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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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John G. Turner

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Strategies to Reduce Absenteeism in the Public Sector Workplace

by

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M.Ed, North Central University, 2015

Ed.S, North Central University, 2013

MA, Liberty University, 2009

MS, Indiana Wesleyan University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2020

Abstract

When unplanned absences occur, employers incur lost productivity and additional costs. In the United States, missed work because of employee absence costs organizations about $202 billion dollars annually. Grounded in Burn's transformational leadership theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. The participants included 9 leaders who worked in a chosen department in the local government who successfully reduced absenteeism in the workplace. The data collection process included conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing organizational documents. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis process, and three themes emerged to include collaboration and employee engagement, communication, and organizational culture. A key recommendation is to restructure communications about absenteeism policies while engaging employees in essential aspects of the organization. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to decrease the local government's related costs from employee absenteeism, thereby increasing resources for supporting social initiatives, individuals, and communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my late mother and father, Sarah E. Turner and John Turner, for being my parents and bringing me into this world to do great things. I wish the both of you were here to witness this awesome milestone in my life and see me become the first doctor in the family. I would like to also thank my daughter Tina Brooks ‘Morris and my entire family and close friends for your loving support.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Absenteeism in the workplace is when employees decide not to report to work because of personal issues, transportation, weather, or family demands and can result in considerable costs and losses in work productivity for a business (Negrini, Perron, & Corbiere, 2014). Leaders who experience absenteeism in the workplace still must manage the operations of their individual businesses. Nguyen, Groth, and Johnson (2016) asserted that absenteeism is a complex and multifactorial issue including unscheduled call-offs and unforeseen emergencies. The purpose of this study was to research how some business leaders contend with the problematic issue of absenteeism in the workplace. This study was conducted at a public works department in Northeastern Ohio.

Problem Statement

Duncombe (2019) asserted that employee absenteeism involves absences for which an employee has a choice to attend work but chooses to take a personal day off because of lack of motivation or to attend to some other personal nonwork-related interest. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018), about 4.2 million workers over the previous working year called off from work mainly because of illness, injury, medical problems or other personal reasons. The general business problem is that absent employees can result in loss of productivity and organizational profitability. The specific business problem was that some public works department leaders lack strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. The population was nine leaders in a public works department in Northeastern Ohio who have used effective strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. The findings from this study could contribute to social change by potentially helping leaders address and manage absenteeism in the workplace and having more employees readily available to serve and support the local community. A successful public works department can positively affect society by employing people to be available for potential emergencies, such as natural disasters, thus avoiding the interruption of public services.

Nature of the Study

I used qualitative methodology as the form of inquiry for this study. According to Yin (2016), qualitative research is about studying contextual conditions such as cultural, social, institutional, and environmental conditions in people's lives. The justification for using the qualitative approach was to indicate how leaders address the issues dealing with reducing absenteeism in the workplace. Quantitative researchers examine the statistical relationships or differences among variables (Lock & Seele, 2015). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study primarily because using statistical analysis and hypotheses testing would not address the purpose of this study's specific business problem regarding workplace absenteeism because no prior hypotheses existed. Mixed methods would not have been appropriate for this study because researchers use both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect informational data (see Strudsholm,

Meadows, Vollman, Thurston, & Henderson, 2016). Mixed methods were not appropriate for conducting this study primarily because the process includes the concurrently using qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Anderson, Leahy, DelValle, Sherman, and Tansey (2014) suggested that case studies explore a bounded system through in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of information and reporting of descriptive themes. The justification for using a single case study in this research was to collect and explore information pertaining to absenteeism in the public sector. Ethnographic researchers focus on a lived culture of individual people (Ingham-Broomfield, 2015). The ethnography design would not have been appropriate because ethnographic researchers study how people live or work in a specific culture, which was not my primary focus.

Vagle (2018) posited that the purpose of phenomenological research is to gain a deeper understanding of everyday phenomena. Vagle also stated that phenomenological research is not concerned with generalizing, quantifying, and finding. Therefore, phenomenological research was not appropriate for this study. Khattak, Batool, and Haider (2017) argued that phenomenology research design helps the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomena when participants share their experiences. Narrative researchers inquire and analyze documented experiences indicated in the lived and told stories of actual individual people (Anderson et al., 2014). The narrative design was not suitable for this study because this study was not conducted on told stories of individuals. The case study was more appropriate for studying absenteeism in the workplace because a case study, according to Yin (2017), allows the researcher to

increase their knowledge on individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena. The case study was the most appropriate research design to explore strategies that supervisors of a public works department use to reduce absenteeism.

Research Question

What effective strategies do public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace?

Interview Questions

1. What effective strategies do you use for reducing absenteeism in the workplace?
2. What processes did you use to create the strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace?
3. How did you communicate these strategies throughout the public work department?
4. What were the principal barriers you faced in implementing the successful strategies for dealing with absenteeism in the workplace?
5. How did you overcome these barriers?
6. How do you assess the success of your strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace?
7. What strategies were effective in reducing absenteeism?
8. What strategies were not effective in reducing absenteeism?
9. What other additional information on strategies or best practices would you like to add to this interview?

Conceptual Framework

The transformational leadership theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. Burns (1978) designed the transforming leadership theory and asserted the need for leaders to consider their followers' values and needs. According to Burns (1978), transforming leaders possess qualities or traits that enable them to not only cope with dire circumstance or situations but also transcend or transform them. Bass (1985) identified four elements of transformational leadership: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Burns (1978) stated that pursuing transformational change can help others to transform themselves, and this leadership style could be beneficial to the leaders in the public works department's strategies to reduce absenteeism.

Employee engagement is an important factor when considering the effect of transformational leadership on absenteeism. Besieux et al. (2015) concluded that transformational leaders play a vital role in molding corporate social responsibility as perceived by employees, consequently being related to their engagement. According to Yukl (2012), leaders use change-oriented behaviors to increase innovation and collective learning. Moreover, Hassan, Wright, and Yukl (2014) concluded that ethical behavior could increase organizational commitment and as a result help reduce turnover, improve job performance, and increase citizenship behavior. Transformative leadership's ability to elevate the effectiveness and efficiency in organizations provided the theoretical framework for this study on absenteeism in the public sector workplace. The

transformational leadership theory was appropriate for this study because transformational leaders consider what is beneficial to their followers and organization.

Operational Definitions

Demands resources model: The demands-resources model is an attempt to understand the antecedents of burnout. This model is used employee for health and well-being as a balance between positive (resources) and negative (demands) job characteristics (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Horizontal reciprocity: Horizontal reciprocity refers to ties that exist among individuals or groups of equals or near-equals (supervisors and followers) concerning norms in the workplace that have emotional and instrumental components (De Clercq et al., 2015).

Job demands: Job demands are all physical, psychological, and social organizational aspects of a job that require continuous physical and psychological effort (Schauefeli & Taris, 2014).

Vertical reciprocity: Vertical reciprocity refers to the interactions across explicit, formal institutionalized power or authority gradients such as relationships between employees and their supervisors (De Clercq et al., 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

According Marshall and Rossman (2016), assumptions are things that researchers generally believe but cannot prove in research. There were three assumptions identified for this research project on absenteeism in the public sector workplace. The first

assumption was that the supervisors who participated in the study would provide honest answers to the interview questions on how they use strategies for reducing absenteeism. A second assumption was that the interview questions selected for the study would provide answers to the research questions. The third and final assumption was that the participates would fully understand each interview question and could relate to their responses to their personal experiences.

Limitations

According to Mouter, Annema, and Wee (2015), limitations are uncertainties and boundaries beyond the control of the researcher. One limitation in this study was not having unrestricted access to information, such as records, logs, and procedures. Another limitation in the study involved working around the three shift schedules to interview participants in supervisory and management roles. The final limitation in this study was only having access to the leaders in the public works department.

Delimitations

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), delimitations are boundaries in a study set by the researcher about the contexts and scope of a study. The first delimitation in this study was myself as the only person being able to interview the leaders of the public works department who volunteered to participate in the study. The second delimitation was that the study was limited to doing a single case study in one city. The third delimitation was using open-ended interview questions and public works department records to collect data.

Significance of the Study

By using the findings as the empirical basis for amending policies and programs to address issues of absenteeism, such as employees taking unscheduled leave in the workplace, the study could be beneficial to improving workplace practices in government departments. Moreover, the findings from this study could lead to more effective absenteeism policies and practices in the public sector (e.g., government) through the implementation of strategies that can motivate workers and deter problems related to absenteeism in the workplace. The findings from this study could help leaders in government to become better in understanding the contributing factors for workplace absenteeism and identify other strategies to minimize the effects on organizational outcomes. The results of the study may also contribute to positive social change. The findings may be useful for improving the awareness of members of society about the factors related to absenteeism. The study may provide insight for government employees about how supervisors can address absenteeism. A successful public works department can positively affect society by employing people to be available for potential emergencies, natural disasters, and interruption of public services (Gori, Lattarulo, & Mariani, 2017).

Therefore, the findings of this study could lead to reduced absenteeism once the results are given to the leaders within the public works department. Society may benefit through reduced costs associated with absenteeism. Additionally, reducing absenteeism may improve workers' well-being. Overall, society can benefit from U.S. government

leaders who implement effective strategies to address worker absenteeism, thus improving the overall service performance of these government agencies.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that contribute to reducing absenteeism in a public works department in Northeastern Ohio. The literature review included a search of the literature, which supports the research questions and identifies gaps in literature and practice. The research question was as follows: What strategies do public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace?

This section includes a review of recent and seminal research and theory on absenteeism in the workplace. The literature strategy for this review included a search of resources in Google Scholar and ERIC databases. Search terms included *absenteeism, workplace, organizational culture, employee engagement, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, absenteeism in the public sector workplace, absenteeism and productivity,* and *leadership.* The literature review includes 280 references published between 1985 and 2020. This literature review also includes 250 references published within the past 5 years, and 225 (90%) were peer-reviewed references.

The literature review includes a definition of absenteeism, organizational influences on absenteeism, and a leadership theory as a potential solution and model for improving absenteeism in the workplace. This section concludes with a summary and outline of key points and practice. The purpose and rationale for doing this study are also included in the literature review.

Absenteeism in the Workplace

Absenteeism in the workplace is a problem that adversely affects businesses and governments. Duclay, Hardouin, Sebille, Anthoine, and Moret (2015) defined absenteeism as a failure on the part of the employee to be present under planned work schedules. Baxter et al. (2015) found that absenteeism occurs when an employee uses unplanned leave or unexcused time-off from work. Ticharwa, Cope, and Murray (2019) asserted that absenteeism is the failure to attend work in accordance with established planning and is usually measured by the frequency or duration of working days lost. Cucchiella, Gastaldi, and Ranieri (2014) found that while employers expect workers to miss a certain number of workdays each year, excessive absences can equate to decreased productivity and can have a major effect on company finances, morale, and other factors. These researchers have identified various reasons employees decide not to go to work, which was the main reason for doing this study.

Although absenteeism can adversely affect business outcomes in these ways, presenteeism may also have organizational implications to consider. Jinnelt, Newman, and Schwatka (2017) studied chronic conditions in the workplace and the impact on absenteeism in an organization. Brummelhuis, Johns, Lyons, and Hoeven (2016) found that absenteeism is the employee's failure to report for scheduled work can be viewed as mildly deviant behavior as the employee falls short in his or her contract with the employer, resulting in reduced organizational productivity. In contrast, Boon, Belschak, Hartog, and Pijnenburg (2014) found that employees may miss work for different reasons (i.e., absence), and when at work, employees make choices in how to divide time over

different types of activities, which may affect the company. These statements are different variations on why absenteeism occurs in the workplace and could contribute to this study by providing strategies for reducing absenteeism. In addition, further research is needed to extend these findings to offer more insight into the causes of absenteeism, which was one of the reasons for doing this study.

Absenteeism Versus Presenteeism

Employees who decide to come to work while sick can still cause potential issues that are related to absenteeism. Boon et al. (2014) found that presenteeism is a closely related construct that occurs when individuals avoid taking sick leave when they are ill, which may be related an array of factors. Lopes et al. (2018) argued that individuals who engage in presenteeism are workers who know they are sick but decide to go to work anyway, which often creates a risk of spreading their contagious illnesses to other coworkers. Karageorge (2016) asserted that when the financial pressure is strong enough, people are more than likely to still to come to work despite being sick. Karageorge also found that if firms provide sick workers with paid leave, they are more likely to stay home and not risk infecting others. Previous research on absenteeism and presenteeism in the workplace demonstrated that leaders play a significant role in the follower's sickness and absenteeism patterns (Nielsen & Daniels, 2016). As Nielsen and Daniel (2016) suggested, leaders can influence their follower's decisions not to go to work. In addition, workers who are sick but still choose to come to work place their coworkers at risk of becoming infected while at work.

Presenteeism and absenteeism are correlated and can sometimes affect productivity in the workplace. Miraglia and Johns (2016) found that presenteeism can have both negative and positive effects on employee productivity and welfare. Karageorge argued that organizations that have paid leave as an incentive allow employees who are sick the opportunity to remain at home, reducing the risk of infecting others in the workplace. Miraglia and Johns found that working while ill can compound the effects of the initial illness and can also result in negative job attitudes and withdrawal from work. Miraglia and Johns concluded that presenteeism can affect the workplace if workers who are sick still report to work. Workers who have contagious illnesses such as the flu and common cold can possibly put their coworkers at risk by coming to work sick instead of staying at home. In conclusion, more research needs to be conducted to explore how presenteeism affects absenteeism, supporting the need for this study.

Effects of Absenteeism on Productivity and Performance

Additional factors such as productivity and performance may be related to absenteeism. Srour and Lattouf (2017) found that absenteeism, while driven by micro level health or job shirking reasons, has a macro level impact regarding lost productivity in the workplace. McGregor, Sharma, Magee, Caputi, and Iverson (2018) asserted that the loss of productivity in the workplace can result in financial losses and negatively impact customer demand. Harden et al. (2015) argued that identifying the determinants of absenteeism can potentially yield policies that prevent absenteeism driven productivity losses. Duncombe (2019) asserted that voluntary absenteeism involves absences for

which an employee has a choice to attend work but chooses to take a personal day off instead due to lack of motivation. These various statements regarding absenteeism, productivity, and performance can apply to all professions and industries and specifically to this study because it can affect profits and customer fulfillment.

Absenteeism caused by illness can negatively influence workplace outcomes. For example, Selekler, Gokmen, Alvur, and Steiner (2015) found that headache disorders can cause substantial productivity losses that are related to absenteeism and impaired effectiveness at work. In addition, Buvik, Moan, and Halkjelsvik (2018) asserted that reduced productivity and reduced output are measurable consequences of organizational performance at a national level, and the financial costs are high, which is related to absenteeism in the workplace. Additionally, while productivity loss can be affected by unscheduled leave, other factors such as expected emergencies involving the car did not start or sudden illness can contribute to these outcomes.

