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Strategies for Reducing Employee Absenteeism for a Sustainable Future: A Bermuda Perspective

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2017

Abstract

Strategies for Reducing Employee Absenteeism for a Sustainable Future: A Bermuda

Perspective

by

Allison N. S. Forte

MSc, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, 2007

BSc, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2017

Abstract

Employee absenteeism results in billions of dollars in revenue losses and lost productivity annually. Given the consequences that organizations could face resulting from high levels of work absences, executives should develop strategies to manage absenteeism to support organizational growth and sustainability. Grounded in the theory of planned behavior, the purpose of the single case study was to explore strategies managers in the private insurance industry used to reduce employee absenteeism. The population consisted of 3 managers located in Bermuda who implemented strategies to decrease employee absenteeism from a Bermuda perspective. Data included semistructured interviews, results of the company's 2016 engagement survey, and annual reports from 2014 to 2016 that highlighted the company's commitment to providing strategies to enhance employees' engagement and dedication to its strategic objectives. Through thematic analysis, 4 themes emerged: employee engagement, managerial communication, employee wellness and health promotion programs, and achieving work-life balance. Business managers could use these findings to understand how specific human resources strategies with a focus towards reducing employee absenteeism minimize work absences. Minimizing work absences could contribute to positive social change through increased economic growth in local communities and higher quality of life for its residents.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study in loving memory of my step dad, Geoffrey Roach.
Your unconditional love and support continued to carry me throughout this doctoral
journey after you departed this world way too soon, but God had a greater plan for you.
Dad, you are forever in my heart. I love you and miss you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Absenteeism is one of the oldest and most researched phenomena in the history of human resource (HR) management and organizational behavior (Patton & Johns, 2012). From as early as the1950s, academic researchers examined employee absenteeism in an attempt to understand the causes and determinants of such behavior to minimize its effects on organizations' productivity and profitability (Gosselin, Lemyre, & Corneil, 2013). Despite the continued interest in and the development and intervention of proposed theories, absenteeism remains an organizational problem with business managers continually searching for effective solutions to reduce absenteeism levels (Edwards, 2014). The effects of absenteeism from an operational perspective may potentially lead to decreased organizational productivity and growth (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). The effects of high absenteeism levels could negatively impact companies because of the high costs associated with finding temporary replacements for an organization trying to maintain and achieve its strategic objectives (Kocakülâh, Kelley, Mitchell, & Ruggieri, 2016). Consequently, company leaders might experience challenges in implementing effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism (Kocakülâh et al., 2016).

Background of the Problem

Absenteeism is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, influenced by various interrelated factors (Nguyen, Groth, & Johnson, 2013). Work absences can either be voluntary, meaning under the employee's control, or involuntary, meaning not under the employee's control (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014). Business managers tasked with

increasing productivity while decreasing costs experience challenges when trying to achieve lower levels of absenteeism in a competitive environment (Bankert, Coberley, Pope, & Wells, 2015; Scuffham, Vecchio, & Whiteford, 2013). Consequently, work absences also have the potential to impact social and economic costs and growth (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013).

Some of the leading causes of increased absenteeism levels derive from health related issues that impact productivity and absenteeism behaviors resulting in substantial organizational, social, and economic implications (Frick, Goetzen, & Simmons, 2013; Gosselin et al., 2013; Halbesleben, Whitman, & Crawford, 2014; Wada et al., 2013). Other factors include (a) the loss of employee morale, (b) job satisfaction, (c) leadership, (d) presenteeism, and (e) organizational and demographic influences (Diestel, Wegge, & Schmidt, 2014; Elshout, Scherp, & Feltz-Cornelis, 2013; Gangai, 2014; Gosselin et al., 2013). Employee absenteeism is also a significant business cost factor, and managers should understand that their human capital plays a vital role in its growth and success, potentially increasing its competitive advantage in the local and global economy (Bankert et al., 2015; Scuffham et al., 2013). Therefore, managers could achieve their strategic objectives by developing strategies to reduce absenteeism levels while balancing and aligning employees' needs that support the company's mission and vision (Dhar, 2014; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

In 2013, employees missed 131 million days from work resulting in revenue losses of £14 billion (UK Statistics Authority, 2014). By 2014, employee absenteeism in

the UK cost businesses approximately £29 billion, equating to 7 days lost per individual each year (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD] UK, 2014). The general business problem is that employee absenteeism negatively impacts the organizational bottom line. The specific business problem is that some insurance managers lack strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that insurance managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The targeted population included three managers from a private sector insurance firm located in Bermuda who implemented strategies to decrease employee absenteeism. The implications for positive social change could include the potential for insurance managers to (a) reduce employee absenteeism, (b) improve productivity, and (c) create opportunities to enhance the direct economic impact that reduced employee absenteeism may have on the community (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). From an economic perspective, Livanos and Zangelidis (2013) stated that the results derived from increased consumer spending might potentially highlight resources for companies to make additional investments, subsequently stimulating the local economy.

Nature of the Study

I chose a qualitative method for this study. In a qualitative study, the goal is to explore a phenomenon by analyzing the views and observations of an individual's actions and behaviors (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). The major focus of this study was to explore strategies from the perspective of managers that might potentially

reduce employee absenteeism in insurance companies. Researchers using a qualitative methodology could focus on collecting detailed data about strategies to reduce employee absenteeism by using interviews and archival data to investigate phenomena (Hoon, 2013; Hyett, Kenny, & Dickinson-Swift, 2014; Yin, 2013).

Alternatively, a quantitative study was not an appropriate method for this study. According to Poore (2014), quantitative studies include the measurement of a relationship or differences between or among two or more variables (Poore, 2014). Quantitative researchers use statistical analysis on numerical data to estimate the outcomes of a study, representing generalizations about a population (Breen, Holm, & Karlson, 2014; Poore, 2014). Finally, the objective of a mixed method study includes the manipulation of quantitative and qualitative data for increased understanding of a single research or longitudinal program of study (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). A mixed method approach did not meet the needs of this study, because the focus of the research was to explore individuals' real life experiences and observations, and did not include the assessment of any relationship or differences among variables.

The most appropriate research design for this study was a single case study. Case study researchers explore a social problem by objectively gathering direct or participant observations, interviews, archival records or documents, physical artifacts, or audiovisual materials to explore and develop an understanding to explain phenomena (Hoon, 2013; Hyett et al., 2014; Yin, 2013). Therefore, the case study design was appropriate because the intent was to explore strategies necessary to reduce employee absenteeism.

According to Reeves, Peller, Goldman, and Kitto (2013), an ethnography study involves the exploration of social behaviors of a group of individuals sharing a common culture. Therefore, an ethnography design did not satisfy the needs of this study. Furthermore, a phenomenological design also did not meet the needs of this study. According to Pigg (2013), the objective of a phenomenological design is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an individual's lived experiences, which was outside the scope of this study. To answer the central research question, the researcher must analyze and understand human behavior by focusing on the essence and structure of participants' personal experiences of a particular phenomenon (Gill, 2014). Consequently, the most appropriate research design for this study was a single case study.

Research Question

The creation of a central research question was critical to selecting the research design to explore a social phenomenon (Yilmaz, 2013). The central research question that guided this study was: What strategies do insurance managers use to reduce employee absenteeism?

Interview Questions

The interview questions are:

1. What strategies are you using to reduce employee absenteeism?

2. What method did you find worked best to reduce employee absenteeism?

3. How did your employees respond to your different techniques used to reduce employee absenteeism?

4. What other information not addressed you would like to share?

Conceptual Framework

Employee absenteeism is a diverse and complex phenomenon that reflects an individual's decision to report to work. For this study, I utilized the theory of planned behavior (TPB) to explore and explain strategies that middle-level managers use to reduce absenteeism. Ajzen (1985) developed the TPB as an extension of the theory of reasoned action conceptualized in 1980 by Fishbein and Ajzen (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB is a suitable framework for exploring theoretical determinants of behavior. Ajzen's rationale for developing the TPB was to understand the association between human behaviors and how behavioral achievement depends on both behavioral intention (motivation) and the ability to exert control referred to as perceived behavioral control (Dunstan, Covic, & Tyson, 2013).

The primary tenets of the TPB, which provides the basis for behavioral control, include (a) an attitude toward behavior, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioral control (Baden & Parkes, 2013). As applied to this study, I chose the TPB model to obtain an understanding of the strategies utilized by managers to reduce employee absenteeism. The TPB is one of the leading frameworks for potentially explaining human actions and could help explain employees' deliberate behavioral decisions on absenteeism based on a goal-oriented process (Biswas, Boyle, Mitchell, & Casimir, 2016; Dunstan et al., 2013). According to the TPB model, and based on a reasoned approach, individuals form certain beliefs depending on specific behavioral decisions (Kehoe & Wright, 2013). By exploring human behavior to frame research

studies in absenteeism, the TPB could potentially provide a new conceptual lens for understanding behaviors related to creating strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

Operational Definitions

Employee absenteeism: Paid days off from scheduled work per full-time employee (Dietsel, Wegge, & Schmidt, 2014).

Growth: The sum of growth labor hours plus labor productivity growth (Ramendran, Raman, Mohamed, Beleya, & Nodeson, 2013).

Insurance industry: Market consisting of both foreign and domestic underwriting insurance companies and reinsurance companies to provide assurance of various risks (Chien-Chung, Shi-jie, & I-Chan, 2013).

Insurance manager: An individual in an insurance or reinsurance company serving in a position of chief executive officer (CEO), chief operating officer (COO), chief risk officer (CRO), president, vice president, or director (Dionne, 2013).

Productivity: The conversion of certain combination of input resources (e.g., capital and labor) into various degrees of outputs produced (Ramendran et al., 2013).

Strategies: The development, implementation, evaluation, and directing of resources to solve a problem or achieve a goal (Buchanan, 2013).

Voluntary absenteeism: An employee's decision to be absent from work (Gangai, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Pettigrew (2013) defined assumptions as verified facts that could influence the research. The first assumption in this study was that factors such as (a) various causes of absenteeism; (b) musculoskeletal diseases; and (c) leadership, management, and organizational challenges could adversely affect a company's absenteeism levels. The second assumption was that the use of a qualitative single case study was appropriate to explore the factors associated with this study. Another assumption was that the participants would provide truthful responses with an understanding that their answers remained confidential. The final assumption was that the findings derived from the research might help managers to understand various strategies to minimize absenteeism levels and improve organizational productivity and growth.

Limitations

In any research study, limitations and weaknesses exist specific to the problem statement outside the scope of the researcher (Yin, 2013). One key limitation of the study was the generalizability of the study because of the small sample size. Morse (2015a) and Yilmaz (2013) noted that having a small sample process limits the possibility of generalizing the research findings to other situations and settings. Another limitation observation included the limited scope of information gathered on the various causes of absenteeism. Focusing only on factors that managers have control over would impact the collection of the data, because of the possibility that other elements might exist outside the scope of managerial control that could potentially influence absenteeism levels and

productivity (Joseph, 2015; Kocakülâh et al., 2016; Mtimkulu, Naranjee, & Karodia, 2014; Shi & Skuterud, 2015).

Delimitations

Delimitations of a study relate to self-imposed limitations from the scope and design of the study (Snelson, 2016). Delimitations of the study included the (a) sample size consisting of three managers, (b) targeted population comprising managers from a private sector insurance firm, and (c) geographical location in the Island of Bermuda. The timeframe and resources available to conduct the study may further limit the ability to use a single case study instead of multiple case studies. Another delimitation was not focusing on causes of absenteeism outside of a supervisor's managerial responsibilities. The focus of this study was on factors and strategies that business managers could use to reduce workplace absenteeism and increase productivity and growth. The final delimitation involved only interviewing managers in the insurance industry that successfully implemented strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) and Kronos Incorporated (2014) suggested that employee absenteeism is the leading factor for indirect costs (productivity loss) and direct costs (e.g., payroll, overtime, and employee replacement costs). Work absences also account for employers failing to achieve higher productivity levels because of lost work-time (Hassan et al., 2014). Consequently, business managers should adopt strategies to minimize employee behaviors that result in high financial costs

to the company (Hassan et al., 2014). Motivated employees could assist in reducing employee absenteeism, and managers would benefit by identifying and exploring the strategies used to achieve lower absenteeism levels. Business managers failing to understand and implement solutions to reduce employee absenteeism may potentially suffer significant financial losses (Gosselin et al., 2013). The results of the research findings may assist with providing strategies to enable managers to (a) decrease employee absenteeism and encourage productivity, (b) support growth, and (c) promote an increased competitive advantage. Through the creation and implementation of strategies and programs to reduce work absences, employers can enhance their position as vehicles for economic growth (Bankert et al., 2015).

