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High School Administrators' Perspectives on Reducing Chronic Absenteeism Among African American Male Adolescents

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

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by

Torrie S. Walker

MA, Bowie State University, 2011

BS, Virginia State University, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Educational Administration and Leadership

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February 2024

Abstract

The research problem for this study was that school administrators in an East Coast urban public school district in the United States inconsistently implemented leadership strategies to reduce the chronic absences of African American male high school students. Chronic absenteeism rates had led to decreased graduation rates and higher drug use and school dropout rates in the district. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore high school administrators' perspectives on implementing situational theory strategies to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students. Hersey and Blanchard's theory of situational leadership served as the conceptual framework. A purposeful sample of 10 high school administrators with two or more years of experience in their current school and membership on their school's attendance team participated in semistructured interviews. Thematic analysis featuring open coding was applied to the interview responses. Three themes—building relationships, establishing a support system, and communicating with students—encapsulated participants' recommendations for making African American male adolescents want to attend school. These findings could contribute to positive social change by highlighting the potential for urban public high school administrators to use situational leadership strategies to maintain daily attendance among African American male high school students. Doing so may reduce chronic absenteeism, which may promote African American male adolescents' academic and postgraduation success.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my family, who provided me with support and encouragement to continue the journey to complete my doctoral research. To my husband, Kevin, I would not have persisted without your love, support, patience, and encouragement to keep pressing onward. You were my most prominent advocate and cheerleader. You pushed me to be able to complete this lifelong goal. To my three children—Markos, Lyndsea, and Kevin Jr. —thank you for letting me have my space to work to meet my goal.

I also dedicate this study to my parents, Charlie and Edna Brown, for instilling in me the importance of having a good education, holding me to high expectations, and being proud of the work that I do for students each day.

Then, I must dedicate this study to my grandmother, Marian L. Brown; my aunt, Dorothy Johnson; and my faithful church member Bettie Browder. All three women are no longer here and are truly missed. To my grandmother, you were always here for me to talk to, and I genuinely miss you. I did not know I could continue this journey when you passed away. To my aunt, you stated that you did not understand why I continued to go to school, and you did not think you would call me "Dr." Then, Ms. Browder, you were the first to call me "Dr."; your words each Sunday at church encouraged me to start and complete this process.

Last, to all the family, friends, church members, and former co-workers who knew I was on this journey and kept me in your prayers. I greatly appreciate you remembering me.

Acknowledgments

I honor, praise, and give glory to God for helping me research, write, and complete this work at Walden University. God gave me the ability and strength to accomplish this lifelong goal. I want to take this time to acknowledge, thank, and show my appreciation to my chair, Dr. Rob Flanders, and committee member, Dr. Cheryl Burleigh, for providing support and expertise while I completed this work. I am genuinely grateful for the conferences, emails, and text messages that gave me the feedback I needed to achieve my goal. Words cannot express my gratitude for your wisdom, guidance, and constant communication. Thank you for your time, especially when I sent late-night texts and emails.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The United States Department of Education (ED, 2019) has characterized chronic student absenteeism as a hidden educational crisis (see also Weinberger & Forbush, 2016). Chronic absence refers to students missing an extended number of classes, either excused or unexcused. School absenteeism is a pervasive problem that affects an estimated 14% to 15% of American students (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent in the early and later school grades, with peaks at the high school level, where about 25% of all schools serving Grades 9–12 are chronically absent at extreme levels (Attendance Works, 2017). The literature shows that students who are not regular school attendees suffer short-term and long-term consequences (Gottfried, 2015). Absenteeism in the early grades is associated with lower academic achievement in later grades and high school dropout (Chang & Romero, 2008). Students who attend school regularly have higher academic achievement than students with high absences (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Chronic absenteeism and truancy or dropping out of school can have many long-term adverse effects. When students are repeatedly absent from school, they miss meaningful learning and developmental opportunities that negatively affect their future outcomes (London et al., 2016). Longitudinal studies have found associations between chronic absenteeism and lower levels of academic achievement, employment problems, convictions, aggression, substance abuse, and other adjustment problems in adulthood (Gottfried, 2015; Patnode et al., 2018; Rocque et al., 2017). Youths dropping out of school experience more chronic diseases, substance abuse, mental health concerns, and

early death (Olshansky et al., 2012). Students who attend school regularly can succeed in their future professional lives through work-related skills such as persistence, problem-solving, and working with others to accomplish a goal (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). As this research shows, regular school attendance is essential for students' academic achievement, language, and social development.

Chronic absenteeism is a national issue that cuts across urbanicity and demographic groups (Patnode et al., 2018). However, urban and high-poverty schools have the highest baseline absenteeism rates. Urban areas reporting high poverty report that up to one third of high school students are chronically absent (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Schools where most students (75% or more) live in poverty are more likely to experience high levels of chronic absenteeism (Chang et al., 2018). U.S. urban areas had a graduation rate of 61% compared to a 75% graduation rate in the suburbs, in 2018-19 (Reyes, 2020).

There are also racial differences in U.S. school attendance and dropout rates. Black youth drop out at a higher-than-average rate of 8.2%, compared to 4.3% of White youth (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The high dropout rate is concerning because African American high school male students who regularly attend school have higher academic success, standardized test scores, graduation averages, university entrance rates, and job opportunities (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In the urban school district that was the focus of this study, African American high school male students had a higher average of chronic absenteeism than White male students.

Absenteeism is a part of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) school quality rating. Policymakers and educators nationally have been trying to find strategies and interventions to reduce chronic absenteeism rates in schools. School leaders in the East Coast district use chronic absenteeism as an accountability metric for their ESSA rating, as seen on the school's Maryland State Report Card (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019). However, they, like high school administrators throughout the United States, have found it challenging to address chronic absenteeism.

The findings of this research may clarify how the leaders of this East Coast urban public school district can address the issue of chronic absenteeism in African American male high schoolers. The results from this study may help school administrators better understand how situational leadership behaviors can be used to decrease chronic absenteeism for African American high school males in urban public school districts. At the time of this study, there were over 25 comprehensive high schools in this urban public school district. The findings of this research could reveal new approaches to decrease the chronic absenteeism rate in similar high schools. The situational leadership theory behaviors of delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing might benefit similar high schools facing chronic absenteeism, especially those in urban areas that serve a high percentage of African American male high school students.

This study addresses a gap in the literature on high school administrators' situational leadership behaviors to decrease chronic absenteeism in African American male high school students. Although principals who decrease absences may not excel at increasing student test scores and high-stakes accountability measures, such as supervisor

ratings (Bartanen, 2020), they play an important role in encouraging students to attend school. High school administrators may gain insight on how to determine which situational leadership theory behavior is paramount when working with staff, students, and parents to decrease chronic absenteeism. Reductions in absenteeism among African American male high schoolers may promote positive social change in that regular school attendance may allow this population of students to have better academic achievement and postgraduation success.

The first section of Chapter 1 includes background information on the East Coast urban public school district, followed by the study's problem and purpose. This chapter includes sections devoted to the following: research question, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points and a transition to Chapter 2.

Background

Chronic absenteeism has been a national concern in the United States since the 1800s. Most U.S. schools before the 20th century were private, typically run by churches. Massachusetts became the first state to pass a compulsory education law in 1852. Maryland, in which this study was conducted passed a compulsory education law in 1902 (Legal et al., 2016). Chronic absenteeism is not new to education. All states in the United States have laws governing compulsory education covering school attendance and truancy issues (Mireles-Rios et al., 2020). Even though compulsory education laws have existed since the early 1900s, children continue to miss school. The U.S. education

system is founded on the idea that students are in class every weekday; simply put, to benefit from school, a student must be in attendance (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Historically, educators and policymakers have overlooked absenteeism, given that students regularly attend to be academically successful (Nauer, 2016). Chronic absenteeism has continued to be a problem across the United States; students labeled as "chronically absent" are not attending school consistently, have higher rates of school dropout, have low grades, and have poor standardized test scores (Chang et al., 2018). Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) identified absenteeism as a national problem in the United States, with 5,000,000 to 7,500,000 students not regularly attending school.

Students who miss 10% or more school days are chronically absent. Regular school attendance is associated with higher standardized test scores and grades (Epstein & Sheldon, 2004). In 2019, the Maryland State Report Card for the focal urban public school district reported that the average absenteeism rate among African American male high schoolers was 41.2% (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019). African American male high school students who are not consistently attending school have a higher chance of not graduating on time or dropping out.

Students of color, especially those who are male, graduate with substantially lower rates. In 2005, the national graduation rate was 70%. For the subgroup of Blacks, the overall graduation rate was 55%; this included a combined rate for male and female students. Urban areas had a graduation rate of 61% compared to a 75% graduation rate in the suburbs in 2019 (Mireles-Rios et al., 2020). Between 1993 and 2002, the dropout rates in the United States increased while the graduation rates decreased. In 2004, there

were between 900 and 1,000 high schools with a graduating rate of 50% and a dropout

rate of 50% (Balfanz et al., 2015). Once a student enters high school, it is the goal for all

Grade 9 students to graduate within the 4-year cohort. Truancy tends to be high in Grade

9 and has long-term effects. Earning credits in high school to graduate can be very

demanding for a student who is labeled as chronically absent. If students are absent daily,

passing the class and earning credits for their high school diploma will be difficult.

Chronic absence in high school is linked negatively to later achievement levels, as well as

to increased odds of dropping out, and to postsecondary enrollment outcomes (Balfanz,

2016)

Orfield et al. (2004) reported that nationally, high school graduation rates were

low for all students; it is estimated that 68% of students who enter into Grade 9 in a

regular curriculum graduate at the end of Grade 12 with a regular diploma. Chronic

absenteeism is often defined as missing 10% or more of the school year, negatively

impacting students' performance, high school graduation rates, and overall success in

adulthood (Kostyo et al., 2018). According to a recent report published by Civic

Enterprises (DePaoli et al., 2015), 2014 graduation rates for Latino and African American

students lagged significantly behind those for White students, with the gap between

Latino and White students at 11% and the gap between African American and White

students at nearly 15%. Based on research from the juvenile courts, students labeled as

"dropouts" are more likely to engage in criminal activity. Fifty to ninety percent of the

prison population dropped out of school (Cassel, 2003; Grossnickle, 1986). Today, a

young African American man between the ages of 20 and 24 with no high school

diploma (or an equivalent credential) is more likely to be incarcerated than employed (Cardichon et al., 2017). There can be numerous reasons why African American male students are labeled "chronically absent." In this basic qualitative study, I interviewed 10 high school administrators from the East Coast urban public school district regarding implementing situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students.

Problem Statement

The problem was chronic absenteeism among African American high school male students in the target East Coast urban public school district. Chronic absenteeism rates for African American male students were 36% higher than for their White peers was conducted in 2013-14 by the George W. Bush Institute, (2018). Chronic absenteeism promotes adverse outcomes for learning (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012) and was a recurrent issue for this East Coast urban public school district. All states in the United States have laws governing compulsory education covering school attendance and truancy issues. In 2019, data from the Maryland State Department of Education Report Card showed an overall attendance rate of 92.6% for African American high school male students in the target district, nearly an entire percentage point below the state's rate of 93.5% (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019). The rate of chronic absenteeism in 2017–2019 among the district's African American male high schoolers was also problematic: 28.6% in 2017, 28.1% in 2018, and 27.4% in 2019.

Chronic absenteeism rates have also contributed to problems in this urban public school district, such as decreased graduation rates, drug use, and higher school dropout

rates. The reauthorization of federal education law with ESSA in 2015 promoted a state-level focus on student attendance as a robust metric of school quality/student success (Patnode et al., 2018). Under ESSA standards, chronic absenteeism accounts for 15% of the district's overall accountability rating (George W. Bush Institute, 2018). In addition, ESSA requires states to report how many students are chronically absent on their school report cards (Patnode et al., 2018). Because of the historically established absenteeism rate, this urban public school district must include intervention strategies in its mandatory strategic plan to reduce the chronic absenteeism rate to meet ESSA standards. Those interventions include supporting high school students in tutoring, mentoring, after-school sports, getting a job, and working in the community.

The 2019 National ESSA Consolidated Strategic Plan section entitled "School Quality and Student Success" includes student attendance, which requires district campuses to have intervention strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism. The data provided by the Maryland State Report Card and the ESSA ratings substantiated satisfactory levels of chronic absenteeism in African American high school male students should be prioritized in the district strategic plan. Consequently, the issue of chronic absences among African American high school male students was a problem for the East Coast urban public school district. Improving chronic absenteeism rates is a priority for high schools in this East Coast urban public school district.

In high schools, chronic absenteeism is associated with dropping out, low academic achievement, homelessness, and delinquency, increasing the achievement gap for low-income students and students of color (Mireles-Rios et al., 2020). As a result,

African American male high schoolers who are chronically absent cannot earn enough credits to graduate from high school. Black youth drop out of high school at a higher-than-average rate of 8.2%, compared to 4.3% of White youth (Patnode et al., 2018). Hendron and Kearney (2016) examined adolescents with chronic absenteeism. They found a relationship between attendance problems and school climate variables, including order and discipline, sharing resources, relationships between students and teachers, and parental involvement. Chronic absenteeism can affect a student's social and emotional outcomes. When students are repeatedly absent from school, they miss meaningful learning and developmental opportunities, negatively affecting their future outcomes such as college, military, and career opportunities (London et al., 2016). Parents and students need to understand the purpose of attending school daily. Jordan and Miller (2017) posited that students absent 18 days or more or 10% of the school year fall into chronic absenteeism, including all missed days categorized by excused, unexcused, and disciplinary reasons. National data from 2018-19 indicated that 58% of U.S. high schools met the threshold for chronic absenteeism, equivalent to approximately 18,000,000 students yearly (Attendance Works, 2018b). An ED (2019) report identified chronic absenteeism as a hidden educational crisis. Six million students missed more than 3 weeks of school during the 2013–2014 school year. That equals 90,000,000 days of lost instruction, 20% of which were at the high school level.