Previous researchers have indicated the financial impacts of absenteeism relative to organizational productivity. Hassan et al. (2014) found that absenteeism is a costly workplace problem for some organizations, and, in addition to its direct financial costs (e.g., sick pay, replacement costs, and overtime costs) can lower individual productivity and overall team performance. Additionally, Losina, Yang, Deshpande, Katz, and Collins (2017) found that absenteeism that is considered a work-related illness is a significant problem, and an estimated $250 billion dollars is lost annually in the United States from workers not going to work. Therefore, absenteeism can be financially detrimental to organizations when left unaddressed, supporting the need for conducting this study.

However, employees face difficult decisions regarding coming to work when ill if policies on paid sick leave are not clear, and the effects of absenteeism versus presenteeism on workplace productivity are not evident. Stromberg, Aboagye, Hagberg, Bergstrom, and Lohela-Karlsson (2017) found that reduced work performance, which can be a consequence of absenteeism, could contribute substantially to production costs for employers. Tolonen et al. (2017) found that physical inactivity of employees can cause higher medical costs and production loss that are related to sickness absence, presenteeism, and lower on-the-job productivity. Additionally, Halbesleben, Whitman, and Crawford (2014) indicated through a conceptual paper drawing on the dialectical theory that many employees come to work despite medical or mental issues that should prevent them from working when clear policies regarding sick leave do not exist. Halbesleben et al. found that presenteeism is considered to be a contributor to absenteeism within the workplace. While this previous research offered insight into conservations of resources, theory, and other issues related to turnover and absenteeism, these findings must be assessed through focused case studies to determine their validity. Based on an understanding of the relationship between absenteeism and reduced productivity and performance, organizations and leaders require specific strategies for reducing absenteeism. The following section pertains to causes and contributing factors of worker absenteeism.

Causes of Absenteeism and Contributing Factors

Many contributing factors can increase the risk of absenteeism. Leon and Morales (2018) asserted that contributing factors such as sickness and unscheduled call-offs from

work contribute to absenteeism in the workplace. These findings help provide insight into the causes of absenteeism but are correlational and rely on self-report. Mahy, Rycx, and Volral (2016) argued that some of the main reasons for absenteeism are health issues, physical conditions, and work-related stress. Mahy et al. used a correlational design involving secondary data. The results of the study revealed that absenteeism might be a result of deviance, general lack of physical well-being, sedentariness, burnout, and workplace bullying (Mahy et al., 2016). Bouville, Russo, and Truxillo (2018) found that sickness absenteeism is a costly phenomenon for organizations and, when prolonged, is also costly for nations, which often share with employers a portion of an employee salary to be covered during sick leaves. While there are various types absenteeism listed, more research to support this study is needed.

Absenteeism as a Result of Deviance

Employees who constantly call off from work can potentially cause issues in the workplace. Brummelhuis et al. (2016) reported that absenteeism is the employee's failure to report for work and can be viewed as deviant behavior as the employees fail to fulfill their contracts with the employer. Based on their research, Queiroz-Lima and Serranheirab (2016) asserted that absenteeism is employees' professional capacities and their motivations to work, as well as by internal and external factors at work. Employees who lack intrinsic motivation for work or have negative organizational attitudes may be more inclined to engage in deviant behaviors, such as absenteeism (Brummelhuis et al., 2016). Schaumberg and Flynn (2017) found that failing to manage employee attendance effectively can inflict great organizational costs, in terms of lost productivity, poor

performance, and frustrated coworkers. By reducing absenteeism, the leaders in the public sector can focus on maximizing the profitability of the organization.

Absenteeism related to a lack of physical wellness. Grawitch, Waldrop, Erb, Werth, and Guarino (2017) found that a lack of physical wellness may cause absenteeism and increase the risk of illness. Losina et al. (2017) asserted that employees who are less physically active or have chronic medical issues are going to have higher rates of unplanned illness-related absenteeism. Welch, Miller and Engle (2016) argued that considering the reality of common illnesses and the burden of employees taking sick leave or working at lower productivity levels while sick could be problematic in the workplace. Krausert (2017) argued that there are various factors which may lead to employees' absenteeism such as health problems, environmental factors such as distance from workplace, transport problems, relationship with management and other workers. Nguyen, Groth, and Johnson (2016) concluded that individuals who are not in good physical shape or have medical issues may cause them to take unscheduled leave. These various types of absenteeism can impact the productivity of a business confirming the need for this doing this study.

Evidence from some U.S. governmental agencies indicated the impacts of physical well-being and absenteeism. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2018), which defined absenteeism as instances when persons who usually work 35 or more hours per week use unscheduled leave for illness, injury, medical problems, other family or personal obligations, found that 2.8 million workers used unscheduled leave from work due to illness, medical, or personal/family issues in the previous year. The

same report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) revealed that 17,978 public sector workers missed work related to absences. According to the BLS (2018), absences is defined as when a person who usually works 35 or more hours per week (full-time) worked less than 35 hours during the reference week. The reasons for absences include temporary illness, chronic illness, family or personal obligations, civic or military duty and maternity or paternity leave.

Some illnesses such as the common cold and seasonal flu are not preventable. For example, Welch et al. (2016) found that infectious diseases occur in society every day. Additionally, these authors did not identify that there is a direct correlation between infectious disease acquisition and absenteeism. Welch et al. also found that annual flu attack rates are 5 to 10 percent in adults each year, and seasonal flu epidemics are estimated to result in about 250,000 to 500,000 deaths worldwide each year. These findings suggest that absenteeism can be caused by chronic illnesses difficult to prevent. However, this evidence is secondary data and must be validated through more qualitative research to determine the applicability to individual organizations in the public sector. Last, because there is more to learn about how chronic illnesses can affect the workplace, which is another reason for doing this study.

Absenteeism caused by lack of physical activity. Nevertheless, research has indicated that preventable factors like physical inactivity also cause absenteeism. For example, Tolonen, Rahkonen, and Lahti (2017) found that physical inactivity is related to numerous chronic diseases, such as type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression, anxiety, stress, and obesity. Each of these diseases can result in absenteeism and

reductions in workplace productivity. Additionally, Losina, Yang, Deshpande, Katz, and Collins (2017) found that productivity and increased physical activity can further lead to lower rates of work absenteeism. Employees that are less physically active, as well as persons with any number of chronic medical issues, had higher rates of unplanned illness-related absenteeism Tolonen et al. (2017). Chen, Hannon, and Laing (2015) further concluded a direct correlation exists between physical inactivity, medical issues, and absenteeism that may affect productivity in the workplace. These studies confirmed that a lack of physical activity can be a contributing factor for absenteeism, which supports the need for this study.

Absenteeism because of employee burnout. Absenteeism can also be related to stress and employee burnout. Norlund, Reuterwall, Hoog, Janlert, and Jarvholm (2015) found that employee burnout is described as a phenomenon characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that affected people working in client-related occupations. Schouteten (2017) observed that a relationship may be a result of a lack of organizational commitment to employee wellness. In addition to sickness and infectious diseases, employee burnout may be a contributing factor in absenteeism in the workplace. Drawing on a qualitative study involving semi structured interviews with 55 healthcare employees, Damart and Kletz (2016) found a direct relationship between employee burnout and absenteeism within the workplace. Damart and Kletz also found that increased work demands and diminishing resources could trigger burnout among workers and increase the duration and frequency of employee absence. Furthermore, according to Jourdain and Chenevert (2015), perceived

organizational values denoting flexibility, humanity, and innovation can reduce the risk of burnout and may prevent undesirable levels of absenteeism. In general, Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, and Yang (2015) asserted that job burnout is an extreme reaction that individuals experience when they cannot successfully cope with work pressure. Therefore, the leaders in the public works department should establish organizational strategies, along with wellness programs, that may help reduce absenteeism and losses in productivity that is related to employee burnout. However, further research to support this study is needed.

Workplace bullying. Work-related bullying may also result in absenteeism, performance, and productivity losses. Magee, Gordon, Robinson, Caputi, and Oades, (2017) asserted that workplace bullying as negative and unreasonable behavior from other employees while at work. Akhter (2015) asserted that workplace bullying is a significant problem that affects the well-being and productivity of employees. Anjum and Muazzam (2018) found that workplace bullying exhibits a wide range of behaviors such as public humiliation and condemnation, social segregation, verbal exploitation, intimidation, inaccurate allegations, ignore people for a long period of time, and repeating reminders of one's errors. Khalique, Arif, Siddiqui, and Kazmi (2018) found that bullying is a phenomenon, which causes destruction and damages to the performance of an organization. Notelaers, Heijden, Hoel, and Einarsen (2019) argued that the phenomenon crystalizes and manifests through negative social behaviours, such as humiliating remarks, gossiping, finger pointing, or excluding employees from the social group activities often resulting in targeted employee absences. Magee et al. concluded

that workplace bullying experiences are related to absenteeism via health impairment and lower work engagement. Because of the impacts of workplace bullying in relation to absenteeism, organizational leaders who adopt to more evidence-based practices and strategies may help reduce absenteeism.

Organizational Impacts on Absenteeism

Although absenteeism is a result of individual factors, some organizational strategies exist that can be used to mitigate the risk of its occurrence. Based on the negative impacts of absenteeism on workplace productivity, organizations must consider revising their workplace strategies to facilitate improvements in the overall health of the working population (BLS, 2018). Unfortunately, many organizations lack clear policies or guidance for sick leave or workplace absenteeism. For example, Welch, Miller, and Engle (2016) indicated that a lack of consideration of common illnesses and the burden of employees taking sick leave or working at a lower productivity level while sick could be problematic for the workplace. Employees who are sick, but elect to report to work, are risking transmitting their illnesses to other co-workers in the workplace, which can lead to further reductions in productivity (Welch et al., 2016). Additionally, Welch et al. (2016) concluded that organizational leaders should advise their employees that are sick to exercise better judgment when deciding on if they should come to work or stay at home. Also, because illnesses can be a contributing factor for employees being absent from work, organizational leaders at the public works department may use leadership and organizational theories to create better strategies for reducing absenteeism supporting the need for this study in particular.

Organizations that have a healthy workforce were better equipped to help address absenteeism in the workplace. For example, Kampkotter and Marggraf (2015) found that organizational actions to promote health could prevent unscheduled absences from the workplace. According to the BLS (2018), nearly one-third of workers in the United States have no access to paid sick leave. As a result, employees who do not have paid sick-time to use for unexpected situations, such as illness, are at a disadvantage versus employees at other firms that have paid leave benefits. Jourdain and Chenevert (2015) asserted that employees who choose to attend work when they are ill, can risk exacerbating their illnesses which can lead to infection of other workers and result in significant reductions in productivity.

While individual illness is only a short-term phenomenon in most cases, it can have broader organizational implications. For example, a lack of allowance by organizations for employees to recover can lead to exponentially more significant losses in performance and productivity for the entire workplace (Kampkotter & Marggraf, 2015). Specifically, employees who decide to come to work despite being ill are potentially exposing their co-workers to communicable diseases such as the flu or other common illnesses. Karageorge (2016) defined this phenomenon as *contagious presenteeism*, and this problem may be an even more significant contributor to reductions in productivity than absenteeism. Organizations that value individual employee well-being and discourage contagious presenteeism may be better equipped than those who do not assess personal well-being and discourage contagious presenteeism.

The Relationship Between Organizational Values, Burnout, and Absenteeism

There are other issues that occurs in the workplace that contributes to absenteeism. Jourdain and Chenevert (2015) found that an increasing body of research related organizational values are closely related to burnout and absenteeism. According to Jourdain and Chenevert organizational values like pursuing excellence, denoting control (rationalization and quality) and flexibility (humanity and innovation), can reduce burnout and absenteeism. Jourdain and Chenevert suggested that leaders who have positive relationships with their followers are more likely to control or reduce employee burnout in the workplace than those who do not. According to Nelson, Shaw, and Robertson (2016) the decision to be absent from work or attend work while unwell is made up of a combination of individual and organizational factors (physiological, psychological, organizational and social considerations). De Stobbeleir et al. (2018) suggested that absenteeism that results from a personal decision made by the employee, and is used to alleviate feelings of job frustration, can be defined as voluntary absenteeism. However, Lee, Wang, and Weststar (2015) found that organizational values can have substantial impacts on individual actions and decisions made regarding absenteeism versus presenteeism. These organizational values can influence how employees within in an organization work, as well as employee well-being and attentiveness to their workplace needs.

Organizations that do not value the physical well-being of their employees should encourage them to come to work. Halbesleben, Whitman, and Crawford (2014) conducted a conceptual and theoretical analysis to show that presenteeism can negatively

affect the work productivity of employees who still try to come to work despite not feeling well. Both absenteeism and presenteeism can affect the workplace regarding costs and lost productivity (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Organizations that encourage presenteeism may cause significant levels of burnout in employees (Nelson et al., 2016). Presenteeism in relation to employee burnout may lead to higher levels of absenteeism and further research is needed with this topic to support the need for this study to locate strategies for reducing absenteeism.

The relationship between absenteeism and presenteeism is complex. Fortunately, Nelson et al. (2016) suggested that accommodation at work can help prevent employee absenteeism and presenteeism. Stromberg, Aboagye, Hagberg, Bergström, and Karlsson (2017) asserted that leaders who incorporate accommodations for their workers can help reduce burnout and absenteeism in the workplace. Ammendolia et. al. (2016) suggested that improving compensation and providing greater autonomy deter employee burnout and can help reduce absenteeism. According to Dhaini et. al. (2016) organizations that make appropriate accommodations for employees when sick or require leave can help prevent functional limitations and encourage the perception of fairness regarding temporary leeway and distribution of work. These studies provided information that would be beneficial for organizations to implement strategies for improving organizational values, deterring employee burnout, and reducing absenteeism.

Strategies to Reduce Absenteeism

Because of the large body of evidence documenting the causes and adverse effects of absenteeism, organizations searched for strategies for reducing its occurrence.

Organizations that have strategies in place to reduce absenteeism in the workplace would improve on their productivity and overall organizational efficiency. For example, Jansen, Otten, and Van Der Zee (2017) showed that gender diversity could improve internal work processes, may enlarge the organization's external network, and can enhance the moral image of the organization. Additionally, Schaumberg and Flynn (2017) found that failing to manage employee attendance effectively could inflict great organizational costs, lost productivity, poor performance, and frustrated co-workers. Jansen et al. (2017) found that an improved mental state might cause employees to be sick less often and reduce absenteeism.