Implications for Social Change

Employee absenteeism has adverse business consequences for employers that could negatively impact projected financial earnings, productivity, and growth (Bankert et al., 2015). Reduced employee absenteeism could also have a significant economic effect on the community, because employees with higher disposable income may consider spending more money in the local community (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). An increase in consumption spending may potentially stimulate the overall economy of the community and subsequently the country (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). At the macro level, with increased economic activity, community leaders can build on improving the well-being of their population to attract new business and grow existing companies while investing in community programs that enhance the quality of life (Bankert et al., 2015; Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The focus of this study was to explore strategies leaders within the insurance industry used to reduce the high absenteeism levels among employees in the workplace. The purpose of this literature review was to analyze the current state of research regarding the themes of absenteeism strategies selected to minimize high levels of absence rates among workers. The peer-reviewed literature includes journal articles relevant to employee absenteeism and TPB to support the single case qualitative study. Articles reviewed related to TPB, absenteeism models, and causes of employee absenteeism and presenteeism. The purpose of the literature review was to conduct an extensive review of the literature on TPB and employee absenteeism and provide a critical analysis and synthesis of the various journals, reports, and seminal scholarly works related to the study.

The literature review included the division into two categories of academic references from various journals and reports retrieved from the Walden Library databases, EBSCOhost, and ProQuestScholar, and Google Scholar. Key words searched included *employee absenteeism*, *theory of planned behavior*, *absenteeism models*, *costs related to absenteeism*, *determinants of absenteeism*, *leadership and absenteeism*, *organizational culture and absenteeism*, and *presenteeism*. The overall literature review consisted of 117 (86%) peer-reviewed articles and 17 (14%) non peer-reviewed articles.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Based on the concepts of the early absenteeism models by Nicholson (1977) and Steers and Rhodes (1978), the development and objective of the TPB constructs assisted

researchers in understanding the complexities of human social behavior factors that could

potentially decrease absenteeism and improve organizational growth (Ajzen, 1991, 2015).

Ajzen (1991, 2015) created the TPB as an extension of the theory of reasoned action

(TRA) to address the TRA's limitation in dealing with an individual's behavioral control.

The TPB consists of three primary variables based on the central factor, behavioral

intention: (a) attitude toward behavior, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioral

control (PBC) used to predict a person's behavior. The purpose of the model suggests

that attitudes, subjective norms, PBC, and intentions may potentially determine an

individual's behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2015; Jiang, Lu, Hou, & Yue, 2013; Uţă & Popescu,

2013).

Behavioral intention is an individual's cognitive representation based on

motivational factors that influence and predict performance behavior (Ajzen, 1991,

2015). Ajzen (1991, 2015) postulated that a person's intentions to perform a behavior

correlate positively with the behavior and the three determinants, as previously

mentioned, govern the individual's intention. Ajzen (2015) and Thun, Saksvik, Ose,

Mehmetoglu, and Christensen (2013) defined the first construct *attitude toward behavior*

as a favorable or unfavorable appraisal or evaluation of behavior based on beliefs and

consequences for performing the behavior. The second construct, *subjective norms*,

arises as a result of social pressures to perform a particular behavior derived from a

person's individual beliefs and what society expects them to do (Ajzen & Sheikh, 2013).

The third and final construct *perceived behavioral control* is a critical part in the TPB and

is a person's perception of their beliefs that influences their intentions and actions (Ajzen,

1991, 2015; Dunstan et al., 2013). The interrelation of the three variables depends jointly on the interaction of motivation (intention) and ability (behavioral) to influence performance.

Ajzen (1991) posited that the motivational factors exist because of a person's intention to perform a specific behavior, which is indicative of the individual's motivation. The combination of the person's intention and motivation reflect how much effort people are willing to exert to perform a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the organizational context, the implications of Ajzen's assumptions about the TPB is relevant for exploring employees' perceptions of control as it relates to absenteeism (Ramsey, Punnett, & Greenidge, 2008). While researchers extensively use the TPB in other fields and rarely use it in studies of implementation of improvement programs, Bergquist and Westerberg (2014) found the theory potentially effective in predicting behavioral outcomes for the improvement of employees' behaviors. Therefore, I selected the TPB as a viable theory to understand individuals' behavioral intentions about their decision to be absent from work, ultimately increasing an employer's absenteeism levels.

Ajzen (1991) hypothesized that human behavior is a function of the intention to perform the behavior and PBC, while behavioral intention is an assumed function of attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and PBC. Similarly, Mathieson (1991) defined PBC as an individual's perception of his or her control over behavioral performance. Mathieson's definition included the need for or absence of certain resources and requisites that enable a person to engage in a particular behavior. Consequently, Doll and Ajzen (1992) suggested that a person's perceived ease or

difficulty in performing a certain behavior reflects past experiences inclusive of any anticipated impediments and obstacles. Hence, to explore the PBC hypothesis, Schreuder, Roelen, van der Klink, and Groothoff (2013), investigated the characteristics of zero-absenteeism on PBC. Schreuder et al. (2013) defined zero-absenteeism as uninterrupted long-term work attendance over a 5-year period to determine the participants' specific behavior to achieve zero-absenteeism. The targeted population included 1,053 employees working in a Dutch hospital with recorded sick days from January 2006 to December 2010 (Schreuder et al., 2013). The implications of the results indicated personal attitudes and self-efficacy were more important than social norms for employees motivated to attend work, supporting one of Ajzen's arguments that human behavior is a volitional function of PBC (Schreuder et al., 2013).

The implication of the importance of self-efficacy as a potential explanation for an individual's behavior derived from the concept of social cognitive theory (Zolait, 2014). The assumptions of self-efficacy occur because Ajzen's postulations on PBC arose from Bandura's work of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2012). For example, PBC involves the degree to which people perceive that they have control over their intended behavior (Bandura, 2012). Consequently, a person with PBC should be willing to engage in performing a particular behavior they have control over compared to one where they have no control (Aboelmaged & Gebba, 2013). However, the similarity between PBC and self-efficacy relates to a person's acceptance of change and willingness to adjust their behavior (Straatmann, Kohnke, Hattrup, & Mueller, 2016). Therefore, an individual

should consider changing their behavior, an act that they have control over, to achieve an objective of zero-absenteeism.

Schreuder et al. (2013) further indicated that workers with zero-absenteeism continued to work because parental education assisted in their personal views on subjective norms and perceived expectations and not because of any responsibility towards their patients or pressure from their supervisors and teammates. According to Luna and Chou (2013), behavioral intentions become affected by subjective norms, which occur due to social pressure. The social pressure causes the individual to act in a particular way that is important to someone who is important to him or her. In contrast, Kura, Shamsudin, and Chauhan (2013) argued that the correlation between an individual's norms and deviant behavior has a significant positive relationship with an employee's norms and perceived behavior, which encouraged deviant behaviors. However, Schreuder et al. found that volitional human behavior is a component of an individual's intention to perform a specific behavior, which could potentially help managers have a better understanding of an employee's decision to be absent from work. Employers trying to understand why employees are absent from work could link the process of employees' absence behavior to their absence decisions based on whether those people who are important to him or her think he or she should perform that behavior (Luna & Chou, 2013).

Furthermore, within the zero-absenteeism milieu, Schreuder et al. (2013) also posited that participants' behavioral attitude depended on their perceived expectations of their norms and beliefs. In contrast, Ferencz-Kaddari, Shifman, and Koslowsky (2016)

argued that an individual's behavioral expectations of their norms and beliefs were of an ethical and moral nature, especially when confronted with a conflict between two courses of action. Consequently, the basic premise of subjective norms to behavioral intentions illustrates that individuals could make decisions based on ethical principles or from social pressure. The inclusion of a morality component further reflects that the implication of volitional behavior suggests a choice that an individual has towards choosing to (or not to) attend work (Thun, Saksvik, Ose, Mehmetoglu, & Christensen, 2013).

Building on Ajzen's theory, Uţă and Popescu (2013) tried to extend the model by investigating existing theories related to individuals' attitude, motivation, and actual behaviors to predict health-related behavioral intentions. The implications of Uţă and Popescu's theory could potentially help researchers understand how to reduce absenteeism levels by positively predicting an individual's health-related behavioral intentions via volitional control. According to Alok, Raveendran, and Jha (2015) and Armitage and Connor (2001), a highly correlated relationship exists between behavioral intention and actual behavior, illustrating that behavior can, in effect, accurately predict behavior before it occurs. Uţă and Popescu found that the higher the degree of effective control over behavior, the more the individual would intentionally act favorably when the opportunity arises. Furthermore, Benrazavi and Silong (2013) found that people would behave positively if they perceive that the outcome from performing a behavior is positive. The opposite is also true (Benrazavi & Silong, 2013).

One critical limitation of Uţă and Popescu's (2013) study was its failure to consider the emotional aspects of the employee's behavior such as fear, threats, and

positive and negative feelings in his or her decision process. According to Dodoiu (2015), such emotions could lead to increased conflict within the working environment resulting in an individual's choice to act positively and for the organization's shared objectives. Similarly, Dunstan et al. (2013) found that a person's perceived limited ability for having a significant barrier to the achievement of a personal goal could further limit their control to action, which will see PBC having a direct influence on their behavior, causing them not to perform.

Since the inception of the TPB, theorists sought to utilize the model to explain underlying employee behaviors such as (a) work absences, (b) individuals' decision-making actions, (c) managerial actions, and (d) health conditions to improve their productivity and profitability (Ajzen, 2015; Dunstan et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2013; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2014). Although limited studies exist, Ramsey, Punnett, and Greenidge (2008) used the TPB to understand what factors influences an employee to decide to be absent from work. Ramsey et al. (2008) examined how an individual's subjective norms' regarding absenteeism and one's perceived ability to attend work to predict absence behavior. Ramsey et al. critically examined absenteeism frequencies in a Barbados manufacturing company that included a targeted population of 264 participants from five divisions within the organization. The measurement variables to analyze absenteeism included (a) absence frequency, (b) PBC, (c) intent to be absent, (d) attitude, and (e) subjective norms. The implications of this study appeared beneficial for managers. For example, managers utilizing the TPB constructs could examine

individuals' attitudes and intentions between explicit and implicit measures of a person's approach toward their behavior.

Ramsey et al. (2008) postulated that (a) TPB explained 62% of the variance in absence frequency and was a viable framework for understanding the factors influencing future work expectations and outcomes of employees, (b) subjective norms highly influenced an individual's intention to be absent, and (c) a worker with the intent to be absent was more absent than a worker who did not intend to be absent (Ramsey et al., 2008). The results indicated a strong association with PBC, which according to Alok et al. (2015) illustrates that employees' internal and external factors facilitate or impede their ability to select their personal choice. Workers found that they were sometimes not always in control of their actions because of competing demands such as family emergencies or short- or long-term health issues (Ramsey et al., 2008). For example, Besen, Young, and Shaw (2015) found a 10% to 30% variance in an individual's intent to return to work after an unforeseen medical incident. Besen et al. (2015) suggested that PBC plays a critical role in the outcomes involving both direct and indirect relationships through intentions, which positively influence a person's behavior despite their actual intentions. Subsequently, PBC could have an indirect as well as direct effect on a person's absence behavior (Ajzen, 2015). For example, a person with higher PBC who failed to have control over their behavior because of external factors could more likely intend to be absent from work compared to an individual with low PBC (Ramsey et al., 2008).