School administrators play a vital role in creating an action plan to address the problem of chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism is meaningful because, in the long term, it correlates with increased rates of high school dropout, adverse health outcomes

and poverty in adulthood, and the likelihood of increased interactions with the criminal justice system (ED, 2016; Schoeneberger, 2012). High levels of absenteeism affect the students who miss class and create a kind of classroom churn that makes it harder for teachers to teach and other students to learn (Balfanz & Hedy, 2013). Studies have shown that chronic absenteeism rates rise when students enter high school. With a national graduation rate of 82.3%, 16 states have graduation rates below 70% for African American and low-income students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). In East Coast high schools, the state graduation rate for African American male high school students was 77.18% in 2016, almost 5% lower than the national average. The graduation rate for this student population was the second-lowest of any population in the East Coast state. In the study district's high schools, the graduation rate of African American male students was 77.20%. In this basic qualitative study, I explored high school administrators' practices in implementing situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American high school males.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative was to explore high school administrators' perspectives on implementing situational theory strategies to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students. I examined school administrators' perspectives regarding the causes of chronic absenteeism and the situational leadership theory behaviors needed to help reduce chronic absenteeism in African American male high school students. At the study site, I explored

how high school administrators (principals and assistant principals) described situational leadership behaviors to reduce the chronic absenteeism rate in this student population. I analyzed interview responses and historical school report card data. I evaluated how high school administrators use situational leadership behaviors to impact staff, students, and parents. I believe there are obstacles that high school administrators face when determining which situational leadership behavior is used to get better results with staff, students, and parents to decrease chronic absenteeism. The research paradigm for this research was constructivism, which does not assume a single reality (Burkholder et al., 2016). I investigated the participating administrators' experiences and day-to-day interactions with staff, students, and parents. My goal was to learn how the use of situational leadership might improve outcomes for chronically absent African American high school males.

Research Question

To investigate East Coast high school administrators' situational leadership behaviors in reducing chronic absenteeism in African American males, I developed a single research question to serve as a foundation for this study. The research question was as follows: How do urban high school administrators implement situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this basic qualitative study consisted of Hersey and Blanchard's (1979) situational leadership theory, which explains how school

administrators use different leadership strategies to combat chronic absenteeism rates. Four supportive leadership behaviors are delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing (Leahy & Shore, 2019). Hersey and Blanchard (1982) proposed that leaders adapt to the appropriate needs depending on the employee's readiness to improve performance. Last, leadership can be determined by how the leader can assess and respond to a situation or challenge, and the leader's communication with staff can evaluate this.

Chronic absenteeism justified the need for this research. Truancy was not a part of this research, but it is essential to define the difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy. The ED's Civil Rights Data Collection 2017-18 found that nearly 8,000,000 chronically absent students missed 18 or more school days (Chang et al., 2018). If students are not consistently attending school, then students are labeled "chronically absent." When students are not attending school, they fall behind academically. Hersey and Blanchard (1979) proposed that situational leadership is both directive and supportive; situational leaders can adapt the dimensions to different scenarios based on the theory that different situations need other leadership behaviors. Based on research, chronic absenteeism significantly affects high school academic performance. The findings of this basic qualitative study may further the understanding of how urban high school administrators use their leadership skills to combat this challenge. The study may also clarify how the relationship between the administration and school staff can influence chronic absenteeism among African American male high school students. Hersey and Blanchard recommended a normative model in which leaders adapt their techniques to match the maturity or readiness of the employee.

Based on the existing research, the situational leadership framework was appropriate for the study focus, which was on clarifying urban high school administrators' leadership practices to improve chronic absenteeism among African American male high school students. I sought the perspectives of high school administrators regarding how they implemented situational leadership theory behaviors to reduce the chronic absenteeism rate among African American male high school students within the target urban public school district. A more thorough explanation of situational leadership theory appears in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore high school administrators' perspectives on implementing situational theory strategies to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high schoolers. As Yin (2016) note, ensuring the reliability of a basic qualitative study necessitates adequately collecting, documenting, interpreting, and representing the findings so that others could reach the same conclusions if given the same data. During the analysis of an urban East Coast school district, a study was conducted on high school administrators who were identified in the Maryland State Report Card as having high rates of chronic absenteeism among African American male students. I obtained permission from the supervisor of the district's office of research and evaluation to interview the high school administrators. I analyzed trends in data to understand which situational leadership theory behavior administrators used. The data collected for this study comprised responses to the semistructured interview questions. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The

high school administrators in this urban public school district were asked the same questions. Due to social distancing guidelines, interviews were conducted via the Zoom audioconferencing platform.

Definitions

Absenteeism: Missed instructional days, either excused or unexcused, that may result in removal from school (Jordan & Miller, 2017).

Chronic absenteeism: Students' absence from school for 18 days or more (or 10% of the school year); absences include all missed days categorized as excused, unexcused, or for disciplinary reasons (Jordan & Miller, 2017).

School dropout: A phenomenon that encompasses periods of school stop-out or temporary departure from school before graduation, before eventual permanent, premature departure from school; school dropout is considered more of a process than a specific event (Boylan & Renzulli, 2014).

Truancy: Any intentional, unjustified, unauthorized, or illegal absence from compulsory education ("Truancy," 2022).

Assumptions

By identifying the underlying causes of chronic absenteeism, school leaders can be more effective and efficient in providing resources and services to improve individual students' attendance (Patnode et al., 2018). I assumed that the participating high school administrators would be honest and forthcoming when describing their strategies and experiences for decreasing the chronic absenteeism rate in African American male high school students. I presumed that all high school administrators would be interested in

solving the problem of chronic absenteeism. I believe that the administrators provided

honest responses to the questions. Administrators may be able to use their situational

leadership behaviors to reduce chronic absenteeism rates in African American high

school male students.

Scope and Delimitations

This study's scope included 10 high school administrators from high schools with

students in Grades 9–12 in the East Coast urban public school district. I conducted this

study at five comprehensive high schools in the district, each having an estimated

population of 800 to 2,400 students. The average high school's chronic absenteeism rate

was higher than the state average. At the time of data collection, all participants worked

as an administrator in a high school in this East Coast district. The study's delimitations

included that the sample consisted of urban high school administrators. This study did not

include school administrators, teachers, and support staff in elementary and middle

schools within the urban public school district. Teachers and support staff were not a part

of the study because it focused on urban school administrators' behaviors with staff,

students, and parents.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses that could affect a study (Brutus et al.,

2013). Specifying the limitations of a study allows the researcher to monitor these

limitations (Hatch, 2010). The study did not occur in all 25 high schools in this urban

public school district on the East Coast. The research design for this study on chronic

absenteeism was limited to a basic qualitative approach with 10 administrators from five

comprehensive high schools in an East Coast urban public school district. The study was limited to one school district and five high schools with high chronic absenteeism rates. I interviewed only high school administrators; I did not interview other school staff. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the interview process based on the study site's mandated safety protocols. I interviewed online via audioconferencing rather than in person to meet the district's safety and social distancing guidelines when the study began.

Significance

The basic qualitative research study addressed the gap in the practice of urban high school administrators implementing situational leadership strategies to support decreasing numbers of African American high school males who are not consistently attending high school. Chronic absenteeism is a national concern in many other U.S. school districts and in the school district where the research was conducted. Chronic absenteeism is much more significant in education outcomes than is commonly perceived (Balfanz, 2016). Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts student outcomes, including mathematics and reading achievement, social-emotional development, grade retention, dropout, and student discipline (Patnode et al., 2018). In 2013-14 chronic absenteeism rates for African American male students were 36% higher than those of White peers (George W. Bush Institute, 2018). Multiple early indicators for high absenteeism rates and eventual dropout have been identified, including course failure, grade retention, or low academic performance (Patnode et al., 2018).

The topic of student absenteeism continues to permeate education policy and practice. Education officials in states such as New Jersey, California, and New York have

incorporated chronic absenteeism as an accountability metric under ESSA. Although there is extensive research on truancy, chronic absenteeism is not generally measured or tracked in school data systems and is poorly understood (London et al., 2016). Moreover, the available data indicate that although chronic absenteeism is profoundly detrimental to educational success, missing more than a week of school can have consequences (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The consequences of chronic absenteeism are significant. For students, absences robustly predict academic performance, high school graduation, drug and alcohol use, criminality, and the risk of later life adverse outcomes (Rogers & Feller, 2018). There is substantial evidence showing that when students do not attend school, it has long-term effects on the student, school, and school district.

According to the 2019 Maryland State Report Card (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019) for the East Coast school district, the chronic absenteeism rate for African Americans was 27.4%. This study's findings may benefit high school administrators and other school districts across the United States. The study may provide information to high school-administrators on how to implement situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students. High school administrators in this East Coast urban public school district may learn ways to address chronic absenteeism and increase consistent daily attendance among African American male high school students. Addressing chronic absenteeism can provide students with better chances of graduating from high school, continuing with postsecondary education, and attaining better paying jobs with benefits.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction and background information on chronic absenteeism, its influence on low academic performance, dropping out of school, and the possible post-high school effects. This study addressed chronic absenteeism among African American high school male students in this East Coast urban public school district. In this basic qualitative study, I explored high school administrators' behaviors related to implementing situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students. Hersey and Blanchard's (1979) situational leadership theory provided the conceptual framework for this study. Chronic absenteeism predicts school dropout better than low grades or poor standardized test scores (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). In Chapter 2, I will review literature pertaining to the study topic. In addition to the literature review, the chapter includes details about the literature search strategy, key variables supporting this basic qualitative study, and the conceptual framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

During the 2015–2016 school year, the ED's Civil Rights Data Collection showed nearly 8,000,000 chronically absent students in the United States (Chang et al., 2018). Chronic absences can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school (Attendance Works, 2018b). The problem is that high school administrators are challenged to reduce the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students based on inconsistently implementing situational leadership theory strategies in high schools in the East Coast urban public school district. The study's East Coast urban public school district-wide high school chronic absenteeism rate for African American male high school students was 27.4%, according to the 2019 Maryland State Report Card (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019). This basic qualitative study explored high school administrators' behaviors in implementing situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American high school males.

A literature review determined chronic absenteeism is a concern across the United States. Chronic absenteeism plays a much more significant role in students' education outcomes. The Maryland State Report Card (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019) reported that 33.5% of African American male high school students were chronically absent in high school. In the district where this study took place, the Maryland State Report Card reported that the average of high schools was 41.2% chronic absenteeism for African American male high school students. No written account of any

studies conducted to explore the exact causes of this chronic absentee problem in the East

Coast urban public school district has occurred. Therefore, this study appeared because

chronic absenteeism is more than this East Coast state's issue. Blad (2017) states that

students who rack up absences score lower than their peers on an achievement test, are

less engaged in the classroom, and are at a higher risk of dropping out as they age.

This chapter outlines the literature search strategy used, listing key terms and

combinations of search terms—and then the study's conceptual framework and the

literature review. The literature review includes a history of chronic absenteeism and

truancy, national policy and measures of school quality, battling chronic absenteeism, and

strategies/interventions that reduce chronic absenteeism. The literature on chronic

absenteeism related to failing courses, dropouts, social-emotional outcomes, and high

school administrators' challenges is discussed. Last, based on the challenges, I reviewed

the strategies, interventions, and resources that have effectively reduced chronic

absenteeism in various high schools.

Literature Search Strategy

My search for peer-reviewed articles published within 6 years was primarily done

in the research databases accessible through the Walden University Library. The

databases searched EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. The literature review

also included reports and statistics from the Maryland State Report Card, ED, and the

United States Census Bureau. The search included absenteeism, chronic absenteeism,

fewer than five absences, more than 20 days, and student demographics.

When searching, I used specific key terms and the Boolean operators built into the Walden Library search system to complete my search in the literature: *chronic absenteeism*, *high school*, *secondary school*, *daily attendance*, *administrators*, *dropout rates*, *interventions*, *mentors*, *school attendance*, *truancy*, *truancy* AND *chronic absenteeism*, *African American males* AND *chronic absenteeism*, *school administrators* AND *chronic absenteeism*, *school administrators* AND *truancy, graduation rates*, *demographics*, *State of Maryland*, *adverse childhood experiences*, *absent*, *present*, *parent beliefs on chronic absenteeism*, *reducing chronic absenteeism* AND *truancy*, *ESSA policies* AND *law*, *situational leadership*, and *compulsory education laws.* These terms and phrases were searched for the research needed to complete the Chapter 2 literature review.

Conceptual Framework

This study attempted to address the perspectives of high school administrators on reducing chronic absenteeism in African American high school males. By applying Hersey and Blanchard's (1979) situational leadership theory framework to support this study's purpose, the research question is how urban high school administrators implement situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing chronic absenteeism of African American high school male students. The purpose was to explore administrators' situational leadership behaviors to battle the challenges of chronic absenteeism. Hersey and Blanchard (1979) proposed that situational leadership is both directive and supportive; situational leaders can adapt the dimensions to different scenarios based on the theory that different situations need other leadership behaviors.

This theory relates the leaders' behavior to the subordinates' developmental level, and the

leader determines the level and modifies their leadership style and behavior-based

situation needs. School leaders must know their staff, build relationships, and understand

the staff's work ethic. Four situational supportive leadership behaviors are delegating,

supporting, coaching, and directing (Leahy & Shore, 2019). The situational leadership

theory behaviors address school administrators' challenges when reducing chronic

absenteeism of African American high school males. The situational leadership model,

first introduced in 1969, theorized that there was no unsurpassed way to lead. Influential

leaders must adapt to the situation and transform their leadership behavior between task-

oriented and relationship-oriented (Khan et al., 2016).