According to Schaumberg and Flynn workplace absence is a behavioral response to an aversive situation, such as low job satisfaction. Wang and Brower (2019) asserted that job satisfaction should be a key driver of reducing workplace absence, and organizational strategies like those listed above may prevent losses in satisfaction that would otherwise contribute to burnout and absenteeism. Oksuz et al. (2019) found that conditions that influence the success, happiness, and productivity of individuals at work, job satisfaction is the personal feeling of satisfaction created by the perceived benefits. Organizations that emphasize job satisfaction are also generally more cohesive and organizationally stable to reduce absenteeism.

In addition, a sense of cohesion at the organizational level may facilitate job satisfaction and prevent absenteeism. Based on survey data involving nearly 400 employees, Jansen et al. (2017) asserted that perceptions of inclusion has been positively associated with a range of individual mood, work satisfaction, and creativity,

interpersonal, trust, and group-level outcomes (conflict, performance, and team learning behavior). Based on empirical work testing assumptions of the withdrawal and process models of absenteeism. Schaumberg and Flynn (2017) asserted that people work more when they enjoy being there. The results of these studies conclude that organizations that promote social inclusion and job satisfaction could enhance employee morale and minimize absenteeism.

Organizations that promote strategies for workforce diversity could help with minimizing absenteeism in the workplace. For example, Peretz, Levi, and Fried (2015) defined workforce diversity as the degree to which the organizational workforce consists of people with different background characteristics and refers to the program's organizations use to enhance and maintain job satisfaction in the workplace. In addition, Allisey, Rodwell, and Noblet (2016) suggested that the expanded effort-reward imbalance model (ERI) model could be utilized for promoting workplace diversity and reducing the effects of potentially damaging working environments. This model suggests that an imbalance for a reward received for a given amount of effort can contribute to reduced job satisfaction and performance (Allisey et. al., 2016). The ERI model could be also utilized as a tool to help reduce absenteeism and improve individual behavior in the workplace. Allisey et al. (2016) found that expanding on the notion of job demands and resources, the ERI model considers the role of situational, personal and social factors about workplace strain and employee behavior.

Some organizations have explored alternative strategies for reducing absenteeism, such as modifying work schedules. Deery, Walsh, Zatzick, and Hayes (2017) found that

some organizations use a wide range of flexible work schedules to meet their business requirements. Wadsworth and Facer (2016) asserted that some organizations and businesses are offering compressed work schedules as an incentive to help balance work and family life to assist with reducing absenteeism in the workplace. Hyatt and Coslor (2018) conducted a quantitative study on the benefits of flexible work schedules. Hyatt and Coslor administered a survey to determine employee satisfaction with the modified work schedule.

Hyatt and Coslor also asserted that one common form of flexible scheduling is the compressed workweek (CWW), where a full-time schedule is reduced into fewer working days with longer working hours each day. Hyatt and Coslor found that employees working an alternative schedule were relatively more productive and had higher job satisfaction than when working a regular schedule. Hyatt and Coslor asserted that these productivity gains were sustained, while employers also reaped other savings in regards energy costs and lower call-off rates from work. In addition, Deery et. al. (2017) found that compressed schedules offer employees more control over the timing of non-work demands, as personal appointments and other non-work activities can be scheduled more efficiently within the employee-controlled time off from work.

Additional organizational strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace identified in previous research include one-for-one substitution policies and flexible on-the-call workers. Damart and Kletz (2016) found that the flexible on the call and one-for-one substitution policies mean those organizations allow flexible schedules in which workers can be called into the workplace at times convenient to them. As a result, these

policies may be able to reduce absenteeism. Damart and Kletz also found that under the one-for-one substitution policy, all absences, whether short-term or long-term, for whatever reason (illness, workplace accident, and maternity) can be reduced. Damart and Kletz also suggested that the one-for-one substitution policy allows the employer to fill an immediate need and is an effective strategy for reducing absenteeism. Deery et al. (2017) found that absenteeism is reduced by calling on the flexibility of the full-time personnel (permanent, statutory and non-contractual) to help keep the workplace operational. Preliminary evidence reviewed in this section suggests that many strategies exist to reduce absenteeism, although the precise impacts of each of these strategies within specific workplaces and contexts remain unknown.

Transformative Leadership as a Potential Solution to Absenteeism

An understanding of leadership theories and conceptual frameworks is needed to identify potential ways organizations can reduce absenteeism and its causes. Shapira-Lischchinsky and Raftar-Ozery (2018) found that leaders of organizations can encourage their workers to provide better professional services to their customers if their employees come to work on time and as scheduled. Antonakis and House (2014) found that leadership is essential for motivating followers and mobilizing resources towards the fulfillment of the organization's mission and is necessary for organizational innovation, adaptation, and performance. Specifically, Antonakis and House suggested that if the workers are motivated they will come to work and be productive.

Employee motivation is an important factor in how they will perform in the workplace. Prior research on absenteeism revealed that transformational leadership

generally has promising effects on absenteeism, its causes, and related constructs like burnout (Shapria-Lischinsky & Raftar-Ozery, 2018). Pradhan, Jena, and Bhattacharyya (2018) found that transformational leaders motivate their followers to relook their job by elevating the status of the job from being boring, repetitive and menial into something more meaningful and significant. Le et al. (2018) asserted that transformational leadership (TL) is one of the most effective leadership styles for enhancing knowledge capital, human capital. Shapria-Lischinsky and Rafter-Overly (2018) studied workplace absenteeism in educational institutions and the participants in the study were 443 teachers from 21 schools. The purpose of their study was to explore teachers' acceptance of absenteeism. Shapria-Lischinsky and Rafter-Ozery posited that different job attitudes may reflect intrinsic motivation factors more than extrinsic motivation factors. Shapria-Lischinsky and Rafter-Ozery encouraged administrators to use their six-item measure as an indicator of teachers' attitudes toward absenteeism and to predict voluntary absenteeism.

Leadership is an important process in leading others within the workplace. Alatawi (2017) found that transformational leadership is a process whereby a manager serves to change the status quo by identifying problems in the current system and providing a new vision of what the organization could be. Wong and Berntzen (2019) describes transformational leadership as behaviors, including articulating a vision, providing a work model consistent with that vision, fostering the acceptance of goals, and expressing performance expectations. The transformational leadership theory is based on giving followers with more options for succeeding within the workplace. Alatawi (2017)

suggested that transformational leadership is four factors, known as the four I's: idealized influence (a) inspirational motivation (b), intellectual stimulation (c), and (d) individualized consideration. These four I's are the foundations for implementing transformational leadership theory in the workplace.

Furthermore, Alatawi (2017) found that transformational leadership is a highly effective style of leadership at all managerial levels and in all kinds of organizations. Alatawi suggested that higher transformational leadership style scores on the GTL scale were connected to lower levels of turnover intention amongst subordinates. The findings of the study were that a negative correlation exists between transformational leadership and turnover intention. Poghosyan and Bernhardt (2018) found that transformational leaders within various organizations can encourage their followers to strive for, and achieve, the common mission. Abdullah, Ling and Peng (2016) encouraged future researchers to study the effect of transformational leadership on welfare at work and affective commitment. Chen, Sharma, Zhan, and Liu (2019) asserted that transformational leaders within various organizations can encourage their followers to strive for, and achieve, the common mission.

In this study the topic be researched are the impacts of transformational leadership on organizational outcomes, including reducing absenteeism. For example, Bin et al. (2016) found that that transformational leadership facilitates voice behavior via enhancing employees' identifications, promotes performance, self-efficacy, and influences creativity through promoting psychological empowerment in the workplace. Nielsen and Daniels (2016) found that leaders who utilize the transformational leadership

theory are empowering their followers with options for enhancing individual performance and productivity within the working environment. Hildenbrand, Sacramento, and Binnewies (2018) found that employees benefit from transformational supervision for example, increased employee support and various positive constructs such as happiness and psychological well-being.

Followers who are happy were more inclined to come work because the work environment is employee friendly. Nielsen and Daniels found that transformational leaders that encourage feedback are allowing their followers to vent or express their personal opinions in the workplace. Bin et al. (2016) found that when followers are empowered by their leaders, they perceive this relationship as high quality and are therefore, willing to reciprocate by expending more effort to improve their performance and overall behavior. Therefore, transformational leadership may also be useful in reducing absenteeism and is connected to this study because the leadership theory allows leaders to influence their followers to go above and beyond what is expected of them.

Generally, Saint-Michel (2018) found that transformational leaders who treat their followers well can help build a channel of trust that can help elevate productivity in the workplace. Yang (2019) asserted that followers with a high level of confidence in their leaders may seek more feedback because they perceive this information as more valuable than do followers with a lower level of trust. As a result, Bin et al. (2016) concluded that trust is a critical element of transformational leadership theory because it encourages positive performance and possibly reduces absenteeism. The transformational leadership theory has been used by some leaders to facilitate improvements in performance. For

example, Suk, Kihwan, and Seung (2017) found that transformational leadership is a style of leader behavior by which the leader helps followers to exceed their initial performance expectation by promoting changes to their values, norms, and personal. Breevaart and Bakker (2018) asserted that their charisma and attentiveness to subordinates' needs and opportunities for personal development, transformational leaders can have a significant impact on the functioning of their subordinates.

Leaders that use the transformational leadership theory will be better equipped to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Suk et al. (2017) also found that transformational leaders share personal morality and organizational ethics with their employees and, as a result, the employees' intrinsic motivation becomes stronger and their organizational commitment increases. Ma and Jiang (2018) found that transformational leadership also increases intrinsic motivation, which can result in reductions in absenteeism. Intrinsic motivation is a reliable indicator of how transformational leaders apply the leadership theory in the workplace (Nielsen & Daniels, 2016). Abelha, Carneiro, and Cavazotte (2018) found transformation leadership theory is building a strong relationship with followers that exhibits trust and personal respect. In addition, Suk et al. (2017) asserted that employees who consider their leaders as role models will seek to innovate and be proactive in sharing their ideas with the team, ultimately increasing team effectiveness.

Leadership is needed so followers can be directed on what to do while at work. Ferreras, Sanz, and Alegre (2018) found that transformational leaders encourage experimentation and risk-taking mainly through idealized influence and intellectual stimulation. In addition, Tafvelin, Isaksson, and Westerberg (2018) found that

transformational leaders challenge their followers to question long-held assumptions, reframe problems, approach old situations with novel ways of thinking and be innovative in their approach to problem solving. Additionally, Ferreras et al. (2018) argued that leaders with idealized influence are more willing to involve their followers in risk-taking activities that may include the workplace. Giddens (2018) found that transformational leaders focus on building relationships with people and creating change by emphasizing values. Robertson and Jennifer (2018) argued that while influence and risk-taking are part of the norm utilizing the transformational leadership theory, intellectual stimulation is the primary goal along with implementing strategies for reducing absenteeism.

Many of the positive impacts of transformational leadership described in this study may encourage presenteeism, which can eventually reduce workplace productivity. For example, Alvarez, Castillo, Molina, and Balague, (2016) found that transformational leadership theory emphasizes on intrinsic motivation and followers' development, which are topics that occupy a central place in current research. Campbell (2018) asserted that the transformational leadership is a popular theory because leaders can influence their followers to embrace change and staying motivated to enhance productivity in the workplace. Additionally, Alvarez et al. (2016) argued that individual behaviors that are team-based and can lead to higher levels of effort satisfaction with the leadership style and perceived leader effectivity. Avci (2018) found that transformational leaders help followers develop new ways of thinking that leads to superior performance. In assessing the transformational leadership theory employees that are motivated by their leaders

would be more inclined to come to work. However, while there is a correlation between individual behavior and motivation this confirms another reason for doing this study.

Transformational leaders may be overly focused on organizational quality and neglect the contingencies needed to motivate performance and attendance at work. For example, Ariyabuddhiphongs and Kahn, (2017) found that transformational leaders primarily consider how to improve and maintain performance quality, leading to the substitution of one goal for another. Kahn concluded that transformational leaders are concerned with fostering a positive relationship with their employees that would inspire motivation and creativity in the workplace. Similarly, Lin, Huang, Chen, and Huang, (2017) found that pseudo-transformational leadership can lead to a violation of the fundamental ethical requirement for transformational leadership and that it must rest on a moral foundation of legitimate values. Kahn and Lin et al. (2017) found that subordinates of pseudo-transformational leaders exhibit negative attitudes and behaviors such as overdependence, unconditional loyalty, and fear of their supervisors. Additionally, Muchiri, McMurray, Nkhoma, and Pham (2019) found that pseudo-transformational leadership may undermine the subordinates' willingness to identify with the organization and could further discourage them from engaging in organizational activities. This behavior is typical of a follower in a traditional utilization of the transformational leadership theory.

Many differences exist between transformational and transactional leadership, and each may differentially influence absenteeism. In contrast, Pradhan, Jena, and Bhattacharyya (2018) found that transactional leaders and transformational leaders look

at long-term goals and holistic development of employees. Pradhan et. al. (2018) also found that such leaders motivate employees to focus on more profound concerns associated with organizational growth rather than concentrating on personal gains. Similarly, Suk, Kihwan, and Seung-Wan, (2017) transformational leaders act as a role model among team members by sharing creative ideas and knowledge to facilitate working cooperatively and efficiently. Employees who consider their leaders as their role model engaged in more employee contribution thus deterring from being absence at work.

Effects of Transformative Leadership on Absenteeism

Leaders need to have good communication skills when leading within the workplace. Employees that are Pradhan et al. (2018) reported that transformational leaders compellingly communicate the organizational vision and convince their followers to exert extra effort, thus resulting in followers displaying more of discretionary pro-social behaviors. Lechmann and Schnabel (2014) found that absence from work is a pervasive phenomenon that is costly to organizations and society as it is associated with underutilization of labor and corresponding productivity losses in the workplace. Kuonath, Specht, Kuhnel, Pachler, and Frey (2017) found that transformational leadership is one of the most traditional leadership concepts in research and practice and has been known to predict a wide range of favorable work-related follower outcomes. However, its effects on absenteeism remain primarily unexplored, and this model may encourage presenteeism, which can be equally be detrimental to workplace productivity.

While the transformational leadership theory has positive attributes for reducing absenteeism this supports the need for further research and for conducting this study.

Johns and Al Hajj (2016) found that absenteeism may result in increases in total time lost within an organization. Time lost refers to the total number of days an individual is absent from work over some time excluding vacation days, jury duty, and scheduled leave. Johns and Al Hajj asserted that there is a direct correlation that exists between absenteeism and overall business productivity. Fortunately, Kuonath et al. (2017) found that when using the transformational leadership style, supervisors motivate their followers as they are proactive, raise follower awareness for transcendent collective interests to achieve extraordinary goals. Therefore, leaders who incorporate transformational theory in their leadership styles could help address employee absenteeism. However, the advantages of this model over transactional leadership in this regard remain unclear. Overall, results from the literature examining the effects of transformational leadership on absenteeism and has been revealed. While the transformational leadership theory has options for reducing absenteeism further research to confirm this study is needed.

