure the association between the variables. The authors distributed 476 questionnaires, a description of the study's purpose, and postage-paid envelopes for participants to return the questionnaires to the researchers. A total of 227, or 48%, participants returned completed questionnaires. The authors used a 5-point Likert scale to obtain the data. Absenteeism was the dependent variable measured as the average days absent per occurrence. Deery et al. also received absenteeism data from each participant's personnel records over a 12-month period after the survey. Researchers obtained presenteeism data from participant answers to the question inquiring about the number of times over a 12-month period the employee attended work while sick. Deery et al. concluded that both job demands and attendance policies positively correlated to an employee attending work while ill. Deery et al. further established that employees might view job demands as a personal benefit; however, they may also impact organizational productivity due to a backlog of work resulting from employee absences.

Researchers examined the effects of the relationship between multiple variables on performance and productivity. Deery et al. (2014) reviewed variables at a single emergency call center in the United Kingdom. Deery et al. limited the study to testing the effects of presenteeism on absenteeism. The study results might provide a foundation for future researchers to expand the variables to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between additional variables and their impact on performance and productivity. To increase the generalizability of the findings and conclusions, future

researchers should also replicate the study in other organizations, geographical locations, and industries.

When employees are absent, some leaders may hire substitute workers to complete tasks commonly addressed by more experienced workers. Bukchin and Cohen (2013) conducted a study to examine the effect of leaders hiring less skilled workers to maintain the responsibilities of more experienced workers on an assembly line. The authors provided analytic equations to introduce a work-sharing model to minimize the bottleneck or slowdown of the assembly line (Bukchin & Cohen, 2013). The work-sharing required leaders to temporarily reassign a portion of the tasks to more experienced workers until the substitute workers learned to do the job better (Bukchin & Cohen, 2013). Bukchin and Cohen concluded that due to absenteeism, the loss of throughput or the rate of task completion could be substantial. The authors found that relieving the less-skilled substitute of 25-30% of the workload until the replacement employee becomes more familiar with the tasks should minimize throughput losses. Bukchin and Cohen explored an interesting dynamic that can enable future researchers to expand the study by including employees with varying learning slopes, the effects of training and cross-training, and the organizational policies used to define the criteria for hiring substitute workers to maximize productivity during employee absences.

### **Strategies to Minimize Absenteeism**

Using strategies to minimize absenteeism can enhance productivity outcomes and organizational effectiveness. Kuster et al. (2013) shared that conflict in the workplace can result in higher rates of absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, low employee retention rates,

and loss of productivity. Garland et al. (2013) suggested that the use of a proactive strategy to promote organizational commitment will increase profitability by reducing absenteeism costs and training for replacement employees. Carmel, Yoong, and Patel (2013) opined that a decrease in absenteeism might result in a reduction in organizational costs and an increase in productivity and employee retention. Garland et al. determined that employees who maintained a vested interest in the success of the organization had a high-level of commitment to the organization and a lower rate of absenteeism in the organization. Additionally, Garland et al. discovered that employees who had values similar to those of the organization tended to develop a strong commitment to the organization, not an individual within the organization. Garland et al. defined affective commitment as the level of commitment associated with the shared values of the employee and the organization. Affective commitment resulted from the employee perceiving that they were fairly treated; thus the employee was more motivated to reduce absenteeism and tardiness to increase productivity outcomes for the organization (Garland et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important for leaders to understand the commitment of employees and ensure an acceptable level of satisfaction of the employees to minimize absenteeism.

Organizational managers' use of a proactive hiring process to select employees with certain personality traits may also help leaders minimize absenteeism and tardiness. Jonsson and Rancano (2013) asserted that when managers use a proactive hiring process, employees have a higher level of attendance, lower tardiness, and reduced turnover. Jonsson and Rancano used the five-factor model to conduct a study of 35 personality



traits to identify traits that related to tardiness and absenteeism. The researchers concluded that conscientiousness and neuroticism are most correlated with employee attendance. Jonsson and Rancano found that employees with certain personality traits have a higher rate of absenteeism and turnover. The personality traits that impacted absenteeism included the main traits of extraversion and conscientiousness (Jonsson & Rancano, 2013). To minimize workplace absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover, organizational leaders may develop strategies to identify and hire individuals who possess the personality traits related to lower absenteeism, tardiness, and longevity.

Though a leader's development of a proactive hiring process may increase the likelihood of hiring employees with shared values and commitment, it is important to create a hiring process to ensure the individuals fit the job and organization. Opportunity for advancement is pivotal to curtailing employee absenteeism. Conner (2013) warned that employees who learn to complete all tasks but have no advancement opportunities within the organization might lose interest in their commitment to the organization. Thus, employees who were previously committed to the organization may become discouraged and develop a negative attitude towards the organization, minimize productivity outcomes, and increase employee absenteeism (Conner, 2013). Organizational leaders must develop strategies to maintain the employees' commitment throughout the employee's tenure with the organization. Conner also advised that organizational leaders use a combination of strategies to address employee absenteeism and a reduction in organizational productivity. Conner identified the following five strategies managers could use to minimize absenteeism: (a) career counseling, (b) cross-training, (c) job

rotation, (d) mentoring, and (e) incentives for early retirement. A combination approach demonstrated that developing strategies to increase flexible work arrangements, reduce long work hours, and provide training to identify other ways to ensure a work-life balance may decrease organizational absenteeism while increasing employee wellness.

Capitalizing on Conner's recommendation of a combination strategy, other researchers explored the value of managers using a multi-pronged investment in employee wellness and development. Gosselin et al. (2013) emphasized the positive impact of organizational managers investing in employee wellness and its impact on employee absences. Devonish (2014) shared that the investment in employee wellness resulted in a decrease in the direct and indirect costs associated with employee absenteeism. Likewise, Olive and Cangemi (2015) claimed that leaders positively impacted employee behaviors when leaders provided an opportunity for staff to participate in organizational wellness programs. Tromp (2015) explained that leaders who develop metrics, provide health screening, and monitor employee engagement in the programs, see a significant impact on reducing absenteeism and increasing organizational productivity. Organizational leaders may minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity outcomes by developing and offering employee wellness programs, career counseling, job rotations, and other incentives to employees.

By allowing flexibility in meeting the demands of the job, leaders may positively impact job satisfaction and absenteeism within the organization. Hofäcker and König (2013) stressed that leaders who encourage flexibility and employee work-life balance positively impacted employee wellness and satisfaction, which in turn, increased work

attendance. Hofäcker and König also cautioned that employees who do not effectively balance work and personal obligations might use absences from work to compensate for the imbalance. Mubanga and Nyanhete's (2013) research supported the claim that a healthy work-life balance reduced the need for employees to use absences to reconcile an imbalance, in turn reducing absenteeism and productivity losses. Offering employee flexibility may enhance the work-life balance and result in an increase in job satisfaction, thus increasing work attendance.

Another strategy used to improve flexibility in meeting job demands involves allowing employees flexible work arrangements. Taneja (2013) asserted that long work hours result in a work-life imbalance, which may lead to employees making unhealthy food choices, exercising less, and getting less sleep. Mubanga and Nyanhete's (2013) research also addressed the perspective shared by Taneja. Mubanga and Nyanhete concluded that leaders who help employees balance work and personal responsibilities, offer childcare at the work site, allow employees to flex the work schedule, and train employees on how to integrate work and family life to minimize required over time, experience a reduction in absenteeism. Additionally, since a work-life imbalance increases employee stress, the assistance, and encouragement to balance work and family obligations will minimize absenteeism (Mubanga & Nyanhete, 2013). Flexible work arrangements allow employees to satisfy work assignments without the requirement to physically attend the job, which increases employee satisfaction and decreases productivity losses due to absenteeism.

Researchers also assessed the value of offering financial and nonfinancial incentives to motivate employees and reduce absenteeism. Achim, Dragolea, and Balan (2013) posited that the use of financial incentives, nonfinancial motivators, or a combination of the two might positively impact absenteeism. Aubert and Hollandts (2015) addressed the positive impact short-term financial incentives, such as profit-sharing practices alone had on reducing absenteeism by 7% in a French-listed organization. Additionally, long-term financial incentives, such as organizational ownership through the purchase of stock options at a discounted price, reduced absenteeism at double the rate as the short-term financial incentives (Aubert & Hollandts, 2015). Gabriel and Nwaeke (2015) conducted research to examine the relationship between nonfinancial incentives and employee job satisfaction in five hotels in Port Harcourt, concluded that a positive correlation between the two variables existed. Gabriel and Nwaeke explained that leaders recognized and treated employees as the organization's most valued asset and empowered employees to make the decisions necessary to do the job. Therefore, leaders may use financial and nonfinancial incentives to impact employee satisfaction, commitment, and absenteeism positively.

### **Transition**

In Section 1, I proposed Herzberg's two-factor theory as a means to enhance an understanding of the strategies managers use to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity on organizational effectiveness. The nature of the study was a qualitative single case study chosen after considering various possible research methods and designs. The research question and interview questions align with the general and specific

business problems in the problem statement. Herzberg's two-factor theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. Section 1 also includes a description of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. To conclude this section, I introduced the significance of the study and the review of the literature published within the last 5 years of the study.

Section 2 includes the following components: (a) a restatement of the purpose statement, (b) role of the research, (c) participants, (d) the research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) data collection, and (g) reliability and validity.