A leader's relationship with followers will likely go through different stages as

these abilities and willingness can change the staff's learning styles (Bein, 2020). Once

the school administrator knows the team, it is time to determine what type of leadership is

needed to address the concerns of chronic absenteeism. According to this theory, there is

no single right way to lead because the internal and external dimensions of the

environment require the leader to adapt to that situation (Khan et al., 2016). The four

leadership behaviors guide the school administrators on the approach taken at the

schoolhouse to decrease chronic absenteeism. The administrator can use all, one, two, or

three leadership behaviors to direct or support the strategies and interventions based on

this theory. Every leader has a preferred behavior; some prefer the telling because it gives

them greater control. Some prefer to trust their subordinates fully with the assigned tasks.

However, a good leader should know when to use the appropriate style to draw the

maximum potential from every individual (Khan et al., 2016). The four situational leadership theories of directing, supporting, coaching, and delegating are explained below.

The directing or "telling" leadership behavior consists of subordinates who lack the ability or maturity to handle a task well. The directing behavior works best for leading employees at the low competence and joint commitment stage. The administrator needs to direct the subordinates with specific instructions and expectations. The administrator's job is to provide this information to the staff and determine if the team can track the expectations.

The school administrator may also use this situational leadership strategy when speaking to parents about children's attendance and importance. The school leader may provide examples of the positive and the negative attendance situations to parents if the children are not in school every day. Students who attend school every day would be a positive example, and those students have better future opportunities. Some opportunities include graduating high school in 4 years, attending a 2-year college, obtaining a good job with benefits, and being a productive citizen. Therefore, the coaching leadership behavior encompasses telling, but the staff can decide to complete the task.

Coaching leadership, or "selling" leadership behavior, tells people what to do; the school administrator sells them the idea and gives them some independence and autonomy in the task. Even with providing an assignment, coaching still requires leaders to define roles and tasks clearly, but the leader seeks ideas and suggestions from the followers. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more

two-way. The situational leadership model is adapted from the model by Ken Blanchard and Paul Hersey in Management of Organizational Behavior, '96. The coaching behavior works best for leading staff members with low competence and high commitment. The school leadership uses this leadership style to get community and business partners to assist in fighting the concern of chronic absenteeism. Many interventions are available across the United States, but it takes more to get those strategies and interventions to assist the school. The school leader must sell why this community, business, and faith-based partners need to come and help the school. What can they offer? How can they assist with speaking to parents and students? Can they better understand the root causes of absent students and work with families in their homes? The school leader must sell that the strategies and interventions will be in the child's best interest; just as telling has positive and negative outcomes, so will selling.

The positive is that the more people the school administrator can get to assist in implementing strategies and interventions to work with parents and students, the more the chronic absenteeism rate may decrease. The negative would be that no one from the community feels this is an important topic, and they do not want to assist the school in solving this problem. There are more opportunities for interaction between those, directly and indirectly, involved in the selling strategy to reduce absenteeism. However, the "supporting" leadership behavior shows highly supportive behaviors. Having knowledgeable staff members around gives the leader the support needed to move the team forward.

The supporting or "participating" leadership behavior is the leader who trusts the staff to achieve the day-to-day tasks as the staff's competence has grown over time. Improvement in teaching and learning is highly influenced by the administrators' creation of a culture of trust and support for teachers, including staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The administrator's responsibility is to encourage and offer feedback to staff for inspiration. The administrator believes that the follower is capable enough of achieving the required tasks largely independently. The school administrator feels more staff will step up because the staff feels like their voices are heard. Decisions that are made are more collective from a team or group. Supportive behavior works best for leading staff members with high competence, low commitment, and confidence. The school administrators still provide information about the challenges of chronic absenteeism but can get others to address the challenges. As the school administrator enforces this leadership style, it is essential for the experts who focus on school absences to come to the table. Participating behavior can be helpful to a school leader who wants to ensure that all voices are heard. It can work with an attendance team or those critical stakeholders in the school who focus on addressing the challenges of chronic absenteeism. The stakeholders would make a collective decision to work on addressing the problem. Furthermore, delegating leadership behavior is a hands-off approach, and the school leader can further encourage autonomy.

Last, every leader wants a trusting staff who can fully delegate tasks. In the delegating behavior, the school leader would provide functions to the team without specific instructions. Regularly delegating duties accomplishes more than taking some

work off the principal's likely over-full plate. In this leadership behavior, the leader must trust that the staff will achieve the mission. This leadership behavior of the four is the riskiest. The delegating behavior works best for leadership staff members with high competence, commitment, and confidence. Through delegating, the leader needs to build trust. The leader knows the staff members' learning and work styles to accomplish the work. In this leadership style, those not responsible workers will take this time to slack off, but those who want to make a difference will work diligently to complete the task.

These four leadership behaviors of the school leaders formed the conceptual framework for this study because the administrators implemented one or more of these leadership behaviors to work on the challenges of chronic absenteeism. Based on the information in this literature review, absenteeism is a significant matter that school administrators battle daily to ensure that students are in school every day. The basic qualitative study's research problem is that school administrators inconsistently implement leadership strategies to reduce the chronic absences of African American high school males in the East Coast urban public school district. Hersey and Blanchard's theory provides school administrators with four different leadership behaviors to examine how to be an effective leader who can judge the response needed based on the ability and willingness of the followers. By providing four different leadership styles, the leader can adjust their behaviors to meet the staff's needs, and the team grows and becomes more capable of completing the required tasks (Wright, 2017). Using the situational leadership theory, I examined why school administrators are challenged with increased chronic absenteeism in African American male high school students.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

The literature in this review for this study was taken from current studies, peer-reviewed articles, and other sources that address chronic absenteeism and the adverse outcomes for African American male high school students. In this literature review, I addressed a variety of information in each heading in this chapter, from the history of chronic absenteeism to strategies that can be used to reduce chronic absenteeism. Each of the following sections provides information that supports chronic absenteeism.

History of Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

Absenteeism is not a new concern but has been an ongoing issue. Educators and local officials were focused on this issue as early as the late 19th century. In the Chicago House of Correction in 1898, a quarter of juveniles were jailed for truancy (Miller, 2017). Chronic absenteeism is a huge concern, but unexcused absences make the child truant. Truancy has always been a concern of high school administrators, but it is snowballing in all types of schools. Truancy worsens as students' progress through school, and the schoolwork becomes more demanding. School districts have realized that chronic absenteeism and truancy are issues that must be addressed.

Early Compulsory Education Laws

During the early 1500s, Martin Luther was a rationalist. Luther wanted education for all children, but he also suggested that society should provide that education. Martin Luther called for mandatory schooling laws to ensure more Christians could read the Bible independently. Children between the ages of five and 18 were required to attend school because Martin Luther thought it was important for children to read. He advocated

that those parents should be their children's first and most essential teachers (Legal et al.,
2016). As the Reformation spread throughout Europe, so did the enactment of mandatory
education laws. Compulsory education law was implemented to improve literacy skills
and discourage child labor practices in the early 1800s and early 1900s. Even though
most U.S. schools were private and run by churches, before the 20th century,
Massachusetts became the first state to pass a compulsory education law in 1852 (Yeban,
n.d.).

Mandatory school attendance spread to other areas of the world. Before the state
of Massachusetts, law education was provided by private schools that the church ran. The
private schools charged tuition, which meant poorer parents could not send their children
to school. Some parents offered informal schooling at home. 1852, Massachusetts
became the first U.S. state to enforce a compulsory education law. The law required
every city and town to provide primary schools focusing on reading and basic math.
Parents who refused to send their children to school were fined and could have lost
parental rights. As states began to enforce compulsory attendance in school, the goal was
to stop factory owners from using children as workers. Mississippi was the last state to
pass the mandatory law in 1917. It was not until these laws were enforced that states
realized the value of educating young adults in the workforce. All states have been
following the compulsory law for over 100 years. The public education system can
assume that students regularly attend school. Mandatory education laws support this
assumption (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Nationwide Policies on School Attendance in the United States

Attendance is a leading indicator of a student's learning opportunity and is a crucial metric for measuring whether the government delivers its promise of educating its populace. All states have compulsory education laws covering school attendance/truancy issues (Mireles-Rios et al., 2020). ED's Office for Civil Rights collects chronic absence data through its Ed Facts data collection; it reports the results through the release of the biennial Civil Rights Data Collection. ESSA allows states to create new approaches to school accountability and continuous school improvement. Educational leaders of the target East Coast state use improvement science to improve academic achievement, absenteeism, preparedness for college and career, graduation rates, and a positive school climate. The provision for states to adopt a school quality indicator and more traditional academic accountability measures in ESSA led 36 states and the District of Columbia to adopt chronic absenteeism as one of their multiple accountability measures. In the 36 states and the District of Columbia, student absenteeism is often a key performance metric, and absenteeism is tied directly to performance evaluations and funding. Recently, policymakers have put more effort into reducing absences, as stated in the ESSA Act. During the Obama Administration, the goal was to reduce chronic absenteeism by 10% each year, but meeting this goal has been challenging.

Causes of Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

When addressing chronically absent or truant students, it is crucial to understand the root cause. First, it is essential to understand the difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy. Absenteeism is the absence of the person engaged in work or

the classroom, causing adverse effects on the worker (Tomás & Diaz, 2017). Truancy is any intentional, unjustified, unauthorized, or illegal absence from compulsory education. It is a deliberate absence of a student's free will and usually does not refer to legitimate excused absences, such as those related to medical conditions ("Truancy," 2022). If children are absent from school, they are missing out. It is essential to understand why students miss school. It would be suitable for a school or district to complete a needs assessment to help understand the root causes of chronic absenteeism. The needs assessment can help schools create interventions and strategies that reduce chronic absenteeism. Schools should use in-house and community-based resources to work with students and families. Researchers can prove that students miss school for many reasons.

Reasons for students missing school can be put into three vast categories: First, the reason students cannot attend school is due to illness, family responsibilities, housing instability, the need to work, or involvement with the juvenile justice system. Secondly, students who will not attend school to avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment, and embarrassment. Last, students who do not attend school because they, or their parents, do not see the value in attending school or have something else they would instead do, or no matter what, nothing stops them from skipping school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Families may not realize that all absences, even excused absences, can negatively impact students' academic performance (Gottfried, 2015). There are many cases where parents do not believe their children are absent from school. Due to parents' work schedules, parents do not know that their child has missed school. Parents are also unaware of how absenteeism can impact their children's education or the number of

missing days their children have compared to their peers (ED, 2019; Rogers & Feller, 2018). Some school districts have automated systems that call parents to inform them that their child has been marked absent for the day. Last, an unexcused absence occurs by lacking a note or missing school for non-emergency reasons, such as the parent reporting the child needs extra sleep or missed the school bus. In general, even with a parent's note, an absence may still be unexcused, such as the child staying home because the parent was ill or because of a lack of transportation (Kirksey & Gottfried, 2018).

According to state laws, parents and children are held accountable for not attending school. As a result of children not attending school, parents and children can be taken to court if the truancy problem persists. Taking legal action should be the last result for schools. Some court systems have developed truancy court diversion programs. Over 60% of U.S. school districts implement court diversion programs to address chronic unexcused absenteeism (McNeely et al., 2019). One example of a diversion program would be assigning a social worker to assist the family with any problems or concerns preventing the student from attending school. Another program would be assigning a mentor to the student. The mentor can work on building a relationship that encourages the student to participate in school.

Student attendance in high schools is essential for graduation; however, it has been done on part-day absenteeism rates in secondary schools and their impact on graduation rates. Most of the research that has been done focuses on full-day absences, their causes, and their effects (Whitney & Liu, 2017). In high school, part-day or half-day absenteeism is not unusual. There are several reasons why high school students are only

present for part of the day. High school students are often given half-day schedules for dual enrollment classes at the local community college or a job. These factors are not considered when schools and districts calculate chronic absenteeism rates. The total absence from secondary school classes is likely higher than the national 8% average daily attendance rate, and half-day attendance is not considered (Whitney & Liu, 2017). Chronic absenteeism data disclose that students are likely to drop out of school, have low-paying jobs, not attend college, and suffer social and emotional issues.

Research has shown that youth who drop out of school experience high levels of chronic disease, substance abuse, mental health concerns, and early death (Stempel et al., 2017). The difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy is that truancy is a problem with multiple causes. There is a gap in the research to support a single solution for all students and the different truant behaviors. On the other hand, for students and families labeled chronically absent, school administrators and districts can work with those students and families to put interventions and strategies in place to increase students' consistency in coming to school.

Chronic Absenteeism in U.S. High Schools

Chronic absenteeism is discussed in secondary schools. When chronic absenteeism and truancy are mentioned, high school is the first level that comes to mind. It is essential to know that absenteeism is perceived as a high school issue, but one-half of chronically absent students are enrolled in elementary and middle schools. It has been proven that disruptive behavior rises in middle and high school when attendance drops. Chronic absenteeism is high in Grades 9 and 10, but there tends to be a decrease in

Grades 11 and 12 because chronic absenteeism students have already dropped out of
school.

Chronic absenteeism is often associated with dropping out of school, poor
academic achievement, homelessness, and delinquency, increasing the achievement gap
for low-income students and students of color (Mireles-Rios et al., 2020). Research
shows that high school students who are absent on an average of 1 to 2 days per month
have a one in five chance of graduating from high school. If the high schooler does not
regularly attend school, then it is likely that they will drop out. As a result, the dropout
rate and the graduation rate will decrease. Between 1993 and 2002, the dropout rates in
the United States increased while the graduation rates decreased. A typical high school
class would shrink by 40% between Grades 9–12 (Mireles-Rios et al., 2020). If this
continues, fewer students will not graduate from high school. As a result of the decrease
seen in Grades 9–12, high school dropout will remain a critical issue for high school
administrators, policymakers, and school district leaders. Chronic absenteeism at any
level can be problematic. A child who misses 18 or more days in high school will have
adverse effects unless the school staff understands and implements the appropriate
support and intervention strategies (Chang et al., 2018).