Transformative Leadership and Organizational Culture

Leaders have a part in helping establish organizational culture. Clipa and Greciuc (2018) found that transformative leadership increases employee commitment and job satisfaction, which may contribute to a decrease in absenteeism. Some employees do not come to work because of a toxic work environment. According to Gathunga, Iravo and Namusonge (2015), the most valuable and indispensable resources for any organization

are human resources. Pavritha, Baroni and Lingaraja (2017) examined absenteeism in public sector organizations and the results of the study revealed that employee absenteeism has an impact on productivity, morale, and performance. Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, Windt, and Alkema (2014) asserted that transformative leadership focuses on organizational effectiveness. Many scholars have studied the impact of transformative leadership on organizational culture. According to Dierendock et al. (2014), transformational leadership has positive effects such as positively influencing work motivation, employee satisfaction, and innovative performance. In addition, White, Pearson, Bledsoe, and Hendricks (2017) suggested that this process ultimately transforms followers as a whole and enables their own leadership capacity. However, because absenteeism is an on-going issue further research was needed to examine the actual relationship between organizational culture and the transformational leadership theory and to support this study.

Rival Leadership Theory (Transactional) and Absenteeism

There are other leadership styles such as the transactional leadership theory that leaders use to lead others. According to Jabeen, Behery, and Abu Elanain (2015) a leadership style that has been utilized to manage absenteeism is the transactional leadership theory. Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2014) asserted that transactional leadership focuses on the task-related exchange of actions and rewards between follower and leader. Kark, Van, and Vashdi (2018) found that transactional leadership as a leadership style that makes clear what actions and roles followers must take to achieve goals. In addition, Tyssen et al. (2014) argued that the transactional dimension focuses on tasks with factors

that relate to the leader and follower bargains and exchanges that provide the necessary motivational aspirations for the followers to pursue. According to Antonakis and House (2014) such leaders use contingent rewards and sanctions for employees that do or do not achieve organizational set goals. Tyssen et. al. (2014) found the role of a transactional leader is like administrative manager and the impacts of these contingent rewards on employee performance. However, transactional leadership is not the best leadership method for the modern-day worker within the workplace.

Specifically, Antonakis and House (2014) suggested that transactional leaders may be suited to ensure organizational adaptation by encouraging the accomplishment of task objectives within the workplace. Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse, Sassenberg (2014) found that leaders that promote achievement goals in their employees can substantially affect organizational functioning, as these goals shape employees' motivational experiences, behavior, and their performance. Hamstra et al. argued that transactional leaders specify that rewards are contingent on achievements, which may make individual task performance more salient and thereby set followers apart from one another due to their accomplishments. De Oliveira Rodrigues and Ferreira (2015) found that the transactional leader clarifies the goals that are to be achieved and makes it clear that the successful achievement of these targets implied rewards, while non-compliance was implied punishments. Hamstra et al. argued that transactional leaders who emphasize their own output as opposed to collective goals tends to reduce cooperation within teams and could lead to negative interdependence. Transactional leaders that specify to their followers that

they must achieve their goals, or be subject to being punished is not good for reducing absenteeism.

Transactional leaders focus more on achieving organizational goals. According to Jabeen et al., (2015) transactional leaders can influence their followers to be more focused on achieving individual goals versus working together to accomplish as one collective unit. Hamstra et al. (2014) found that multilevel study involving 120 organizational leaders revealed that leadership styles, which match subordinate preferences, might facilitate the achievement of goals. Dussault and Frenette (2015) asserted that transactional leadership is composed of two factors, contingent reward and management-by-exception. Contingent rewards are positive reinforcements when subordinates do what is expected and required.

Conversely, positive reinforcements or reward are lacking when subordinates do not do what is needed for their leaders. Dussault and Frenette (2015) found that management-by-exception is the use of negative feedback if subordinates fail to meet expectations. Similarly, Cole (2017) asserted that management-by-exception is more of a negative reinforcement versus positive reinforcement with contingent rewards. According to Dussault and Frenette (2015) if the leader neglects to provide rewards when objectives are met, they allowed their subordinates to continue to do work as usual, if they meet performance goals. The transactional leadership theory consist of the follower achieving goals for rewards or being subject to disciplinary actions for not being in compliance. Because of this conclusion further research was required on the transactional leadership theory. Transactional leadership may also be useful when combined with

transformational leadership models. Findings from one study suggested that Bass's (1985) multifactor leadership model, which contains transactional and transformational leadership qualities, is by far the most common leadership theory over the past 30 years, and includes transactional leadership theory (Dussault & Frenette, 2015). According to Martinez-Corcoles and Stephanou (2017) asserted that transactional leadership can influence the relationship between superior and subordinate, and its purpose is to meet the expectations and gratify the interests of each party. Dussault and Frenette (2015) found that both multifactor and transactional theories has been indicated in various fields, such as the military, education, project management, and coaching. The transactional leadership style is indicated in this literature review mainly for comparison and research purposes. However, because the transactional leadership-style consist of achieving goals or risk being subject to punishment further research to support this study was needed.

Transactional leaders encourage their followers to focus more on doing what is needed to accomplish their goals. Asencio and Mujkie (2016) revealed that when leaders engage in transactional leadership behaviors, employees developed trust in them and also had faith in their leaders' intentions and confidence in their actions. Brahim, Ridic, and Jukic, (2015) found that transactional leaders identify the expectations of their followers and respond to them by establishing a close link between effort and reward. Brahim et al. (2015) found that transactional leaders are more in-line with getting their followers to focus on achieving individual goals versus working together to achieve as one collective unit. In a conceptual paper, Kunnanatt (2016) argued that transactional leaders must have the ability to identify, cultivate, and organize the team task capabilities significant for the

organization to align with policies and procedures. Therefore, leaders who identify with their employees' abilities may be better equipped to keep them motivated while at work. This justifies the need to for doing this study mainly because motivated employees were more inclined to come to work and this could help with reducing absenteeism.

Transactional leadership may have some positive effects on reducing absenteeism. For example, Peachey, Zhou, Damon, and Burton (2015) found the leader-follower exchange relationship in which the follower receives specific rewards that are predominantly oriented toward lower-order needs, such as security, recognition, and affiliation, in exchange for performing a task. Peachey et al. (2015) also found that leaders who are engaged in more culture-building activities handled change better and had more coordinated teamwork in the workplace. Similarly, Khattak, Batool, and Haider (2017) found that while the transactional leadership style is associated consist of setting goals, providing feedback, and exchanging rewards and recognition for accomplishing specified goals, it emphasizes employee performance. Interestingly, Shapira-Lishchinsky and Raftar-Ozery (2018) found that some transactional leaders' perceptions can lead to attitudes in their followers which did not assist with reducing absenteeism.

According Rodriguez and Brown (2016) transactional leaders that exhibit strict leadership with their followers would not be suitable for keeping a positive workplace environment, although they may be useful in reducing absenteeism. For example, Martin (2016) found that transactional leaders focus on the priorities of the organization and not the personal concerns of its members. In addition, Rodriguez and Brown (2016) asserted that leaders who abuse and manipulate the dimensions of transactional leadership, such as

using a perverted version of contingent rewards and engaging in management-by exception-passive, are likely to fail. Martin (2016) asserted that transactional leaders who set performance objectives and clear measures for achieving those objectives, which may help clarify employees' decisions taking unscheduled leave.

Additionally, Buch, Thompson, and Kuvaas (2016) found that transactional leaders enhance followers' ability to understand others at work. Therefore, Buch et. al. transactional leaders that use their knowledge to influence followers to work harder or smarter may represent an effective pathway to reducing absenteeism in the workplace. Transactional leaders may help with clarifying performance standards for employees. For example, Prasad and Junni (2016) found that through being precise, systematic and detail oriented, transactional leaders can detect deviations in behaviors on the part of their followers and correct this through constructive feedback or other corrective actions. Transactional leaders expect their followers to do what is required of them in the workplace by offering goal setting and other incentives to stay motivated and productive, which may reduce absenteeism in the workplace.

Transactional leadership also has negative impacts on worker perceptions, although their effects on absenteeism are not fully understood. Furthermore, Tremblay and Gibson, (2016) found that receiving support in the context of a negative relationship is perceived by the target person as unexpected and conflicting, increasing the likelihood of offensive behavior and its adverse implications. Prasad and Junni (2016) revealed that negativity and conflict are not good precursors for utilizing authentic transactional leadership in the workplace. In addition, Tremblay and Gibson (2016) found that adverse

events are considered more heavily in social judgment than positive experience or events. These studies concluded that when instances involve negative experiences it may hinder with the process to reduce absenteeism. The precise effects of transactional leadership on absenteeism remain unclear and warrant further investigation. Some research has shown that transactional leadership can increase the focus of workers through clarifying goals and objectives. For example, De Oliveira, Rodrigues, and Ferreira (2015) argued that transactional leadership could define objectives, offer rewards for good performance, and increase acknowledgment of accomplishments. Stromberg et al. (2017) asserted that these outcomes may lead to increased motivation to come to work give and followers the opportunity for them to get rewards in exchange for good performances.

However, research suggests that transactional leaders are using a more business approach in their encouragement of the leadership theory. De Oliveira et al. (2015) asserted that transactional leaders can sometimes waive their responsibilities and avoid decision making and look for rewards and patterns, adopting corrective attitudes when necessary. Therefore, the overall objective of using the transactional leadership style is to help with deterring employees from calling off from work. Theoretically, if the relationship established with the employee is a positive one, it should be enough to motivate them from calling off from work. Berkovich (2018) found that transactional leadership does not produce long-term commitment to the values and vision being promoted. De Oliveira et al. (2015) found that transactional leaders clarify goals and that the achievement of these targets implied rewards and non-compliance was subject to punishment. The punishment aspect of the transactional leadership theory could be

utilized to change follower behavior and reduce absenteeism, but further research is needed for confirmation to support this study.

Transition

In Section 1, I suggested that the transactional leadership theory would be an excellent way to research and understand various strategies organizational leaders use to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity in the workplace. The foundation of the study is information on the background of the absenteeism problem. The location for the study is a U.S. government department in Northeastern Ohio. The problem statement indicated statistical data related to absenteeism and the specific business problem, which is that some public works department leaders lack strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace. The qualitative single case study was conducted to explore strategies to reduce absenteeism in the public sector workplace. The research question and interview questions are aligned with the specific problem. The transformative leadership theory was used as the conceptual framework for this study. Section 1 also includes the operation definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. Section 1 concludes with the significance of the study and a review of the professional and academic literature.

Section 2 includes the following sections: purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method, design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data organization technique, data analysis, reliability, and validity.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. The population was nine leaders in a public works department in Northeastern Ohio who have strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. The findings from this study could contribute to social change by potentially helping leaders address and manage absenteeism in the workplace and having more employees readily available to serve and support the local community. A successful public works department can positively affect society by employing people to be available for potential emergencies such as natural disasters, thus avoiding interruption of public services.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was to do a single case data collection process to collect information and data from in-depth interviews of participants and document analysis. Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnava, Shoghi, and Cheraghi (2014) asserted that the researcher is the main instrument for data collection and is involved in all stages of the study from defining a concept to design; conducting interviews; taking part in the data collection process; doing transcription, analysis, verification; and reporting the results and findings. As the only researcher in this study, I was the main instrument for collecting data and information. Korstjens and Moser (2017) found that the role of the researcher is to collect data that are relevant to a research topic or study. My current position of employment is as a supervisory management and program analyst

for the U.S. federal government, and I manage a staff of over 50 employees, which includes subordinate supervisors in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Tatebe (2015) found that the researcher's role regarding ethics is to avoid potential harm and to safeguard the welfare of all those involved in the research to include the participants of the study and comply with the Belmont Report. The primary strategy was to use the qualitative case study to conduct interviews and interact with the participants within the workplace. Supervisor logs were also collected and analyzed. According to Miracle (2016), the Belmont Report is a critical document for those involved in research and is used primarily to protect the rights of all research subjects or participants and is comprised of three major components: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. I used the concepts and principles of the Belmont Report to conduct and facilitate my research study. The process was to include an informed consent process wherein all participants received an informed consent form to learn more about the risks involved in the study and the rights of the study participants.

According to Kruth (2015), a researcher’s role for qualitative research involves the need to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic or subject. In doing so, Kruth found that a researcher has to minimize personal biases from influencing the findings of the study. To mitigate being biased and viewing data through personal lenses, researchers must report on the methods used to minimize the possible influences of own biases during the interpretation and analysis stages to include their reasoning (Kruth, 2015). In this study, during data collection, I conducted interviews, completed document analysis, and conducted observations. Brinkmann (2016) asserted that qualitative interviews are

used as a method of inquiry across the human and social sciences in fields and disciplines, ranging from sociology to anthropology to communication and education. I used the interview protocol as a guide to minimize the influences of personal biases.

The rationale for using the interview protocol is to facilitate the interview process and to ask open ended questions to collect data and information that are specific to the study. According to Turner (2010), open ended questions allow participants to contribute more detailed information and allow the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up. The interview protocol increases validity and reliability because the researcher has an opportunity to evaluate their biases. According to Castillo-Montoya (2016), the interview protocol can help the researcher to guide participants to tell their stories one layer at a time and stay aligned with the purpose of the study.

Participants

Raeymaeckers (2016) found that researchers could use qualitative research methods to provide specific insights into the perceptions of collaboration in reference to participants. I used qualitative research methodology because the process requires researchers to develop an eligibility criterion for interviews. One of the eligibility criteria is that supervisors and managers from the chosen U.S. government agencies or departments should have effective strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace. All of the data were analyzed from reports to determine if there is evidence that the supervisors and those who report to them have patterns of absenteeism. In establishing the eligibility of the participants for the study, the supervisors and managers in the chosen government office had the following experience: They (a) have been in their current

position for 12 months, (b) have leadership experience in a public sector workplace setting from an government agency, (c) have a direct supervisory role towards employees, and (d) have strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace. These criteria were essential to make sure that the supervisors who participated in the study had seen the midterm and long-term effects of the effective strategies to address absenteeism. Burles (2017) indicated that qualitative studies typically revolve around researchers gaining an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, often through in-depth interviews and prolonged engagement. According to Bell (2013), qualitative researchers typically rely on the voluntary participation of people who have previously experienced the central phenomenon of the research study.