## Section 2: The Project

My goal for this study was to explore and understand the strategies managers at a retail store in northwest Florida used to minimize absenteeism to increase productivity and organizational effectiveness. I used the methods and processes identified in Section 2 to review and interpret the specific business problem concerning a lack of effective strategies that reduce absenteeism in a retail store. This section also contains the following topics: purpose statement; the role of the researcher; participants; research method and design; population and sampling; ethical research; data collection instruments, techniques, and organization methods; data analysis techniques; and reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore how some retail managers reduced absenteeism and increased productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness. The target population consisted of retail store managers within one retail store in northwest Florida. The sample included five managers who had experience applying strategies to reduce absenteeism to increase productivity outcomes. According to Lally (2014), retail managers experienced \$74 billion in productivity losses, which, according to BLS (2015), included a 30% increase in absenteeism during the period from 2010 to 2015. Therefore, a retail store population was suitable for this study. The results of this study may effect positive social change by contributing to sustainable employment, thus improving the quality of employees' families lives, increasing opportunities for both employees and employers to enhance economic contributions to

community organizations, and establishing quality customer services for improved living conditions.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I served as the primary data collection instrument for this study. Yin (2014) indicated that the role of the researcher starts with reviewing the previous literature to obtain a deeper understanding of the research topic. A researcher is involved in the following phases of the research study: (a) determining the research topic; (b) interviewing participants; (c) recording, transcribing, and analyzing the interview information; and (d) validating study themes and concepts (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Sho-ghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). Additionally, Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) asserted that the role of researchers in a qualitative research study is to serve as the primary data collection instrument. As the primary data collection instrument, I collected data through semistructured interviews with managers and review of company documents related to absenteeism and annual revenues.

Though I possess experience with managing employee absenteeism, I had no relationship with anyone in the research organization. Yin (2014) posited that it is important for researchers to gain an understanding of the topic before conducting research. To minimize conflicts of interest and preconceived conclusions, I had no prior experience with the research organization leaders or the study participants. However, through my educational and work experience, I learned about and maintained responsibility for minimizing absenteeism within several organizations but had no experience in the retail industry. My experiences with absenteeism and its impact on

productivity and performance were central to my decision to research absenteeism in a different industry.

In conducting research involving human subjects, a researcher must comply with the three basic ethical principles outlined in *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) to address respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Mikesell, Bromley, and Khodyakov (2013) identified the need for a researcher to protect the rights and wellbeing of participants by practicing the basic ethical principles identified in *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Likewise, Haahr, Norlyk, and Hall (2013) stressed the importance of maintaining respect for and the autonomy of all human research subjects. Participant signatures on the informed consent form signified agreement to voluntarily participate in the study, completion of the National Institute of Health's (NIH's) Protecting Human Subject Research Participants training, and the identification of the characteristics that may impact research conclusions served to address the required ethical principles. To comply with the three basic ethical principles, I ensured participants, after reading the consent form information, voluntarily participated in the study, received no harm, and received equal treatment throughout the research study.

Mitigating bias in collecting, analyzing, and reporting data is essential to enhancing the reliability and validity of the study results. Hansen (2013) stressed that researchers might introduce bias through preconceived expectations and nonverbal expressions shown during face-to-face interviews. Chan et al. (2013) defined bracketing



as the effort researchers make to eliminate previous knowledge and experiences related to the research phenomenon. As a result, I limited facial expression and other nonverbal movements during the face-to-face interviews. Additionally, I used bracketing to minimize bias in collecting, analyzing, and reporting research data.

Using an interview protocol, researchers may establish trust with the participant and collect rich data. Yin (2014) indicated that following an interview protocol is important to ensure the data collected by a researcher will address the defined research question. Haahr et al. (2013) posited that it is important for a researcher to develop and follow the interview protocol with the participants to minimize inherent biases during the data collection phase of the study. Researchers enhance the credibility of the study findings when participants verify the accuracy of the interview summary (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). The interview protocol (Appendix B) contained prompts that include the actions to take (a) before the interviews, (b) during the interviews, (c) after the interviews, and (d) after the study is approved and published. I followed the interview protocol and asked the same interview questions to each participant to collect rich data through semistructured interviews to address the overarching research question. Using the interview protocol, researchers may build participant trust through the consistent conduct of the interview techniques with each study participant (Morton, Rivers, Charters, & Spinks, 2013). Additionally, to enhance the validity and reliability of the study results, the five participants validated the accuracy of the interview interpretations.

## Participants

The participants included supervising managers who used strategies to reduce employee absenteeism at a retail store in northwest Florida. Gray (2013) suggested that researchers develop eligibility parameters to identify participants who may provide information essential to addressing the overarching research question. Likewise, Yin (2014) posited that it is important for researchers to ensure participants possess the necessary experience to address the study phenomenon. Additionally, Killawi et al. (2014) opined that it is important to develop inclusion and exclusion criteria when selecting or eliminating participants. Therefore, I established the following eligibility criteria to select participants for the study: (a) managers currently employed at the targeted retail store, (b) managers willing to share experiences and perceptions of absenteeism in retail stores, (c) managers who fluently spoke English, (d) managers employed in a management position at the retail store for at least 1 year, and (e) managers who were over the age of 18. Participants who successfully used strategies to reduce absenteeism for increasing productivity and enhance organizational effectiveness aligned with the study's overarching research question. Managers who declined to share their experiences and perceptions of absenteeism or who had not held a management position with the organization at least 1 year did not participate in the study.

I used information provided by the general manager to identify and communicate with potential participants to address the study phenomenon. As shared by Namageyo-Funa et al. (2014), it is important for researchers to obtain permission to communicate with potential participants from the organization's gatekeeper. Brown et al. (2015) also

suggested that researchers use a written outreach strategy to enhance the success rate for recruiting potential participants. Marshall and Rossman (2016) discussed the importance of participant availability and eligibility to participate in the study. I obtained a letter of cooperation from an authorized representative from the research site (Appendix A). The letter of cooperation contained an explanation of the purpose of the study and authorization to conduct interviews, followed by a member checking session, with store managers regarding strategies used to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes at the retail store. After receiving Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and permission from the organizational leader, I e-mailed potential participants the informed consent form. I used the consent information and study details to develop an objective relationship with participants by providing the opportunity for participants to become acquainted with the study procedures. I reiterated that participants could contact me through e-mail, phone, or in person to ask clarifying questions concerning the participant's role in the study. To continue nurturing the working relationship between participants and me, I responded truthfully to questions received from participants.

I used various strategies to establish and maintain a working relationship with participants. White and Hind (2015) expressed that it is important for researchers to maintain constant communication with study participants. Additionally, Patton (2015) opined that researchers who show an interest in participants' experiences maintain a stronger working relationship between participants and researchers. The working relationship between a researcher and study participants is stronger when participants

know that a researcher will protect their rights and wellbeing through compliance with the ethical principles described in *The Belmont Report* (Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013). Therefore, to establish a working relationship with participants, I maintained constant communication with participants through e-mail, telephone, and in person to discuss the overarching research question, purpose of the study, confidentiality of the participant and data shared, and the importance of the participant's participation to help retail store managers learn strategies to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity.

### **Research Method and Design**

The business problem and overarching research question are important factors for the foundation for this study. The business problem, purpose statement, and research question factored into selecting the study's research method and design. After thoroughly considering the available research methods and designs, I used the qualitative research method and single case study design to collect rich data to interpret, analyze, and report.

### **Research Method**

Using the business problem, research purpose, and the research question, I selected the most appropriate qualitative research method. Researchers select from the following three research methods: (a) quantitative, (b) mixed methods, and (c) qualitative (Yin, 2014). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013), and Yilmaz (2013) indicated that qualitative researchers collect in-depth participant perspectives and experiences by asking what, where, and how questions that are otherwise unavailable using a quantitative approach. Likewise, Paull, Boudville, and Sitlington (2013) asserted that a qualitative research method is most appropriate when the interpretation of participants' responses is an

objective of the research and researchers will ask open-ended interview questions.

Montero-Marín et al. (2013) opined that researchers use qualitative research methods to describe the participants' perspectives and experiences, to explore strategies concerning a bounded issue such as decreased absenteeism, and to increase organizational productivity levels. However, Brédart, Marrel, Abetz-Webb, Lasch, and Acquadro (2014) shared that some researchers have criticized the lack of objectivity, control, and incidences of misinterpretations when using qualitative research methods. Therefore, I used a qualitative research method to collect in-depth participants' experiences with strategies used to decrease absenteeism and increase organizational productivity outcomes and to describe the experiences shared by participants.

A quantitative research method is appropriate to test hypotheses or the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Bishop and Lexchin (2013) described quantitative research as a process used to test predetermined hypotheses and examine the relationship between and among variables. Yin (2014) opined that using a quantitative method of testing a hypothesis would not be appropriate for exploring life experiences and perceptions. Kipo (2013) explained that researchers who use a quantitative research method do not make direct contact with participants because researchers examine the relationship between variables in the study. Gilstrap (2013) shared the following examples of quantitative research methods: (a) linear and nonlinear regression, (b) Markov chains, and (c) probability analysis. My study did not focus on testing a hypothesis or the relationship between and among variables; thus, a quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study. The mixed method research approach

is a combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods. Sparkes (2014) shared that the mixed methods approach involves combining qualitative and quantitative methods to explore problems and solutions. Similarly, Kipo opined that researchers use a mixed method approach when researchers collect quantitative and qualitative data to analyze the defined research question. Additionally, Petticrew, Refuess, Noyes, Higgins, and Mayhew (2013) described the mixed method as an approach to synthesizing and integrating the qualitative and quantitative methods in one study. Because the mixed method approach includes a combination of the qualitative and quantitative research methods and my study did not include an examination of the relationship between variables, a mixed method approach was not appropriate for the study.

### **Research Design**

After assessing the various research designs associated with a qualitative research method, I chose to use a case study design. Yin (2014) identified that the case study design was most appropriate to answer how and why questions and to explore a real-life context of a phenomenon over which researchers have little control. Ingham-Broomfield (2014) and Sangster-Gormley (2013) indicated that a researcher, using the case study research design, conducts an in-depth, comprehensive inquiry of a social phenomenon. Singh and Monga (2013) and Yin stated that the case study design could include a single location or multiple locations. Garcia and Gluesing (2013) also described a case study as a qualitative method that includes the collection of data from at least two sources (triangulation) such as interviews and direct observations. Given the importance of understanding the strategies managers use to minimize absenteeism for increasing

productivity to enhance organizational effectiveness, I determined that the single case study design was the most appropriate research design for this study.