Strategies and Interventions for Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

School leaders are working hard to determine what can be done at the school level
to reduce chronic absenteeism. Reducing chronic absenteeism is essential to most
administrators because attendance is now used as the school's ESSA rating. ESSA
requires states to report how many chronically absent students are on their school report

cards (Patnode et al., 2018). National, local, and school levels are improving in decreasing chronic absenteeism. Therefore, school districts and schools are working on ways to discover what they can do to reduce chronic absenteeism. Many schools and districts show that it is possible to reduce chronic absenteeism. Districts measure chronic absenteeism, closely monitor attendance, and increase attendance by uncovering root causes by supporting schools and families (Balfanz, 2016). Schools have determined that it is essential to understand why students are not attending school. School districts must look at how they will solve chronic absenteeism. Once states and school districts have determined that chronic absenteeism is a concern, support and assistance must be determined. The next step is determining why chronic absences may be difficult to resolve quickly.

The district then must determine if funding is available to assist schools with intervention programs. Some school districts across the United States have lost funding, which is essential. Data from the California Attorney General's Office states that in the 2014–2015 school year alone, school absences cost school districts $1,000,000,000. Due to absenteeism, California school districts have lost $4,500,000,000 within 3 years (Gottfried et al., 2019). School districts or individual schools must plan to address chronic absenteeism problems among parents and students. Research stated that districts and schools should engage community partners to reduce regular absenteeism rates. One example found in the study was using resources in the community to promote positive attendance and spread positive messages to parents and students about attending school each day. The Attendance Works website (https://www.attendanceworks.org) offers

many additional strategies to reduce chronic absences to help districts, schools, and communities. Several suggestions suggest that the most effective way to address chronic absenteeism is with a comprehensive, multi-tiered system of support that combines prevention with early and consistent interventions. The multi-tiered system can be used to meet individual students' needs. Last, taking legal action should be the last step.

Since chronic absenteeism is a significant concern for many districts in the United States, many school leaders have implemented strategies and interventions to decrease absenteeism rates. By making a comprehensive school effort to monitor attendance, getting parents and community cooperation, improving school climate, and employing sanctions strategically (Johnston, 2005). Interventions will only be effective if they match the root causes of absenteeism. Once schools identify some of the root causes, then schools can begin to implement interventions to assist parents and students. Building positive relationships with a student will not improve attendance if the student faces barriers, lacks transportation, or is bullied. Interventions that have research and evidence of effectiveness have been identified by ESSA and given a substantial rating level to demonstrate a rationale (ED, 2019). Therefore, the following strategies and interventions have been proven to decrease chronic absenteeism and promote attending school regularly.

New York City was among the first to implement mentoring to affect attendance with the Success Mentors program (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2016). This model has since evolved into the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Alliance. On the federal level, on February 19, the White House and the Department announced two campaigns to address and

eliminate chronic student absenteeism: MBK and the Success Mentors Initiative. These programs explicitly support young men of color (Bauer et al., 2018). It is a multimillion-dollar Ad Council campaign to engage parents on the issue of chronic absenteeism. MBK began in 10 cities and connected over a million Grade 6–9 students in high-need communities with caring mentors (ED Review, 2016). My Brother's Keeper is a successful mentor program that can work with parents and children to support high-risk students. The mentors have various well-trained backgrounds.

The mentors must be motivators and supporters to celebrate students and encourage them to attend school daily. The mentors' connections with the students will keep them on track. MBK is one of the nation's first evidence-based and data-driven mentors. MBK is just one of the national mentor programs developed to assist school districts in reducing chronic absenteeism rates. MBK was rated strongly in ESSA (ED Review, 2016). Two other mentoring programs, Big Brothers Big Sisters and Check Connect, found positive student attendance impacts. Just as with MBK, the mentors have to be trained. The mentors and students are expected to build relationships that will continue even after the attendance has improved and the student has graduated from high school—there are several examples of what school districts have done to reduce chronic absenteeism.

In a school in California, the school leaders determined that students were not attending school because the students did not have clean clothes. The issue was that low-income families had a problem with doing laundry. Some of those problems were transportation and cost. Once the principal discovered why students did not attend school,

the principal partnered with Whirlpool. Whirlpool Care Counts was piloted in several

schools. The program provided and installed the machine. It also offered detergent and

canvas laundry bags for students and parents. School administrators began to give

students laundry bags to families and chronically absent children. Students and parents

would return the laundry bags to school to be laundered by school staff. The chronic

absenteeism rate dropped from 20% to 10% in a year (Richardson, 2016). Reaching out

to the community to assist the school is an example of how the school administrator

determined the root cause and implemented a plan to decrease the absenteeism rate.

In the Grand Rapids school district, posters and stickers in English and Spanish

blanketed neighborhoods, stating to strive for fewer than 5 days of absence. Attendance

improved at schools, and students and parents were rewarded. Parents felt welcomed at

school and provided more resources to support their children. Schools need to determine

what works to convey that attending school is essential. One of the most successful

interventions was a message sent home to parents about the importance of attending

school and the consequences of not attending school. This intervention reduced chronic

absenteeism by 11%, consistent across grades, races, genders, and socioeconomic

statuses, and improved attendance among siblings living in the same household (Mireles-

Rios et al., 2020).

This school-based intervention spilled over into families with children at other

school levels. Communicating with families regarding the importance of attendance and

the student's current attendance rate is an effective method of prevention for reducing

absenteeism (Epstein & Sheldon, 2004). Communication with parents can come in many

forms, such as school newsletters, personalized text messages to parents when their child is absent, and notes promoting the importance of regular attendance. Schools must determine ways to celebrate and recognize students with perfect or improved attendance. It has been known that schools often celebrate the parents, too. When communicating with parents, students must attend school consistently with the expectation that attendance policies should be included in the message. Often, some parents are unaware of the importance of children attending school.

Another example is from the Virginia Department of Education. There are three levels of intervention for school attendance: (a) legal intervention or enforcement of attendance laws, (b) early intervention or reduction of barriers to attendance, and (c) prevention or establishment of expectations and a positive school climate (Johnston, 2005). If school districts focus on Levels 2 and 3, they will not have to enforce Level 1.

Effects of Chronic Absenteeism on Graduation

Graduating from high school is the goal after completing 13 years. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2023), during the 2018–2019 school year, the national adjusted cohort graduation rate for public high school students was 86%, the highest since the rate was first measured in 2010–2011. The state education agencies calculate the adjusted cohort graduation rate by identifying the cohort of first-time ninth graders in a particular school year. All public schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia are included in these data. The cohort can be adjusted by adding students who immigrate from another country or transfer into the cohort after ninth grade and subtracting any student who transfers out, emigrates to another country, or dies (National

Center for Educational Statistics, 2023). Labeling students as "chronically absent" affects school, state, and national graduation rates.

Many policymakers hold school districts and leaders accountable for improving graduation rates. High school administrators are challenged to improve their graduation rate when it is known that chronic absenteeism and graduating from high school during the 4-year cohort are related. If school administrators can solve the chronic absenteeism problem, then graduation rates will increase, and dropout rates will decrease. High school students need to get a high school diploma. Once students earn a diploma, they can continue their education by attending college, starting a career, or joining the military. Earning a college degree will provide better job opportunities and a better outlook in life.

Summary and Conclusions

There are several ways to refer to school absences, such as chronic absenteeism or truancy. However, what truly matters is that some students do not attend school daily. Student attendance is critical to educational success and is increasingly the focus of educators, researchers, and policymakers. School absenteeism is a pervasive problem that affects an estimated 14% to 15% of American students. The rates are even higher in low-income, urban districts. The causes of chronic absenteeism are broken down into three domains: those students who cannot, will not, or do not go to school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Some students cannot attend high school due to medical reasons, work, or parental responsibilities (ED, 2016). Barriers such as health problems suffered by the student or family members, transportation, housing instability, and suspension all prevent the student from attending school (Chang et al., 2018). No matter the reason, students must

attend school for a better future. The consequences of chronic absenteeism are significant.

The problem of this basic qualitative study explored is high school administrators' behaviors in implementing situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American high school males. There are many reasons and causes for chronic absenteeism, but the results can be the same. If students are not present in school, it is hard to learn. School absenteeism is problematic; it is connected to severe problems such as behavior disorders, lower academic performance and achievement, fewer skills, grade retention, juvenile justice involvement, and dropout. Regular school attendance is fundamental to children's intellectual, language, social, and work-related success. School attendance provides youth with a setting for educational development, a language-rich environment, opportunities to develop social competence and relationships, and experiences nurturing work-related skills such as persistence and problem-solving (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014).

Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative study was conducted to identify situational leadership theory behaviors that high school administrators implemented to reduce chronic absenteeism in African American male students. This East Coast urban public school district where the research took place has 35 high schools, and not all the high schools have high chronic absenteeism rates in African American male students. In this chapter, I outlined the research design and rationale, described my role as the researcher, and detailed the methodology I used to conduct this study. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the study's trustworthiness and the ethical procedures that meet all requirements of validity and reliability of the research findings.

Research Design and Rationale

This basic qualitative study examined five high schools in an East Coast urban public school district exemplify a history of chronic absenteeism in African American high school males. High school administrators encounter challenges in decreasing the chronic absenteeism rate in African American high school males in urban school districts in the United States. This basic qualitative study was conducted to gather more in-depth data to answer straightforward research question without framing the inquiry within an explicit theoretical, philosophical, epistemological, or ontological tradition (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To comprehend the administrators' approach to reducing the chronic absenteeism rate in African American high school males, I relied on data interpretation from interviews. This approach helped me gain insights into their experiences

implementing best practices, understanding their school communities, and overcoming the associated challenges.

I used this basic design to help answer the following research question, which guided the study: How do urban high school administrators implement situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students? The research question defined this basic qualitative study's research and data collection process. This study's question was derived from the literature and sought to explore high school administrators' perspectives on implementing situational theory strategies to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American high school males. A basic qualitative study was the best option because exploring perceptions cannot be evaluated through quantitative statistical research and number crunching (Yin, 2014). Contrary to quantitative research, which uses more experimentation, organized data, and closed-ended procedures, qualitative research uses more open-ended approaches, in which participants are asked broad questions about their lived experiences (Yin, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

Before this study, I held a high school principal position for 8 years in this East Coast urban public school district where this study takes place. While serving as a high school principal, I led and facilitated biweekly attendance meetings. These biweekly attendance meetings were data-driven and included vital school staff and community stakeholders. The attendance team created an attendance plan that included resources for parents and students. The attendance team members vary from school to school; some

school staff members are the principal, assistant principal, pupil personnel worker, nurse, truancy officer, social worker, psychologist, counselor, current teacher, parent, and student. Depending on the school, community members such as faith-based partners, business owners, or the Department of Social Services may exist. The community members attend the meeting because of the resources needed to support the student and the parent. During the attendance meeting, the students who were labeled as chronically absent were listed on a tracker. Attendance plans were created for each student listed. The purpose of the attendance plan was to prevent future absences. I interacted directly with students and parents to address attendance concerns or support all resources provided.

Once I selected the high school principals for the interview, I ensured that all participants understood that their participation would be voluntary and that their identities would remain confidential. As a former high school principal, I have worked closely with participating administrators. I did not supervise principals or have authority over district principals; therefore, any principal who met the selection criterion will be invited to participate in the study. The selection criteria met to participate in this study were being an administrator in one of the five high schools that have a high chronic absenteeism rate based on the Maryland State Report Card and at least have been in that school for a minimum of 2 years and had to participate on the school attendance team.

As an administrator of a high school, I understood the importance of the attendance team, which focused on decreasing chronic absenteeism. After working closely with the school attendance team, tracking students, and providing resources to parents, I have witnessed a decrease in chronic absenteeism in African American male

high school students. Understanding the connection that leadership can play in providing those supports is critical to unlocking the challenges schools face in decreasing chronic absenteeism in African American male high school students.

Methodology

For this basic qualitative study, I investigated the problem of chronic absenteeism in African American high school males in an urban district in an East Coast state. According to state reports, this district is among the largest school districts in the United States. Approximately 11,209 African American students are in the 35 high schools in this East Coast urban public school district. African American male high school students account for 59.02% of the total population of the 35 high schools (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019). I focused on the chronic absenteeism rates in five high schools for this study. According to the 2019 Maryland State Report Card, these five high schools had a high chronic absenteeism rate. Each school is led by one principal and three to six assistant principals. Ten high school administrators met the criteria to join this study. The requirements to participate in this study were that the administrator had to have worked in their current school for at least 2 years and participated on the school's attendance team.

Participant Selection

I selected the administrators from five high schools in the target urban East Coast state. The administrators have worked in their current school for at least 2 years. Each administrator had been a participant on the school's attendance team. There were 10 to 15 administrators who met the criteria. After serving 2 years in their schools and on their

attendance team, the high school administrators had implemented some practices to address chronic absenteeism in African American male high school students. I used purposeful sampling to select individuals specifically because they served as administrators in this district (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I emailed all eligible 15 administrators to gain participant volunteers. Ten administrators agreed to participate in the study. Then, they were sent a follow-up email with an overview of the study, clearance from the district to conduct the study, the consent form, and the available days and times to interview.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument was an interview protocol (see Appendix). To develop the interview protocol, I followed the template provided by Walden University. Walden University and the district research office personnel approved the interview protocol to create consistency and validity in the interview process. I used the interview protocol to structure each interview from the opening and subsequent posing of interview questions to the conclusion. I conducted semistructured interviews to allow for interview questioning and follow-up responses (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The interviews were recorded using Zoom audioconferencing, a service that transcribed all interview recordings for data analysis. Once the interview process was complete, I reviewed the transcribed responses for accuracy. Then, transcribed responses were emailed back to each participant, and they were allowed to correct their transcribed responses. The participants were given 3 to 5 days to comment on member checking. Member checking included making comments for incorrect words or phrases. If a participant deemed all

responses correct, they emailed me to confirm that they agreed with all the transcribed responses.