Hoyland, Hollund, and Olsen (2015) found that successful planning for gaining access to study participants requires researchers to interact with individuals who have knowledge aligned with the topic of their study. I identified possible participants, made telephone calls, and sent emails to ask for their participation in this research study. In addition, French and Stavropoulou (2016) asserted that conducting recruitment procedures and gaining access to the volunteers gives researchers more time for investigating general perceptions. Furthermore, Reybold, Lammert, and Stribling (2013) found that subjectivity is the qualitative researcher's obligation when planning for obtaining participants to participate and volunteer for a research study without manipulating interpretation and representation of data. A formal request was made to have access to the chosen U.S. government agency or department to ask permission to conduct the study with their managers and supervisors. Through this process, the plan

was to establish a working relationship with the participants in the study. Access was necessary primarily for interviewing selected and qualified participants and asking open-ended interview questions that aligned with the research question: What effective strategies do public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace? In addition, White and Hind (2015) asserted that although the recruitment of participants can be challenging once a working relationship is made, the researcher can benefit from the positive connection. The participants for the research study consisted of 10 supervisors who had strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace. In addition, Gustafson and Hertting (2016) found that having access to the grounded knowledge of participants could ensure a better collection of data and increase the understanding of the research problem. The overall objective was to establish and maintain a good relationship with the stakeholders at the chosen government department. Additionally, Dennis (2013) found that qualitative research findings are from interpersonal contact with participants, which allowed for a complete connection with me and was directly reflected in the results.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Gerring (2017) stated that qualitative researchers usually focus on particular individuals, events, and contexts with an emphasis on the idiographic style of analysis. According to Gerring, the idiographic style of research is on the idea that everyone is unique and should be studied in an individual way. Fachrunnisa et al. (2014) concluded that qualitative methodology is in line with focusing on specific individual behavior

within the workplace. For this study, I used the qualitative method to identify what strategies public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Silverman (2016) found that the qualitative methodology is a broad umbrella term for a collecting data for research purposes because of the multiple approaches to qualitative inquiry.

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), qualitative methodology is appropriate when exploring a phenomenon in-depth using data from experiences, perceptions, and behavior of individuals. Guercini (2014) stated that researchers who use the qualitative method ensure that properly gathered data provide a focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings and the option to collect data in closer proximity. Using the qualitative methodology was an efficient way for me to collect data on absenteeism in a natural setting like at the chosen department in government. The justification for using the qualitative research method is that the process is appropriate for a researcher to engage in collecting data. I used some secondary data to determine which leaders had lower absenteeism rates. However, the primary methodology used in this study was the qualitative research.

Other methodologies were inappropriate for this study. Goertzen (2017) found that quantitative research methodology applies to studies concerned with collecting and analyzing data that are numerically represented for statistical purposes to establish relationships between variables. A quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this research study because the focus was on the individuals who work in a government agency and the strategies they used to decrease absenteeism in the workplace. According

to Yin (2017), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. A case study provided a good process for collecting and recording informational data for this research study. According to Paull and Girardi (2017), a mixed methods research is an approach that is primarily concerned with collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data based on selected predetermined research questions. Mixed methods research was not be appropriate for this study primarily because the study did not involve establishing relationships of variables, which is usually done when a study has quantitative components. My intent in this study was to research and document strategies for reducing absenteeism.

Research Design

According to Malagon-Maldonado (2014) the purpose for utilizing qualitative research is to comprehend, describe, and interpret different phenomena as perceived by individuals, groups, and cultures. Based on the purpose of this research, a single case study is an appropriate design. Malagon-Maldonado stated that case studies are a specifically bounded system and can be considered both a process and a product of the inquiry to research a single unit, location, or community. Moreover, Yin (2017) stated that a case study is the appropriate research design for this study, as a case study is useful when exploring a specific phenomenon based on the perceptions of a homogeneous group of individuals. The group of individuals concerned in the study was leaders in a chosen government department who had effective strategies that addressed the issue of worker absenteeism.

Furthermore, Yin (2017) stated that case studies are appropriate when there is a need to collect data from more than one source. For this study, I collected data using one on one interviews and document reviews. The justification for using the case study was to gain insight on how to develop effective strategies for reducing absenteeism in the public sector workplace. The description of a case study corresponds with the purpose of this research, which is to explore how some business leaders are reducing absenteeism in the public sector.

Other research designs were reviewed for this study. However, the researcher found these other designs to be inappropriate for this study. Ethnography research design would not be appropriate for this study because the aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions (Ross, Rogers, & Duff, 2016). This study was focused on aspects of organizational culture but not regarding power, resistance, and dominance. Malagon-Maldonado (2014) indicated that phenomenological research design is concerned with the everyday human experience to achieve an understanding of its essential structure and to give deep insight into the lived experience. A phenomenological research design would not be appropriate for this study because the research focus is not on the *lived world*. Furthermore, Farina (2014) asserted that absenteeism is not a phenomenon experienced by everyone in the organization.

The intent was be to interview a variety of participants and collecting substantial amounts of information from the selected interview questions to obtain data saturation. As the primary researcher multiple methods for triangulation was utilized to ensure that data saturation was achieved. I conducted one-on-one interviews, observations, and

document analysis of all data that was collected for the study. Tran, Porcher, Falissard, and Ravaud (2016), argued that data saturation can be achieved with data triangulation and that no single method, theory or observation can capture what is relevant or important. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation occurs when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to add new data and further coding is no longer required.

Population and Sampling

Target Population

The population consisted of leaders that work in a chosen U.S. government department, wherein successful strategies for reducing workplace absenteeism are in place. The researcher chose these leaders as the population for this study because they had experiences of implementing effective strategies that address issues of absenteeism. These experiences are essential to collect relevant information that will directly address the research question of this study. There was a total of nine supervisors who work in the chosen U.S. government department. These supervisors had some strategies for addressing absenteeism in the workplace. According to Palinkas et al. (2015) sampling is the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives. The plan was to use structured interviews that consisted of asking the interview questions in Section 1 to gather data and information about strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study consisted of nine supervisors who work in a chosen department in the local U.S. government who have strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace. According to Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016), the sample size for qualitative studies does not have to be large, as in quantitative studies. Instead, the basis for identifying the appropriate sample size may be more or less than the indicated 10 supervisors for achieving data saturation. The participants for this study must satisfy the eligibility criteria described previously to be a relevant supervisor who can provide information that can directly address the research question of this study.

Participant Selection Method

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for this study. According to Barratt, Ferris, and Lenton (2015) purposive sampling is recruitment technique for qualitative studies wherein the researcher select participants based on having a specific set of characteristics that are aligned with the requirements of the purpose of the study. The researcher used the eligibility criteria, which was the basis for the selection of participants.

The inclusion criteria include the following: a supervisor in the public works department in Northeastern Ohio. Additionally, the leaders in the chosen local U.S. government office must (a) have been in their current position for 12 months, (b) have leadership experience in a public sector workplace, (c) have a direct supervisory role towards employees, and (d) have successful strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace. Etikan (2016) suggested that the primary focus of purposive sampling is on

data saturation and obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Purposive sampling is when the researcher is familiar with the population under study and can logically assume that the sample was representative of the population. The sample in this study was inform sample size in future studies on absenteeism in the workplace. Using purposive sampling as the recruitment technique is relevant with the purpose and requirements for accomplishing this study.

Ethical Research

Ethics is an important part of conducting research in a study. According to Miracle (2016) the Belmont Report serves as the guiding ethical document to protect the rights of human subjects and participants involved in research. The principles of the Belmont Report was used as a guide to ensure ethical compliance for all participants who volunteer to take part in the study are properly conducted during the series of interviews. Kumar (2013) asserted that informed consent is one of the critical elements for protecting the welfare of patients or research participants. Dekking, Graaf, and Delden, (2014) found that through informed consent, the researcher can address many ethical guidelines for human subjects. The informed consent process involves asking participants to complete a consent form that contains details about the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, length of participation, possible risks to participants, and confidentiality arrangements. The consent form had an option listed for participants to withdraw at any time from participating in the study.

The participants can send an email to my researcher's Walden University email indicating that they would like to be removed from participation in the study. There were

no gifts or monetary compensation given as incentives for participating in the study. The interview guide ensures that all questions are aligned to the research question and business problem. The protocol was reviewed to ensure that the items in the interview guide did not pose any concerns or ethical issues for the participants in the study, such as asking irrelevant and leading questions. The names of the participants were be kept confidential by using special codes such as P1 and P2 in place of the actual names. Agreement documents for this research study are listed in the (a) text of the study, (b) appendices (see Appendix A: Interview Protocol) and (c) table of contents of this doctoral study. The data collected for this study was maintained in a safe and secured database that was password protected with data encryption for 5 years to protect the rights of participants. All data would be destroyed after 5 years. A summary of the findings shall be made available by email to the participants at the conclusion of the study. The final doctoral manuscript included the Walden IRB approval number 12-02-19-0584917 and did not include names or any other identifying information of individuals or organizations that participated in the study.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for this research study and used the interview protocol and research questions are listed in Appendix A. Aside from interviews includes relevant archival documents, records, or logs that pertain to strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. The participants provided the archival documents which provided information on specific employee absenteeism such as scheduled and unscheduled leave. The participants also provided records of attendance

logs that indicated data on employees facing disciplinary actions for leave abuse. The following three data sources were utilized for this study.

Semistructured Interview Guide

Anyan (2013) asserted that the interview is a highly used method of collecting data in qualitative research methods. I conducted semistructured interviews to obtain data and information for this qualitative research study. According to Robinson (2014) interview research that has a specific aim or outcome seeks a sample size that is sufficiently small for individual cases to have a locatable voice within a study. In addition, conducting structured interviews allowed for time to inquire about how the leaders in the public works department work at with reducing absenteeism. In qualitative According to Witty et al. (2014) structured interviews are an ideal tool for exploring human social experiences.

The selected interview protocol was utilized, and all participants were informed that the study was voluntary, and they could drop out at any time. The participants were reminded of the purpose of the research study and interview protocol. The interviews were conducted in a quiet place, which was not associated with the public works department to protect the identities of the participants are not disclosed. Each interview was allowed 60 minutes and included the use of a tape recorder to record interviews to make transcription easier. The structured interviews was one of the primary sources for gathering data to gain a better understanding about the impact of absenteeism in the public sector.

Documents for Review

Aside from the semistructured interviews and as the primary researcher, data was collected from a second source to improve the credibility of the findings. By collecting data from another source, data was collected that pertained to strategies to reduce absenteeism in the public sector. The documents were collected from the U.S. government department where the participants work. I secured permission from the site supervisor to review all documents that were not public records. In addition, a letter of cooperation was submitted with the IRB application. Upon conclusion of each site visit each participant was asked to provide copies of archival documents, records, or logs that relate to absenteeism of employees after the interview sessions. Every document was reviewed during the site visits and detailed notes were recorded to support this study. These documents were the second data source for this study.

Observations

Finally, all observations were be conducted on site. A review was conducted of copies of the archival documents, records or policies related to absenteeism of employees after each onsite interview session. Multiple data collection methods were utilized to ensure that triangulation was achieved. According to Fusch and Ness (2018) triangulation is an important concept regarding data analysis for an empirical study. A reflective journal and field notes was utilized to observe and record employee absence during each site visit. Denzin (2012) asserted that data triangulation is for correlating people, time, and space; investigator triangulation for correlating the findings from multiple researchers in a study; theory triangulation is for correlating multiple theoretical

strategies; and methodological triangulation is for correlating data from multiple data collections. A reflective journal was utilized to record notes and accurately record data from the structured interviews. Bashan and Holsblat (2017) found that data collection is an important means in qualitative research.

Data Collection Technique

The research question for this study is What strategies do public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace? Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) asserted that interviews represent one of the most common ways of collecting data in qualitative research because they provide opportunities for the researcher to obtain rich and meaning-making data. I used in-depth semistructured interviews to collect data and relevant documents about attendance and absenteeism of employees from the public works department.

Semistructured Interviews

Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez (2015) argued that face-to-face interviews are often the preferred method for collecting data and have been the norm in the field of qualitative research for many decades. According to Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, and Young (2018) one of the advantages of using the interview protocol is that it is a helpful tool to maintain the structure and alignment of the questions concerning the topic of the study. In addition, Cairney and Denny (2015) found that interviews are often a form of emotional processes that can sometimes leave participants transformed in ways they had not anticipated. However, Kallio et al., (2016) argued that structured interviews may also cause problems for researchers, who serve as interviewers, because of possible confusion

in asking follow-up questions. The interview guide was utilized to conduct onsite interviews and there was a time limit on follow-up questions to three.

The interviews were conducted in a small meeting room within the public works department of the participants to maximize their comfort and convenience. I also used a tape recording device to audio-record the interviews for purposes of transcriptions. Throughout the interview, I was courteous and professional while conducting the interviews to ensure that the participants continue to volunteer in the study. Each interview lasted for 60 minutes while finishing all three phases: introduction, interview proper, and summary or conclusion.

In the introduction, there was a brief discussion about the overview of the topic of the study to refresh the memory of the participants. I also mentioned the purpose and the flow of the interview to manage the expectations of the participants. The participants were asked questions based on the items in the interview guide. There were also follow-up questions based on the initial responses from the participants. In the conclusion phase, the researcher ensured that all of the participants answered the questions in the interview guide. I also used member checking to interpret the data by conducting follow-up interviews with the participants to ensure that all information collected is accurate and correct. According to Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016), member checking is used to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results to include the accuracy and interpretation of the transcripts. In addition, the member checking protocol was utilized to conduct follow-up interviews to enhance the reliability and validity of the data and information collected for the study.

Document Review

I requested copies of human resource policies, records, or logs related to attendance and absenteeism of employees from the participants of the study. In addition, I also requested copies of any policies or records related to strategies for reducing absenteeism. The human resource department (HRD) may have to get special permission from their employees especially if some of the records includes specific information related to individual absenteeism. The main was to identify policies or records that indicate that some public works department leaders lack strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Additionally, a review of all collected informational data was reviewed for highlighted words, phrases, and sentences that can directly address the research questions of the study. NVivo is a software package has functions used for digitally coding texts or images that allows the user to synchronize evidence and make analytically richer intersections (Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo, & Teixeira, 2016). The NVivo software was utilized to store all data related to the review of documents. The NVivo software was also be utilized to identify common themes and characteristics, which emerge from the document analysis. An advantage of creating a soft copy and importing data into NVivo was that the documents about the research study was stored in one place. A disadvantage of making the soft copy is that emerging themes may not be evident and essential data could be missing from the document review. Oliveira et al. (2016) found that by using this software, the researcher can manage the empirical material in a single location (text, spreadsheets, audio, video or images), and can add, modify, connect and

cross reference data. Using the NVivo software further enhanced the coding of themes and images was an acceptable protocol for categorizing data.

Data Organization Technique

In this qualitative case study, the data was organized and prepared to allow for open coding, creating categories, and safeguarding any data that was collected from the interview process (Elo et al., 2014). I used research logs and reflective journals to keep track of any data and information collected for the study. Research logs and reflective journals help researchers to keep accurate records that are free of bias and assumptions. The goal was to search for data or information that reflected problems with management trying to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. According to Ortlipp (2008) research logs and reflective journals help researchers to become active participants in the research process. The research logs and reflective journals were be stored in a folder in NVivo. I w used the word tree and text query function to identify emerging themes from the research logs and reflective journals.