As a result of the increasing changes and uncertainty in the business environment, organizations require their employees to behave proactively at work, resulting in the achievement of their strategic objectives (Shin & Kim, 2015). Ramsey et al. (2008) suggested that for companies to achieve their strategic goals, managers could implement strategies for reducing absenteeism such as (a) introducing control policies, (b) developing organizational cultural programs to improve attendance, and (c) developing prevention programs. Similarly, Luna and Chou (2013) agreed that managers could implement strategies that increased a person's perceived difficulty in engaging in behavior not conducive to the company's objectives.

In contrast to Ramsey et al. (2008), Løkke (2013) investigated whether past absence behaviors were a predictor for present absence behavior. Løkke found a significant positive relationship between employees' absence duration and past absence spells and past absence days evidencing that past days and past spells have an equal opportunity for predicting present absences. The results further revealed that personal and job characteristics such as (a) age, (b) wage, (c) contracted number of work hours, (d) seniority, and (e) the season influenced the length of work absence (Løkke, 2013). Thus, understanding why employees act and make certain decisions based on past behaviors is of vital importance to managers trying to reduce high absenteeism levels (Biswas et al., 2016; Ramsey et al., 2008; Schreuder et al., 2013).

Beginning in 1991, theorists also used the TPB to predict health-related behaviors (Kwasnicka, Presseau, White, & Sniehotta, 2013). The TPB inspired health behavior research based on correlational designs to investigate cross-sectional and potential

associations between TPB, cognitions, and behavior to address a range of substantial health issues (Sniehotta, Presseau, & Araújo-Soares, 2014). In the UK, the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2014) cited musculoskeletal conditions (neck and back pain) as the most costly cause of sickness absenteeism, with employees losing 31 million days from work and impacting future work expectations. To illustrate the importance of musculoskeletal conditions on absenteeism, Dunstan et al. (2013) sought to utilize the TPB model to identify the relationship between the factors that influenced future work expectations and outcomes of employees with musculoskeletal injury. Dunstan et al. used a quantitative analysis conducted over a 3-month period to determine a person's intention to return to work when impacted with a situation that is beyond their control. However, intentions can be a poor predictor of behavior over long and short periods as illustrated in this study. Dunstan et al. found that attitude, subjective norms, and PBC explained 76% of the variance in behavioral intention to return to work. The perceived expectation for an employee to return to work align with the studies by Besen et al. (2015) and Ramsey et al. (2008) that indicated when a person has no control over their behavior, they will likely be absent from work.

In situations beyond the control of the individual, the concept of PBC can prove contradictory given its primary objective that a person's perception of their ability to perform a given behavior arises from their intention and subjective norms. Furthermore, the intention-behavioral correlation of the TPB model could vary considerably, especially when intervening events occur, changing people's behaviors and impacting business leaders' strategic agenda to manage and influence workers' attitudes towards achieving

the company's objectives. Leary et al. (2013) argued that poor management skills factor into how successful a manager is with motivating and inspiring their followers. The effects from an employee's PBC towards attending work could significantly harm an organization's productivity through increased absenteeism levels (Thun et al., 2013). The behavioral changes could impact an individual's perception and attitude (Leary et al., 2013). Moreover, how an employee views and trusts the organizational climate, which includes group norms and workplace norms, has a high potential to influence both employee perceptions and their decision choices, such as their decision to or not to be absent from work (Mosher, 2013).

The TPB approach could potentially provide managers with the tools for identifying an individual's willingness to perform a specific behavior based on attitude, subjective norms, and PBC (Shin & Kim, 2015). Thun et al. (2013) argued that a supervisor's attitude and norms influence an individual's desire to attend work and could potentially impact management issues with absenteeism. Furthermore, Oc and Bashshur (2013) suggested that business leaders who understand an employee's intention to support a particular action behaviorally could implement change management strategies to reduce absenteeism levels, which could lead to a better financial outcome for the business. The TPB approach could potentially assist managers in explaining and predicting an employee's behavior towards attending work based on the combination of their attitudes, PBC, and norms (Ajzen, 2015). Consequently, leaders might better understand of how they can strengthen or change the intended behavior of their employees' decision to attend work, potentially reducing absenteeism levels.

From the literature reviewed, there is significant theoretical and empirical support for the implications of PBC on behavioral intentions (Wated & Sanchez, 2014). According to the principles of TPB, PBC together with behavioral intentions can directly predict behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2015; Sanberg, Hutter, Richetin, & Conner, 2016; Shin & Kim, 2015; Zolait, 2014). Ajzen (1991) theorized that when a situation allows an individual to have volitional control over their behavior, intention is sufficient to predict his or her behavior. Therefore, the implication of PBC is an important element in predicting behavioral control over behavior (Zolait, 2014). For organizations and managers to accurately predict behavior, they should meet three certain conditions. First, the measure of intent and PBC must correspond or be compatible with the predicted behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2015; Zolait, 2014). Secondly, intentions and PBC must be stable between the assessment and observation of the behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2015; Zolait, 2014). Finally, PBC must maintain a predictive validity reflecting actual control (Ajzen, 1991, 2015; Zolait, 2014). If managers use the theory accurately, they might be able to demonstrate and predict employees' behaviors towards absenteeism and develop and implement strategies to reduce their absenteeism levels.

Employee Absenteeism

Absenteeism is one of the most researched topics in the field of human resource management (HRM) (Gosselin et al., 2013). Scholars continue to examine the multifactorial phenomenon attempting to understand the determinants and consequences of an employee's feelings towards absenteeism from work (Ritesh, 2014). Researchers also continued to try to define the scope and behavior of absenteeism in the workplace by

investigating the factors relating to absenteeism and the associated key determinants (Nguyen et al., 2013). Drawing on the literature reviewed, determinants of absenteeism were multiple factors such as (a) health related illnesses, (b) workplace behaviors, (c) social demographical indicators, (d) leadership, (e) organizational challenges, (f) job demands, (g) family issues, (h) job satisfaction, (i) productivity, (j) personality characteristics, and (k) the decision process to predict and explain absenteeism (Ahn, Lee, & Steel, 2013; Bierla, Huver, & Richard, 2013; Biron & De Reuver, 2013; Gangai, 2014; Hofmans, De Gieter, & Pepermans, 2013; Ramsey et al., 2008). However, for this study, the focus was on (a) employee decisions and behaviors that lead to absenteeism; (b) causes of absenteeism such as musculoskeletal diseases; and (c) leadership, management, and organizational strategies for addressing absenteeism.

Absenteeism is the failure of an employee to report for scheduled work (Bierla et al., 2013). Employee absence can either be voluntary or involuntary, and the inability to report to work is a universal problem (Tenhiälä et al., 2013). Voluntary absenteeism is when an employee decides to be absent from work (Gangai, 2014). By contrast, involuntary absenteeism is an employee's inability to report to work (Tenhiälä et al., 2013). Bankert, Coberley, Pope, and Wells (2015) noted that although organizations become affected by work absence rates for different reasons, the influence of high absenteeism levels can potentially be costly and disruptive with business managers failing to devise effective strategies to minimize the problem, supporting the need for continued research, as in this study.

Business managers consider absenteeism a potentially significant expense and often measure the cost of productivity against absenteeism levels (Bankert et al., 2015; Gosselin et al., 2013; Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013; Scuffham et al., 2013). The annual costs of absences to organizations in 2013 alone exceeded $74 billion in the United States and $16.6 billion in Canada (Akgeyik, 2014; The Conference Board of Canada, 2013). The consequences of absenteeism include direct and indirect financial costs to organizations (Dale-Olsen, 2014). The results of the costs of absences to companies illustrate the adverse effect that high absenteeism levels have on an organization's bottom line, potentially challenging the company's leaders in meeting their strategic objectives.

The SHRM (2014) found that direct and indirect costs totaled between 20.9% and 22.1% of payroll, with unplanned absences having the highest overall cost. Unplanned absenteeism occurs when an employee does not attend work because of the employee's lack of motivation based on factors such as poor physical health and mental health and economic, social, and personal pressures (Magee, Caputi, & Lee, 2016). In 2013, employee absenteeism cost UK businesses approximately £29 billion, equating to 7 days per individual each year (CIPD, 2014; Hesketh & Cooper, 2014; UK Statistics Authority, 2014).

Although numerous factors exist contributing to work absences, one of the most widely studied sources includes physical and psychological health-related illnesses factors (Hassan et al., 2014; Mitchell, Ozminkowski, & Serxner, 2013). Consequently, Business leaders should explore factors that influence an employee's decision not to attend work to improve their sustainability and growth (Gosselin et al., 2013). The

factors associated with high absenteeism levels can have adverse effects on the economy, resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). For the purpose of this study, absenteeism factors relevant to business leaders include (a) causes of absenteeism; (b) musculoskeletal diseases; and (c) leadership, management, and organizational strategies for addressing absenteeism.

Business managers trying to understand the causes of high absenteeism levels researched early absenteeism models and theories to obtain further insight into the causes of voluntary and involuntary workplace absences (Gosselin et al., 2013). Absenteeism models analyzed included the conceptual model of absenteeism, attachment theory, the process model, pain-avoidance models, adjustment and maladjustment model, and decision models (Gibson, 1966; Hill & Trist, 1953; Nicholson, 1977; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). To have a better understanding of the determinants and consequences of employee absenteeism, I conducted a review of and analyzed early absenteeism theories and models.

Early absenteeism theories and models. Gosselin et al. (2013) noted that various early absenteeism models helped researchers to explore and understand determinants and consequences of work absences. One of the models, the conceptual model of absenteeism theorized by Gibson (1966), noted the definition of the absence function as a contractual relationship between the individual and the employer. This definition remains prevalent in the employer–employee relationship and serves as a contractual obligation in employment contracts (Persson & Wasieleski, 2015). From a behavioral perspective, pain-avoidance models focused on the withdrawal behavior

associated with employee absence through research on job satisfaction (Swider &

Zimmerman, 2014; Thun et al., 2013; Zimmerman, Swider, Woo, & Allen, 2016).

Similarly, the adjustment and maladjustment models highlighted the differential

withdrawal behaviors found throughout the employment relationship based on three

phases (Russo, Miraglia, Borgogni, & Johns, 2013). The first phase known as *induction*

crisis included elements related to employee turnover (Nicholson, 1977; Russo et al.,

2013). The next phase, *differential transit*, meant unsanctioned absence, and the final

phase, *settled connection,* meant sanctioned employee absence (Nicholson, 1977; Russo

et al., 2013). According to SehBaradar, Ebrahimpour, and Hasanzadeh (2013), the

development of the three phases illustrates that employees had different withdrawal

behaviors based on their various stages in the employment relationship resulting in

various causes of absenteeism. Therefore, an employee's choice to be absent could

potentially result from the dissatisfaction with their employer.

In contrast to Hill and Trist's study, Argyris (1963) postulated that organizational

demands evoke absenteeism behaviors in workers based on factors such as (a) promotion

seeking, (b) psychological adjustment of expectations, and (c) informal sanctioning

behavior. Argyris highlighted that management's harsh control measures regarding job

demand adversely affected employees' behaviors causing workers to decide to be absent

from work. In illustration of Argyris' assumption on the element of psychological

adjustment of expectations, Deery, Walsh, and Zatzick (2014) examined the relationship

between job demands and absenteeism. The implications of the results of the study

supported Argyris' theory that management's harsh control measures regarding job

demands negatively impacted employees' behaviors and suggested that a significant

relationship existed between job demands and absenteeism (Deery et al., 2014).

Similarly, Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013) along with van Woerkom, Bakker, and Nishii

(2016) suggested that employees are happier when receiving challenging work demands

and not hindering work demands that are stressful and lead workers to become detached

from their work, resulting in decreased negative behaviors such as poor performance and

increased absenteeism. The implications of the results of the various studies on work

demands and absenteeism suggest that employees and supervisors can collaboratively

work together to facilitate employee well-being by designing challenging, optimal, and

not stressful job demands, which might ultimately lead to decreased negative work

behaviors such as voluntary absenteeism.