I considered the use of the phenomenological and ethnographical research designs to explore the strategies managers use to reduce absenteeism to increase productivity and enhance organizational effectiveness. Ingham-Broomfield (2014) and Roberts (2013) explained that researchers use a phenomenological design to gain a comprehensive understanding of social realities that build on individual experiences and multiple meanings for those experiences. Additionally, in using a phenomenological design, researchers sought to determine the logic or meaning of the interrelationships of the phenomenon based on information obtained from the interviews, observations, and stories shared by the individuals (Ejimabo, 2015). Because the purpose of this study did not include exploring the interrelationships of a phenomenon, the phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study. Yin (2014) explained that ethnography research includes a particular cultural group over an extended period. Ethnography involves an observation of day-to-day activities of the identified group (Yin, 2014). Likewise, Case, Todd, and Kral (2014) described ethnographical research as a design used to understand a culture-sharing group. The purpose of this study did not include the exploration of a culturally specific group over an extended period; therefore, the ethnographical research design was not best-suited for this study.

Achieving data saturation in qualitative studies is important. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) explained that in qualitative studies, researchers use interviews to collect data and continue to recruit and interview participants until

participants share no new information. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) asserted that interviews are one method used to reach data saturation. Additionally, Fusch and Ness (2015) stressed the importance of understanding that data saturation is not about the number of interviews, but more about the depth of research data. I continued to interview managers until the data began to replicate or became redundant.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this study consisted of managers in a northwest Florida retail store who have used strategies to minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity for organizational effectiveness and included purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a nonprobabilistic sampling method used by researchers to select participants who will most likely contribute relevant and in-depth data to address the study phenomenon (Apostolopoulos & Liargovas, 2016). Purposive sampling allows researchers to select an appropriate sample size to focus on the unique characteristics of the population while obtaining answers to the research question (Koch, Niesz, & McCarthy, 2013). Jones (2014) also posited that purposive sampling is appropriate when researchers are interested in a group of individuals with homogeneous characteristics. Study participants included managers currently employed at the targeted retail store who were willing to share their experiences and perceptions of absenteeism in retail stores, and employed in a management position at the retail store for at least 1 year. I used purposive sampling to identify potential participants from which I collected rich data to address the research question and e-mailed an informed consent form asking participants to participate in the study and to provide the details of the study.



I interviewed 5 managers from a single retail store in northwest Florida. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) asserted that the sample size must be large enough to address the research question but small enough only to include data relevant to the study. Yin (2014) shared that a small sample size is sufficient in case study research when the conceptual framework is clear and concise. Dworkin (2012) asserted that a sample size from five to 50 is sufficient to reach data saturation in a qualitative research study. Based on the information shared by various researchers, my sample size included 5 managers who had successfully used strategies to manage absenteeism at the retail store.

Researchers enhance the validity and reliability of research results by ensuring data saturation of data. Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, and Hodder (2015) defined data saturation as the point at which researchers determine that participants share no new information, no new themes have emerged, and a sufficient amount of data is collected to replicate the study. Likewise, Morse, Lowery, and Steury (2014) opined that data saturation is the point when additional data collection will yield no new or relevant information. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), defining data saturation across various studies is difficult due to the differences in the parameters used from study to study. I continued to conduct interviews and review company documents until no new information emerged and the information became redundant.

I based my selection of participants on the overarching research question of the study. Killawi et al. (2014) stressed the importance of developing inclusion and exclusion criteria when selecting or eliminating participants. Likewise, Ogden (2014) indicated that researchers should apply inclusion and exclusion criteria to selecting research

participants. In following these suggestions, I did not include managers at the retail store who declined to share their experiences and perceptions of absenteeism, were under the age of 18, did not fluently speak English, or those who had not held a management position with the organization at least 1 year. Additionally, research should develop robust participant eligibility criteria for the research (Crocker et al., 2015). Study participants were managers currently employed at the targeted retail store, willing to share their experiences and perceptions of absenteeism in retail stores, and employed in a management position at the retail store for at least 1 year.

Johnson and Esterling (2015) noted that the interview setting should protect the privacy of the participant. Additionally, Harris, Boggiano, Nguyen, and Pham (2013) stressed the importance of researchers selecting a location to ensure no one else is privy to the interview responses. Herring (2013) also expressed the need to select a proper interview location to ensure the comfort and trust of the participants to provide honest responses. The semistructured interviews included managers who met the sampling criteria included in the consent form were held at a location and time that ensured convenient access, comfort, security, and confidentiality of the participants, and only lasted 20 minutes.

### **Ethical Research**

To ensure the ethical conduct of this research and upon obtaining IRB approval and research site leader approvals, I e-mailed the potential participants an informed consent form. Researchers use the informed consent to obtain voluntary consent for an individual to participate in a research study (Schrems, 2014). The consent form included

my personal contact information and a request that participants give initial consent by replying to the e-mail with the words, "I Consent" to signify agreement to participate in the study voluntarily. Participants responded to the e-mail with "I Consent" before the set-up of interviews. Wolf et al. (2014) posited that the informed consent form includes information used to provide assurance of the participant's confidentiality and a description of the study's purpose. The consent form included the following information: (a) researcher's contact information, (b) IRB approval data, (c) research and interview procedures, (d) participant withdrawal procedures, (e) potential study risks, (f) records retention information, and (g) participants' confidentiality procedures. Participants' e-mailed replies included the words "I Consent" to indicate their understanding of the research purpose, data collection, benefits of the research, voluntary participation, and preservation of the confidentiality of the participants' identities before, during, and after the research. E-mailing the consent form to potential participants allowed time for participants to review the study procedures and ask clarifying questions concerning the participant's role in the study via telephone, e-mail, or in person.

To ensure compliance with the ethical standards, I reiterated that participation in the study was voluntary and that participants may withdraw at any time. Nguyen (2015) opined that researchers should ensure participants are aware that they may withdraw verbally or in writing from the study at any time. Participants did not receive compensation for study participation, and the consent form included an outline of the ethical standards.

Researchers should consider several ethical principles when conducting research that involves employee absenteeism, job satisfaction, and motivation. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that a researcher should assign a random unique code rather than each participant's name. To ensure the ethical protection of participants, I followed the advice of Marshall and Rossman and applied a unique code to each participant's interview responses with a letter and number such as P1 (participant 1) through P5 (participant 5). Additionally, Roberts (2013) shared that researchers should consider the following moral principles while conducting research: (a) justice, (b) respect for persons, and (c) beneficence. After receiving permission from Walden University's IRB to conduct research with the organization, I contacted an authorized representative to provide information concerning the nature of the research, objectives, and confidentiality of the organization and participants to the organization's representative. In conducting the research, I applied the principles learned during the completion of the NIH's Office of Extramural Research training (Appendix C) to protect research participants. I further protected the confidentiality of the data by password-protecting the files and stored the information and recorder disks in a locked file cabinet maintained in my home. I solely know the identity of the participants, have access to the data, and will destroy all files five years after the chief academic officer (CAO) approval.

Ensuring transparency in the research process and participant confidentiality is required to obtain approval from the Walden IRB. Sandberg and Copes (2013) stressed that obtaining IRB approval for research involving human subjects can be difficult. This study's IRB approval number is 06-21-17-0565950. To ensure transparency in the

research process, I disclosed to the participants, the steps I took to conduct the research. Marshall and Rossman (2016) discussed the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the participants. Likewise, Renert, Russell-Mayhew, and Arthur (2013) stressed the need for researchers to assign codes rather than use participants' names in reporting the study results and conclusions. I assigned a random code of "P" for each participant, followed by a numerical number based on the receipt of the confirmation to participate in the study as received from each participant.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I served as the primary data collection instrument. Yin (2014) asserted that researchers are the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research studies. Likewise, Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013) emphasized that the researcher is the primary instrument and is responsible for obtaining and analyzing the information. Marshall and Rossman (2016) shared that the researchers act as the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research studies. As the primary data collection instrument, I collected data to identify strategies used to minimize absenteeism to increase productivity and enhance organizational effectiveness.

The interview protocol (Appendix B) included information used to identify the steps to follow before, during, and after the interviews. Baškarada (2014) recommended the use of an interview protocol during the planning phase of research. Morton et al. (2013) opined that researchers use interview protocols to enhance consistencies in the deployment of the interview process. The interview protocol (Appendix B) contained prompts that included the actions taken before the interviews, during the interviews, after

the interviews, and after approval of the study. I followed the prompts in the interview protocol and asked the same interview questions to each participant to collect rich data through semistructured interviews to address the overarching research question. I ensured the interview questions aligned with the overarching research question. Gibbons (2015) asserted the need for researchers to allow participants to ask clarifying questions, as needed, during the interviews. After the interviews, I summarized and synthesized the interview information, shared a copy of the information with the participants, requested that participants validate the accuracy of the information and provide necessary corrections.

Secondary data consisted of a review of company documents from the retail store. The information in company documents can include data researchers need to identify research themes (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). In reviewing company documents, I remained focused on the research question, minimized inconsistencies in collecting data, and ensured I collected rich data to explore the strategies managers use to manage employee absenteeism.

Researchers use the member checking process to enhance the reliability and validity of data collected during this research study. Yin (2014) suggested that validity and reliability were significant factors to maintain reliability in qualitative case studies. Hudson et al. (2014) posited that researchers use member checking to allow research participants to verify a summary of the researcher's interpretations of interview information prepared to validate the accuracy of the. Likewise, Loh (2013) asserted that researchers use member checking to obtain assurance that researchers accurately

interpreted the information shared during the interviews and to allow participants to elaborate on any inconsistencies. Using the member checking process, to increase the reliability and validity of the research results, I ensured an accurate interpretation of the responses.