Once member checking had been completed, I coded them using MAXQDA coding software to find emergent themes and patterns. I used district data from the 2019 Maryland State Report Card and interview data. The state captures all chronic absenteeism data on the state website available to the public, and the state provides a yearly report on all the district's report card categories.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Once I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to begin the research, per the protocol of the district, I sent all Walden University-approved information to the district's department of testing and research to allow approximately 6 weeks for decision making. After receiving approval from the district Department of Testing and Research Office, I gathered the names of potential participants from the district website based on the five high schools and sent each an email. Before the initial meetings with the administrators, I shared information summarizing the study's purpose, provided information on the study's approval process, and advised the participants to respond to the consent to participate electronically. During the first conversations, the following information was reviewed verbally to ensure their willingness to participate and set mutually agreeable interview dates and times. Interviews with administrators were scheduled via Zoom audioconferences. Interviews were conducted at the participant's preferred locations and not in person. Before starting the interviews, I ensured the willingness of the participants to be in the study and then

obtained their electronic consent to begin the interview process. Initially, interviews were scheduled for 1 hour each, and additional interviews will not be required for follow-up or further information gathering. None of the interviews were longer than 35 min.

Administrators conducted transcription reviews via member checking to ensure accuracy before I began analyzing their responses to the interview questions. Each administrator provided an email to state that all transcribed responses were correct. After all interviews, I reviewed the 2019 Maryland State Report Card to ensure all information was the same as when the study started and no information had been updated.

Data Analysis Plan

I conducted the interviews via the Zoom audioconference platform. I recorded the participant's responses to the interview questions using the Zoom platform; I took notes. I used the interview transcriptions to capture additional notes before beginning the coding process to identify patterns and themes. These patterns helped develop the themes relevant to how the high school administrators felt situational leadership strategies influenced chronically absent African American male high school students.

Qualitative research typically uses an inductive approach to understand the raw data (Burkholder et al., 2016). An inductive analysis approach allows the data to be synthesized into a summary that connects to the research questions (Thomas, 2003). Coding is assigned to symbolize the data to create further analysis (Saldaña, 2016). The transcriptions were coded using MAXQDA computerized software for assistance, and the interview transcriptions were used to complete the coding process with multiple coding rounds for thematic analysis.

Archival state academic data are available on the Maryland State Report Card website, providing trend data for each school. The report card data includes state assessment performance by subgroup, attendance, and chronic absenteeism in rating school performance. I obtained specific school data after confirming administrators' participation in the study. All five high school administrators participated in this study. I examined the emergent themes and the school-specific data to identify any other patterns supporting the actions of administrators that might have influenced the decrease in the number of African American high school males labeled as chronically absent.

Trustworthiness

Trust is essential during the interview between the administrator and the researcher, and many terms can be used interchangeably for trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is the assurance level of the results (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Trustworthiness has four components: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Shenton, 2004). Credibility is the most vital because it determines the level of confidence in the truth of the study. Dependability determines whether the data are stable over time and under different conditions. Confirmability relies on the consistency of the data specific to study participants' experiences under investigation, and transferability is the usefulness of the data to be transferred to other settings or studies (Connelly, 2016).

Credibility

Trustworthiness of the results is essential for any research to be credible. Internal validity, which establishes credibility, can be implemented through triangulation, member

checking, multiple coding, discussion of negative cases, peer debriefers, and so on

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During the investigation, administrators' situational leadership

behaviors will be examined to determine which are essential in influencing the decrease

in chronic absenteeism in African American males in high school. There were a few ways

to ensure creditability. The data I collected through interviews included transcription

reviews and member checking by having the administrators examine the transcriptions to

ensure that the information reflected the accuracy of their responses. Using a former

fellow Walden doctoral student for peer debriefing throughout the process provided

additional credibility to the study.

Transferability

From the five high schools, administrators had to have 2 or more years of

experience as an administrator in their current school and participate on the school's

attendance team. It was determined if administrators' situational leadership behaviors

may decrease chronic absenteeism in African American male high school students. Using

behaviors and actions demonstrated in the findings adequately through the interview

responses and evidence found in the literature showed the transferability of the study

(Burkholder et al., 2016). Analyzing the responses from the administrators shared with

me when responding to the interview questions provided me with their experience so that

others might consider the extent of transferability of the findings.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data, and dependability is similar to the

quantitative concept of reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To foster trustworthiness, I

analyzed interview responses and school data to develop the themes. Every step is documented in this capstone, from obtaining approval from Walden and the district to the interview process, member checking, and determining codes and themes.

Confirmability

I was a former high school principal at the time of this study. I used each high school's state report card and the data collection process. Confirmability "is the concept that the data can be confirmed by someone other than the researcher" (Tomas, 2011, p. 417). As proposed by Yin (2016), ensuring the reliability of this basic qualitative study by adequately collecting, documenting, interpreting, and representing the findings so that others could reach the same conclusions if given the same data. Each administrator's interview responses will be used to support the study's findings.

<p align="center">**Ethical Procedures**</p>

As the researcher, I considered ethical concerns before conducting the study. Given that the district formally employed me at the time of this study, I knew that it would be imperative to ensure that the participants were informed of the research and the data that will be used, along with protecting their privacy. Administrators were made aware that all data used outside of their interviews would be publicly available on the state website to address any ethical concerns about my role as a former high school administrator once I received approval from Walden University IRB to allow me to proceed with getting authorization from East Coast urban public school district's Testing and Research Department. Then, that approval provided me with permission to contact

school administrators. Confidentiality was maintained when reporting the results
(Burkholder et al., 2016).

I used a variety of means to gather the data for the study. Interview data were captured through Zoom audio recordings, and state data were collected directly from the state website. I used MAXQDA to identify themes. All this information is stored on a USB in my locked home file cabinet and will be maintained for 5 years. The data were not shared; I loaded them into MAXQDA for coding purposes only. I identified all administrators using alphanumeric codes to ensure the confidentiality of all parties and the district host for this basic qualitative study.

Summary

The research methods outlined in this chapter met the criteria of a basic qualitative study. The review of the qualitative research design, my role as the researcher, and the collection and analysis of the data will be explained, along with assurances of the study's trustworthiness. In Chapter 4, I outlined the results related to the research question. The chapter also includes a more in-depth description of the setting, information on data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Guest et al. (2020) stated that saturation is the point where no new information is derived from further interviews. My goal was to interview 10–15 administrators. Data saturation refers to the point in the research process when no new information is discovered in data analysis, and this redundancy signals to researchers that data collection may cease. Saturation means that a researcher can be reasonably assured that further data collection would yield similar results and serve to confirm emerging themes and

conclusions. When researchers can claim that they have collected enough data to achieve their research purpose, they should report how, when, and to what degree they reached data saturation (Creswell, 2014).

Chapter 4: Results

This basic qualitative research aimed to explore administrators' situational

leadership behaviors to battle the challenges of chronic absenteeism. Chronic

absenteeism is a problem in this urban school district in an East Coast state. This problem

affects both elementary and middle school administrators and high school administrators

dramatically. African American high school males are a subgroup struggling with chronic

absenteeism in this district. According to the 2019 Maryland State Report Card

(Maryland State Department of Education, 2019), for this urban public school district the

chronic absenteeism rate, on average, for male African American high schoolers in the

target district was 41.2%. Ten high school administrators in this urban East Coast public

school district were interviewed to provide data for thematic analysis to answer the

research question. The research question that guided this study was, how do urban high

school administrators implement situational leadership theory behaviors to address the

challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school

students? This chapter presents the study setting, participant demographics, data

collection and analysis process, results, and trustworthiness.

Setting

The setting of this study was an urban East Coast public school district. At the

time of the study, the district served approximately 37,126 male students in 35 high

schools, with about 51% of the population being African American males. The study was

open to five high schools, with 15 administrators who met the criterion of having at least

2 years of experience as administrators at their respective schools and have served on the

school's attendance team. These five high schools currently have a high percentage of African American males labeled chronically absent in this East Coast urban public school district.

Data Collection

I collected data from 10 high school administrators through one-on-one interviews. Upon receiving Walden IRB approval (no. 03-06-23-0070973), an email was sent to administrators at the five high schools identified with high chronic absenteeism rates in African American male students in this East Coast urban public school district. I created the consent forms and emailed them to the 15 high school administrators within the school district who met the criterion of a minimum of 2 years of experience at their current schools and have served on their school's attendance team. There were 10 administrators who responded with emails of consent. The consenting administrators from the five high schools emailed me directly, and we mutually agreed on dates and times for their virtual Zoom interviews. I sent a Google Calendar invite with the Zoom link in the description of the meeting notice after their work hours or during the weekend. I conducted the interviews over 2 weeks to accommodate the East Coast urban high school administrators' busy schedules. Ten East Coast urban public school district administrators participated in individual, semistructured interviews using Zoom. The semistructured interviews comprised two demographic questions and then 12 interview questions. Interviews ranged from 20 to 35 min, with all 10 administrators completing their interview session. All interviews were recorded through Zoom's audio recording

setting and are stored on a USB in my locked home file cabinet, where they will be securely stored for the next 5 years.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a software application, MAXQDA, that used the frequency of words used by the participants in their responses and determined themes. Once the interview transcription process was completed through MAXQDA, I reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy and shared them with the administrators for member-checking and approval. There were three administrators whose corrections were made due to transcription errors. During transcription, two to three words were transcribed incorrectly. The administrators added the omitted word to their interview transcription and emailed it back. Upon receipt of the updated transcript, I made the necessary corrections to the original interview transcript. Last, all updated transcriptions were returned to the participants via email for final member checking. All administrators confirmed via email that their interview transcript was accurate. A USB holds the interview transcriptions, Zoom audio recordings, analyzed theme data from MAXQDA, and all the approved forms from the identified East Coast urban public school district and Walden University. The USB is securely locked in my home file cabinet and will remain there for the next 5 years, and then it will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis was transcribing each interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Each transcript was randomly named using alphanumeric codes A1 through A10 to indicate the individual study participants. The data analysis consisted of open coding, including critical word frequency. This open coding process was done with the support of

MAXQDA 2020 by highlighting terms in each transcription. I checked for the frequency

of phrases and words in the interview transcripts, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin

(2012), and transitioned from coded sections of the transcripts to categories and then

themes, as described by Saldaña (2016). During the interviews, specific words were used

by the high school administrators, which were subsequently counted to assist in

developing the theme. The high school administrators' responses showed a frequency of

similar words categorized in each theme based on the thematic analysis (see Table 1).

Because there was only one research question, all the categories and themes addressed

how urban high school administrators implement situational leadership theory behaviors

to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male

high school students. The quotes from the 10 participants that reflect each theme are

included in the Results section. Data saturation was evident after the seventh

administrator was interviewed. Data saturation refers to the point in the research process

when no new information is discovered in data analysis, and this redundancy signals to

researchers that data collection may cease (Guest et al., 2020). Saturation means that a

researcher can be reasonably assured that further data collection would yield similar

results and serve to confirm emerging themes and conclusions (Guest et al., 2020).

Table 1

Frequency of Words in Participant Responses Associated With Each Theme

Participant	Words in participant responses (*f*)		
	Theme 1: Relationships/Relationship Building (Directing)	Theme 2: Support (Supporting)	Theme 3: Communication/ Collaboration (Directing)
A1	5	19	6
A2	6	0	0
A3	6	8	1
A4	6	5	6
A5	5	5	1
A6	6	7	11
A7	9	4	0
A8	5	6	0
A9	8	10	2
A10	12	9	0
Total	68	73	27

Results

Results of the findings from analysis of 10 interviews of high school administrators from an East Coast urban public school district will be defined. The Results section is organized by theme (see Table 2). The theme of relationships, relationship building, and support is organized by category. The themes identified in this research indicate that administrators respond to the needs of employees based on their readiness to improve performance, as suggested by the conceptual framework of Hersey and Blanchard (1979). The presentation of results includes summaries of the different findings as well as quotes from individual participants that support each theme.

Table 2

Themes, Categories, and Codes

Theme	Category	Code
Theme 1: Relationships and Relationship Building	Administrators' relationships with students, administrators' relationships with staff, administrators' expectations regarding staff and student relationships, and administrators and staff relationships with home and the community	New teacher academy, school culture, parent meetings, community events, being present, school-wide events, visiting homes and neighborhood, trust, personal notes
Theme 2: Support	Empowering the school community	Expectations, meeting expectations, systems and operations, new teachers, mentors, structure, environment, support staff, social and emotional needs, visible, open communication, feedback, time management
Theme 3: Communication and Collaboration	Parent outreach, community events, partnerships with the community, meetings, having a voice, time, misconceptions, attendance, policy, family events, nonjudgmental dialogue	

Theme 1: Relationships and Relationship Building

I coded 68 pieces of text and separated the codes that comprise the theme of relationships and relationship building. The theme encompassed coded references to four subthemes or categories: administrators' relationships with students, administrators' relationships with staff, staff and student relationship expectations from administrators, and administrators and staff relationships with home and community. The findings indicated many relationships built within the school, home, and community.

Relationships and relationship building were mentioned in all of the interviews. The administrators shared how relationships were made in their schools and extended into the home and community. Based on all the high school administrators' interview responses, the situational leadership theory behavior directing successfully created relationships with staff, students, and parents.

Administrators' Relationships with Students

Students have the option to come to school and build relationships with administrators. High school administrators can implement various strategies and provide opportunities to connect with students inside and outside the school building. Encouraging open communication and student feedback ensures that everyone's voices are heard and valued. One way to achieve this is by having an administrator who leads by example and establishes clear expectations. For example, A6 is known for being transparent, openly communicating with students, and holding them accountable. This approach helps foster a sense of fairness and consistency, which is essential when implementing rules, policies, and procedures. As a result, students know they can trust their administrator and will be treated fairly. Administrators indicated that student forums or assemblies made the expectations clear to students at the beginning of the school year. Additionally, administrators provide opportunities for students to give anonymous feedback through school climate surveys or suggestion boxes placed in various areas of the school to which students have access. Lasting relationships in a high school can foster community and support among students and teachers. A3 continued, "It helps me understand their unique needs" with that information it is easier to approach how to assist

students. Strong relationships with students can positively impact their academic performance, attendance, and overall well-being. These relationships can promote belonging between African American high school males and administrators.