Another influential concept based on an employee's predictive behavior and

linked to absenteeism is Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. The expectancy theory

arose from a worker's portrayal of absence as a rational behavior linked to the costs and

benefits associated with the outcomes of an employee's decision to attend work

(Edwards, 2014; Joseph, 2015). The implication of an employee's motivation, based on

predictive behavior, is the outcome of their effort, which will lead to an award based on

performance (Korzynski, 2013). Vroom theorized that an individual's behavior resulted

from conscious choices, which led to valued outcomes. Vroom's assumptions similarly

parallel the TPB construct regarding perceived behavioral control based on individuals'

belief that the behavior would produce a certain outcome (Organ, Proverbs, & Squires,

2013). In contrast, Ringelhan, Wollersheim, Welpe, Fiedler, and Spörrle (2013) said that

a person's performance and the outcomes of such a performance might be an indirect association between job satisfaction and motivational forces and not their subjective perception that the behavior will produce a certain outcome, which might lead to choosing to be absent from work because they lack the motivation to attend.

Conversely, equity theorists supported a similar association within the rationalist framework that focused on the relational satisfaction of employees (Adams, 1963; Biron & De Reuver, 2013). Adams (1963) asserted that equity theory focuses on motivation and suggests that if an individual feels distressed, he or she might react in various ways by restricting the amount of their effort (input) based on the output received (Della Torre, Pelagatti, & Solari, 2015). When inequity occurs, an individual's actions and decisions often change when trying to find a balance in their perceived effort-reward ratio (HajiGhasemi & Hasanzadeh, 2013). Such actions might include (a) absence as a withdrawal from unresolved issues to cope with payment inequities, (b) resigning from the job, or (c) trying to renegotiate different terms of employment (Biron & De Reuver, 2013; Della Torre et al., 2015; Lee, Wang, & Weststar, 2015). Regardless of the reason, managers could work and communicate with the employee to mitigate any adverse reactions from the worker, even though cooperating with the employee might cause additional challenges to the employer (Della Torre et al., 2015).

As a result of the various fragmented theories to adequately explain the causes of absenteeism, Nicholson (1977) developed the attachment theory as an attempt to address the phenomenon of an employee's decision to attend work, known as *attendance motivation* (Patton & Johns, 2012). The attendance motivation theory consisted of four

contextual variables that assisted in examining employee withdrawal behaviors at work: (a) personality traits, (b) orientation to work, (c) work involvement, and (d) employment relationship (Leiter, Day, & Price, 2015). The purpose of the attendance motivation theory was to predict work absences by using absenteeism as a moderating variable between attendance motivation and actual attendance to explain voluntary and involuntary absenteeism (Magee et al., 2016; Rho, Yun, & Lee, 2015). The goal of utilizing absenteeism as a moderating variable was to predict absence frequency or some alternative variance to measure work absences, which supports the need for this study.

As part or the attendance motivation theory, Nicholson (1977) also created the A-B continuum scale to identify causes of absences that disrupt an employee's regular attendance at work. Label *A* related to unavoidable influences concerning previous absences while *B* type absences involved avoidable absences and focused on the prediction of events that could potentially induce absenteeism (Shantz & Alfes, 2015). The *A* and *B* continuum scale appeared to be a useful tool to help managers understand an individual's choice that could influence the occurrence or non-occurrence of their absence behavior. To bridge the gap between predicting absenteeism and work attachment, Russo, Miraglia, Borgogni, and Johns (2013) noted that Nicholson introduced the notion of susceptibility, a variable of attendance motivation, to potential absence-inducing events. Nicholson suggested that highly attached and motivated employees' often attend work, thereby providing resistance to any absence-inducing events. Consequently, managers might need to take quicker action and create strategies

to motivate employees, thus leading to increased individual and team commitment, which could potentially reduce absenteeism levels (Rousseau & Aubé, 2013).

Building on the attachment theory, Steers and Rhodes (1978) conceptualized the process model to examine employee attendance behavior based on 104 empirical studies. The process model, known as a *highly influential model,* provided a holistic approach to representing absence behaviors (Drakopoulos & Grimani, 2013). The purpose of the process model included the examination of predictive factors that influenced absenteeism (Drakopoulos & Grimani, 2013). The predictive factors accounted for different forms of absence behavior based on two variables: attendance motivation, known as *voluntary absenteeism,* and the ability to attend, defined as, *involuntary absenteeism* (Birioukov, 2015; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). For the process model to work, both attendance motivation and ability to attend must interact to produce positive decision-making outcomes (David & Holladay, 2015; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). The implications of the attachment theory showed a link to the TPB and how employees' predicted behavior arises from motivation and intention.

Furthermore, Steers and Rhodes (1978) suggested that additional factors such as personal characteristics, an individual's job situation, and pressures to attend work defined a set of conditions that predisposed employees' attendance at work or its converse, absenteeism. In discussing the process model approach, Steers and Rhodes integrated the causes of both voluntary and involuntary absenteeism by examining a person's satisfaction with their job based on personal characteristics and motivation (Andersen, Kristensen, & Pedersen, 2015). Steers and Rhodes postulated that

employees' motivation to go to work impacted their attendance based on whether they have the ability to attend, which derived from a motive based on satisfaction and motivation relationship. Moreover, to account for the portion of involuntary employee absences, Steers and Rhodes introduced the concept *ability to attend* (Restrepo & Salgado, 2013). Therefore, an employee's motivation to attend work is a function of varying behavioral factors and intention as identified by Ajzen (1985).

Steers and Rhodes (1978) further postulated that an employee's motivation to attend work could depend on their satisfaction with their job and work situation based on various factors. The factors included (a) job role, (b) leadership style, (c) coworker relations, (d) opportunities for advancement, (e) organizational commitment, (f) work group norms, (g) economic or market conditions, and (h) payment or reward system (Magee et al., 2015; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Employees who have a strong desire to work would attend work regardless of any mitigating factor that was beyond their control such as certified sick leave or natural disaster (Restrepo & Salgado, 2013). The outcome of the process model included examining certain employee values (e.g., age, sex, education, and tenure) and expectations to determine the satisfaction level of their work situation based on internal and external influences such as (a) job scope, (b) job level, (c) role stress, and (d) opportunities for advancement (Russo et al., 2013). An examination of Steers and Rhodes' model for this study assisted in understanding why employees' motivation to attend work depended on how satisfied they were with their job and work situation and if the factors could contribute to how a person's attitude, behavior, and intention relates to adverse behavior.

In 1990, Rhodes and Steers revised the process model, which became known as the diagnostic model, to help managers better understand the causes of employee absenteeism (Duff, Podolsky, Biron, & Chan, 2015). The diagnostic model of employee attendance incorporated three critical influences on attendance motivation (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). The first influence was the establishment of a clear set of attendance standards and procedures by the organization (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). The establishment of attendance policies and procedures included the practices of past behavior and clear communication policies of the attendance policies to staff (Owolabi, 2015; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). The second influence was recognizing the importance of absence cultures. Rhodes and Steers suggested that organizations, failing to have appropriate controls and policies, encouraged adverse behavior among employees, and might likely increase absenteeism levels. Examining the diagnostic model provided insight into how managers could potentially have a better understanding of employee absenteeism by using the recommended influences to develop strategies to reduce absenteeism levels while improving the absence culture and policies, which is the objective of this study. The third influence related to understanding how employees' attitudes, values, and goals remain aligned with the organization's culture, vision, and mission.

Another component of the diagnostic model was creating self-management teams with highly interdependent roles to improve the absence work culture and design (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Satpathy & Rath, 2015). Organizations implementing self-management teams allow employees to feel motivated about their job role and responsibilities (Duff et

al., 2015). Employees with the skills to plan and execute organizational objectives

motivate other employees to contribute to the development of an organization's culture

and further influence others' commitment to the company (Ashraf, Farooq, & Din, 2014).

The more committed the employee to the business and its strategic objectives, the fewer

concerns managers will experience related to an employee's decision not to attend work

(Andersen et al., 2015). The final influence related to employee attitudes, values, and

goals based on improved organizational practices and cultures (Rhodes & Steers, 1990;

Satpathy & Rath, 2015). The implications of the diagnostic model highlighted

similarities between that model and the determinants of the TPB and how a person's

attitude, behavior, and intent play a significant role in understanding and potentially

predicting employee absenteeism.

Moreover, the purpose of the diagnostic model provided managers with better

insights for understanding the causes related to employee absenteeism in the organization

(Duff et al., 2015). Factors such as (a) an improved organizational culture, (b) employee

commitment, and (c) developing self-management teams could potentially motivate

employees towards having a positive attitude to go to work and not engage in involuntary

absences (Ashraf et al., 2014; Dasgupta, Suar, & Singh, 2014). Employers might need to

monitor closely and track the well-being of their workforce for any signs of increased

absence levels or increases in certain types of factors related to absenteeism, which

managers could control. Monitoring the reasons associated with absenteeism helps

managers to understand how to design and implement strategies to discourage negative

absence behaviors and influence improved employee commitment to the organization's strategic objectives.

Causes of absenteeism. From as early as 1944, scholars conducted empirical studies to investigate the causes and consequences of absenteeism that effect organizations in some adverse way (Biørn, Gaure, Markussen, & Røed, 2013; Duff et al., 2015; Gibson, 1966; Nicolson, 1977; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Similarly, and according to the various theories and models of absenteeism discussed, the reasons for work absences include both voluntary and involuntary factors (Diestel et al., 2014; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hassan et al., 2014; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). The reasons for absenteeism included (a) illness; (b) personal and family responsibilities; and (c) leadership, management, and organizational challenges (Gosselin et al., 2013; Patton & Johns, 2012). The propositions constituting the theories and models demonstrated that employees might voluntarily attend work based on how motivated they are to perform their duties and improve absence cultures based on their attitude, behavior, and intention towards the organization's strategic goals (Edwards, 2014). The objective of examining early models and theories of absenteeism provided insight into understanding certain causes and determinants of absenteeism and what absence factors a manager has control over to minimize high levels of absenteeism so that they could create strategies to reduce employee absenteeism in their organization.

Musculoskeletal diseases. Chronic health-related illnesses contribute to high absenteeism by significantly reducing organizational productivity (Gandy, Coberley, Pope, Wells, & Rula, 2014), and employees with musculoskeletal diseases, account for

the highest rate of absenteeism (Gandy et al., 2014; Kraatz, Lang, Kraus, Münster, & Ochsmann, 2013). Absenteeism due to chronic health-related illness such as musculoskeletal diseases is one of the major causes of sickness absence in Western countries, having both direct and indirect effects on a company's productivity levels (Janssens et al., 2014; Sears, Shi, Coberley, & Pope, 2013). Sears, Shi, Coberley, and Pope (2013) revealed that an organization's productivity levels significantly related to (a) employees with chronic illnesses, (b) high costs of health care, (c) lost productivity, and (d) job turnover. From these findings, business leaders could consider implementing strategies to assist employees by examining the psychological and health-related factors derived from poor ergonomically designed work environments, potentially reducing absenteeism levels (Janssens et al., 2014).

Leadership, management, and organizational strategies for addressing absenteeism. High absenteeism levels can result from the overall effectiveness of a manager's leadership approach (Ashraf et al., 2014). Leaders have an important role in motivating their employees and should strive to be receptive to changing their leadership style, which could potentially promote positive outcomes in an organization's culture resulting in a reduced commitment to the company's mission and strategic objectives (Schreuder et al., 2013). Committed employees with a favorable relationship with their managers and supporting the company's strategic vision will often decide to attend work instead of reporting absent (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2016). Eighty percent of UK workers and 50.8% of U.S. workers indicated that they did not have a positive relationship with their supervisor, resulting in employees using this excuse as a reason to not attend work

(Adkins, 2016; Roberts, 2014).