### **Data Collection Technique**

One of the data collection techniques used in this study included semistructured interviews as the primary data collection technique. Yin (2014) shared that researchers use case study interview information to focus on understanding the perceptions and experiences of participants. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggested that qualitative researchers conduct semistructured interviews to collect rich data on the experiences of study participants. The interviews included open-ended, in-depth, questions to gather rich data to address the study phenomenon. Cronin (2014) stressed the importance of conducting interviews in a setting that is free from noise and other disruptions. Interviews commenced in a private room of the participant's choice to enhance the participant's ability to focus on the study phenomenon, and interviews lasted no longer than 30 minutes. Chan et al. (2013) indicated that researchers use information collected through interviews to concentrate on the research questions and to enhance the adequacy and accuracy of data collected. The interviews began with an introduction of the researcher and participant and a discussion on the phenomenon of the study. After the introductions, the participants confirmed the approval to record the interview. Morton et al. (2013) posited that interview protocols reduce inconsistencies in the conduct of semistructured interviews. I applied the processes outlined in the interview protocol (Appendix B) with

each participant. I conducted one-on-one, face-to-face, semistructured interviews with each participant, audio-recorded participant responses, and documented the results of my review of company documents related to employee absenteeism and organizational productivity.

The review of company documents served as the secondary data collection technique. Yin (2014) posited that using company documents as a secondary data collection technique is an appropriate technique when conducting qualitative research. Gibbons (2015) suggested that researchers use additional data collection techniques, such as a review of company documents and archival records. Bryde, Broquetas, and Volm (2013) also noted that using the review of company documents as another data collection technique. I reviewed company documents to obtain data on the level of employee absenteeism and net sales recognized for 2014 to 2016.

Semistructured interviews have advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of face-to-face interviews involves seeking clarifications immediately, as compared to mailed questionnaires (Milne, 2014). Milne (2014) also identified another advantage of interviewing as the ability to receive a higher response rate, maintenance of the ability to obtain detailed information on the participants' perceptions, and the researcher's ability to sustain the flexibility to modify the interview questions, as needed. Likewise, Baškarada (2014) identified the advantage of researchers having the flexibility to refocus questions as needed or the ability to prompt for additional information during the interview. Also, Chan et al. (2013) shared that interviewers can ask open-ended, in-depth, questions to maintain the focus on the overarching research question. Yin (2014)



identified the following disadvantages of case study interviews: (a) travel costs, (b) risk of participant refusing to answer questions, (c) limitation on the generalizability of the study results, and (d) participant questioning the confidentiality of the shared information. Baškarada also shared that participants may have a preconceived, but incorrect, understanding of the interview questions, or researchers may misinterpret the participant's answers. Yin warned of the necessity of researchers to pay close attention to the data to ensure a proper interpretation of the information and remain attentive to the fact that each company creates the documents for a specified purpose and target audience. To maximize the advantages, I ensured the interview protocol contained vital information to enhance consistency in the interview process, to increase trustworthiness, and to answer the research question. Additionally, to minimize the disadvantages, participants selected an interview time, date, and location that allowed for minimal disruption, noise, and the clarity of the audio-recorded information.

Similar to semistructured interviews, using the review of company documents as a secondary data collection technique may have several advantages and disadvantages. Yin (2014) identified an advantage of reviewing company documents as the ability of researchers to continually review the data to ensure the accuracy of the interpreted results. Researchers may use the analysis of the information obtained from company documents to identify research themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Bowen (2009) indicated that reviewing company documents may result in increased efficiencies of time required to select and analyze company data. Houghton et al. (2013) noted that one disadvantage of using company documents as a data collection technique includes the possibility incorrect

or incomplete information. Additionally, Yin (2014) posited that additional potential disadvantages of using company documents include the accessibility of accurate, complete information; research selection bias; and, the retrievability of the data.

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) described pilot studies as a process used to validate the clarity of the interview questions to address the research question. Ivey (2014) explained that pilot studies might require additional time to complete the research study; however, they include information that will allow researchers to obtain necessary information to complete the research to satisfy the study phenomenon. Additionally, Morin (2013) asserted that researchers might use a pilot study to identify major obstacles that may impact the larger sample and address issues earlier in the process. I used the interview protocol to eliminate the need to conduct a pilot study.

Researchers summarize and synthesize the interview information and conduct member checking by sharing the interpreted data with participants and requesting participant feedback on the validity of the interpretations. Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, and Wakefield (2014) explained that member checking includes the process of participants reviewing and validating the interview results to increase the validity of the study results. Likewise, Koelsch (2013) emphasized that through member checking, participants validate the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of the information shared by the participant. Also, Hudson et al. (2014) posited that researchers use member checking to allow participants to verify a summary of the interpretations of interview information prepared to verify the accuracy of the information. I used member checking

results to validate the interview interpretations and enhance the reliability and validity of the study results.

### **Data Organization Technique**

I categorized the research data and maintained the data in separate electronic folders using Microsoft Excel. Gajewski (2013) expressed the importance of properly storing data to enhance the reliability for future use and study analysis. Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014) explained that the use of a reflective journal with semistructured interviews increased a researcher's ability to capture the participant's behavior and demeanor during the interviews. I categorized and labeled all data by file name, type of information (document review or interview), participant identifier, date obtained, and collection location.

After the conclusion of the interviews, participants reviewed the interpretive interview information and verified the accuracy of the data. Once I verified the information, I transferred the data to separate participant files on the password-protected USB and labeled each file. Paull et al. (2013) shared that researchers have several ways to store data and protect the confidentiality of the participants. Doody and Noonan (2013) stressed the importance of protecting the identity of the study participants. Ranney et al. (2015) suggested establishing a coding system to keep participants, and the information shared confidential between researchers and participants. Margarian (2014) indicated that researchers should maintain participant folders by the unique code assigned to each participant, type of data, and data analysis results. Anyan (2013) asserted the importance of researchers maintaining confidentiality by using techniques that include assigning

unique codes to participants. I maintained transcribed data in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets on a password-protected USB, audio recorded each participant's interview, used a unique participant identifier (P1 through P5) to identify each participant while protecting the participant's identity for subsequent data analysis, established individual folders for each participant to easily retrieve data, and documented my observations made during the completion of the study. Data only contained the unique identifier assigned to the participants, remained on a password-protected computer, and backed up to an external disk. To comply with Walden DBA program requirements and to ensure confidentiality as described, after participants verified the accuracy of the interpretative interview data and approval of the study results, the raw data will remain secure for five years before the electronic data, and the hard copy information is erased and shredded, respectively.

### **Data Analysis**

Multiple sources of data were used to achieve the methodological triangulation of the data for the study. Methodological triangulation involves synthesizing multiple sources of data (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Methodological triangulation is a method used to collect and analyze data with at least two data collection techniques (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Cho and Lee (2014) posited that researchers who use methodological triangulation reduce the misinterpretation of data and increase the reliability of research results. Additionally, Fusch and Ness (2015) asserted that researchers use triangulation to explore multiple perspectives of a phenomenon. The primary data source for the study included

semistructured interviews. The secondary data source came from the review of company documents. Coding of both sources of material provided information needed to develop an in-depth understanding of all data for analysis.

Researchers analyze the audio-recorded interview data, assign codes to protect the identity of the participants, and identify the emerging themes to describe how they use the data collected to address the study phenomenon. Paull et al. (2013) described the method of sensemaking as a process used to list or categorize textual data. I used the sensemaking process described by Paull et al. to group the relevant textual data and remove any unclear or irrelevant textual data. Carter and Baghurst (2014) suggested researchers use the process of reduction and elimination to remove irrelevant information shared by participants in the interviews. As suggested by Carter and Baghurst, I reviewed the interpreted interview documentation and removed extraneous response information. I used the following sequential process to analyze the data:

1. Collect and document the interpretation of the interview data and ask participants to participate in the member checking process by validating the accuracy of the interpreted data;
2. Code each participant with a letter “*P*” for the *participant* and a number;
3. Make any necessary corrections at the time of the interviews; and,
4. Use this data to document the study findings and future research.

The identification of word frequencies and patterns between the conceptual framework, research question, and other literature includes information researchers use to justify the research. The results of the data analysis should provide answers to the

research question (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). I asked participants to review and validate the accuracy of semistructured interview interpretations. To protect the identity and confidentiality of the participant and shared information, I assigned the codes of P1 through P5 to each participant, and I used the frequencies of words and patterns to answer the research question.

Various data analysis software programs exist to perform the process for sorting and coding data and identifying research themes. Lawrence and Tar (2013) identified the following phases of qualitative data analysis: (a) gathering, (b) organizing, (c) categorizing, (d) analyzing and extrapolating data to answer the research question, (e) identifying patterns and themes, and (f) deciphering what data are relevant. Castleberry (2014) described NVivo as a user-friendly software program researchers use to collect, organize, and analyze research data. Castleberry identified the similarities of NVivo to the Microsoft Office suite. Similarly, Woods, Paulus, Atkins, and Macklin (2015) noted that researchers use NVivo to sort, store, and maintain data obtained from transcripts and other researcher literature. Castleberry also identified similarities between NVivo to the widely used Microsoft Office suite.

I used the results from NVivo to focus on key themes, and I correlated the themes to published literature and the conceptual framework of the study. Researchers use NVivo® 11 to identify key themes by identifying finding word frequencies that exist between the various sources of data (Castleberry, 2014; Yin, 2014). Likewise, Yin (2014) further shared that researchers may use data analysis strategy that includes the correlation of the themes to the conceptual or theoretical framework. De Massis and Kotlar (2014)

stated that qualitative researchers should use a coding technique to analyze interviews and transcripts to synthesize the data with the research question. Therefore, I correlated the key themes identified during the data analysis process to the conceptual framework and new studies published. The key themes related to the constructs of absenteeism, productivity, organizational effectiveness, employee motivation, and employee satisfaction.