Mouritsen (2013) asserted that when considering measures of safeguarding confidential data the information needs to be managed and handled properly to protect the data from being disclosed to other people. A safe was used to maintain all data collected from the study. All data was secured in an online database that has password protection and data encryption for 5 years to protect the rights of the participants. All raw data was maintained in a locked container for a period of 5 years. Maseh, (2015) found that ssafekeeping of data is vital to protect the confidentiality of the participants in a study. The data collected from this study will be destroyed after a period of 5 years.

Data Analysis

According to Oliveira et al. (2016) the NVivo software sources can be coded, and the material can be gathered into categories or *nodes*, where portions of the collected material are indexed and classified according to persons, places or organizations. I conducted the data analysis phase for this study using codes and thematic analysis of the data collected from the structured interviews and document reviews. The codes are indicated by color and category to reflect the theme of any data collected from the study. According to Williams and Moser (2019), coding in qualitative research is comprised of processes that enable collected data to be assembled, categorized, and thematically sorted, providing an organized platform for the construction of meaning.

The coding for this study was be determined by the data that was collected from the interviews. By having more than one data source, this allowed for triangulation, which is a term used to describe the deployment of multiple research methods in the study of the same phenomenon (Joslin & Müller, 2016). According to Marcio, Leonel, Carlos, and Rafael (2018) there are four types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation; (b) theoretical triangulation; (c) researcher triangulation; and (d) methodological triangulation. Nancy, Denise, Alba, Jennifer, and Alan (2014) argued that data triangulation involves the collection of data from different types of people, including individuals, groups, families, and communities, to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data. According to Mayer (2015) the data analysis process consists of data collection, data display, conclusions, drawing, verifying, and data deduction. The plan is to use data triangulation to gather data and information for this study.

In the thematic analysis, the following steps from Braun, Clarke, and Terry (2014) was used: (a) familiarization, (b) coding, (c) initial theme development, (d) theme revision, (e) theme finalization, and (f) report generation. I preformed the first four steps for each of the three data sources with the intention to combine the results for the first four steps for all the three data sources to conduct the last two steps for the analysis to indicate the results from the collected data. All collected data was uploaded in the NVivo software version 12 program to analyze, code, and to identify themes of the data received from the study.

In the familiarization phase (Phase 1), I read each interview transcript twice. In the first round of reading there was a review of the answers from each participant, while considering the member-checked interpretation of the interviews. In the second round of reading, descriptive words were be highlighted that are related to the research question.

For the coding phase (Phase 2), I developed a scheme of codes for one of the 10 interview transcripts. The codes was made up of straightforward descriptive words for inclusion for the study. According to Roberts, Dowell, and Jing-Bao (2019), codes are a form of pattern recognition used in content analysis that emerge from the data to become the categories for analysis. The codes were terms that describe the highlighted texts from the first phase could address the research question of this study.

I applied the codes to the other descriptive texts in the other interview transcripts. In the third phase (Initial Theme Development), the goal is to carefully analyze and review the data and input the information into categories. These categories formed the initial themes list. In the NVivo software, Castleberry (2014) asserted that each theme

will be considered as storage called nodes, which can represent anything that the researcher wants them to be and grants easy organization and reorganization of themes in the data. By utilizing the NVivo software program version 12 all collected data and themes was presented in the study.

In the fourth phase (Theme Revision), I revised the initial themes by deconstructing the themes and assessing if the codes are correctly grouped. All key themes obtained from the literature review and conceptual framework (transformational leadership theory) was indicated by the most current information collected for the study. All data and themes was inputted into the NVivo version 12 program.

In the fifth phase (Theme Finalization) I finalized the codes and themes and provide a description to relate the themes to the research questions. According to Williams and Moser (2019), asserted that coding in qualitative research is comprised of processes that enables collected data to be assembled, categorized, and thematically sorted, providing an organized platform for the construction of meaning. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018) a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. There was a comparison of all themes from the interviews and document reviews. Themes present for both data sources was considered as major themes. The themes that were present in just one data source would be minor themes. In the final phase (Report Generation) I wrote a discussion of the findings, which was presented in Section 3.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which a measure, procedure, or instrument yields the same results on repeated trials (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). According to Olson, McAllister, Grinnell, Gehrke Walters, and Appunn, (2016), reliability in qualitative research includes improving reliability means improving credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Also, I used the member checking process to ensure the reliability of the data. Member checking provided participants with an opportunity to correct errors and challenge what is being perceived as wrong interpretations. Member checking also provided an opportunity to understand and assess what the participant intended to do through their actions. Dependability refers to the constancy of the data over similar conditions (Cope, 2014). I ensured that the collected data are consistent with the theme and topic of the study by aligning the codes with selected categories. Leung (2015) suggested that in qualitative research with diverse paradigms ever present, the essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency. The plan was to ensure that any data collected from the study would be reliable and credible by ensuring data saturation. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), data saturation is achieved when there is enough information to replicate the study and no new themes or codes emerge from additional interviews. Reaching data saturation helped with the dependability of the results of the research study. Korstjens and Moser (2018) found that dependability involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation, and recommendations of the study that all are supported by the data received from all participants of the study. The

interview process with the participants was continued until no new information or themes emerged.

Validity

According to Kihn and Ihantola (2015), validity refers to the extent to which conclusions in research give an accurate description or explanation of what happened. Yin (2017) recommended the use of multiple sources of data and techniques to provide enough evidence to answer research questions and increase validity. I conducted structured interviews, document analysis of policies and records, on-site observations, and notate field notes in a reflective journal. According to FitzPatrick (2019) when accessing validity in qualitative research the following criteria are considered: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, and (c) confirmability. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018) credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher. I evaluated attendance records from the department of public works to determine any data and strategies for reducing absenteeism. Korstjens and Moser (2018) stated that transferability refers to results that can be applied to other settings or groups. Connelly (2016) also stated that transferability is about providing a rich and detailed description of the context, location and people studied. Morse (2015) asserted that transferability is essential for someone interested to transfer the original findings to another context, or individuals. According to Amankwaa (2016), transferability is a way of achieving a type of external validity. I also reviewed multiple data sources to gather and produce data and conduct a thematic analysis of all collected data.

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data are based on the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or opinions. I plan to use member checking to improve the confirmability of the findings. Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell and Walter (2016) stated that member checking is about participant or respondent validation. Member checking is used to explore the credibility of results. Therefore, I used member checking to decrease research bias and involve the research participant in checking and confirming the results. Each participant was provided with a copy of the interview transcript. I conducted a member check interview to determine whether the transcript accurately reflects the participants' thoughts during the interview process.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I provided a restatement of the problem statement, an indication of the role of the researcher, participants for the study, and reasoning for using the research method and research design. Section 2 also included information on the population, sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, reliability and validity of the study. In Section 3, I presented the research findings, application to professional practice; implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, reflections, and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. I conducted semistructured interviews with nine leaders from one public works department who possessed at least 1 year of successful experience in using strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Data were collected from the semistructured interviews and a review of the human resources attendance and leave policy. I used NVivo to conduct an analysis of the study participants' responses and human resources attendance and leave policy, which revealed the following themes: (a) collaboration and employee engagement, (b) communication, and (c) organizational culture. These were the main contributors to employee absenteeism in the workplace.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this qualitative single case study was as follows: What effective strategies do public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace? I conducted semistructured interviews with nine leaders from the public works department who successfully used effective strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. I also reviewed organizational documents, which included the human resources attendance and leave policy. After using NVivo to analyze and code the interview data, I discovered three main themes: (a) collaboration and employee engagement, (b) communication, and (c) organizational culture. I assigned codes of P1 to P9 for to maintain participant confidentiality. The themes identified in this study were

related to factors that contribute to employees' reasons for not attending work. Table 1 contains the public works leaders' overall demographic characteristics. The nine participants possessed over 90 years of combined experience working in leadership positions.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Public Works Leaders

Characteristics	Specifics	Quantity
Gender	Female	3
	Male	6
Academic	Doctorate's	0
Degree	Master's	2
	Bachelor's	5
Age	40-49	6
	50-59	3
Years of experience	1-5	2
leadership role	6-10	7

Theme 1: Collaboration and Employee Engagement

The first theme that emerged from the in-depth data analysis was collaboration and employee engagement. P1 commented "that a collaborative work environment that involves employee engagement reduces absenteeism." Osborne and Hammoud (2017) also suggested that organizations that collaborate and engage with their employees experience better customer satisfaction, increased employee productivity, and reduced absenteeism. P2 stated, "We collaborate with the unions who represents the city employees which helps keep them engaged in the workplace." In addition, P2 shared, "There are employees that act as union representatives in each section to help keep open channels of communications with the leadership in the public works department." Nunes, Richmond, Pampel, and Wood (2018) noted that there is an association between

workplace collaboration, employee engagement, and reduced absenteeism that can result in potential cost-savings to employers. P3 advised, “Collaboration and employee engagement is important because the forum allows for leaders to better communicate with their subordinates in the work environment.” P1 stated, “I would like to have more events such as cook-offs and team building contests to help keep the employees motivated which may help with deterring absenteeism in the workplace.” Llorente-Alonso and Topa (2019) suggested that employee engagement is a work-related concept that refers to a pervasive affective-cognitive state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. P4 stated,

> I used a collaborative approach to record absenteeism to address leave abuse with my employees. Whenever one of my employees had a pre-disciplinary hearing I would give them their attendance record to review as a source to get them more engaged in the overall process.

P6 commented, “We always look for reasons on why employees were not coming to work and noticed there was a lack of collaboration with management that did not allow for employee engagement,”

All of the participants implied that collaboration and employee engagement are two factors that are needed in the public works department to ensure more commitment to job satisfaction and organizational success. P4 shared, “We use collaboration as a way to assist the unions that represent our employees in hearings that are subject to disciplinary actions.” P2 claimed, “building a positive work environment allows an employee the chance to focus more on work and can reduce absenteeism in the workplace.” Ritzel,

Kohler and Mann (2017) suggested that a collaborative environment provides avenues for employees to actively interact and share knowledge and skills, in turn fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. In addition, O'Connor and Crowley-Henry (2019) asserted that employers have a moral responsibility to care for their employees, and opportunities for employee engagement form part of the overall package of care. All of the participants throughout the entire interview process continuously talked about the importance of collaboration and employee engagement in the public works department.

Employees and leaders need to understand their roles when collaborating and engaging in the workplace. Collaboration and employee engagement are necessary elements in the workplace. Llorente-Alonso and Topa (2019) found that collaboration and employee engagement aims to change tasks or working conditions in order to ensure either better job performance or higher work-related motivation. Cornwell, Howard-Grenville, and Hampel (2018) suggested that to date, there is preliminary evidence that collaborative partnerships influence the quality of employees' work relationships and in particular areas, such as corporate social responsibility. P8 stated,

> We have interviews with the employee whenever there is a problem with their attendance. I have my staff work with human resources to have disciplinary hearings for any employee that wants to indicate their reasons for using unscheduled leave. This helps with keeping the employees engaged and also indicates that we value their collaboration efforts to work with management.

Osborne and Hammoud (2017) found that employee engagement and human behaviors have a connection to collaboration and the essence of work engagement.

P7 commented, "We overcame barriers in working with the employees to work together in a partnership to adhere to the rules in the attendance and leave policy to help reduce leave abuse." This reflects the ideas of Osborne and Hammoud (2017), who suggested that an employee's level of engagement derives from his or her being able to control personal behaviors and goals. Moreover, P6 asserted, "I feel that overall its always best for our employees to know how the attendance and leave policy works to keep them informed and educated on the process." Llorente-Alonso and Topa (2019) suggested that engagement is a work-related concept which refers to a pervasive affective-cognitive state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. P9 maintained, "We are encouraging the unions that represent our employees to help us with improving collaboration and employee engagement." P9 also stated, "The previous attendance and leave policy was flawed and had to be revised to help build a more positive collaboration and relationship with the employees." Bickerton and Miner (2019) asserted that work engagement is a persistent, positive affective–motivational state of fulfilment in employees characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Shanock et al. (2019) suggested that human resource professionals often promote favorable treatment of employees (praise, fairness, supportive supervision, and developmental opportunities) as a way to enhance employee well-being, decrease turnover, and encourage job engagement and better performance.

When employees are engaged, they are more motivated to be at work. Chen (2019) suggested that employee engagement means that employees are energetic and mentally resilient at work, dedication means that employees embrace their jobs deeply and enthusiastically, and absorption reflects that employees concentrate on the work happily and absorbedly. P3 affirmed, "The collaboration and engagement process allows leadership with an opportunity to advise our employees about pros and cons of the attendance and leave policy." P6 noted that "all of the managers use the attendance and leave policy which includes a 7-step process to help reduce absenteeism in the workplace." Martinussen, Kaiser, Adolfsen, Patras, and Richardsen (2017) asserted that good collaboration between employees and their leaders can be linked to beneficial consequences for the partnerships, which could lead to better outcomes and increased job satisfaction.

Leaders should ensure that their followers are engaged in the workplace. Matthews, Stanley, and Davidson (2018) found that employees could be disengaged if they were distracted from work because of a challenge in their personal circumstances. Similarly, P2 stated, "We do have employees that have personal issues in their personal lives that sometimes cause them to be disengaged in the workplace." P3 also shared, "My employees are happy most of the time because they enjoy their work." P5 suggested that "it is important for a manager to offer mentoring to their employees to help reduce disengagement in the workplace." Brewington and Darko (2020) found that having a positive organizational culture is vital to the success of any organization and can enhance employee productivity, engagement, and retention as well as strengthen relationships

with partners and other stakeholders. All of the participants agreed that engaged employees who embrace the attendance leave policy will help reduce absenteeism in the workplace.

Correlation to the Literature

The findings specified in Theme 1 aligned with the findings of Kwon and Park (2019) human resource practices on collaboration and employee engagement defined as the as the harnessing of organization members selves to their work roles. Kwon and Park specified that these type of leaders allow their employees to express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Participant (P2) noted that, “all employees to should be able to express themselves whenever they are collaborating and engaging in within the workplace”. “I also consider my relationships with my employees to be similar to a partnership as we both are vested in working together”. “If employees feel like they are appreciated they will be more engaged to come to work”. P2’s comments confirms Kwon and Park findings that choose to collaborate and engage with their leaders will result in a positive workforce and reduce absenteeism. Kwon and Park (2019) also found that employee engagement benefits employees in terms of a variety of positive attitudes and organizational outcomes, including personal initiative and learning behaviors. Leaders will benefit from employees that collaborate with them as they will be more engaged in the workplace.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 1 supports Burns (1978) transformational leadership theory that leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’

needs by allowing them to engage and collaborate by aligning the objectives and goals of the followers. Bass (1985) found that transformational leaders, are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) suggested that dedicated and meaningful work enables employees to realize how valuable they are within the organization and makes them engaged and more willing to collaborate with their leaders. Bass (1985) found that transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. Bake (2019) noted that effective transformational leadership can motivate employees to engage and help create an environment where they feel valued and wanted. Therefore, when a leader empowers their employees to engage and collaborate the interaction can result in positive and influential outcomes thus reducing absenteeism in the workplace.