The actions and behavior of a leader begin with the company's organizational

culture, which consists of a set of shared beliefs and values that help to shape the

behavior patterns of employees (Wen, 2014). Organizational leaders trying to achieve

their strategic goals require the collaborative support of their staff to attain the desired

goals successfully. As a result, managers could ensure that they motivate and influence

their employees towards meeting the organizational objectives. Employees deciding not

to go to work will continue to challenge managers (Merrill et al., 2013). Tackling

absenteeism with a poor organizational reputation leads to demotivated employees and

reduced productivity (Merrill et al., 2013). Rho, Yun, and Lee (2015) investigated how

employees viewed their organization (image), how workers linked the organizational

image and their definition of themselves (identification), and how the cognitive process,

in turn, affected their organizational behavior (outcome) on absenteeism. There was a

significant relationship between absenteeism levels and how an individual viewed

themselves and their association with the organization (Rho et al., 2015). The

implications of the findings of this study further illustrated how significant an

organization's image and identification are to employees. A negative perception of the

organization potentially could impact a worker's behavior and is an essential factor for

leaders when creating strategies to reduce absenteeism levels, which could be a potential

solution for one of the strategic outcomes of this study.

By expanding on the concept of organizational culture, organizational trust is

another critical aspect of the quality of an employee's relationship with his or her

supervisor (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2016). Employees need to feel that their manager and the organization are trustworthy and can empower them to perform at their best. Shantz and Alfes (2015) examined the moderating roles of organizational trust, the quality of employees' relationship with their manager, and the motivating potential of jobs on the negative association between work engagement and voluntary absence, as measured by the Bradford Factor. The Bradford Factor is a system utilized by managers to calculate a score for each employee's absence in a year (Merekoulias & Alexopoulos, 2015). The higher the score, the more disruptive each employee's absence will be (Merekoulias & Alexopoulos, 2015). Merekoulias and Alexopoulos (2015) suggested that managers using the Bradford Factor could benefit from creating strategies to mitigate high absenteeism levels by looking at various absenteeism trends and patterns to manage unnecessary absence and persistent absenteeism, which is the goal of this study.

Shantz and Alfes (2015) revealed that while work engagement negatively related to voluntary absence, using the Bradford Factor, organizational trust and the quality of employees' relationships with their managers reversed the adverse effect of low levels of engagement on voluntary absence (Shantz & Alfes, 2015). Moreover, Thun et al. (2013) found that a significant positive relationship existed between a supervisor's negative attitude toward adjustment norms and attendance pressure norms that adversely resulted in an employee's decision to come to work. A supervisor's positive attitude towards adjustment of work influenced an employee's desire to attend work despite illness, which could potentially reduce costs associated with sick leave and absenteeism (Saksvik et al., 2013). Attendance pressure norms resulted in precursors related to sickness presenteeism

(Saksvik et al., 2013). Thus, attendance pressure norms and adjustment norms influence an employee's beliefs about adjustment and pressure at work. As a result, employees have a tendency to form general opinions about the extent to which management cares about their well-being. Consequently, employees believing that they have the support of their supervisor during work adjustments or pressurized moments behave in a positive manner that reduces absenteeism levels (Giæver, Saksvik, & Thun, 2013).

Leaders with solid management skills are essential in developing an organization's culture in a way that contributes to the company's overall effectiveness. Some scholars suggested that certain types of leadership could help reduce absenteeism (Elshout et al., 2013). For example, Mohammed, Fernando, and Caputi (2013) found that transformational leadership advanced a higher level of morality and motivation in employees, which helps move toward positive outcomes, hence reducing adverse consequences such as employee absenteeism. Conversely, Hassan et al. (2014) concurred that transformational leadership helped reduce absenteeism and had a positive influence on organizational commitment. Therefore, the type of leadership might be of consequence to managers trying to understand what issues impact an individual's performance to avoid negative behaviors that translate into decreased absenteeism (Hassan et al., 2014).

Leadership factors supporting balanced workload arrangements also include an employee's attitude towards the company's HR and management practices (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Siukola, Nygård, and Virtanen (2013) explored the association between absence rate because of sickness and workers' attitudes towards their absence

among blue-collar and white-collar workers. The study highlighted that among blue-collar workers, if an employee faced an increased workload or accumulated tasks after being absent from work, the absence level was higher for short absence spells (Siukola, Nygård, & Virtanen, 2013). In contrast, for white-collar workers, the absence level was lower providing that management hired a substitute worker to assist the employee (Siukola et al., 2013). The findings of the study further illustrated that managers should be more active in finding positive strategies for reducing any adverse outcomes related to increased workloads. As noted by Siukola et al. (2013), a lower risk existed for short and long sickness absence spells when an employee knows that they will have a job when returning to work. In support of Siukola et al.'s research findings, Cohen (2013) found that 64% of global executives had conflicting priorities when aligning effective strategies with top organizational concerns. Cohen's findings support the necessity for managers to be more adept at designing effective strategies to minimize the outcomes of excessive employee workloads, which could ultimately lead to unwarranted behavior from the worker. Business managers interested in creating effective and robust strategies to reduce absenteeism levels should focus on the needs of the employees and the organization (Hassan et al., 2014; Wong & Laschinger, 2013). By engaging employees, managers could have a better understanding of the factors causing an increase in absence behavior and allow for the development of successful strategies to reduce high absenteeism levels.

Transition

High absenteeism levels continue to cause concern among business leaders trying to maximize profitability and productivity while reducing costs (Bankert et al., 2015). Bierla et al. (2013) defined absenteeism as the failure of an employee to report for scheduled work while Hassan et al. (2014) noted that absenteeism could either be voluntary or involuntary. Globalization and industry competitiveness are inevitable, and business leaders consider absenteeism as a potentially significant expense primarily because of the aging working population (Gosselin et al., 2013). The financial and economic consequences of absenteeism encourage managers to create and implement strategies to achieve sustainability while reducing the costs caused by high absenteeism levels (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). High absenteeism levels cause business leaders to incur additional expenses on recruiting and training temporary workers to fill the vacant positions. As a result, senior executives should develop targeted strategies to manage better absenteeism results to drive organizational growth and sustainability.

The review of academic and professional literature included a critical analysis and synthesis on topics such as (a) the TPB; (b) the history of absenteeism; (c) causes of absenteeism; and (d) leadership, management, and organizational strategies for addressing absenteeism. Section 2 of this study will cover (a) the restatement of the purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) research participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments, (h) data collection techniques, (j) data analysis, and (k) reliability and validity. Section 3 will include (a) the presentation of the findings, (b) applications for

professional practice, (d) social change implications, and (e) recommendations for action

and further study.

Section 2: The Project

The focus of this qualitative single case study was to understand the strategies that managers should use to minimize absenteeism levels. The purpose of the study included collecting data from managers within the private insurance sector in Bermuda using semistructured interviews. Additional data collection methods included the review of corporate documents such as annual reports from 2011-2015 and the participating company's operational and HR policies and procedures. The objective of collecting the data was to obtain an understanding of the strategies managers could utilize to reduce employee absenteeism levels.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that insurance managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The targeted population included three managers from a private sector insurance firm located in Bermuda who implemented strategies to decrease employee absenteeism. The implications for positive social change could include the potential for insurance managers to reduce employee absenteeism, improve productivity, and create opportunities to enhance the direct economic impact that reduced employee absenteeism may have on the community (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). From an economic perspective, Livanos and Zangelidis (2013) stated that the results derived from increased consumer spending might potentially highlight resources for companies to make additional investments, subsequently stimulating the local economy.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a qualitative study is to focus on the participants'

underlying experiences to provide a contextual account when explaining a phenomenon

(Yin, 2014). As the researcher, I sought to obtain factual accounts of the participants'

experiences in their words through the design, collection, and interpretation of

information via multiple data resources (Yilmaz, 2013; Yin, 2014). The data collection

process for this study included using interview questions aligned to the conceptual

framework and research problem. The interview questions included relevant questions

about strategies to decrease organizational absenteeism levels.

The study included in-depth interviews seeking to understand the experiences and

observations of the individuals participating in the study selected via a nonprobability

purposive sample. Yilmaz (2013), Yin (2014), and Yu, Abdullah, and Saat (2014)

indicated that acquiring the necessary data for evaluating the study's research question

involves listening, reflecting, and asking probing questions. Additionally, collecting data

also included the review of current corporate and archival documents to cross-reference

the participants' responses and obtain a better understanding of strategies that managers

used to reduce employee absenteeism.

Furthermore, I ensured the reliability and validity of the findings through member

checking, data saturation, and data triangulation. Member checking involves the process

whereby the participants receive a copy of their transcribed responses to check and

validate the accuracy of their experiences and views of the research phenomenon (Oun &

Bach, 2014). As necessary, the participants provided feedback to the researcher to update

the data. I achieved data saturation, which demonstrated content validity, by conducting a critical analysis of the data collected. The data saturation process involved the identification of (a) themes, (b) thematic definitions, (c) categories, and (d) coding based on the participants' responses. Consequently, data saturation occurs when the researcher fails to identify any new (a) themes, (b) categories, (c) insights, or (d) perspectives for coding (Griffith, 2013). Upon completion of the member checking and data saturation processes, I triangulated the data using archival documentation of the participating organization, reducing any biased research findings (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Accomplishing triangulation (a) minimizes any inaccuracies and inconsistencies found by using one data source, (b) determine validity and credibility of the study: and (c) increases the confidence, strength, and validity of the research findings (Heale & Forbes, 2013).

The topic of this research was effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. With over 20 years in the legal and insurance services industry, and as a corporate group manager, my professional experience included having access to employers' incentive programs for achieving improved policies to minimize employee absenteeism. Furthermore, my opinions and ideas remained separate when evaluating the research content by acting as an ethical researcher according to the principles of the Belmont Report. Moreover, to be nonjudgmental and reduce bias, personal prejudices were set aside including any personal experiences, beliefs, attitudes, culture, and generational views as recommended by Crockett, Downey, Fırat, Ozanne, and Pettigrew (2013) and Yin (2013).

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument during the data collection process. According to the Belmont Report (1979), the researcher should also develop processes to mitigate any ethical issues and secure the participants' privacy when conducting the study. The tenets of the Belmont Report include ethical principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice that I practiced at all times during the study. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) along with Palmer, Fam, Smith, and Kilham (2014) indicated that the core principles of the Belmont Report along with the application of an informed consent form, the foundation of the assessment of risks and benefits, and the selection of participants, serve as a guide for ethical principles.

The Belmont Report included a summary of the well-established ethical principles of the protection of human subjects for research purposes (Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013). The report illustrated the distinction between *research and practice* and the *applications* for safeguarding human research subjects in field studies (Belmont Report, 1979). For the purpose of this study, I followed the three basic principles respect for persons, beneficence, and justice throughout the study to ensure participants were free from coercion. Additionally, the guidelines of the report indicated that Institutional Review Board (IRB) members and staff complete educational and certification programs on research ethics before receiving permission to conduct research studies. Furthermore, I completed the necessary education and certification from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Protecting Human Research Participants on 7 September 2015 and secured approval from Walden University's IRB to conduct the study. Klitzman (2013) indicated that the role of the IRB as an independent ethics

committee should ensure that they protect the rights, safety, and well-being of human subjects involved in research studies.

Participants

The participants for this study comprised three full-time managers purposefully sampled from an insurance company in Bermuda with experience implementing strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. According to Gupta, Kumar, and Singh (2014), the insurance sector plays a vital role in a country's economy and the selection of participants leads to the identification of strategies to reduce employee absenteeism, subsequently improving an organization's profitability and sustainability. Consequently, the selection of participants is vital, because the objective is to collect their views and experiences of the phenomenon in a contextual format (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). The characteristics of an insurance sector environment include multidimensional factors such as (a) elements of constant changes in structures and new laws, (b) management techniques, and (c) new competition that impacts an employee, requiring them to work for longer hours (Balakrishnan, 2013). Consequently, managers should understand how to mitigate these challenges to reduce employee frustrations, leading to increased absenteeism levels.

Before conducting the semistructured interviews, I sought approval from the selected organization's compliance department requesting permission of the participants' involvement in the study. The objective of the semistructured interview approach is for the researcher to collect detailed data that supports the research question (Ajagbe et al., 2015; Lalor et al., 2013). After receiving permission to conduct the study from the

company's authorized representative, participants received an e-mail (a) outlining the purpose of the study, (b) requesting confirmation of their eligibility to be a participant, (c) requesting confirmation of the time of their availability to conduct a face-to-face meeting, (d) asking their consent to participate in the study, and (e) notifying participants of the audio recording proceedings of the interview. Obtaining consent is the ethical and legal responsibility of the researcher to ensure that each participant has sufficient information to make an informed decision to participate in the study (Marrone, 2016).