### **Reliability and Validity**

To enhance the soundness of qualitative research findings, researchers must address the reliability and validity of the data. Noble and Smith (2015) shared that reliability and validity are necessary to ensure that researchers comply with the academic research standards. Leung (2015) noted that validity in qualitative research connects with the researcher ensuring that the research method, research design, data collection, and data analysis methods are appropriate to address the research question. I included a comprehensive description of the research method, research design, data collection process, and data analysis process to enhance the reliability and validity of this qualitative, single case study.

#### **Reliability**

Researchers determine the reliability of research findings by a researcher's ability to use similar data collection techniques to replicate the research in other industries and geographical locations. Lakshmi and Mohideen (2013) share that reliability is determined by the ability of future researchers to use the same data collection instruments and techniques to replicate the study in different settings. Elo et al. (2014) asserted that

researchers enhanced reliability when data remained stable over time in multiple environments or circumstances. I addressed reliability by including detailed steps used to address the business problem, purpose, participants, data collection techniques, data analysis, and research results.

Researchers use member checking to increase the dependability of research results. Marshall and Rossman (2016) shared that researchers enhance dependability in qualitative research through the documentation of processes and procedures and member checking of the interpreted interview information. Zohrabi (2013) posited that dependability increased when researchers documented the order of events so others may replicate the study for future research. Reilly (2013) described member checking as the process of obtaining clarity and verification of the accuracy of interpreted interview data. I e-mailed my interpretations of the interview data to the participants and requested that participants review the document, identify any misinterpretations, and return the review results file back to my Walden e-mail address. After the interviews and the completion of the member checking process, I synthesized the transcribed data with the validated interpretations.

### **Validity**

Researchers assess the validity of research findings by applying various criteria. Reilly (2013) identified the following three criteria to determine research validity: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, and (c) confirmability. Houghton et al. (2013) defined credibility as the conduct of research that results in reasonable findings. Prion and Adamson (2014) indicated that researchers might use triangulation and member checking



to enhance the credibility of the research conclusions. I used methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of the research results. Methodological triangulation involves synthesizing multiple sources of data (Carter et al., 2014). Cho and Lee (2014) further explained that researchers use methodological triangulation to reduce data duplication and misinterpretation, and enhance the quality of research data. To minimize duplication and enhance credibility, I synthesized the information and identified data themes from the semistructured interviews and the review of company documents.

Transferability is important to enhance the validity of research findings. Elo et al. (2014) described transferability as the ability of researchers to use research data from one study to replicate the study in another setting. Yilmaz (2013) posited that researchers enhance the transferability of data through providing detailed descriptions of the processes used for other researchers to determine whether the study's findings are transferable to future research. Houghton et al. (2013) identified the need for researchers to develop and maintain an audit trail that includes the researcher's decisions and activities throughout the study. Morse and McEvoy (2014) shared that the failure of a researcher to provide detailed descriptions of the research may threaten the transferability of the data for future research. Using the information collected during the research, I provided a rich description of the participant, research phenomenon, analysis, and results. The detailed description included information that future researchers may transfer to other research studies.

Researchers use member checking as a primary basis to minimize bias and confirm the accuracy of the research findings. Houghton et al. (2013) defined

confirmability as the extent to which researchers may validate the accuracy of the data. Researchers use member checking to provide participants with the ability to review and confirm the accuracy of interpreted interview data (Killawi et al., 2014). Yin (2014) posited that individuals determine confirmability of research conclusions by the trustworthiness of the data used to develop the research findings. To confirm the accuracy of the interpretive interview data and minimize misinterpretations, I conducted member checking and collected data from multiple sources to minimize bias and enhance the confirmability of the study results. I asked participants to review the interpreted data and confirm the interpretation accuracy.

I pursued data saturation by continuing to interview participants and review company data until information began to repeat. Marshall et al. (2013) expressed the need to collect data until no new themes emerge. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) also determined that data saturation was satisfied when participants shared no new information. Likewise, Fusch and Ness (2015) described that researchers achieve data saturation when no additional coding is practicable. To achieve data saturation, I continued to interview participants and review company data until no new themes or information emerged.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 2 included an overview and restatement of the problem statement, an explanation of the role of the researcher, and a justification of the research method and design selected and used in the study. The section also included information used to address the moral principles of justice, autonomy, and respect for persons. Additionally, section 2 included a description of the research site population, geographical location,

participant and sampling method selection process, and a discussion of the data analysis used to address the reliability and validity of the study. I used methodological triangulation, through semistructured interviews, member checking, and a review of company documents, to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. In section 3, I will present the research findings and identify how the results may apply to business practice, the implications of social change, and recommendations for future research.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that retail store managers use to minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity. Achim et al. (2013) posited that employee absenteeism is a complex business problem that managers can address through using financial incentives, nonfinancial motivators, or a combination of the two. Various researchers shared that absenteeism in the retail industry results in high productivity losses (Bankert et al., 2015; BLS, 2015; Kocakulah et al., 2016). Because employee absenteeism impacts organizational productivity, it is important for retail store managers to implement strategies to minimize absenteeism.

I explored strategies by interviewing five managers at a retail store in northwest Florida. Participants had experience implementing strategies to reduce employee absenteeism and were in a managerial position in the store at least 1 year. Before participating in the interviews, participants reviewed consent forms and consented to participation in the study by responding “I consent” to the e-mailed invitation. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes, and all interviews were face-to-face. To enhance the validity and reliability of the data, I compared transcribed data to the interview notes and requested participants to validate the accuracy of my interpretations of the interview responses. The three themes that emerged from the data analysis included leadership support and comradery, communication, and competitive compensation and benefits.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question in this study was as follows: What strategies do retail managers use to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness? I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to allow participants to provide detailed information I then used to determine what strategies were effective in minimizing absenteeism at the retail store. In addition, I reviewed company documents on employee absenteeism and net sales for the past 3 years (2014 to 2016). To enhance participant trust, I followed the interview protocol (Appendix B), which contained prompts that included the actions to take (a) before the interviews, (b) during the interviews, (c) after the interviews, and (d) after the study is approved and published. I followed the interview protocol and asked the same interview questions to each participant to collect rich data through semistructured interviews to address the overarching research question.

I used face-to-face semistructured interviews to allow participants to share their experiences with employee absenteeism at the retail store, how absenteeism impacted the organization's productivity, and the strategies used to reduce absenteeism. I held each interview in a private room at the research site, and each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. As participants shared their experiences, I recorded the interviews and made notes to document my interpretation of the interview responses and meanings. I used the member checking process to confirm the accuracy of my interview interpretations. Completing the member checking following the interviews allowed me to eliminate and

correct misinterpretations in the interview data to enhance the reliability and validity of the research results.

In analyzing the data, I used NVivo to identify and group emerging themes. I uploaded the transcribed interview data, notes, and company documents into NVivo. I compiled the data to develop grouping of the emerging themes, eliminate irrelevant textual data, cluster core themes, and check patterns against the interview data and company documents. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, I assigned an alphanumeric code to each participant (P1 to P5) in place of the participants' names. P1 indicated Participant 1. I identified the following three emerging themes from the triangulation and coding of data: (a) leadership support and comradery; (b) communication; and (c) competitive compensation and benefits. Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) includes the identification of various factors that result in job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. The themes identified in this study include factors similar to the factors identified by Herzberg that impact employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. From the findings, I identified strategies that retail store managers can use to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity for organizational effectiveness.

### **Theme 1: Leadership Support and Comradery**

Leadership support and comradery among employees was the first theme that emerged from the in-depth analysis of the participants' responses and a review of the company documents on the rate of absenteeism and net sales for the past 3 years (2014 to 2016). Each participant explained that supportive managers help to minimize employee absences, enhance job satisfaction, and increase commitment, which all lead to a

reduction in employee absenteeism. P1 and P2 also shared that they supported employees by being available to address any questions employees may need to ask. P3 said, “I understand that satisfied employees are motivated to help the organization succeed and are more willing to minimize absences from work.” P4 mentioned that disgruntled employees have the highest rate of absenteeism and have the least amount of commitment to the organization, so it is important for managers to identify strategies to enhance employee job satisfaction. Each participant emphasized the need for managers to support employees and create a positive, happy work environment to increase job satisfaction and reduce absenteeism. P3 shared the experience of working in a location where managers had not implemented the strategies used in this location, and the leaders in that location had the highest rate of sick absences in the region. Within 2 years of implementing the strategies for leading by example and establishing an environment of teamwork and value, the location improved, and managers reduced the occurrences of absenteeism. The findings that supportive leaders create a positive work environment that results in minimizing employee absenteeism were similar to Kocakulah et al. (2016). Kockalah et al. found that leaders who took the initiative to provide clear expectations, showed interest in employees’ feelings, and listened to employee ideas created a positive and welcoming environment and experienced a lower rate of absenteeism. Additionally, Frear, Donsbach, Theilgard, and Shanock (2017) concluded that organizations with supportive leaders had a higher level of employee commitment to the organization, which also resulted in a decrease in absenteeism. All participants consistently used words such

as *happy, family, team, listening, importance to the organization, and appreciation* when describing the impact of supportive leadership to minimize absenteeism.