This relationship includes administrators getting buy-in from the students because their voices are being heard. Students feel cared for and valued once relationships have been built with administrators. According to A10, when administrators show genuine interest in students' lives, listen to their concerns, and make efforts to address their needs, students are more likely to attend school and engage actively in their work. Administrators must prioritize relationship building with students, particularly those at risk of chronic absenteeism, to ensure they receive the support they need to thrive in school.

Administrators' Relationships With Staff

The message about building relationships has to be straightforward to staff, a non-negotiable made by administrators at the beginning of the school year. Being approachable and available to staff, for example, during the beginning of the school year, administrators tell all staff members that they have an open-door policy, which helps them build better relationships with their colleagues. The staff appreciates being able to come and talk without making an appointment. Furthermore, with the open-door policy, administrators schedule regular check-ins with staff to see how they are doing and to address any issues they may be facing. According to A3, "at the last school, the administrator was about being family oriented through building relationships, she was a role model to staff," and staff see how the administrator operates within the school and

school community. According to two of the high school administrators, A6 and A10, creating a culture where staff feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions in a safe and respectful manner is key. This can be achieved by encouraging open communication and feedback from staff, which in turn ensures that everyone is respected. Based on their experience as being high school administrators leading by example, being transparent, and having open communication with staff are critical to developing trusting relationships within the school. Additionally, administrators can provide opportunities for staff to provide feedback through surveys, focus groups, one-on-one meetings, and feedback forms. These channels allow staff to share their thoughts and ideas on areas that need improvement and offer suggestions for addressing them. Providing these opportunities for staff to collaborate, share ideas, and give feedback to administrators.

Administrators plan for relationship-building activities to be done with staff when they return to school from summer break. One approach is to organize team-building activities and events to encourage collaboration; A5 said,

> This allows new and old staff to get to know each other. Once administrators connect with staff, they can work together to create a positive school culture. Then administrators expect that when students return during the 1st week of school, teachers will not be teaching content but doing relationship-building activities to get to know their students better.

Administrators indicated that the expectations were made clear to staff at the beginning of the school year. Relationship building takes place during the entire school year but sets the tone when done at the beginning of the school year. Administrators model building

relationships because this is how they want staff to operate within their schools. Staff want to know you care about what is happening with them and "how I can be a listening ear" (A6).

All administrators stated that it was vital for them to demonstrate the importance of building relationships with staff. Strong relationships in these high schools changed the school building's climate and culture. Changing the environment and culture is a positive result of building relationships and creating a positive, inclusive school culture that promotes respect, kindness, and collaboration. This led to relationships in the students' homes and the school community.

Administrators' Expectations for Staff and Student Relationships

The staff and student relationship expectations from administrators vary depending on the school. This district does require that administrators provide clear expectations to their staff during the beginning of the school year. Administrators set clear expectations for staff and students, especially when attending school. Setting clear expectations and providing resources and support for students encourages "the positive relationships administrators build with staff are those administrators want staff to make with students" (A4). This involves staff being approachable, supportive, and communicative with students. Staff can work with students to identify and overcome personal and environmental barriers. As A7 reflected, "Staff should provide guidance and support to help students overcome obstacles and achieve their goals," additionally, administrators are expected to create a safe and inclusive environment for all staff and students. Overall, staff can be critical in helping students overcome obstacles and achieve

their goals. A1 posited the expectation that positive interactions such as respectful

communication and engagement in learning activities will occur on campus. They further

acknowledged, "When I visit classrooms, I watch the interactions that staff and students

have with each other." Holding staff accountable for implementing policies around

school attendance and communicating the school's vision, mission, and goals. Ultimately,

the goal of the administrators is to ensure that staff have developed trusting relationships

with the students they service to help them succeed by "changing the mindset of staff to

prepare students for life beyond high school is the goal; to do that, staff must ensure they

attend school" (A9).

Administrators and Staff Relationships With the Community

Building relationships can be the bridge to link school and home. Once

administrators establish the importance of their relationships with teachers and students,

getting staff to understand the importance of building relationships with parents is

essential. Administrators emphasize the importance of creating a welcoming and

inclusive environment for parents and community members by providing opportunities

for them to participate in decision-making processes and contribute to school

improvement efforts. The high schools represented in this research are all community-

based. This means the students attending their prospective high schools live in the same

community—administrators task teachers at the beginning of the school day. Teachers

and staff can contact parents to introduce themselves via phone, send a positive message

through an app, or send a welcome letter. These are just a few examples used at the

beginning of the school year.

During the school year, staff can be visible by attending after-school and sporting events, allowing teachers to meet and talk to parents. When students see community administrators, teachers, and staff supporting events, it shows students that they care. Two administrators, A2 and A10, held various events at their schools that shows the connection between the parents, school, and community. Some of these events include career fairs and parent–teacher conferences to foster a sense of community and engagement. As stated by A3, "keeping the school website and social media pages up to date to keep parents and the community members informed about school news and events" will make parents and the community aware of what is happening. All administrators have an open-door policy for teachers and staff but extend that to parents. If parents have a school or community-related concern, administrators encourage them to contact the school. Administrators stress to parents that they want to know what is going on at home and in the community before it affects the student's academic or behavior. School administrators stress the importance of teachers and staff establishing solid relationships with parents. "When teachers and parents foster positive relationships with each other and their students," stated A1, this improves the teacher-student relationships but also enables a more straightforward resolution of issues as they arise. A4, A8, and A5 agreed that parents want to hear from the teacher, not just when their child is misbehaving, not doing work, or not attending school. A10 noted that "communication will be better" when parents and the school speak the same language, creating a true partnership.

Through the situational leadership behavior of directing, administrators set the example that teachers must build relationships with African American male high school students to have fewer problems as the year continues. The same goes for the staff as A5 stated, "Building lasting relationships will be a considerable benefit by the end of the school year, or once it is time for them to graduate." A5 further stated that "Relationships are essential with our African American males. They must see themselves as a part of the school's culture." Overall, building relationships with parents and the community was viewed as a critical strategy for reducing chronic absenteeism and improving the academic success of African American high school males.

Theme 2: Support

I coded 73 pieces of text and separated the codes into one category, comprising the support theme. The one category is empowering the school environment. The findings indicated that administrators desire to establish a support system for teachers, staff, students, and parents. The high school administrators encouraged staff, students, and parents by giving time to actively listen, motivate, and offer support resources throughout the school year.

Promotion of the School Environment That Empowers All Stakeholders

Administrators are tasked with nurturing a positive and inclusive school climate that encourages them to support teachers, staff, students, and parents. Additionally, a supportive environment can inspire and motivate all school community members to work towards a common goal aligned with the school's mission, vision, and academic excellence. The administrators can explain how the vision and mission can be translated

into their classrooms' daily practices and routines. A1, A4, A8, and A10 involve staff in developing the school's vision and mission by seeking their input and feedback. Including staff input creates a shared understanding and commitment to the school's goals among staff members, which can lead to improved morale, motivation, and performance. A1 mentioned that when staff members collaborate, they can bring diverse perspectives and ideas to the table, leading to a more comprehensive and meaningful vision and mission. Last, involving staff in this process can increase the staff's sense of ownership and commitment to the school's objectives, resulting in a shared sense of purpose and direction. This district requires that all administrators communicate clear expectations and the school-wide goals for the upcoming school year. When staff returns from summer break, administrators can explain the school's goals and objectives and how they align with the broader goals of the school district. This leads to the response from A7, "my message aligns all the work to the school's goals, vision, and mission, which are significant to investing in staff and students." By emphasizing alignment with the school's mission, A7 highlights the importance of investing in the growth and development of both staff and students.

A9 articulated that, "Staff and students need to understand that when they are talking to me, I am fully engaged in the conversation and understand the concerns [which] leads to student and staff input." This is important to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue; it is essential to incorporate the perspectives of high school administrators and the input of students and staff. The administration wants to foster open communication and collaboration by creating an environment where staff and students

feel heard and valued. These student and staff input opportunities include student-led and staff meetings to ensure everyone feels heard and provide administrators with feedback on how and where to offer support.

Effective administration ensures that students receive the best education possible. Therefore, school administrators must take the necessary steps to support their staff and provide them with the necessary resources to excel in their roles. A2 expressed, "It is the administrator's job to determine how to support staff and determine what resources they need to be the best for students." The administrator's responsibility is to determine how to support staff and identify the necessary resources to perform their duties to the best of their ability. It is essential to provide ongoing training and support for staff to help them effectively engage and support African American male students. Administrators are tasked with offering professional development opportunities and educational materials and creating a positive and supportive school culture. By investing in the resources needed for their school's demographics, administrators can help improve African American males' attendance. When teachers feel supported and empowered, they understand that for a school to succeed, it takes a team, not an individual. A4 stated, "that she motivates staff and students by recognizing their achievements and providing positive feedback." Acknowledging and appreciating staff members' hard work and dedication can also make them feel respected. This can include public recognition at staff meetings, awards, or a thank-you note or email.

Through the situational leadership behavior of directing, administrators support staff and students. A2 mentioned, "the more support and resources can be given to

students and staff, the easier it is to support their needs." Our responsibility is to provide

staff with the necessary resources to provide high-quality student support and create a

positive learning environment. Ultimately, supporting staff and students with resources

can lead to increased improved school culture and positive social change.

Theme 3: Communication and Collaboration

The third theme expressed is communication and collaboration. Within the theme

of communication and collaboration, themes one and two must be established. High

school administrators are providing the importance of clear communication channels and

collaboration with staff to ensure everyone knows the school's expectations and goals.

Communication of goals and expectations can be demonstrated in various ways, such as

emails, phone calls, newsletters, and social media. These are all forms of communication

that each of the school's administrators can use when interviewed. Administrators can

also use social media platforms to engage with the school community and gather

feedback. Using these various channels, administrators can create a culture of open

communication and collaboration, improving the overall school experience for everyone

involved. Clearly defining the goals and expectations of the school should be

communicated to all staff, students, and parents. Building a culture of transparency is

critical to effective communication and collaboration with a school. "Staff and students

must understand that I focus on what they say when talking to me" (A9); effective

communication and collaboration can be done by creating a culture of transparency. Staff

and students need to know that their voice is heard and valued. Communication is crucial

in school because it facilitates effective information exchange between teachers, students,

and parents. It creates a positive learning environment that encourages students to attend

school. Effective communication is one more layer to build trust and relationships among

staff and students, which can lead to better academic performance and attendance. Being

present in the hallway is essential: "I am present, and this time is used mainly for students

to talk to me about what is happening with classes, home, or work" (A7). This time is

valuable to both students and administrators. Communication plays a vital role in

addressing any issues or concerns, allowing for timely resolution and preventing minor

problems from becoming more prominent.

This can help administrators and staff to understand better and respond to the

needs of their students and parents. Effectively communicating a school's goals and

expectations involves monitoring and evaluating progress toward these goals. This can be

achieved through regular data collection and analysis, which can help identify

improvement areas and inform decision-making processes. Communication is essential,

and important updates are provided through regular staff meetings and emails (A10); this

can be provided weekly or monthly. It is also essential to have regular meetings with staff

to discuss school policies, procedures, and concerns. Effective communication of a

school's goals and expectations requires a collaborative and transparent approach

involving all staff and students in developing, implementing, and evaluating the school's

goals and expectations and following up on feedback and concerns raised by staff and

students to show that their input is valued and taken seriously. This helps with building

trust and confidence in the school's leadership. A9 concluded, "I have to be direct with

staff for them to understand that I want an open line of communication." There are many

different ways to communicate with staff and parents. A1 conveyed, "Our district

provides various tools for teachers to use to communicate with parents, such as school

messenger, and you can send all messages to all students and parents or select students

and parents." They further shared that asking teachers to be consistent with their

communication with parents is important to developing a collaborative relationship. A3

suggested, by implementing this school year a parent–teacher-community email to

families of "several of our students who are struggling with chronic absenteeism" allows

for one message to go out to everyone from each school. Each of the five schools has a

procedure for teachers to call home after students have missed three absences. Both A3

and A9, who is at the same school, expressed that when a student has missed a certain

number of days but has not been labeled chronically absent then returns to school for 3, 5,

or 7 consecutive days, a positive phone is made home to the parent or guardian as one

way to encourage the importance of attending school.

  Based on this study, building relationships, supporting, and communicating are

needed for collaboration. Collaboration can take many forms. When high school

administrators and staff work together, they can develop and implement effective policies

and practices that support student success. The administrator's job is to promote a culture

of trust and respect among staff members, which can help foster open communication and

collaboration. High school administrators collaborate with their staff by encouraging

them to connect with students personally and provide support and guidance where

needed. A8 said, "We involve students in the school's decision-making processes so that

students can share their perspectives and feedback to create a more student-centered

learning environment" to create a sense of ownership and responsibility. Having their voices heard holds them more accountable for valuing their education. This indicates that administrators collaborate with students by establishing positive relationships, providing support, and maintaining open communication.

Establishing a collective effort with a shared mission, vision, and goals prioritizing student success and well-being. A6 noted, "The goal is to have a collaborative school culture that values teaching to foster a positive culture," which helps to create opportunities for staff to work together and share ideas. Learning is critical to providing a culture of respect and collaboration amongst the staff. A2 further noted "That positive school culture will ensure that students want to come to school and not be absent." This is crucial in ensuring students are motivated to attend school regularly and not be absent. By working collaboratively and valuing teaching, a positive school culture can be created that promotes student engagement, reduces absenteeism, and leads to academic and post-graduation success. Administrators can encourage collaboration among staff by creating a positive work environment and providing opportunities for professional development. Through professional development opportunities, high school administrators help their staff develop new skills and acquire new knowledge. Professional development can encourage staff to be open to feedback. This collaboration encourages staff members to share their experiences and insights and provides opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. The goal is for "staff to improve job performance and increase job satisfaction" (A3); it is essential to provide regular feedback and recognition for a job well done, as this can help boost morale and motivation. Improved

job performance and increased job satisfaction can lead to a more positive work environment and more significant opportunities for career advancement. By working collaboratively, teachers can share ideas, resources, and best practices, which can ultimately benefit students and improve the overall goals of each high school.