To help the participants feel comfortable with the inquiry process, I sought to establish a trusting working relationship. For successful working relationships to exist, individuals should develop a sense of trust, empathy, and personal interaction (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). General relationships are the foundation for building trust and collaboration, and according to Fletcher (2014), researchers should build a successful working relationship while establishing rapport with the participants to achieve their trust and support. By sharing my academic career and professional background before and again at the beginning of the interview process, the participants obtained a better understanding of the research phenomena and felt more comfortable responding to the questions. Elo et al. (2014) recommended that the researcher should conduct introductions to the participants to make them feel more valued to the process and study.

I ensured that each participant knew the conditions of the interview process and addressed any additional questions as necessary. Doody and Noonan (2013) said that creating an environment conducive to allowing the participant to feel more comfortable and relaxed in responding to the researcher's questions is prone to engage in further

dialogue when necessary. Once the interview process begins, avoiding biases is one of the critical objectives in conducting a qualitative study (Morse, 2015a). Any biases developed during the interview process can potentially distort the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the study (Ajagbe et al., 2013). Consequently, to avoid any potential biases, I followed an interview protocol (see Appendix C), which allowed the researcher to separate any emotions and personal feelings concerning absenteeism strategies and eliminated personal reactions and views of the individual's responses during the interview process.

Research Method and Design

One critical component of the doctoral research process is to select the most suitable research method that supports the research question and achieves the goals of the study (Hayes, Bonner, & Douglas, 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore strategies from the perspective of managers who could potentially minimize employee absenteeism in companies in Bermuda. Subsequently, qualitative researchers can focus on a particular event by using interviews and archival data to investigate the phenomenon (Hoon, 2013). To achieve the objectives of the study, the selection of a qualitative case study was more beneficial to explore strategies required to reduce absenteeism levels (Yin, 2013).

Research Method

Based on the central research question, the qualitative approach was the most appropriate research method for this study. Qualitative researchers explore participants' perspectives and observations of a contemporary phenomenon in a contextual way

(Yilmaz, 2013). In a qualitative research approach, the researcher collects and analyzes various views and perceptions by asking how and why type questions (Yin, 2013). Based on the participants' behavior and detailed responses, the researcher can establish specific emerging themes (Manhas & Oberle, 2015). The findings of a qualitative inquiry further support suggestions for a better understanding of the participants' responses, by asking follow-up questions (Waite, 2014).

The steps of qualitative studies include the selection of specific questions posed to participants (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016). Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013) suggested that interviews are the most common form of qualitative data collection because of the potential to obtain detailed and quality data. A qualitative study also draws on a conceptual framework that provides direction for the study (Green, 2014). Unlike a qualitative study, a quantitative approach utilizes numerical data to analyze and determine the relationship between two or more variables (Breen et al., 2014). Quantitative researchers attempt to eliminate biases by using statistical data and making deductions about a population typically through closed-ended questions (Poore, 2014). Additionally, quantitative researchers create hypotheses to test for statistical significance, which either proves or disproves the results of the study (Ebinger & Richter, 2015). The selection of a quantitative study includes the development of a hypothesis to measure a relationship or difference between two or more variables, which did not meet the needs of this study.

Mixed methods research is the third type of research method that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Kim, Han, & Kim, 2015). Similar to a

qualitative and quantitative research study, mixed method researchers collect and

analyzes data to obtain a wider and comprehensive understanding of the research problem

(Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). A mixed method approach did not meet the needs of this

study because of the inclusion of its quantitative approach (Maxwell, 2015).

Research Design

There are numerous research designs that researchers can select from to support a

qualitative study. Case study, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative are some of

the most frequently used designs (Roberts, 2013). The qualitative design approach is the

most flexible of the designs available, and the objective of the approach allows

researchers to provide critical and logical indications of the empirical information

collected to understand a phenomenon (Aborisade, 2013). Yin (2013) further suggested

that a research design is an action to take the researcher from one position to another. For

this reason, the study included the selection of an exploratory single case design to

explore and analyze the real life views and perceptions of an individual's experience

about a particular phenomenon.

Case study design involves single or multiple cases bounded by time and place

(Yin, 2013). According to Hoon (2013), the purpose of the design is to explore

individuals' behaviors, actions, and views towards a workplace phenomenon by drawing

on data collecting methods such as (a) interviews, (b) archival data, (c) audiovisual

materials, and (d) physical artifacts, along with private and public documents. Lalor et al.

(2013) noted that to obtain an in-depth understanding of the research problem the

researcher should include *how* and *why* questions, in which the researcher can identify

abstraction of varying levels of data without limiting the participants' responses (Lalor et al., 2013).

Ethnography is another form of qualitative inquiry in which the researcher can focus on explaining social behaviors of a group or subset of individuals that share a common culture (Cruz & Higgingbottom, 2013). As suggested by Reeves, Peller, Goldman, and Kitto (2013), the research design of this method involves the researcher analyzing shared and learned patterns of the subjects of the study comprising of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a cultural group. An ethnography study did not meet the needs of this study, because to achieve its outcomes; the researcher immerses themselves in the daily lives of the participants to subjectively observe and understand the interrelationship between people and their environments in the society based on cultures, norms, social groups, and systems (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; McCurdy & Uldam, 2014). Consequently, the information derived from such observations will not aid in developing an understanding and solution to the business problem.

The narrative theory is an individualistic research approach based on the researcher narrating a collection of data from the study's participants based on lived and told experiences (Wexler et al., 2014). The approach is of a story-telling nature and usually provides a chronological account of an individual's shared stories told to the researcher (Young et al., 2015). Consequently, the information is subjective and constructive in building a chronological story of the participant's life (Deppermann, 2013). The narrative approach also did not suit the needs of this study, because the

research did not involve documenting a narrated version of the participants' lived experiences.

A phenomenological inquiry is an interpretative, structured approach that requires the researcher to find the cluster of meanings within the data, and provide a report that allows the reader to have an essential understanding of the lived experience (Gill, 2014). In a phenomenological study, the researcher selects participants based on their exposure and experience to the phenomenon in question and finding appropriate individuals might pose a challenge (Maoyh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). Using a phenomenological approach also did not meet the needs of this study, because the design is very subjective and includes the integration of the researcher's and participants' collective views by exploring affective, emotional, and intense reactions as they appear to the person experiencing the phenomenon, which was not the purpose of this study (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixmith, 2013).

For this study, the interview process involved the exploration of the participants' experiences and observations based on rich and detailed responses gleaned from the semistructured interview questions. The interviewing process continued until the emergence of data saturation, whereby no new information or themes emerged. The objective of data saturation in qualitative research supports validity and failure to achieve saturation impact the quality of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). One other criterion needed to achieve data saturation was securing sufficient data to replicate the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015b; O'Reily & Parker, 2013). Additionally, achieving data saturation might also vary depending upon the sample size of the population, but

does not rely on this condition. Burmeister and Aitken (2012) suggested that the best way to accomplish data saturation is by collecting extensive, intricate, and detailed information from the participants and not relying on the sample size of the population. Subsequently, the researcher should select the size of the population to the study to achieve saturation and not solely focus on the numerical quantity of the sample size (Morse, 2015b).

Population and Sampling

For this study, I considered both probability and nonprobability sampling procedures. A probability sampling method includes the likelihood for each individual in the population to participate in the study via random selection without excluding entire sections of the population (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013). Thus, the selected participants' yield an unbiased sample representative of the total population (Bornstein, Jager, & Putnick, 2013). Probability sample methodology ensures generalization of the results of the study, which allows for an estimate of the sampling error (Raschke, Krishen, Kachroo, & Maheshwari, 2013). Furthermore, probability sampling is more expensive and time-consuming (Acharya et al., 2013; Bornstein et al., 2013; Raschke et al., 2013). Examples of probability sampling include (a) simple random, (b) systematic random, (c) stratified random, (d) cluster, (e) multiphase, and (e) multistage sampling (Acharya et al., 2013).

Conversely, nonprobability sampling is more convenient and less costly (Acharya et al., 2013; Bornstein et al., 2013; Raschke et al., 2013). In nonprobability sampling methodology, the researcher selects the participants non-randomly based on accessibility

and their expert knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Bornstein et al., 2013).

Examples of nonprobability sampling include convenience or purposive, quota, and

snowballing sampling (Acharya et al., 2013).

For this study, I utilized a nonprobability purposive sampling method. The

population for this study was a private sector insurance company located in Bermuda.

With over 30 years in operation, this business is well known to the Bermudian

community as being one of the leading companies for implementing innovative programs

designed to improve the quality of life for employees and the Bermudian community.

Nonprobability purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies used

in qualitative research and helps the researcher select a suitable sample of the population

that represents the whole population (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015;

McCabe, Stern, & Dacko, 2013). Purposeful sampling also involves researchers

selecting information-rich participants in part based on the relevance of their experience

for the research focus of the study (Noble, 2014).

The rationale for employing a nonprobability purposive strategy is because the

selection of the participants belonged to a unique category of individuals with specialized

knowledge of the phenomenon of interest as noted by Palinkas et al. (2015) and Robinson

(2014). Nonprobability purposeful sampling is an effective sampling approach that adds

to the credibility of the study while supporting the research problem and question

(Ajagbe et al., 2015). However, the method is not without limitations. For example,

researchers place an excessive dependency on judgment and practical knowledge to

identify and select participants (Shorten & Moorley, 2014). The implications of the

selection criteria can result in researcher biases or prejudices impacting their ability to measure or control the collected data (Acharya et al., 2013; Shorten & Moorley, 2014). Additionally, the researcher is unable to generalize the results to an entire population and estimate the sampling error (Raschke et al., 2013).

Robinson (2014) noted that purposeful sampling in qualitative research requires the selection and study of a small number of people needed to provide rich and in-depth information based on their personal experiences of the phenomena. Consequently, the eligibility criteria for the participants included managers who contributed to the development of strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. Furthermore, a nonprobability purposive sample also includes the identification of the participants based on selected criteria and reduces biases (Smith & Noble, 2014). Upon identification of the participants, I circulated an e-mail to each person detailing the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. Kaczynski, Salmona, and Smith (2014) further suggested that using nonprobability purposeful sampling in case studies, even if selecting small samples, would substantially increase the credibility of the research results. Thus, the researcher can collect data with better accuracy and speed from participants that produce insights and in-depth understanding of the research problem rather than forming empirical generalizations (Palinkas et al., 2015).

To select a nonprobability purposive sample, the criteria for the participants comprised managers with experience working in the insurance industry and who had experience developing or implementing strategies to improve employee work attendance levels. For researchers trying to generate quality information, van der Velden and Emam

(2013) stated that the selected sample should comprise information based on their personal experiences. Crocker et al. (2015) and van Hoeven, Janssen, Roes, and Koffijberg (2015) also indicated that researchers' should ensure that they develop a robust criterion that is in alignment with the research question. Therefore, I focused solely on interviewing current employees working with the participating organization to reduce the time searching for and locating past employees.

Making a participant feel as comfortable as possible with their surroundings during the interview process was a critical aspect of obtaining quality information. Cho and Park (2013) noted that the researcher should provide an environment that allows the participants' to feel as comfortable and familiar as possible when answering the interview questions. Moreover, Harris, Boggiano, Nguyen, and Pham (2013) suggested that researchers should also view the most appropriate interview space to assure protection and secrecy of the participants' responses. In support of Harris et al. (2013) assertions, Herring (2013) maintained that establishing an appropriate environment for conducting the research interviews encourage participants to provide more truthful responses. By using the organization's boardroom, the interviewee was free from any interruptions or distractions, and I sustained the participants' privacy as suggested by Johnson and Esterling (2015).

When employing purposive sampling, the researcher can explore individual qualities of the targeted population that experienced the phenomenon by gathering information-rich data (Palinkas et al., 2015). Information-rich data is fluid, rather than linear and enables the researcher to reach data saturation from a sample large enough to

achieve in-depth details of the central research question, but small enough to use data relevant to the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Moreover, in case studies, there is no definite number in a sample necessary to achieve data saturation (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Data saturation depends on the nature of the data source and the research question (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014). Qualitative researchers achieve data saturation when an additional collection of information fails to provide new data, themes, insights, or perspectives for further synthesis and new coding (Griffith, 2013). Subsequently, the researcher should be able to replicate this study based on the use of the same interview questions within the same timeframe.