Theme 2: Communication

The second theme that emerged from analysis of the data was communication. Kelly and MacDonald (2019) found that workplace communication can have lasting impacts on employee psychological and physical health. P6 stated, that "Communication has been a serious problem with some of the management teams and employees". P9 indicated "one of the problems with the communication is that some leaders in the organization are still going by the old attendance and leave policy to address absenteeism". P9 also stated, that "The old attendance had separate policies for tardiness and absenteeism which caused a problem for some managers to understand". Mazzei, Butera and Quaratino (2019) suggested that role of employee communication is crucial to

configure an inclusive employee relations approach conducive to employee voice, suggestions, concerns or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational functioning.

Leaders that communicate effectively inspire their employees to remain committed to their organization. Walden, Jung, and Westerman (2017) found that open communication strengthens employees' commitment to their organization and helps reduce the likelihood that they will look for new employment opportunities outside of the organization. Giudici and Filimonau (2019) suggested that managers represent the most crucial source of information for employees in organizations while creating effective internal communication is paramount to stay competitive and cultivate an organizational culture with a collective mission and vision. Kim (2018) asserted that employees' communication behaviors can have particular internal and external impacts through various kinds of social networks, the misinterpretation of organizational messages can make a crisis worse endangering the organization. P7stated, "We do have am human resources representation for each unit of the public works department and they are required to communicate with the employees on a regular basis". P3 stated, "Employees who abuse the leave policy sometimes blame their reason for being absent on a bad communications with their manager".

Employees look to their leaders for direction and communication. Kim (2018) found that effective communication reduces uncertainty and ambiguity by filling the communication gap between management and employees; to achieve this, organizational management should understand employees as one of the important strategic

constituencies. Slijepcevic, Bovan, and Radojevic (2018) argued that communication is important for all the members in the organization, it is extremely important to know how to communicate with managers, and in what way with employees. Bang and Midelfart (2017) suggested that management teams typically communicate to their employees to set overall goals, strategies, and priorities and make decisions vital to the organization. Participant (P3) stated, “I feel that the when senior management allowed each area in the public works department to enforce the attendance and leave policy it caused a lot communication issues”. “Once the process was centralized with the human resource department managers could enforce the attendance and leave policy more effectively”. Bang and Midelfart (2017) found that when leaders communicate better its members are more eager to discuss issues, solve problems, give one another advice, and monitor ongoing processes within the organization.

Leaders that provide effective communications to their employees will be better positioned to be successful. Maria (2019) found that effective interpersonal communication will succeed if it creates good effects, such as understanding, changing attitudes, better relationships will foster trust and openness, and can foster enthusiasm in employees so as to foster high work motivation. P2 stated, “Once our upper management realized there were flaws in the attendance and leave policy they had it revised”. The new attendance and leave policy consists of 7 steps that details the sick and absence abuse section of the attendance and leave policy. P9 stated, that “The new attendance and leave policy contains effective strategies for reducing absenteeism in the workplace”. Mazzei, Butera, and Quaratino (2019) found that employee communication sustains people in

feeling a sense of belonging to the organization, builds a culture of transparency between managers and employees. P2 stated, “We now have individual time keepers that can effectively keep track of attendance records that can be communicated to any employee that abuses the sick and absence section of the policy”. “I also communicated the revised leave policy to each of my employees and had them sign off on a memorandum of understanding”.

Leaders must provide effective communications for the stakeholders in the workplace. Oliveri and McCulla (2019) suggested that workplace communication involves more than grammar and includes the coherent use of argumentative or rhetorical stances to recognize the conventions for relating well with members within a particular community. Mazzei, Butera, and Quaratino (2019) found that effective communicating allows employees to share information and create meanings, to share ideas and opinions with supervisors about their roles and objectives. P8 stated, “My employees perform the waste collections for the public works department and whenever one of them calls off from work they are required to communicate it to their supervisor and co-workers”. “If there is a break down in communications it will affect the operations of the department”. Hoeven, Miller, Peper, and Dulk (2016) found that co-workers may be pleased that policies exist, but they express annoyance at having to carry the workloads of absent employees. P8 further stated that, “When my employees call off from work it also causes negative attitudes with their co-workers because they have do more work to cover the absences”.

Beck (2016) argued that when employee preferences are understood, managers are in a better position to cater their communications to build relationships. Kelly and MacDonald (2019) found that when communication fosters this type of psychological connection (i.e., solidarity) between supervisors and subordinates, subordinates have more positive intrinsic work dispositions, including higher motivation, lower burnout, and higher job satisfaction. P5 stated, "Whenever one of my employees is having attendance issues I will schedule a counseling session with them to see if there is lack communication". "Most of my employees come to work as scheduled but there are a few of them that abuses the attendance and leave policy". Slijepcevic, Bovan, and Radojevic (2018) found that the achievement of organizational communication is measured by the degree of success in guiding activities, i.e. motivating all participants to behave in a certain way. Desmidt and George (2016) argued that the focus on employee communication satisfaction is predicated on the assumption that organizational satisfaction is a derivative of communication effectiveness and is a useful measure of an organization's communication performance and quality. Slijepcevic et al. (2018) suggested that as communication is important for all the members in the organization, it is extremely important to know how to communicate with managers, and in what way with employees.

Iacob and Badina (2017) found that communication is present at every moment of the personal and professional life. Mazzei, Butera, and Quaratino (2019) suggested that the role of employee communication is crucial to configure an inclusive employee relations approach conducive to employee voice, communication of ideas, suggestions, or

concerns or opinions about work-related issues. P7 stated, “While most of my employees understands the attendance and leave policy I still allow them time to voice their concerns”. “I believe that effective communications with my employees is vital to our organizational success”. P3 stated, that “a good communications with our employees helps us maintain honestly and trust which helps reduce absenteeism”. Niniek and Lantara (2019) found that the organizational communication climate serves as a connector between individual employees and organizations.

Braun, Hernandez, Kirchner, Stegmann, and Dick (2019) suggested that communication is a key component in coordinating and leading team members toward a common goal, leaders use roughly 80% of their working time for interactions with coworkers and employees. Kang and Sung (2017) found that communication behaviors of employees who interact with the public are critical because employees are perceived as a credible source of information regarding the organization. Most of the employees that work in the public works department interacts with the general public on a daily basis. P8stated, “All of my employees have to work in the public and they have to deal with people every day”. “They normally work in teams and there is usually a team that addresses any concerns”. “The key to being successful is knowing how to communicate and motivate my employees”. P4stated, “We must invest time in coaching our workers so that they know how to be effective on the job”. “This also includes having honest conversations with my employees about their work perform especially when their performance reviews are due”.

Correlation to the Literature

The findings specified in Theme 2 aligned with the findings of Kelly and MacDonald (2019) human resource practices on communication in the workplace. Kelly and MacDonald (2019) suggested that subordinates who feel comfortable communicating with their supervisor and who believe that their ideas are valued are more content than subordinates who are missing such a relationship with their supervisor. P5 noted that, "Communication is very important when you are in leadership". "I have weekly staff meetings with my subordinate supervisors to go over the tasking's that needs to be completed in the unit". "I also have an open door for anyone that wants come and talk with me about any concerns or issues". Kelly and MacDonald (2019) found that leadership styles that promote upward and downward communication have been shown to foster a plethora of positive outcomes within the workplace, group collaborations, and team contexts. P5 comments confirmed Kelly and MacDonald's findings in that there is a positive connection when leaders communicate effectively with their subordinates in the workplace. In addition, Kelly and MacDonald (2019) found that individuals who desire to be more effective leaders and for organizations that have training programs dedicated to leadership development, understanding the antecedents of effective leadership, grounded in communication, is essential. Leaders that embrace communication will have a better relationship with their followers to include reducing absenteeism in the workplace.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 2 supports Burns (1978) transformational leadership theory that leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by allowing them to engage, collaborate, and communicate by aligning the objectives and goals of the followers. Burns (1978) transforming leadership is moral action and entails leaders and followers moving up some scale of values and human development where followers may become leaders. Bass and Riggio (2006) found that transformational leaders, are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Eisenberg, Post, and DiTomaso (2019) suggested that transformational leadership influences followers by appealing to their individuality and by using verbal as well as nonverbal communication. Majeed, Jamshed, Nazri, and Mustamil (2019) asserted that the theory of transformational leadership argues that leader practices can empower workers to take an interest in performing extra-role behavior with zeal and enthusiasm. Bass and Riggio (2006) suggested that transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work. Conceptually, the transformational leadership theory is based on the followers being motivated by the actions of their leaders in the workplace.

Theme 3: Organizational Culture

The first theme that emerged from the in-depth data analysis was organizational culture. Di Stefano, Scrima, and Parry (2019) found that a complex phenomenon that characterizes life in organizations is the manifestation of behaviors that betray the

fiduciary relationship between employee and organization. Kava et al. (2019) suggested that culture refers to the basic assumptions and norms shared by members within an organization, while climate is defined as the shared perceptions and meaning given to practices and policies within an organization. All of the participants had expressed how they felt about the current work culture within the public works department. P3 stated that, “We have some employees that have been with public works department over 20 years and they feel that should not adhere to the new attendance and leave policy”. “These employees are usually set in their ways and are not open to change in the workplace”.

Leaders should ensure that their employees are comfortable in their work related roles. Erhardt, Martin-Rios, and Heckscher (2016) found that in order for organizational members to fit with organizational culture (i.e., by doing the right thing), there is great pressure to learn and conform to these rituals. Guillaume and Austin (2016) suggested that the most important thing in understanding the influences of a strong and functional culture is to determine what problems face an organization or industry and how leadership value enactment affects the institutional workforce. Kartolo and Kwantes (2019) asserted that organizational culture varies, there is a general consensus in the literature that organizational culture reflects, and is shaped by, values, attitudes and expectations that are held in common by members within the organization.

P9 noted, “There is definitely an issue with the organizational culture as some employees are finding ways to take advantage of the attendance and leave policy”. P5stated, “Some of the employees have found ways to abuse the Family and Medical

Leave Act (FMLA) and this is causing some staffing issues". According to Carter (2020) the FMLA law mandates that an eligible employee may take twelve weeks of unpaid annual leave to care for a sick spouse, child, parent, or recover from a debilitating illness. P5noted that "The FMLA law is for any employee that has a serious medical condition". "However, some employees that do not have a serious medical condition are finding doctors that will give them a medical excuse to misuse the FMLA law". P3 stated, "I feel that issues with the FMLA policy is because of the current organizational culture". While the attendance and leave policy is effective for reducing absenteeism the FMLA law has guidelines that protect employees against disciplinary actions.

Employees are considered part of the organizational culture. Lopez-Martin and Topa (2019) found that organizational culture is a set of core values, assumptions, and norms that is shared by the members of an organization to generate an environment that has an influence on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Hartnell, Ou, Kinicki, Choi, and Karam (2019) suggested that organizational culture is an important predictor of organizational effectiveness, but it is also part of an organizational system that consists of highly interdependent elements such as strategy, structure, leadership. Yu and Lee (2020) specifically argued that most public organizations share values and beliefs and socially constructed patterns of action that guide the behavior of their employees, resulting in their unique organizational culture. Hartnell et al. (2019) found that there are four culture quadrants: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy represent core values that prioritize fundamental organizational goals and articulate preferred means to attain them.

P3 stated, “I feel that the public works department has a clan culture like work environment”. According to Hartnell et al. (2019) clan cultures focus on coordinating employees’ interrelationships through encouraging participation, cooperation, and collaboration, and prioritizing employees’ development. P1 stated, “I think the organizational culture in my department is more like an adhocracy culture because we believe in being flexible and transparent”. According to Hartnell et al. (2019) adhocracy culture combines flexibility and discretion with external focus and differentiation. Participant (P6) noted that, “we have several management layers in our department and I believe that we have a hierarchy culture type of work environment”. According to Hartnell et al. (2019) hierarchy culture combines internal focus and integration with stability and control. P6 also noted, “Our senior management likes to give directives from the top that will enhance and stabilize leadership at all levels”.

Leaders should establish an organizational culture that involves support and commitment. Esaki (2020) found that in organizational cultures organizations need to create containment, support, structure, involvement, and validation. Galdikiene et. al. (2019) suggested that organizational climate is seen as the way the members of these organizations perceive and experience the environment in which they carry out their everyday work. Di Stefano, Scrima, and Parry (2019) found that culture is manifested in the nature of the exchange patterns that emerge between employees, norms, and values employees usually invoke to orient themselves to others and to the organization. P1 reported, “The managers in the public works department all have different leadership styles that can influence the culture of the organization”. P6 noted, “The attendance and

leave policy was revised to correspond with the beliefs, core values, and organizational culture".

Zhou, Chen, and Liu (2019) emphasized that an organization with a rational culture emphasizes order and the external environment, and focuses on organizational productivity, goal fulfilment, achievement, and performance, to promote output maximization. Olejarski, Potter, and Morrison (2019) found that culture, public-sector politics, and public performance operate together to produce learning. P7 noted, "The current culture can sometimes be a learning experience for new employees that begin working in the department". "A lot of the work that we do is outside regardless of the weather conditions and the new employees usually have to make adjustments". "We engage our employees by allowing them to give their feedback and make contributions to the overall work culture". Lee and Jang (2020) specified that organizational culture is a force that transforms members and has a strong influence on their behavior, attitude, and performance. Lopez-Martin and Topa (2019) suggested that organizational culture has been linked to employees' performance and an organization's effectiveness and influence on the relationship between job demands, resources, and employees' outcomes

Leaders should strive for providing a professional work environment. Susca (2019) found that decisions fostered by an unhealthy culture can disable the defenses of the best safety management systems and programs. Foucreault, Ollier-Malaterre, and Menard (2018) specified that organizational work–life culture comprises of three components: (a) perceived time demands, (b) perceived consequences of the use of work–life programs, and (c) perceived managerial support. Maryono (2020) suggested

that organizational culture is instrumental in maximizing working organization to support the employees in order to work better in an organization. Brown, Kim, and Faerman (2019) implied that work-life culture as the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of an employee's work and private life.