Administrators must communicate these expectations and consequences to staff and enforce them to maintain accountability consistently. A10 noted that "directing staff to understand procedures by providing clear and concise instructions are essential because they are being held accountable," creating these opportunities for staff members to practice and demonstrate their understanding of the school's procedures. By building effective communication and collaboration with students, parents, and staff, administrators can foster a sense of community, improve overall school performance, and help to form better connections between home and school. By working collaboratively, administrators and staff can support each other's strengths, develop a shared vision for the school, and create a culture of trust and respect. This can ultimately lead to improved student outcomes. Effective communication and outgoing feedback are essential to ensure that staff members understand and follow the procedures correctly. Overall, this research determined three themes: building relationships, providing support, fostering open communication, and promoting collaboration among high school administrators, teachers, and students to reduce chronic absenteeism rates among African American males and promote their academic and post-graduation success.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To address trustworthiness, I outlined in Chapter 3 the methods I used to show credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Methods addressing each trustworthiness element and any changes from the plan outlined in Chapter 3 are described below. This study adhered to Walden University's ethical standards, IRB guidelines, and scholarly methodological practices. Trustworthiness is the assurance level of the results (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Credibility

In this study, each interview took place using Zoom. I checked the interview responses' transcripts and then emailed each administrator. Each administrator participated in the member-checking process to ensure the accuracy of the data collection from the transcribed interview. The administrators were asked to review the transcripts and confirm that the interview responses reflected their responses. The administrator emailed me stating they approved or commented on any revisions that needed to be made. The former fellow Walden doctoral student was not used for peer debriefing. Upon thematic coding, the transcripts were reviewed two or three times to find quotes from administrators with which the themes aligned. A review of Zoom recordings and printed transcripts, the use of the MAXQDA coding program, and each school report card provided sufficient data from these sources to yield credible results.

Credibility was increased by ensuring each administrator emailed and understood the consent form. Each administrator also verified that they met the criteria for the study and provided a day and time for the Zoom interview to be conducted.

Transferability

Transferability is the usefulness of the data to be transferred to other settings or studies (Connelly, 2016). I addressed the school, setting, and participants in this study. The information provided in the research design and the data collection process has been accurately represented to facilitate transferability. This study may help develop a deeper understanding of high school administrators' perspectives in working with school staff to use situational leadership theory behaviors to inform their practices and strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism in African American high school male students. Through similar urban high school settings, the study may be relevant to other high schools in similar districts.

Dependability

I identified codes, categories, and themes from participants' transcripts without formulating prior codes, which helped to prevent bias. The data were repeatedly read to address dependability as codes and categories emerged. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), the dependability of qualitative research is based on the sufficiency and consistency of the data to authenticate the results. The results included answers to the research question on how urban high school administrators implement situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American male high school students.

Dependability was also attained through the procedures outlined in Chapter Three, including elements of the IRB application, following ethical protocols, and describing the data collection and analysis process. The data are quoted throughout the

Results section to ensure the thematic analysis was accurately made from the administrator's interview transcript.

Confirmability

I established confirmability through direct administrators' quotes to confirm the thematic analysis results and member checking of 10 participants. The steps for collecting data were shared with all the administrators that participated in the interview. The administrators and the researcher displayed no biases during this study. The confirmability of this study was supported by my prior knowledge of the subject matter being a former principal, frameworks, and questions created (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The use of direct participant quotes to explain the categorical and thematic analysis of the data was also a method I used to ensure the confirmability of results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

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Summary

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I addressed the relationships, relationship building, support, communication, and collaboration while also addressing the components of the research question. Each theme reinforced how each administrator uses one or more situational leadership behaviors to focus on the problem of African American high school males being labeled as chronically absent. Relationships/relationship building, support, communication, and collaboration from an administrator's point of view are closely related. Building positive relationships with students is essential for improving attendance, as students who feel connected to their school and teachers are more likely to attend regularly. Additionally, providing support and resources to students struggling with attendance issues can help address the underlying causes of chronic absenteeism. Effective communication and collaboration

between administrators, teachers, and parents are crucial for promoting regular

attendance and addressing challenges. By working together and maintaining open lines of

communication, administrators can create a supportive and positive school environment

that encourages students to attend regularly and succeed academically. Chapter 4 used the

results of this basic qualitative study based on the interview responses provided by all the

high school administrators. In this basic qualitative study, I explored high school

administrators' perspectives on implementing situational theory strategies to address the

challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American high school males.

In Chapter 5, I summarized and interpreted the findings, presented the study's limitations,

and made recommendations for further research. In addition, I provided insights on

positive social change along with a conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This qualitative study explored high school administrators' behaviors in implementing situational leadership theory behaviors to address the challenges of reducing the chronic absenteeism of African American high school males in an East Coast district. The data included semistructured interview responses from 10 high school administrators with at least 2 years of being an administrator in their current school. The thematic analysis revealed three themes describing relationships: relationship building, supporting, communicating, and collaboration. This chapter includes interpretations of the findings of the study, recommendations for future research, limitations of the study, and implications for social change in education.

Interpretation of the Findings

Through effective interviewing, systematic coding, careful categorizing, rigorous theme identification, and thorough data analysis, I could draw meaningful conclusions and summations in this research. Based on the interpreted response, the researcher determined which situational leadership theory behaviors were used by the administrator. The four situational leadership theory behaviors are delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing (Leahy & Shore, 2019), but from the research, directing and supporting were the situational leadership theory behaviors that urban high school administrators used the most to impact staff and students in addressing their school's chronic absenteeism rate in African American males. The interpretation of the findings in this basic qualitative research study has significantly contributed to the overall understanding of how high school administrators use situational leadership theory behaviors to address the

challenges they face in decreasing chronic absenteeism in African American high school males. The conceptual framework we used for this study was Hershey and Blanchard's situational leadership model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

Interpretation of Theme 1: Relationships and Relationship Building

The first theme from the data was that relationships and relationship building are essential. Relationships and relationship building are crucial to student success in a high school setting. The situational leadership behavior that administrators use to guide relationships and relationship building is directing. Directive leaders focus more on developing their team members' competencies through building relationships. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) said that the leader uses leadership methods that include simple instructions, clear explanations, and careful supervision. A1 emphasized that "new and experienced staff members can benefit from the administration's guidance in using directing behavior." This is important to establish a productive working environment; it is crucial for administrators to cultivate strong relationships with both staff and students.

Kelly (2020) argued that school principals are responsible for creating a positive school culture to support all children academically, yet there is limited knowledge regarding how principals create such a culture. High school administrators must create a positive school climate that fosters meaningful connections between students, teachers, and staff. Each administrator in this study recommended building positive relationships with students to increase and maintain consent attendance. According to all the interviewed administrators, the school staff is granted time to foster relationships with students, not only at the beginning of the academic year but also in the middle, through

mandatory relationship-building activities. As A4 pointed out, building relationships is a continuous process throughout the school year.

Administrators encourage staff to understand students' struggles based on the school and community demographics. Understanding students' living conditions and community environment is vital for staff members in urban public-school districts. According to A6, providing staff members with a tour of the school boundaries has proven to be effective in helping them better understand the neighborhood where the students come from and where they live. The environment that a student grows up in can positively or negatively affect their ability to be successful (Champion, 2022). When school staff members gain a deep understanding of the obstacles that students face outside of the classroom that hinder their ability to attend school, they can provide better guidance to help cultivate the necessary relationship between the students and the institution. Building positive relationships with a student will not improve attendance if the student faces challenges such as lack of transportation or is bullied at school. Interventions that have research and evidence of effectiveness have been identified by ESSA and given a substantial rating level to demonstrate a rationale (ED, 2016). Establishing healthy relationships with staff members has encouraged students to come to school, as it provides a safe and comfortable environment for them to discuss and seek help for their challenges, including drug addiction, family illnesses, homelessness, and hunger, which may hinder their academic progress. By fostering these relationships, teachers can help their students academically and emotionally, leading to a more well-

rounded education. These healthy relationships continue even after the attendance has improved and the student has graduated from high school.

Administrators used the directing behavior to ensure that staff understood the importance of relationships and building relationships. Administrators model the directing style through staff-to-staff relationship-building activities and the 1st week of school expectations. During the 1st week of school, administrators observe staff building relationships through conversations, getting-to-know-you activities, or team-building exercises. These exercises establish trust and rapport between administrators, staff, and students. When students feel valued, respected, and supported, they are more likely to attend school regularly, engage in learning, and persist through academic challenges. Building positive relationships with students helps administrators identify and address chronic absenteeism before it becomes a significant problem. By taking a proactive approach to relationship building, high school administrators can create a culture of attendance and academic success that benefits all students. Research has shown that youth who drop out of school experience high levels of chronic disease, substance abuse, mental health concerns, and early death (Stempel et al., 2017). If administrators are not directing staff to build relationships with students, chronic absenteeism will remain problematic.

Interpretation of Theme 2: Support

The second theme from the data is support because it is essential in a high school between administrators, staff, and students. The behavior from the situational leadership theory, support, is aligned with how administrators support their staff and students

throughout the school year. Improvement in teaching and learning is highly influenced by the administrators' creation of a culture of trust and support for teachers, including staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). High school administrators use this behavior more to ensure that staff understand their responsibility as educators. Supportive leadership involves listening, praising, and making the followers feel good when they show the necessary commitment for success. High school administrators must recognize the significance of situational leadership behavior and its impact on staff and students. Therefore, they should implement such behavior to ensure a positive and effective learning environment for everyone. An administrator's situational leadership directly connects to an educator's dedication to the learning environment (Dudung et al., 2021). Recognizing staff for their hard work and contributions to the school community gives the staff a sense of accomplishment and feeling respected. By showing appreciation and recognition for their staff's efforts, high school administrators can motivate and inspire staff members to continue to work hard and contribute to the success of the school. According to A5, expressing gratitude and acknowledging the efforts of the staff by saying "thank you" and "you are appreciated" can make them feel valued and recognized for their hard work. Administrators offer incentives or rewards for exceptional performance or exceeding their job responsibilities. High school administrators often tailor their appreciation efforts to their staff's needs and preferences.

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) viewed support as encouraging, listening, offering recognition, and providing feedback to staff and students. There are many ways that high

school administrators use the situational leadership theory behavior support to celebrate students' perfect attendance or academic achievements during monthly or quarterly recognitions. Some examples of these celebrations can include recognition during honor roll and attendance assemblies. Students might receive a certificate, pen, or pencil, be invited to a special breakfast or lunch, or have their picture taken for display throughout the school. "Allowing students to have a say in what rewards they receive for achieving honor roll or perfect attendance is often appreciated" (A2). The high school administrators develop the routine of encouraging the staff on the attendance team to offer additional incentives for African American males with attendance concerns to enable them to attend school consistently. African American males needing additional support or being monitored by the attendance team will have individual incentives added to their attendance contracts and celebrated at various milestones.

While using the support situational leadership behavior, the administrator must build confidence. One way to build staff and student confidence is to have an open-door policy so that staff and students can stop in and feel secure. Staff and students need the assurance of knowing they have someone they can talk to and depend on. Administrators' supportive leadership behavior aims to build confidence in students to motivate and change negative behaviors or beliefs about school attendance. High school administrators encourage students to be open and honest to address obstacles affecting their attendance. Some students will not participate in school to avoid bullying, unsafe conditions, harassment, and embarrassment (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). These factors are essential to understand and are vital reasons why African American males are not attending school.

Addressing and finding solutions to these issues is crucial, as every student deserves a safe and supportive learning environment to thrive and succeed. Taking action and developing practical solutions to these challenges is essential since every student deserves a positive and secure learning atmosphere where they can flourish and confidently achieve their goals. When administrators know how to build supportive relationships with teachers, staff, and students, they will exceed. Highly effective administrators who nurture supportive cultures, encourage teachers, and recognize teacher efforts are likelier to retain quality teachers (Grissom et al., 2021).

Building confidence with staff may be more complicated than building confidence with students. Administrators build confidence in staff by providing opportunities for professional development, feedback, and support and guidance when they face challenges. A9 said, "To foster a positive and productive work environment, it is important for administrators to maintain open lines of communication with their staff." This involves communicating clearly and consistently, actively listening to staff concerns, and providing constructive feedback that can be acted upon. By doing so, administrators can help ensure that staff feel heard, valued, and supported. Additionally, administrators can foster community and teamwork among staff members by encouraging collaboration and celebrating successes. By taking these steps, high school administrators can help build confidence and morale among their staff, leading to greater job satisfaction and improved student outcomes. In addition, when the administrator implements situational leadership theory behavior and builds positive relationships with the staff, teachers are more committed to the learning environment.

Once confidence is built, then it is the goal of the high school administrator to gain commitment for support from the staff and students. When staff feel committed to the school community, commitment can be displayed through consistent attendance, active participation in school events and initiatives, willingness to go above and beyond, and a dedication to the overall vision, mission, and school-wide goals. When students demonstrate their commitment, there is consistent attendance, active engagement in class, completion of assignments and projects, participation in extracurricular activities, and a desire to learn and improve. A8 stated that "commitment from both staff and students can be seen through a shared sense of responsibility for the success of the school community and a willingness to work collaboratively towards common goals." When staff and students work together to create a positive and inclusive school culture, it fosters an environment where everyone feels appreciated and supported. Positive school cultures provide a safe, supportive, encouraging, inviting, and challenging environment for students and staff, allowing students' academic achievement to evolve (Confeld, 2019).