Ethical Research

Ethical research involving human subjects should include maintaining the highest form of moral integrity (Haar, Norlyk, & Hall, 2013). Ethical research in human subjects also encompasses the process of informed consent (Marrone, 2015). *Informed consent* is a fundamental principle of a research study that includes obtaining an individual's permission to participate in a study (Schrems, 2014). Informed consent is also a form of legal doctrine and is an implicit social contract between the researcher and the public (Kaye et al., 2015). The purpose of the consent form is to document the researcher's intent to attain the highest level of integrity and confidentiality of the participants' identities (Marrone, 2015). The consent form included the (a) primary researcher's contact information; (b) voluntary nature of the study; (c) IRB approval information; (d) the study procedures; (e) risks and benefits associated with the study; (f) disclosure statement for any payment, thank-you gifts, or reimbursement the researcher shall

receive; and (g) privacy disclosure including a statement that indicated that the researcher shall retain the study data in a secure place for 5 years (Walden University, 2016).

According to IRB guidelines (2016), I ensured the protection of the rights of the participants by maintaining the collected data in a secured lock box affixed with a combination-coded padlock. Storing the data in a secured location prevents unauthorized access, disclosure, or loss of the participants' information (Harris et al., 2013; Johnson, 2014). Cliggett (2013) suggested that a researcher should make any data collected during a research study available for review, which complies with the law and regulations governing the conduct of research. Therefore, during the 5 years, I will make the data available for review by the university. After 5 years, I will destroy all paper documentation by paper shredder and electronic data collected by using KillDisk software to erase the information. According to Walden University's guidelines, the final doctoral manuscript IRB approval number is 02-28-17-0579834.

Another component of the consent form includes a section for the participants to decide if they would like to participate in the study and specify their treatment during the study (Marrone, 2015). Before commencing the study, each participant received a copy of the informed consent via email, which included the benefits and risks associated with the study. Rodrigues et al. (2013), along with Beskow, Check, and Ammarell (2014), noted that informed consent is a vital part of the research process, which enables a participant to receive information about its procedures, risks, and benefits. For participants to contribute in this study, I required all participants to acknowledge their consent via return email.

Ensuring adherence to the three principles of informed consent is critical to the credibility of a study (Grady, 2015). Consequently, I reviewed the Belmont Report (1979) created by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The objective of the Belmont Report includes the following three principles, which apply to this study (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence-treating people in an ethical manner and securing their well-being, and (c) justice, as related to a sense of fairness (Rodrigues, Antony, Krishnamurthy, Shet, & De Costa, 2013). Before researchers conduct or design any studies that involve human subjects, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Protecting Human Research Participants provides a free educational tutorial that individuals might use to fulfill the requirement for education in the protection of human research participants. Consequently, I completed the educational tutorial on September 7, 2015 (Certification No.: 1831724) and referenced in Appendix A and in the Table of Contents. Marrone (2015) said that the Belmont Report provides researchers with a framework to follow for legal and ethical protections on behalf of research participants. The model includes the following six critical elements necessary for utilizing humans in experimental research (a) informed consent, (b) disclosure, (c) competency, (d) voluntariness, (e) risks and benefits, and (f) selection of subjects (Brody & Miller, 2013; Marrone, 2015).

Drake (2013) stated that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, participants also have the right not to answer particular questions (Rodrigues et al., 2013). For these reasons, I included in the participants' debriefing

process an explanation of these rights before allowing them to participate in the study.

Johnson (2014) suggested that confidentiality also plays an integral part in protecting the

participants' rights, and their name, location of the study, and the participating

organization shall remain anonymous. As such, ensuring that the participants'

information remains protected and secure at all times was a priority objective of the

researcher. As part of the procedural process for this study, the participants did not

receive any compensation for taking part in the research process, and they received a

copy of the findings of the study for their records.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for this case study. According to

Gatsmyer and Pruitt (2014) and Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013), a qualitative researcher

serves as the primary instrument of scientific inquiry in the data collection process.

Similarly, Mansfield (2013) argued that as the primary data collection instrument,

researchers are the best source to interact with the participants in the environment to

obtain their experiences and views on the research problem. Thus, as the primary data

collection instrument, I conducted in-depth interviews, noted participant's responses, and

reviewed current and archival documents from the participating organization to collect

information about the research question.

Qualitative research is an exploratory process intended to support researchers to

gain an understanding of the reasons behind the meanings, actions, and behaviors based

on the researcher's perceptions (Cole, Chen, Ford, Phillips, & Stevens, 2014). Some of

the primary sources of collecting data in a qualitative study are individual interviews,

focus groups, observations, and documentation (Yilmaz, 2013). Gatsmyer and Pruitt (2014) noted that researchers often use interviews to gather information associated with the phenomena and are valuable instruments for collecting research data. Furthermore, McIntosh and Morse (2015) suggested that qualitative researchers could collect data for their study by using semistructured interviews consisting of open-ended questions. Therefore, I utilized semistructured interviews consisting of four open-ended questions to gather data associated with strategies managers used to reduce absenteeism levels (see Appendix B). The objective of using open-ended questions is to obtain a higher degree of unbiased, detailed, and quality data (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Another objective of using *how* and *why* questions, illustrate how participants' could provide diverse and detailed answers to understanding the research problem (Lalor et al., 2013). Similarly, by allowing the participants to respond freely to the questions, grants opportunities to the researcher to explore issues that arise spontaneously (Starr, 2014). Moreover, the researcher can change the order of the wording of the questions depending on the direction of the interview, ask additional questions, or explore a new direction not previously considered (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Using open-ended questions helps the researcher to discover new concepts and encourage validity by asking probing questions to draw out the relevant data (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Accordingly, semistructured questions create a sense of structure to the interview and data collection process and are more beneficial to this study as the intent is not to stimulate discussions that fall outside of the interpretation of the research phenomena.

Zhou and Baptista (2013) stated that researchers using data gathering instruments should ensure the reliability and validity of a study. To enhance the reliability and validity of the collected data, I utilized member checking to validate the participants' responses. Member checking involves the process of verifying the accuracy of the collected information was a truthful representation of the participants' experiences and views (Loh, 2013). Furthermore, by using member checking, the researcher minimized the potential to include incorrect data (Roche, Vaterlaus, & Young, 2015). After the interview process and as part of the member checking process, each participant received a copy of their transcribed responses to verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of their responses to the interview questions. As suggested by Vance (2015), member checking enhances the validity and reliability of the collected data.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection in qualitative research involves the gathering of contextual and observational data in a systematic process (Grossoehme, 2014). According to Oun and Bach (2014), data collection techniques include gathering and collecting the data via (a) interpretive techniques (e.g., interviews, observations, etc.), (b) recursive abstraction (e.g., analyzing data without coding), (c) mechanical methods, (e.g., electronic or on-line data collection), or (d) self-study. For this study, I used semistructured face-to-face interviews consisting of open-ended questions. Using open-ended questions helps the researcher view the phenomenon from the participants' current worldview without formulating any predetermined ideas (Yilmaz, 2013). Furthermore, interviews are a significant source of providing information to a researcher and are typically the most

important type of data collected in a case study (Singh, 2014). Moreover, Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) noted that by using semistructured questions, the researcher could capture more information for analysis.

The use of semistructured face-to-face interviews helped support an atmosphere of trust between the researcher and the interviewee in which the objective was to extract truthful and meaningful responses from the participants on strategies to reduce absenteeism levels as noted by Doody & Noonan (2013) and Singh (2014). The purpose of using face-to-face interviews also allows for the researcher to collect detailed field notes combined with the audio-recordings (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Conducting face-to-face interviews provides distinct advantages such as observing social cues in the form of voice and body language, which could give the researcher additional information not readily identifiable via a telephone interview (Oltmann, 2016). Doody and Noonan (2013) suggested that a researcher should ensure that participants are in a neutral and safe interview environment free from possible interruptions while maintaining the interviewees' privacy and confidentiality. I conducted the interviews at the participant's convenience in a neutral and professional environment free and safe from interruptions based on the interview protocol (see Appendix C), and provided an atmosphere of privacy and confidentiality.

Before the interviewing process, the participants received an electronic copy of the questions (see Appendix B). Savva (2013) suggested that providing a copy of the questions before the interview allow each participant to provide better answers and seek clarification. Similarly, Rizo et al. (2015) indicated that the researcher develops a better

relationship with the interviewee by receiving the questions before the interview, subsequently soliciting better responses. Most importantly, the objective of providing an advanced copy of the interview questions enables the researcher with the ability to obtain further clarity of the information conveyed (Rowley, 2012). Although conducting interviews are a useful way to gain insight and contextual information of a research problem, they can also be time-consuming, intrusive, and susceptible to bias by the participant trying to please the researcher with their responses (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In some cases, researchers' take an empathetic view of the interviewing process and employs an ethical stance in supporting the participants' viewpoint and begins advocating their position (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Accordingly, researchers should ensure that the focus is on reducing any biases during the interview process.

Data collection methods in a case study can include the integration of objective and perceptive data through sources, such as interviews, documentation, and archival documentation (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). According to Yin (2013) and Ajagbe et al. (2015), archival records such as (a) books, (b) journals, (c) personal records, (d) earlier research, (e) websites, (f) online materials, (g) mass media communications, (h) government documents, and (i) semi-government documents provides reliable information for the data collection process. The utilization of multiple data collection sources supports the use of triangulation and helps establish the trustworthiness of the research findings (Baškarada, 2014).

Patton and Johns (2012) noted that each data source could contribute to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon. Conversely, using archival

documentation might present certain disadvantages such as (a) unreliability of the information found not collected by the researcher (b) failure to address the critical issues about the research study, or (c) provide incomplete information (Yin, 2014). By using archival data, the researcher can further fail to obtain an understanding of the answers to the research question. To mitigate the potential of using inadequate archival documentation, I collected supplementary data from sources independent of the archival records. According to Verleye, Gemmel, and Rangarajan (2014), researchers can improve the generalizability of the research findings and reduce the limitations of the archival documentation by reformulation of the research questions, if necessary. Similarly, the results of the study should illustrate congruence based on the diverse, documentation, procedural, and ethical rigor conducted during the data collection methods that support the conceptual framework and research question (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). For this study, I utilized the documentation provided by the HR department of the participating company to support relevance to the research problem.

Member checking is a quality control process that allows the researcher to return to the participants the data collected to offer an opportunity to corroborate the validity and interpretation of the reported responses and advise of any errors in the statements (Loh, 2013). Vance (2015) suggested that the researcher could provide interview summaries to the participants at the end of the study, while Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintained that the researcher could arrange for a review of the transcribed responses at any time of the consultation process and not only at the conclusion of the interview sessions. After the interview process, I used member checking to help validate the

accuracy and meaning of the data collected, credibility, and validity of the information recorded during the interview. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2013) along with Houghton et al. (2013) suggested that member checking is the most reliable and critical option for establishing credibility and validating the trustworthiness of the collected data. Additionally, qualitative researchers routinely employ (a) member checking, (b) triangulation, (c) thick description, (d) peer validation, and (f) external audits to maintain the correctness of the data (Elo et al., 2014; Loh, 2013).

Data Organization Technique

Oun and Bach (2014) suggested that the data collected could define the direction of the research findings presented, which helps establish the quality of the study. A researcher should have effective observational and interpretive skills, as well as understanding how to accurately record the information regarding the phenomena (Myers & Lampropoulou, 2013). Gibson, Webb, and Lehn (2014) suggested that researchers use software to keep track of and organize data. Consequently, I created and maintained a password-protected electronic data log through Microsoft Word to categorize the data before beginning the coding phase. Employing computer-assisted programs to help in the coding and thematic phase enhances the researchers' ability to transcribe, categorize, and efficiently organize data (Patterson et al., 2014).