Leaders provide many opportunities to celebrate the successes of individuals, as well as the overall organization. When asked about absenteeism reduction strategies, P1, P2, P4, and P5 shared that leaders provided monetary and nonmonetary incentives to motivate employees to minimize absenteeism. During one of my visits, organizational leaders were providing nonmonetary incentives of brunch for a community nonprofit organization function. Additionally, during one of my interview visits, company leaders were providing a cake to show appreciation to staff. P1 articulated, “Company leaders developed a monetary incentive to minimize the use of sick leave for the organization. The employer pays unused sick leave to employees at the end of the year.” P1 also shared that managers encourage employees to minimize absenteeism to receive an extra check that they can use to go on a vacation, buy gifts, or use for other needs. The findings in this study confirmed the findings of Achim et al. (2013). Achim et al. shared that the use of monetary and nonmonetary incentives can enhance employee motivation and minimize absenteeism. All five participants mentioned the positive impact incentives have had on motivating employees to attend work. P3 explained that leading by example and working with employees also show employees that managers care about them and their ability to grow within the organization.

If employees do not feel important to the organization, absenteeism may increase. P2 explained,



It is important for managers to show concern for employees for their work and personal lives, and that managers must ensure that employees know they matter to the manager and the organization. Employees who understand their value to the organization tend to show loyalty to the managers by coming to work because the managers take care of the employees.

P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 articulated that managers foster a family atmosphere and an enjoyable environment in which to work. All participants indicated that managers conducted one-on-one meetings with employees to celebrate individual successes and provide constructive criticism when needed to provide detailed information on how to make the necessary improvements. In reviewing the absence policy, I noted that managers did not provide accommodations for alternative duties because of employee illness or injury. Though managers at this organization experienced low turnover and absenteeism, this policy could discourage employees who suffer an illness or injury from attending work. Each participant continued to express the need to ensure employees understood their worth to the organization, to foster a family environment, and to maximize the use of incentives in increasing employee satisfaction; however, this policy was contrary to the characteristics shared by each participant. P3 and P4 shared that managers cross-trained employees to minimize delays in accomplishing goals during the absence of other employees. The findings that cross-training employees minimized delays in production were consistent with research conducted by Conner (2013), Kehoe and Wright (2013), and Sharma and Magotra (2013). Based on the results of this study, it is important for managers to ensure employees know that managers are not only

interested in the productivity of the organization, but they are also interested in the personal growth of the employees.

Based on information shared during the interviews, the importance of comradery among employees positively influenced the reduction of absenteeism. All five participants indicated that fostering an environment where people like each other positively influenced the rate of employee absenteeism at the retail store. P2 and P4 further stated that employees who have a fun place to work and laugh are more likely to come to work. P2 and P3 explained that managers at the retail store periodically catered lunches to provide an environment for workers to develop and maintain relationships with coworkers and managers. P1, P2, and P5 shared that hosting gatherings outside of the office further encouraged comradery. Hosting events outside of work also supported the findings by Kehoe and Wright (2013), who stated these events increased the opportunity for communication among employees and may serve to enhance employee engagement, job satisfaction, and minimize absenteeism. Fostering comradery among employees, managers strengthen the team and positively influence employee behavior and attitude towards absenteeism. P1 and P3 shared that when employees are absent, they are aware of how their absence negatively impacts the team, so employees come to work even when they may have a minor illness. Participants used words such as happy, fun, team, family, and friendship when describing the goal of maintaining an environment in which employees want to come and work. Dasgupta, Suar, and Singh (2014) expressed that employees with unsupportive leaders were less satisfied and were more likely to experience a higher rate of absenteeism. Thus, managers at the research organizations

may continue to minimize absenteeism and enhance productive by continuing to provide support, monetary and nonmonetary incentives, and an environment to foster comradery among the employees. The opportunities provided to attend team events may enhance opportunities for coworkers to establish lasting friendships and positively influence the reduction of absenteeism.

### **Theme 2: Effective Communication**

Communication is an important factor to reduce absenteeism. In response to Question 1, all five participants articulated the importance of effectively communicating the manager's expectations to employees. In response to Question 2, P1, P2, and P5 noted that weekly one-on-one meetings with employees allowed staff to share any concerns or barriers in meeting the established expectations. P5 mentioned that managers post weekly goals for team members to determine if they are on track for meeting the weekly goals or to determine how to meet the goals. P1 shared that it is important for managers to set timely follow-up meetings to ensure that employees meet goals or make necessary improvements. P3 indicated the need for managers to communicate expectations and help employees accomplish the goals. For example, managers should help employees stock aisles and develop strategies to expedite transactions (P3). Each participant noted that departmental managers who consistently communicated with employees experienced a lower rate of absenteeism. These findings were similar to findings shared by Walden, Jung, and Westerman (2017). Walden et al. found that communication positively influenced employee commitment to the organization and thus enhanced employee

presence at work. Managers at the organization fostered an environment of open and continuous communication between the managers and the respective employees.

The responses provided by P1 and P5 revealed that periodic feedback was important to increasing employee engagement and minimizing absenteeism. P1 stated, “The use of notes to communicate with employees on concerns, such as absenteeism, and appreciation for hard work and commitment are vital to helping employees accomplish expected goals.” P1 also shared the importance of timely follow-up meetings to ensure understanding by the employee and ensure the meeting of goals. The strategies for holding timely initial and follow-up meetings are similar to findings shared by Grantham and Garcia (2015). Grantham and Garcia asserted that managers who used individual meetings to share status updates and possible roadblocks kept team members more focused on satisfying the established goals. Additionally, Persson and Schlichter (2015) found that managers used daily or periodic meetings to minimize the uncertainty of expectations, ensure a proper allocation of resources and responsibilities, and provide a clear explanation of processes. P2 and P3 stressed the importance of managers engaging with employees to emphasize the employees’ importance to the organization. All participants noted that managers must show universal concern for the employees’ personal and work lives. In this level of communication, managers can assure employees that they are part of the team and that they matter to the manager as well as the organization (P2, P3, and P5). P3 indicated,

I work directly with staff to help them accomplish their goals to get products out the door. I understand the importance of being involved with employees.

Employees see managers who openly communicate with them as accessible, which leads to enhancing employee respect for the manager. The time spent working with employees to mentor them to identify goals, tasks needed, how to do tasks, and reasoning behind tasks increases trust and respect between the manager and employee. Mentoring also helps to prepare employees for future management opportunities.

All five participants addressed communication as an important factor to increase employee motivation and minimize absenteeism. P1 indicated,

All employees are provided the absence policy and are required to sign an agreement that indicates that they understand that if they reach the maximum number of absences allowed in a month, a human resources representative will meet with the employee, and if there is a third violation of cause for disciplinary action of the same within a 6-month period, the employee can receive a 3-day suspension.

In response to Question 4, all five participants shared managers held weekly one-on-one manager-to-employee meetings and weekly manager meetings to address weekly goals. The weekly one-on-one meeting strategy was similar to findings by Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, and Moye (2015). Pulakos et al. stressed the positive influence of one-on-one meetings to building trust, improving individual employee performance, and establishing open lines of communication between the manager and employee. P1 stated, “During the weekly manager meetings, managers share strategies used and the results experienced in their respective areas.” Other managers may adopt strategies initiated in

other areas to improve the results in their respective areas. In response to Question 6, P1 shared a need to “provide an additional one to two more group meetings across departments to foster more collaboration and sharing of ideas and strategies.” P3 articulated the importance of not only communicating goals, but also providing guidance on how to accomplish the goals, why the goals are important, and the benefits of meeting the goals. In response to Question 7, P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 indicated that the outcomes experienced from implementing the absence reduction strategies included a low level of absenteeism throughout the organization. P2 also emphasized that effective communication resulted in content and happy employees, a pleasant work environment, and employee loyalty to managers.

Communicating goals is one step in the process, but leaders must ensure employees understand the goals and the benefits of reaching the goals. P3 expressed that managers must have two-way communication to ensure employees understand the goals. P2 and P3 said that it is important to set goals, but if no one understands them, they are irrelevant and serve no purpose to the organization. Four of the participants (80%) shared that leaders tie goals to performance expectations and discuss the goals with employees to enhance the understanding of the desired results. Radda, Majidadi, and Akanno (2015) suggested that managers use strategies such as constant and effective communication to develop colleague relationships to enhance employee engagement. Based on the findings of this study, managers who openly communicated goals to employees had a low rate of absenteeism in the organization.

The results of this study expanded on existing literature related to the phenomenon. Participants in this study shared the importance of effective communication for minimizing absenteeism, enhancing productivity, and increasing organizational effectiveness. Radda et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of employee engagement in reducing employee absenteeism and increasing productivity. P3 noted, “Enhanced employee engagement results in higher levels of employee morale, productivity, and bottom-line profits.”

### **Theme 3: Competitive Compensation**

Competitive compensation emerged as the third theme for minimizing employee absenteeism from the detailed analysis of participants’ responses and a review of company charts and memorandums on employee absenteeism. Participants provided valuable information on employee compensation to support the conclusion that competitive compensation was an effective strategy to reduce employee absenteeism. Muthusi-Nzyoka (2016) explained that employee compensation includes benefits provided by employers. P1 shared that the organization offers full-time and part-time hourly employees a base hourly wage, paid leave, and benefits. Saleh (2017) discovered a significant relationship between employee commitment, job satisfaction, employee performance, and compensation. P1 said, “Part-time employees are paid very well, and they also receive benefits, which is not common among retail stores.” P3 concluded that the hourly wage and benefits offered by the organizational leaders contributed to the low-level of absenteeism and turnover in the organization. The findings that competitive compensation reduced employee absenteeism were similar to Aziz, Hasbollah, Yaziz, and

Ibrahim (2017) in that compensation, including benefits, has a direct correlation to turnover. Organizational leaders may need to periodically review the compensation packages to maintain the low level of absenteeism and turnover within the organization.