Interpretation of Theme 3: Communication and Collaboration

The third theme from the data was that communication and collaboration between administrators, staff, students, and parents are essential in a high school. Communication and collaboration are critical components for policy, procedures, and goals to be accomplished. The situational leadership theory behavior that administrators use to guide communication and collaboration is directing. According to the research mentioned earlier, building relationships and communicating with students were among the strategies recommended by administrators to encourage attendance. To implement

effective communication strategies, high school administrators can establish clear and consistent communication channels with students and their families. School administrators with a mindset for promoting culturally responsive learning environments use open communication; establish meaningful relationships with staff and students while collaborating with the teaching staff (Gordon & Ronder, 2016). High school administrators can use various communication methods, including email, phone calls, and text messaging, to inform parents and guardians about their child's attendance and academic progress. A9 shared, "Using as various platforms of communication methods and social media has increased parents knowing what is happening in the school building." High school administrators can also use school-wide announcements, newsletters, and social media platforms to communicate with students about the importance of regular attendance and the negative consequences of chronic absenteeism.

Last, high school administrators can also foster a culture of open communication with students. They can create opportunities for students to express their concerns and needs through student-led forums or advisory groups. According to A5, having a Principal Advisory Board has given students' the voice to express their concerns about the school, especially on how to make it better. High school administrators can create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment by listening to students' voices and involving them in decision-making, ultimately leading to improved attendance rates. Effective communication is a crucial foundation for successful collaboration in any high school.

Effective communication is crucial in schools. As an administrator, it is essential to maintain open and transparent communication channels with staff to ensure everyone is on the same page and working towards common goals. By fostering a culture of effective communication, administrators can build trust and respect among staff members and create a positive work environment. Effective communication can also help address issues or concerns and encourage and support staff members. Open and transparent communication can lead to better collaboration, improved job satisfaction, and increased success for the school and its students.

High school administrators use collaboration between staff and students by promoting a culture of teamwork and communication. This can be done by fostering an environment where administrators can make staff and students comfortable sharing ideas, opinions, and feedback. Administrators can also encourage staff and students to work together on projects and assignments, which can help build relationships throughout the school year and improve learning outcomes. Additionally, high school administrators can provide professional development opportunities to learn about effective collaboration strategies and encourage staff to model these behaviors for their students. Finally, administrators can incorporate technology tools that support collaboration, such as online platforms for sharing resources and collaborating on projects, into their school's curriculum and daily operations. High schools can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that ultimately benefits everyone involved in achieving the school's and district's goals by fostering a culture of communication and collaboration among staff and students.

Effective communication can pave the way for better collaboration among administrators, staff, and students. When members of the school community communicate effectively with each other, they can share ideas, provide feedback, and work together to solve problems. This collaborative approach can lead to the development of more innovative and practical solutions to challenges faced by the school. Moreover, open and transparent communication can help to foster a sense of teamwork among administrators and staff members. When everyone is on the same page and working towards common goals, they are more likely to feel connected and invested in the school's success. This can create a positive work environment where staff members feel supported and valued, increasing productivity and job satisfaction.

It is essential for all educators, including teachers, students, and administrators, to collaborate and work together to reduce chronic absenteeism rates in African American high school males. Educators can create a positive and supportive school environment that encourages daily attendance and academic success by implementing situational leadership theory strategies and focusing on building relationships, supporting, and communicating with students. Through this collaborative effort, we can ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study include a limited sample size of high school administrators, geographic location, and interviews through the Zoom virtual platform. There was a limited sample size of 10 high school administrators from five comprehensive high schools in one urban public school district. Out of the 35 high

schools and over 100 high school administrators in this East Coast urban public school district, the administrators who took part in the study were specifically chosen from the five high schools where African American males have a high chronic absenteeism rate, per the Maryland State Report Card from 2019 (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019). This study was limited to the geographic location of an urban setting in the East Coast region of the United States because this was the school district where, during my tenure as a high school principal, I noticed a concerning trend of chronic absenteeism among African American male students, which seemed to be worsening with each passing year. Last, due to the study's ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not allowed to meet with administrators face to face to hold interviews. Interviews using Zoom neglected my ability to observe the body language-based potential bias in interview responses.

Nationwide, many public urban high schools' attendance rates are impacted by chronic absenteeism in African American high school male students, and this study was limited to the geographic location of an urban setting in the East Coast region of the United States. Children living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent—and face the most harm because their community lacks the resources to make up for the lost learning in school. Students from communities of color, as well as those with disabilities, are disproportionately affected (Attendance Works, 2017). The findings and recommendations may be relevant to other urban high school administrators throughout the United States facing chronic absenteeism issues in their African American high school male student population.

Recommendations

There continues to be a need for further research regarding why African American males are chronically absent in urban high schools. Gottfried (2015) stated that chronic absenteeism has not been well recorded or studied for all students. I recommend a study that examines the different software applications used to record attendance daily to determine total and half-day absences. No matter how absences are interpreted, it is clear that students who are not regular school attendees suffer short and long-term consequences (Gottfried, 2011) when exploring demographically contradictory areas from this study, such as a large rural area in another region of the United States. London et al. (2016) suggested that studies in other areas of the country with different populations are needed to document the reasons students fail to attend school regularly. According to Rocque et al. (2017), longitudinal studies have found associations between chronic absenteeism and lower levels of academic achievement, employment problems, convictions, aggression, substance abuse, and other adjustment problems in adulthood. I recommend a longitudinal study focusing on African American high school males in urban districts performing below national standards to establish whether consistent daily attendance could positively influence better post-graduation.

Implications

A significant research finding is that high school administrators use situational leadership theory behaviors to interact with staff, students, parents, and the school community. The information that the five high schools in this East Coast urban school district and other similar districts can gain from this research on thematic elements of

relationships, relationship building, supporting, communication, and collaboration can help high school administrators understand how to better assist with, team-building activities, understanding policies, procedures, and professional development and educating staff, students, and parents on the laws, policies, procedures, and yearly data percentages on chronic absenteeism that can lead to the social change of why it necessary to attend school. The understanding gained through this research study can lead to positive outcomes in the district, improving attendance rates and increasing the academic and post-graduation success of African American male students.

By reading the findings of this study, high school administrators may find common ground in determining resources that can be used to address chronic absenteeism. This East Coast school district high school administrators from these five high schools can utilize the findings in this study to provide professional development for all high school administrators, more resources, and wrap-around services to support high schools with many chronically absent African American male students. To promote positive social change in the district, high schools could establish learning communities that focus on resources based on research strategies tailored to meet the needs of African American high school males. The learning communities could also offer students and their parent's resources and support. Targeting this subgroup in particular needs to be a district priority to improve African American high school males' attendance. Schools need to ensure that every student attend school regularly and provides adequate support to both students and parents. This can be achieved by utilizing available resources from the school, school district, or community to encourage and motivate African American

male students to attend school daily, in line with the recommendations put forth by Balfanz and Byrnes (2012).

The high schools that are labeled with chronic absenteeism in African American males can seek community mentors and business partners to provide social and emotional support resources to assist students and parents. Mentoring programs for African American males labeled chronically absent due to lack of interest in school, not having a positive male figure in their lives, or being bullied could be implemented. Working with area community centers or faith-based partners to offer sessions related to peer pressures faced by African American males today would be beneficial.

School attendance provides youth with a setting for opportunities to develop social competence, relationships, and experiences (Kearney & Graczyk, 2013). Finally, positive social change could be achieved if other urban high schools collaborated to determine the barriers and causes for chronically absent African American high school males and then provided resources to support the specific hurdles identified.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I interpreted the thematic findings of the data, recommended future topics, and made implications for social change in the educational setting. Though the high school administrators in this urban East Coast urban school district is challenged with using all four situational leadership theory behaviors, they were able to use two of the behaviors, directing and supporting. The behavior from the situational leadership theory, directing, is aligned with how administrators lead their staff throughout the school year. High school administrators interviewed shared that this style is essential to pay

attention to because it is the lowest level and can determine how the staff members rise to the next level of their ability. When using the directing style, high school administrators can get assurance from staff and students by building relationships, supporting, communicating, and collaborating on needs to achieve school-wide and district goals.

High school administrators have employed a supportive approach to foster student commitment, which involves encouraging, listening, praising, and recognizing achievements. This leadership style should be maintained by administrators with students and staff, even after demonstrating their commitment. Both the style of directing and supporting are essential to a school and its community. The challenges in this East Coast urban public school district are when administrators are not using the four situational leadership theory behaviors to influence staff, students, parents, and the community. The findings of this study included only two situational leadership theory styles that high school administrators use to address chronic absenteeism and suggestions to improve the problem with African American high school males, but the high school administrator needs to be more intentional about implementing the other two situational leadership theory behaviors of coaching or delegating. While the Hersey-Blanchard model is highly respected in the professional realm, its application in real-world situations can be challenging. The model's strong focus on the individual can make it difficult for school leaders to apply it to groups with varying abilities and experience levels. Additionally, some leaders may struggle to adapt their leadership styles, particularly if they hold long-established beliefs. Administrators can also use coaching and delegating to lead staff in relationships, relationship building, supporting, communicating, and collaborating. It

would be best for high school administrators to use coaching leadership, or "selling" leadership behavior, to tell people what to do. Still, the difference between directing and coaching is that the school administrator sells the idea and gives them some independence and autonomy in the task. Even with providing an assignment, coaching still requires leaders to define roles and tasks clearly, but the leader seeks ideas and suggestions from the followers. High school administrators can use delegating behavior, and the school leader can provide functions to the team without specific instructions. Regularly delegating duties accomplishes more than taking some work off the principal's likely over-full plate. In this leadership behavior, the leader must trust that the staff will achieve the mission. This leadership behavior of the four is the riskiest. Using all four of the situational leadership styles would be an advantage to each high school administrator. Still, it is often difficult because of the various levels of the staff, students, and school community.

By providing four different leadership styles, the leader can adjust their behaviors to meet the staff's needs, and the team grows and becomes more capable of completing the required tasks (Wright, 2017). The high school administrators use the more situational leadership theory behaviors, the more likely the administrators will have a more significant impact on influencing staff, students, and the school community. There is a need to educate administrators, staff, students, and parents requesting additional resources such as implementing mentoring programs, research-based strategies, and professional development. The schools should offer mentors and resources to students and parents by soliciting the community and churches. Professional development is

needed to continuously build an understanding of absenteeism data, school and district policies and procedures. Parents should be informed of all the school and district attendance data, policies, and procedures associated with attendance. A collaborative effort with families, schools, communities, and the district to address the obstacles and root causes regarding chronic absenteeism in African American high school males might assist in increasing consistent attendance, increase high school graduation, and move African American high school males from high-level chronic disease, substance abuse, mental health concerns, and early death to becoming productive citizens and parents.

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Appendix: Semistructured Interview Questions

Situational Leadership Style 1: Directing

Directing is the initial or basic level of leadership style. Nearly all new employees need a more directive style of leadership. They are very formative, with little or no experience in their new roles. In the formative stage, the follower is characterized by low competence and high commitment, the inability to comply, with possible feelings of insecurity.

As leaders, we need to pay close attention to tasks rather than the relationship with the direct report, as a relationship does not yet exist.

When a direct report can't do the job because they are unknowledgeable, the leader must spend much more time working with the employee, offering clear instructions and regular follow-up. It's all about encouraging and motivating, celebrating positive results, and offering suggestions and remedial actions for less favorable results. The idea is to inspire followers to rise to the next level of their ability. This is a very leader-driven stage.

IQ1. How does the administration support new teachers/staff members to feel a part of the school family and understand school expectations?

IQ2. How does the school encourage, motivate and celebrate staff, students, and the school community?

IQ3. How do school administrators handle directing staff members?

Situational Leadership Style 2: Supporting

Supporting addresses the follower who is now competent at the job but remains somewhat inconsistent and is not yet fully committed. The follower may be uncooperative or perform as little work as possible, despite their task competence.

The leader must participate with and support the follower. The leader no longer needs to give detailed instructions or follow up as often but must continue to check in to ensure that the work is being done at the required level.

The follower is now highly competent but is not yet convinced in their ability or not fully committed to doing their best and excelling. The leader must now focus less on the tasks assigned and more on the relationships among the follower, the leader, and the group. This is a very follower-driven, relationship-focused stage.

IQ4. How do administrators convince staff members to be committed to teaching and do their best to teach students?

IQ5. How do administrators build relationships with staff members, students, and parents?

IQ6. How do administrators ensure teachers build relationships with students and parents?

Situational Leadership Style 3: Coaching

Coaching is for followers who have developed some competence and improved commitment. The follower is not confident in their abilities but is getting there. This is still a very leader-driven stage. At this point, the leader still needs to focus on tasks that require a significant time commitment. Still, the focus can now expand to the developing

relationship with the employee, building on the trust that has developed and the encouragement demonstrated. Again, the leader needs to spend significant time listening and offering advice.

The goal is to engage the follower to develop to the next level. There is less "telling" and more "suggesting," which leads to more encouragement, acting as a coach. The recognition that they have progressed motivates them to progress even further.

IQ7. How do administrators build trust with staff and students?

IQ8. How do you provide equal time to listen to staff, students, and parents?

IQ9. How do you develop staff members to become leaders and coaches on the faculty?

Situational Leadership Style 4: Delegating

The ultimate goal is Delegating: to create a follower who feels fully empowered and competent enough to take the ball and run with it, with minimal supervision. The follower is highly skilled, highly committed, motivated, and empowered.

As a leader, you can now delegate tasks to the follower and observe with minimal follow-up, knowing that acceptable or excellent results will be achieved. There is a low focus on tasks and a low focus on relationships. There is no need to compliment the follower on every task, although continued praise for outstanding performance must be given as appropriate.

This is a very follower-driven stage.

IQ10. How does the administration empower staff members to step up with various tasks, and how is feedback given? i.e., department chair, after-school tutoring, club sponsors, coaches, etc.

IQ11. What does the administrator do to keep staff members highly committed and motivated, and how is staff celebrated?

IQ12. What does the administrator use to observe or evaluate staff members on given tasks or responsibilities?