P9 reported that "The work cultures in the public works department usually change when a new mayor is elected". The current head leader has been in office since 2006 and they have instilled a work culture that incorporates the beliefs and values of the organization". P5 noted that "Head leader is a very professional leader that leads by example". "The head leader is an elected senior official that has to maintain a diverse working environment that consists of employees with different ethical backgrounds". In addition, employees have to feel comfortable working with their supervisors to maintain a leader and follower relationship. Maryono (2020) suggested that a strong culture leads the employees to do a better job, therefore every employee has to understand and implement the culture. Zhou, Chen, and Liu (2019) found that Organizations with a developmental culture focus on pursuing growth, resource acquisition, creativity, and external environment adaptability.

Leaders should manage the expectations and perceptions involving work culture. Foucreault, Ollier-Malaterre, and Menard (2018) suggested that perceptions regarding an organizational culture are based on formal policies (flextime), practices (replying to colleagues' emails in the evening), and expectations (taking work home) in employees' work environment. Canning (2020) found that Organizational mindsets will influence

perceptions of a company's cultural norms (collaboration, innovation, and ethical behavior), which will, in turn, mediate employees' organizational trust and commitment to the organization. P6 stated, "The human resources department provides all employees with a yearly leadership survey to measures the organizational culture and work environment". "This allows the employees with an opportunity to give their input on their entire of chain of leadership". P2 reported that "some employees use the leadership survey to criticize their leaders in a negative way". "The results of the leadership survey is distributed by the human resources department to all of the leaders in the organization".

Saad and Abbas (2018) argued that organizational culture at its peak becomes a source of competitive advantage for organizations, since it affects commitment of people at work, and it arises from the underlying assumptions, beliefs, norms, values and attitudes. Silva, Castro, Dos-Santos, and Neto (2018) found that satisfaction includes a multi-factorial feature that is reflected in many elements of the organizational environment, such as compensation, organizational climate, relationships with colleagues and superiors. P1 stated, "The public works department leadership promotes diversity and career growth to keep the employees engaged in the work place". "Overall, the hierarchy at city hall has provided all leaders with the opportunity to contribute to keeping the work culture positive and steady". Di Stefano, Scrima, and Parry (2019) specified that organizational values may underpin the employee–organization relationship, providing a frame in which the relationship employee–organization develops. All of the participants

in this study indicated that leaders should have a good working relationship with their employees that is beneficial to both parties in the workplace.

Correlation to the Literature

The findings specified in Theme 3 aligned with the findings of Hartnell, Ou, Kinicki, Choi, and Karam's (2019) human resource practices on strategy, structure, culture, leadership, and high performance work practices (HPWPs). Hartnell et al. (2019) found that high performance work practices (HPWPs) penalizes for failure, rewards to bind their members into the system, norms and values to justify and stimulate required activities, and authority control and direct organizational cultural behavior. P8 noted that, "There is a system in place that rewards employees for superior work performance and disciplinary actions for those who fail to meet expected work standards". P8's comments confirmed Hartnell et al. (2019) findings that there is incentives for employees to earn and achieve if they do what is expected of them while at work. In addition, Hartnell et al. (2019) confirmed that organizational culture is an important predictor of organizational effectiveness, but it is also part of an organizational system that consists of highly interdependent elements such as strategy, structure, and leadership. These elements allow leaders to engage and motivate their employees to higher performances thus reducing absenteeism in the workplace.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 3 supports Burns (1978) transformational leadership theory that motivates followers by appealing to higher ideals and moral values. Bass and Riggio (2006) found that transformational leaders enhance the self-concepts of followers and encourage

followers' personal and collective identification with both the leader's and the organization's goals and objectives. Liu, Wang, and Chen (2019) suggested that transformational leaders motivate and encourage their subordinates to perform beyond their expectations and promote employees to form autonomous motivation by fulfilling their psychological needs related to self-determination. In this study, I found that public works departmental leaders' human resources management practices, such as empowerment, engagement, incentives, and rewards, inspire and motivate their employee's job satisfaction, and job performance. Perreault, Baker, Cohen, and Blanchard (2020) found that transformational leaders stimulate teams to attain greater goals, cultivating trust, cooperation, and inspiring others to perform beyond what is expected of them through the nurturing of individual development and empowerment.

Farahnak, Ehrhart, Torres, and Aarons (2020) suggested that leaders influence subordinates' attitudes through their leadership style, specifically through transformational leadership behaviors that encourage the acceptance of change and innovation. Brown, Brown, and Nandedkar (2019) emphasized that transformational leadership contains four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Organizations must have incentives and rewards in place to justify employee performance in the workplace. Brown et al. (2019) found that the transformational leadership theory is associated with core values, goal setting, incentives, and rewards are effective for enhancing organizational culture.

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Understanding employee absenteeism and the issues that may better equip public works department leaders with the knowledge and processes to establish effective strategies to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Buzeti (2020) specified that employees who perform routine and repetitive (the same) jobs with a low level of autonomy and responsibility, and a low possibility to make and create decisions, are more inclined to be absent from work. Public works department leaders have an opportunity to reduce employee absenteeism by having effective attendance and leave policy strategies.

The participants that participated in the study offered suggestions and processes that could allow public works leaders the opportunity to adopt leave and attendance strategies that reduce absenteeism. Geydar, Arumugam, Kuppusamy, and Singh (2020) found that any organization nowadays, whether large or small, private or public, rural or urban, faces the phenomenon of employee absence. Public works department leaders and other business leaders may apply the findings from this study to help reduce absenteeism by establishing a collaborative and engaging work environment that promotes empowerment, incentives, rewards, and professional development opportunities.

Participants in the study stated that a collaborative and empowerment environment is an effective strategy to reduce absenteeism. Public works department leaders use effective strategies to reduce absenteeism and improve employee morale, collaboration, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. The participants reported that

collaboration, employee engagement, and organizational culture increases employee morale and empowerment reduces absenteeism. P1 stated that “leaders collaborate with employees to establish a sense of comradery to improve motivation to reduce absenteeism”. P2 noted that “employee incentives, employee recognition, and rewards reduce absenteeism”. P3 reported that “Empowerment and job satisfaction improves employee morale and job effectiveness”.

In this study, I found that leadership practices could improve and add value to the public works department effectiveness and professional practices in the local government sector. Leaders may use the findings of this study as a resource to explore new literature about the execution of professional practices in the public works department reduce absenteeism. Public works leaders could improve employee engagement and effectiveness by (a) increasing employee development and job satisfaction (b) increase employee engagement and collaboration opportunities, and (c) empowerment of employees in the workplace. Findings from this study support the need for effective strategies to reduce absenteeism. Geydar et al. (2020) found that because of absenteeism a company losses approximately eight days a year, which is equivalent to 3% of working time in a year. Given the burden of the employee absenteeism issue, previous studies support the recommendation for the public works department to implement effective strategies for reducing absenteeism.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential for public works department leaders to explore the main causes that are related to employee absenteeism.

Decreasing absenteeism may reduce the local government's related costs and expenses thereby increasing resources for supporting social initiatives, individuals, and communities. Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, and Mair (2016) suggested that the opportunity for positive social change is evident when public works department leaders reduce employee absenteeism and use additional funds to improve the standards of professional standards for the stakeholders. Dixon, Wales, Pennington, and Calega (2019) found that improving the effectiveness of the public works department may reduce employee absenteeism and improve job satisfaction. Using the findings of this study, public works department leaders may achieve social change by establishing effective attendance and leave policy strategies to reduce absenteeism and improve management effectiveness, which benefits the employees, stakeholders, and the community.

Additionally, the participants indicated that social change initiatives keep employees engaged and motivated to come to work. Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, and Mair (2016) noted that positive social change are expressed in terms of tangible improvements to individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, or societies, as the finding could affect social change and behavior. Wittmayer et al. (2019) suggested that social initiatives can enhance transformative leadership strategies that will provide employees with social innovation and professional development opportunities. Kelly (2018) emphasized that organizations that provide more professional development opportunities for their employees can stimulate, develop, and progress their employees increase for knowledge and productivity. Garanina, Andronova, Lashmaykina, Maltseva, and Polyakov (2017) suggested that the professional development can be seen as the

desire of increasing the level of self-efficacy and the professional competence. Hager et al. (2017) found that the positive impact of enhanced employee engagement and professional development has been well described and linked to many human resources goals to include increased retention and decreased absenteeism. Public works department leaders that embrace effective human resources strategies, such as employee engagement and professional development opportunities, may serve as a solution to reduce absenteeism and provide social benefits to meet the needs of employees, stakeholders, and the community.

Recommendations for Action

Employees value organizations that are committed to supporting their well-being. Gupta, Agarwal, and Khatri (2016) suggested that the perceptions of employees that the organization cares about as well as values their service and contributions could lead to positive employee relationships and behaviours. Vardaman et al. (2016) found that organizational commitment holds that perceptions of organizational support to which an employee believes the organization values an individual's contribution and cares about their well-being elicits positive and behavioral responses to include decreasing absenteeism. Public works department leaders and other business leaders should pay attention to the results of this study and consider using the strategies to improve on, collaboration, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and workplace recognition to reduce absenteeism. These strategies may decrease employee absenteeism and improve leadership effectiveness. Based on the results of this study, I propose the following

recommendations for action, which may lead to reduce absenteeism in the public works department:

1. Build collaborative and supportive work environments. This recommendation for action means that public works department leaders believe that a collaborative and supportive organizational culture increases employees' work performance and job satisfaction and reduces employee absenteeism. Haque, Fernando, and Caputi (2019) found that leading responsibly is likely to promote a collaborative and positive work environment, increased organizational commitment, and reduced absenteeism in the workplace. Public works department leaders should provide their employees with effective leadership and organizational support to obtain a good working relationship that offers job satisfaction and organizational growth.
2. Implement opportunities for professional development. This recommendation for action means that public works department leaders should promote job enhancement programs to the employees to include professional development and employee engagement. Huang, Hung, and Hsu (2020) asserted that professional development includes organization, education and training, as a part of human resources, could positively affect the promotion of employees, job morale, interpersonal relationship, and the acquisition of professional knowledge.

Organizations that promote professional learning opportunities to their organizations will enhance the professional development of their employees.

3. Implement performance incentives and rewards. This recommendation for action means that public works department employees are regularly rewarded for their job performance, work efforts, and achieved goals, which leads to higher employee retention and reduced absenteeism. Rewards and goal setting incentives are necessary to recognize employees for their work efforts. Law (2016) found that there are various types of rewards such as retention bonus, on the spot awards, holiday bonus, non-cash award, and culture-specific bonuses that can keep employees motivated and engaged in the workplace. Public works department leaders must recognize their employees for their individual time and efforts. Gunarso and Moeins (2019) suggested that awards are considered to be useful, at least for their short-term effects because there is merit for the recognition given to the recipients for employee retention and to decrease absenteeism.

By implementing effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism, public works department leaders may be able improve employee relations and better serve the community and local government. I intend to publish the findings from this study in various academic business journals and disseminate the results in scholarly literature,

conferences, and workshops related to employee absenteeism in public works department. I recommend that public works department leaders review the findings of this study and implement these strategies in their organizations.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Although the findings of this study expanded my knowledge of the existing literature on absenteeism in the workplace, public works department leaders identified various reasons that employees call off from work. The findings of this study indicated the need for further research. Because this study was delimited to the public works department, future qualitative researchers should explore other strategies leaders consider effective in reducing absenteeism in other geographical locations.

Recommendations for future research should address some of the limitations of this study. The limitations included in this study was only having access to the leaders in the public works department. I conducted the study at one location located in Ohio, which limited the generalizability of the findings. Future researchers should consider increasing the sample size of this study. In addition, sampling local, state, and federal government organizations should enable future researchers to collect in-depth data on absenteeism in the workplace. Interviewing leaders at the other government organizations should allow future researchers the opportunity to explore other different perspectives on absenteeism. In addition, future researchers should consider studying leaders in other business sectors to determine if the findings can apply to other industries.

Furthermore, future researchers should consider using other research methodologies such as quantitative and mixed methods examine the relationship between absenteeism and other variables, such as (a) collaboration and employee engagement, (b) communication, and (c) organizational culture were the main contributors to employee absenteeism in the workplace. By conducting other studies to examine these variables, future researchers could provide local government leaders with new statistical data that may reduce absenteeism in the workplace.

Reflections

Completing the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) was a very time consuming process but enriching. I struggled mainly with balancing academics and working a full-time job. However, I made my academics a priority and spent many days doing homework. My daughter, siblings, family, and friends supported my ambitions to completing this study. During the process I learned a lot about the elements of the qualitative research methodology and case study processes to evaluate existing literature relating to my research topic. The knowledge that I gained from completing this study helped me explore strategies public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace.

In my interactions with public works department leaders, I learned that local governments use effective strategies from the attendance leave policy to reduce absenteeism. Securing participants was problematic mainly due to the inconvenience of contacting organizations to volunteer their time and resources for this study. I was the primary data collection instrument and I developed a very professional relationship with

the participants to conduct a more comprehensive and transparent interview. All of the participants were very eager and forthcoming to participate in this study and provided detailed information to the interview questions.

Conclusion

Nunes, Richmond, Pampel, and Wood (2018) found that when unplanned absences occur, employers incur direct replacement worker compensation, overtime costs and indirect lost productive time of coworkers and supervisors costs. Brummelhuis, Johns, Lyons, and Hoeven (2016) asserted that absenteeism is an employee's failure to report for work can be seen as deviant behavior as the employee falls short in their responsibilities resulting in reduced organizational productivity. Ticharwa, Cope, and Murray (2019) suggested that strategies that reduce the number of absent employees can benefit organizations immensely. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective strategies that public works department leaders use to reduce absenteeism in the workplace.

I used the NVivo software to code, organize, and conduct an analysis of the study participants' responses and human resources attendance and leave policy which revealed the following themes, which were: (a) collaboration and employee engagement, (b) communication, and (c) organizational culture. The findings of this study aligned with the existing literature and Burns (1978) transformational theory relating to strategies on reducing absenteeism. Recommendations for action include (a) build collaborative and supportive work environments (b) implement opportunities for professional development. (c) implement performance incentives and rewards. These strategies may help public

works department leaders improve leadership effectiveness and reduce absenteeism in the workplace.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

What you will do	What you will say
I will introduce the interview and set the stage	Script: Interview questions
Each participant will be given a hard copy of the informed consent letter for their records.	I will thank the participants for their time and agreeing to participate in my research project. I will introduce myself and explain that I am collecting data for my study.
I will turn on the audio recorder and note the date, time and location	I will share a little about my study and background of the problem.
Each participant will be given the required time to fully answer questions (including follow-up and probing questions).	Consent to participate- I will explain that participation is voluntary and that the participate can leave the study at any time.
I will ask probing questions whenever necessary if participants do not mention certain elements on specific questions.	Next Steps: After this interview I will take a few days to transcribe and interpret the data and I will meet you again for member checking procedures to assist with enhancing the reliability and validity of the data.