Managers reward employees with monetary and nonmonetary incentives for exceeding established goals (P1, P2, and P3). P3 indicated that employees have been promoted and recognized for commitment and helping to satisfy the organizational goals. P4 also mentioned the importance of recognizing employees for good work; however, the participant shared that more frequent recognition will continue to enhance employee morale and motivation. Other participants mentioned that by offering incentives to employees, managers might further improve employee commitment to the organization, which lead to minimizing employee absenteeism (P4 and P5). P2 and P3 shared that organizational leaders have periodic recognition events to recognize top performers. P3 said, "Employees appreciate leaders who show they care and value employees." All participants indicated that celebrating the accomplishments of the team helps to improve employee commitment, reduce absenteeism, and increase productivity. The findings that providing incentives to employees for meeting established goals were similar to research conducted by Nazir, Shafi, Qun, Nazir, and Tran (2016) in that rewards and incentives increased employee commitment, job satisfaction, and productivity, which may lead to a reduction of employee absences. Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 stated that compensation at this organization is better than at other competitors.

Compensation in many retail stores is low and has minimal effect on reducing employee absenteeism. Based on responses from all participants, compensation at this



organization is better than at other competitors. P3 articulated that offering employees an hourly wage above minimum wage, paid leave, and benefits result in high retention and low absenteeism. P2 also indicated that paying employees a reasonable wage improves job satisfaction, employee engagement, and retention. The findings that competitive compensation enhances job satisfaction, employee engagement, and retention were similar to research findings by Escrig-Tena, Bou-Llusar, and Beltrán-Martín (2016). Additionally Bryant and Allen (2013) and Chew, Ng, and Fan (2016) found that competitive compensation had a positive effect on an employee's commitment and desire to work for the organization, which also results in a reduction of absences. The findings indicated that managers should ensure competitive compensation strategies to improve employee engagement and the reduction in employee absenteeism.

### **Relevancy to Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is Herzberg's two-factor theory, also known as the motivation-hygiene theory. I used Herzberg's two-factor theory to identify intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that leaders use to reduce productivity losses due to employee absenteeism. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, the intrinsic motivation factors include achievement, recognition, and advancement (Arifin, 2015). Additionally, Herzberg (1974) identified extrinsic job factors as rate of pay, job security, and company policies. In this study, I focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors identified in Herzberg's two-factor theory and how leaders perceived the impact of these elements on absenteeism and organizational productivity.

Participants identified intrinsic and extrinsic factors in strategies used to minimize absenteeism and enhance organizational productivity. Some participants' responses were similar to Herzberg's conclusion that employees use intrinsic factors to describe job elements that motivate them. Herzberg identified these factors as motivators (Herzberg et al., 1959). Herzberg et al. (1959) posited that leaders associated superior performance with an employee's job satisfaction, and the performance resulted in positive behavioral characteristics towards the job. Additionally, feedback based on the employee's performance plays a vital role in the level of employee satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). Mumanthi and Gachunga (2014) concluded that employees who were intrinsically motivated performed well and accepted additional responsibilities. Therefore, employees who take an active role in establishing goals receive job recognition and obtain the opportunity for growth have a higher level of job satisfaction and performance. Sankar (2015) posited that extrinsic factors may influence job dissatisfaction and can result in an increased level of absenteeism. Morgan et al. (2013) added that extrinsic rewards such as pay and promotion result in increased job satisfaction. Therefore, it is important for managers to balance the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to cultivate an environment to maximize employee satisfaction and minimize absenteeism.

Herzberg's theory included the factors of motivation and hygiene. Motivation, also known as intrinsic factors, includes (a) achievement, (b) growth and advancement, (c) responsibility, (d) recognition, and (e) the work (Herzberg et al., 1959). Additionally, the hygiene factors, also known as extrinsic factors, include (a) salary, (b) working conditions, (c) supervision and leadership, and (d) policy and administration (Herzberg et

al., 1959). Themes 1 and 3 relate to the hygiene (extrinsic) tenets of Herzberg's two-factor theory. Theme 2, effective communication, relates to recognition and achievement and correlates with the intrinsic tenets of Herzberg's two-factor theory.

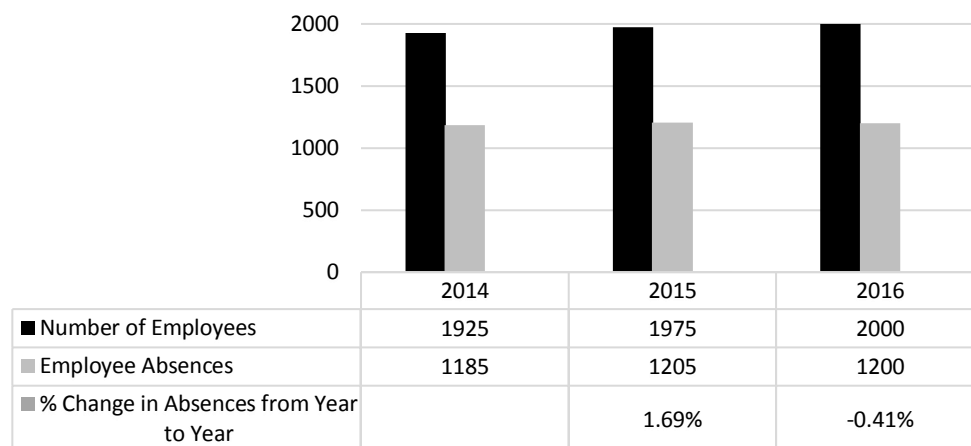
Organizational leaders who manage retail industry employees may benefit from the findings of this study. The results of the study included strategies that retail managers and other business leaders may use to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity. The research findings based on interview responses and company documents confirmed and expanded the literature concerning employee absenteeism and organizational productivity in the retail industry.

### **Triangulation of Data**

In addition to the semistructured interviews, I reviewed company documents that included employee absences and gross profit for the past 3 years (2014-2016), publicly displayed goal charts, and the absence policy that employees sign to document receipt and understanding of the policy. The general manager acted as the gatekeeper and provided company documents as requested. Carter et al. (2014) explained that methodological triangulation involves synthesizing multiple sources of data. Collecting data from multiple sources enhanced my understanding of the strategies managers used at the retail store to minimize absenteeism and improve productivity at the store. To gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies used, I used methodological triangulation by synthesizing interview data with the company documents about absenteeism and organizational productivity, and the past and current literature to support the research findings. Using the triangulated data, I identified three themes. Cho and Lee (2014)

posited that researchers who use methodological triangulation reduce data duplication and misinterpretation of data and increase the reliability of research results. I coded information from the interviews and company documents to develop an in-depth understanding of all data for analysis.

I reviewed documents on the number of employees, employee absences, and gross profit from the last 3 years (2014-2016). Figure 1 includes information about the results of the review of employee absenteeism spreadsheets and charts that support that organizational managers used effective strategies to minimize absenteeism. According to NASDAQ (2017), gross profit for the last 3 years was \$14.18 billion, \$15.13 billion, and \$15.82 billion, respectively. From 2014-2016, the number of employees in the organization increased by 3.9% (Figure 1) and gross profit increased by 11.6%. Additionally, the percentage of absences decreased each year. Based on a comprehensive review of transcribed interview information, validated interview interpretations, company documents, and the past and current literature to support the research findings, managers at this retail store were effective in implementing strategies to reduce employee absenteeism and increase productivity.



*Figure 1.* Employee absences in relation to the number of employees.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that managers use to minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity at a retail store in northwest Florida. The interviews and company documents provided information on effective strategies to reduce absenteeism and enhance productivity. Most participants indicated that employee absenteeism occurred with less than three of their employees. Based on the analysis of the interview responses and relevant archival company documents, I identified the following three emerging themes: (a) leadership support and comradery; (b) communication; and (c) competitive compensation and benefits. Overall, the retail store managers maintain a work environment that is conducive to personal growth, work schedule flexibility, and competitive compensation. Implementing the strategies, organizational leaders may lessen the gap in professional practice relating to mitigating the impact of employee absenteeism on productivity.

Previous researchers addressed the growing impact of absenteeism on productivity. Kocakulah et al. (2016) discussed that absenteeism results in a disruption in daily workflows and an increase in health care costs to organizations. Ahammad, Tarba, Liu, and Glaister (2016) shared that employee absence due to reduced performance on the job impacts productivity and organizational sustainability. Additionally, Gonzalez (2016) expressed that because absenteeism could lead to turnover and business failure, it is important for managers to take an active role in managing employee absenteeism. Radda, et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of employee engagement in maintaining a positive work environment to ensure positive outcomes, such as a reduction in absenteeism and an increase in organizational success. Radda et al. also suggested that managers use strategies such as constant and effective communication, work flexibility, supportive leadership, work-life balance, and encouragement to develop colleague relationships to enhance employee engagement. Based on a review of previous literature, managers could increase productivity and organizational effectiveness by using various strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

The findings in this study may provide managers and other business professionals with information that they can use to understand the factors that impact absenteeism and implement strategies to reduce absenteeism within the organization. Additionally, managers may use the findings of this study to understand how the use of absenteeism reduction strategies may increase employee satisfaction, morale, engagement, motivation, and retention. Further, retail store managers may use the results of this research study to identify new, feasible strategies to enhance employee engagement and satisfaction within

the organization. Business professionals might use the results of this study to identify effective communication strategies to enhance leader support, employee satisfaction, and commitment to the organization.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies retail store managers use to minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity. Absenteeism and workplace productivity are concerns for organizational leaders and members of the society. Asay et al. (2016), Pohling et al. (2016), Bamber and Lansbury (2013), and Jourdain and Chênevert (2015) posited that absenteeism results from factors such as poor employee health, dissatisfaction, anxiety, and burnout. Kocakulah et al. (2016) stressed that as the economy tightens, employee stress levels may continue to rise. Carmel et al. (2013) and Kocakulah et al. indicated that employee absenteeism due to stress reduces productivity and increases health-related employer costs. Absenteeism reduction strategies that provide flexible work schedules to maximize balanced work-life responsibilities may result in minimizing work-related stress and improve employee job satisfaction. Additionally, leaders who foster an environment of comradery among employees may improve employee satisfaction and motivate employees to volunteer to assist members of the society. Therefore, managers should implement absenteeism reduction strategies that ensure a satisfying work environment, minimize employee stress, reduce work and personal life conflicts, and foster social interaction among colleagues which can benefit the employees, organizations, and society as a whole.

A reduction of absenteeism may result in an increase in the continuity of services to members of society. Implications for social change through implementation of absenteeism reduction strategies may help to improve the physical, mental, and socioeconomic status of employees and enhance organizational productivity. Additional implications for social change include the potential to provide retail managers with an understanding of factors that impact employee absenteeism and strategies on how to improve organizational productivity and enhance employee job satisfaction. Employees consistently attending work might result in an increase in disposable income that employees can use to invest in the surrounding communities. An increase in productivity may also result in an increase in organizational profitability. Leaders could use the study results to develop strategies to decrease absenteeism and increase productivity to maximize the quality of life for the employees and the surrounding communities.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Managers, organizational leaders, and other business professionals who hold authoritative positions could use the information, findings, and recommendations in this study to mitigate the negative impact of absenteeism and organizational productivity. Retail industry leaders and other business organizations can use the knowledge gained from information in this study to (a) foster supportive leadership and comradery among colleagues, (b) maintain effective communication, and (d) offer competitive compensation to employees. By implementing these strategies, managers, leaders, and other business professionals may improve absenteeism rates, employee motivation, and organizational productivity.



I plan to use several methods to disseminate the research findings. I will submit this study to various professional journals. Additionally, I plan to distribute a summary of the study results to each participant and a copy to the organizational leader to share with other internal and external leaders. I will also publish this research study in the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database and present the findings at various leadership conferences.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies retail store managers use to minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity. The research findings obtained from participants in this research study expand upon existing research needs for strategies that managers can use to minimize absenteeism and enhance organizational productivity. I obtained the results from this study from a single retail store located in northwest Florida. Therefore, I recommend that future researchers conduct similar case studies at other retail stores. In expanding the study to other retail stores, researchers could contribute to an in-depth understanding of absenteeism strategies for implementation. Additionally, some participants may have withheld pertinent information due to the fear of retaliation by organizational leaders. Future researchers who conduct similar case studies could use the invitation letter and e-mail communications to develop a trusting relationship with participants and ensure the protection of the participant's identity and the information shared by the participant.

Future researchers should consider conducting similar case studies using a quantitative or mixed methods approach to examine or explore absenteeism reduction

strategies to determine which method is the most effective. I also recommend that researchers explore effective absenteeism reduction strategies in other geographical locations and increase the sample size beyond five participants. I further recommend that future researchers expand the eligibility criteria for participant selection and explore additional strategies that may influence employee absenteeism and organizational productivity.

### **Reflections**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies retail store managers use to minimize absenteeism and enhance productivity. I chose to research absenteeism reduction strategies based on my education and professional experience as a mid-level manager in state government for over 20 years. I experienced the impact on absenteeism to organizational productivity, and I wanted to research effective absenteeism reduction strategies to modify absenteeism behaviors. For these reasons, my role as a researcher in this qualitative single case study was to minimize bias in data collection, analysis, and the presentation of findings.

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) process was extremely frustrating, but I grew much stronger as an individual as a result of going through this process. The rigorous requirements of the program helped me to strengthen my writing skills and gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies leaders use to manage employee absenteeism. Before this process, I thought I was an effective writer. During the completion of this process, I learned that I needed to improve the organization of my writing to enhance the flow of information.

## Conclusion

Employee absenteeism is a major factor in productivity losses due to absenteeism. According to Lally (2014), absenteeism contributed to annual productivity losses of \$74 million, a disruption in daily workflows (Kocakulah et al., 2016), and an increase in health care costs to organizations (BLS, 2015). Absenteeism occurs daily in organizations around the world. Many challenges exist for managers to develop and implement programs to support employees, maximize comradery among employees, ensure effective communication, and provide a competitive compensation package.

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies retail managers use to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity. The overarching research question was: What strategies do retail managers use to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes for organizational effectiveness? Five managers of a retail store in northwest Florida participated in face-to-face semistructured interviews. I applied methodological triangulation to compare recorded interview data with validated interpreted interview meanings, company documents about absenteeism and gross profit, and the past and current literature to support the research study data analysis.

After analyzing and coding the data, three themes emerged from the thematic analysis. The themes included leadership support and comradery, effective communication, and competitive compensation. Business leaders may use the information incorporated in the themes identified in this research study to develop and implement additional strategies to balance the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence employee motivation. The findings of this study related to strategies managers use to

minimize absenteeism and increase productivity align with Herzberg's two-factor theory. Two of the three themes link to Herzberg's extrinsic principles, while the third theme links to Herzberg's intrinsic principle because motivated employees are more committed to the organization, have a lower rate of absenteeism, and focus on increasing productivity. The results of this study align with the results of previous and current literature which contain conclusions that vital components to organizational success include effectively managing absenteeism and productivity.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name  
Contact Information

Date

Dear Patricia Manning,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Strategies for Reducing Employee Absenteeism in Retail Stores within the [Insert Name of Community Partner]. As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct an interview, followed by a member checking session, with store managers regarding strategies to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity outcomes at [Insert Name of Community Partner]. I understand you will invite store managers to participate in interviews to share absenteeism strategies used to enhance productivity and organizational efficiency. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. I also authorize you to review non-confidential company documents including internal newsletters, staff handbook, training policies, and reports that could provide additional information and perspectives on absenteeism strategies at our organization.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include access to management personnel and room availability, if required, for the interview session. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not include the name of our organization in the published doctoral study report.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

The following information constitutes the interview protocol for this doctoral study. The purpose of an interview protocol is to provide a step-by-step guide of the interview process.

<b>Before the Interview</b>		<b>Notes</b>
Selecting Respondents	Initial contact via email. Interview protocol and consent form sent via email. Respondent Identified via unique alphanumeric code.	
Setting Interview Time and Place	Closed environment within the organization as selected by participant. Interview Time Approximately 30 minutes. There will be a gap of approximately 30 minutes between each interview or conducted on different days to protect the privacy of the participants.	
Building Rapport	Explain Purpose of the Study and voluntary nature of the study. The purpose of this interview is to explore strategies managers used to minimize absenteeism and increase productivity for organizational effectiveness in the retail industry. I have never worked in the retail industry; however, in my experience as a supervisor for over 28 years, I have found that employee absenteeism impact productivity and employee performance. My purpose is to help other leaders gain an understanding of different strategies and implement the strategies that fit the organization Participation is voluntary. The decision to participate does not impact the participant's current or	

	<p>future relationship with the researcher.</p> <p>Inform the participant to stop the interview if any discussion becomes offensive, threatening, sensitive, or degrading.</p> <p>Inform the participant that to enhance industry knowledge and establish best practice the participant should avoid providing a response based on perceptions of what the researcher may want to hear and ensure all responses are honest.</p>	
Explaining the Study and Consent	Participant agreed to participate in the study by replying 'I Consent' to the invitational email.	
Recording the Interview	<p>Verify that the participant is comfortable with the researcher recording the interview.</p> <p>Record each interview</p>	
<b>Interview</b>		
<b>Introduction</b>	<p><b>Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. I have studied the literature and identified some of the most successful strategies to minimize employee absenteeism. The open-ended interview questions allow you to elaborate on how you, as a retail store manager, has minimized employee absenteeism within the retail industry.</b></p> <p><b>After the interviews, I will record my thoughts of the interview. I will transcribe the interviews and send you an email to verify the accuracy of all the information you provided.</b></p>	
<b>Interview Questions</b>	<b>Notes (Define abbreviated terms)</b>	<b>Nonverbal Notes</b>
What strategies have you used to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity?		
What process did you use to develop the strategies?		
How did you communicate the		

strategies throughout the organization?		
How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity?		
Which strategies would you like to modify? Please explain.		
What additional strategies would you like to implement in your organization?		
What outcomes have you experienced that support the reduction of absenteeism and the increase of productivity on organizational effectiveness?		
What other information would you like to share concerning the strategies used to reduce absenteeism for increased productivity?		
<b>Interview Wrap Up</b>		
<b>Thank Participant</b>	<b>I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this interview. Your practices are important to the retail industry. To ensure I have conveyed the meaning of your responses, I will transcribe the interview and synthesize the responses for your review and approval. I will email you a synthesis of your interview to ensure my transcription is accurate. This process is called the member checking.</b>	
Researcher	Record thoughts after each interview	
Additional Interviews	Next Interviews. Approximately 30 minutes.	
	Repeat Process Above	
Transcription	Transcription with Interpretation	
<b>Member Checking- Sent to participants via email.</b>		

<b>Member Checking Email</b>	<p><b>Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to validate the responses from our initial interview. I would like to ensure I accurately convey your meaning through the member checking process. Please review each question and your response.</b></p> <p><b>Participants will need to respond to my email with corrections, comments, or 'No Changes'. Reviewing interpretations should not take more than 30 minutes.</b></p>			
<b>Interview Question</b>	<b>Synthesis of Response</b>	<b>Accurate Y or N (Did I miss anything)</b>	<b>Additional Information (Anything you would like to add)</b>	<b>Additional Questions after Synthesis</b>
What strategies have you used to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity?				
What process did you use to develop the strategies?				
How did you communicate the strategies throughout the organization?				
How do you measure the effectiveness of your strategies to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity?				
Which strategies would you like to modify? Please explain.				
What additional strategies would you like to implement in				

your organization?				
What outcomes have you experienced that support the reduction of absenteeism and the increase of productivity on organizational effectiveness?				
What other information would you like to share concerning the strategies used to reduce absenteeism for increased productivity?				

## Appendix C: NIH Certificate of Completion