Coding is the first step in data reduction and interpretation by identifying, describing, and classifying the data into codes and themes (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). For the coding process, I categorized the aggregate data into codes and assigned a label to each code. Campbell et al. (2013) and Vaismoradi, Turunen, and

Bondas (2013) suggested that utilizing short phrases or descriptive one word captures the essence of the participants' responses. The data organization process also included synthesizing of the data by analyzing what words and phrases frequently used by the interviewees to form ideas and concepts to categorize into unique codes. In the data reduction process, I reread the interview transcriptions several times, reading each sentence line by line to highlight words, phrases, or blocks of a sentence, into various colors for ease of reference, and to subtract the initial ideas and concepts. Assigning color codes to identify the interviewees' responses during the analysis stage is one essential sorting process for researchers to employ (Hall et al., 2015).

When reviewing the various responses, I also made a list of the different ideas that emerged to conduct a final cross-reference before placing the data into themes. Vaismoradi et al. (2013) referred to the independent process of identifying, analyzing, and placing data into patterns and themes as thematic analysis. By placing the key ideas into groups to represent the salient themes of the study could contribute to the organization of the collected data for final interpretation (Singh, 2014). Additionally, during the coding process, I was also cognizant of any information that might highlight an unexpected idea or direction relevant to reducing absenteeism trends. According to Cameron, Naglie, Silver, and Gignac (2013), the researcher can further explore particular ways that the raw data could fit into respective categories and themes developing from the information collected that support the conceptual framework, research question, and literature reviewed.

To record all information about the study, I utilized a personal journal. The use of a journal assists researchers with promoting reflective thinking on the events and experiences throughout the research process (Constantinou & Kuys, 2013; Morse, 2015a). Reflective practice involves critical thinking with the ability to self-monitor, be self-directive, and autonomous (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Introduced by Schon in 1982, the reflective process involves three stages, awareness of thoughts and feelings, critical analysis of a situation, and development of a new perspective on the situation (Constantinou & Kuys, 2013). For these reasons, using a personal journal enables the researcher with the ability to recognize the interviewees' ideas and feelings when addressing the research problem (Cowan, 2014). Furthermore, using a journal allows the researcher to enhance their critical thinking skills in describing, analyzing, and evaluating the data collected for increased knowledge of the research problem (Naber & Wyatt, 2014). As required by the university, I securely stored all raw dated collected in a secured locked box with a combination-coded padlock for 5 years, then subsequently remove and destroy via a paper shredder (e.g., field notes and journal book entries) and by using the software KillDisk for all electronic data.

Data Analysis

Sotiriadou, Brouwers, and Le (2014) suggested that the analysis and interpretation of data through the use of qualitative software analysis tool increases the reliability of the analyzed and recorded data. Edwards-Jones (2014) indicated that data analysis is the understanding of analytical insights and theoretical explanations without bias and comprise of the data. For this study, I used research notes to gather information in

support of the research question for population into the NVivo[©] software program as

suggested by Zamawe (2015).

To ensure success of the face-to-face interview process, I adopted the following

strategies suggested by Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wine, and Frels (2013): (a) establish and

maintain a relationship with the interviewee, (b) understand the context of interviewee's

experiences, (c) use the language of the interviewee, (d) include expanded or larger

systems in the interview, (e) maintain flexibility in conversation, (f) attend to the process

of the interview, (g) use a restraining or go slow approach, (h) use a team process

effectively, and (i) finalize and summarize the interview process. After transcribing the

interviewee responses using Microsoft Word, the participants received a summary of

their answers to authenticate the accuracy and intended meaning of the information for

member checking validation before uploading into NVivo[©] software for MAC computers

(NVivo[©]). I chose to use NVivo[©] software to analyze each participant's response based

on the audio recordings and the research notes. NVivo[©] is one of the most utilized

software programs for analyzing qualitative research data (Edwards-Jones, 2014).

Furthermore, Sotiriadou et al. (2014) stated that an objective of the NVivo[©] helps the

researcher manage, organize, facilitate the analysis of data, and the identification of

themes, gleaning insight and developing conclusions.

The objective of member checking allows the participant to endorse, validate, and

clarify the correctness of the data collected to confirm the data's trustworthiness, and if

necessary, the plausibility of additional interviews (Nelson et al., 2014). The objective of

the NVivo[©] program contributed to the coding, organizing, and placing the data into

themes (Zamawe, 2015). By using NVivo© software, the researcher can improve the

accuracy and interpretation of the data by allowing them to search electronically and sort

the data in seconds improving accuracy and reliability of the research results (Zamawe,

2015). Additionally, researchers using NVivo© software can work more methodically

and thoroughly during the data analysis process (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Although the

NVivo© software increases the speed and accuracy of data analysis process, the software

program is not 100% accurate (Zamawe, 2015). Subsequently, I conducted a final

manual review of the data to minimize the omission of key words and sentences to

account for additional accuracy.

Codes are the building blocks of the analysis potentially relevant to the research

question and themes are common trends and patterns of underlying meanings that tie the

data together (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Vaismoradi et al.,

2013). For the coding process, I created a master list after systematically reviewing the

participants' responses. A review of the participants' responses consisted of identifying

words used frequently and key terms and phrases that symbolically captured information

about the research question and conceptual framework. The words and phrases from

collected data are a critical aspect in qualitative research (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). From

the master list, I further sorted the initial codes into a more simplified order or groups by

using a color-coded scheme for easier identification of the words, key terms, and phrases.

The purpose of using a color-coded theme allows for easier tracking and controlling of

the data by the researcher for interpretation purposes; and, assists in easily highlighting

the themes and subthemes to aid researchers in the transition stages from research content

into the data analysis (Hall et al., 2015). After analyzing and reviewing the initial data, I

conducted several more reviews of the data content to identify any omissions of all

significant themes and subthemes as suggested by Rowley (2012). The implication of

conducting additional reviews improves the data collection process for the researcher by

capturing accurate and pertinent information necessary for a detailed analysis (Zhou &

Baptista, 2013).

The active process of generating and constructing themes occurs after the coding

phase. Searching for themes involves reviewing the coded data to identify the similarities

and overlap between the codes and creating overarching themes and subthemes (Braun &

Clarke, 2013). For any overlapping themes, I combined into one theme, and any themes

not easily identified, placed into a miscellaneous category for further analysis or

discarding. Braun and Clarke (2013) noted that miscellaneous themes that do not fit into

the overall analyzed data might require discarding should the information not support the

objective of the research question. The reviewing of themes is a recursive process that

ensures essential quality checking by mapping the developing themes to the coded data to

determine whether the theme works compared to the data collected (Ward, Furber,

Tierney, & Swallow, 2014). Upon completion of the identification and reviewing

process, I made several comparisons between the data to create a thematic map. Creating

a thematic map helps the researcher with the analysis of the data conducted to refine the

specifics of each theme to tell the story of the analysis (Esmaeilia, Cheraghi, & Salsali,

2013). The objective of the thematic analysis is to ensure that each theme connects

logically and meaningfully to aid with drawing initial conclusions of the conceptual framework and research problem of the study for further validity by using triangulation.

Achieving triangulation involves the process whereby researchers strive to provide rich data and unbiased findings of a study (Joslin & Müller, 2016). One way to accomplish triangulation and increase the confidence, strength, and validity of a study is to decrease biases by providing multiple perspectives and methods that involve triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Heale & Forbes, 2013). According to Denzin (1978), there are four types of triangulation: data, investigator, methodical, and theory. In 2011, Bechara and Van de Ven added a fifth triangulation method known as philosophical triangulation. Philosophical triangulation, seldom used by researchers, requires additional effort and rigor necessary to support the research problem (Joslin & Müller, 2016).

The type of triangulation chosen by the researcher depends on the purpose of the study. For this study, I chose methodical triangulation, which is the most commonly used form of triangulation to study a research problem (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Methodical triangulation consists of two classifications, within-method and between or across-method triangulation. Within-method triangulation involves the use of two or more methods when studying the phenomenon under investigation (Denzin, 1978). In contrast, and as noted by Gibson (2016) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), between or across-method triangulation, incorporates the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods within a study and was not suitable for this study.

Denzin (1978) further stated that methodical triangulation involves the cross-referencing of internal consistency to achieve external and convergent validity and should assist the researcher in substantiating the research study. This study included the use of methodical triangulation by incorporating two or more methods to validate the data. To complete the triangulation process, I compared and analyzed the responses from the semistructured interview process, archival documentation, and current human resource and financial documents issued by the company's leaders, such as the participating company's annual report. By using methodical triangulation, the researcher should be able to (a) obtain more insight into the research problem, (b) minimize inadequacies and inconsistencies found by using only one data source, (c) determine validity and credibility of the study by using multiple sources, and (d) allow the researcher to analyze the data and draw more accurate conclusions and outcomes of the research findings (Anney, 2014; Denzin, 1978; Heale & Forbes, 2013).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are essential components of all research (Konradsen, Kirkevold, & Olson, 2013). Unlike quantitative studies that focus on correlational elements, qualitative researchers incorporate subjective information based on people's beliefs and experiences towards a phenomenon (Yilmaz, 2013). Assessing the credibility of qualitative research requires assessing the reliability of the study's findings to support the soundness and integrity of the conclusions (Nobel & Smith, 2015). Reliability involves describing the consistency of the analytic methods employed for the study while validity refers to the integrity, transferability, and confirmability of the findings of the

data collected (Houghton et al., 2013). The validity of a qualitative study includes four elements of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). Thus, the integrity of the results of a qualitative research study depends on the availability of rich, appropriate, and well-saturated data (Elo et al., 2014).

Reliability

One of the essential aspects of any research is the reliability of the data and findings (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Reliability in qualitative studies includes the dependability and replicable nature of the results obtained (Zohrabi, 2013). To this end, the researcher uses triangulation and audit trails to confirm reliability (Anney, 2014; Zohrabi, 2013). To ensure reliability, I used multiple data collection methods, including interviews, and archival documentation to identify strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

The audit trail involves a detailed review of the inquiry process inclusive of the data collection and analysis methods, and how the various themes emerge from the results obtained (Anney, 2014; Zohrabi, 2013). As suggested by Ramthun and Matkin (2014), I utilized data triangulation to assist with the reliability and validity of the findings. Data triangulation includes the use of different sources of research data or instruments such as (a) interviews, (b) focus group discussions, (c) participant observations, (d) current documents, or (e) archival documents (Anney, 2014). Additionally, I used multiple sources of data or research instruments such as (a) interviews with managers, (b) current corporate documents, and (c) archival documentation to analyze the results as suggested by Foster, Hayes, and Alter (2013).

Validity

The issue of validation in qualitative research is ambiguous and contentious (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). According to Creswell and Miller (2000) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), the use of validation concepts has a place in qualitative studies. Similarly, Patton and Johns (2012) agreed that validating the results of the research findings is a necessary feature to legitimizing and confirming the accuracy of the outcomes of a study. Validity in qualitative research ensures that collected data is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and defensible (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Validity in qualitative research refers to the appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data collected and used to analyze the research question (Leung, 2015). The researcher should select the appropriate research method, design, sampling option, and data analysis in assessing the validity of the study (Leung, 2015). Thus, researchers trying to judge the soundness of their research can apply the four examining criteria credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability when conducting a qualitative study (Guba, 1981; Leung, 2015).

Achieving validity also includes reaching data saturation, which helps assure credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the research findings (Leung, 2015). Data saturation is the point where the researcher fails to identify any new themes or information to support the research phenomena (Oun & Bach, 2014). Before researchers reach data saturation, they strive for assuring validity by processing the collected data used to evaluate the accuracy of the participants' interpretations of their views and experiences of the research phenomenon (Tuohy et al., 2013).

Subsequently, the concept of data saturation demonstrates content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015a). Therefore, the researcher should assure that they achieve data saturation, which improves the quality of the research findings (Houghton et al., 2013). One way to achieve data saturation includes using the interview method, and the number of interviews depends on the quality of responses received (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To achieve data saturation, I interviewed multiple participants asking semistructured questions and gathered detailed information from their perspective until the replication of responses failed to generate any new data or themes. Data replication means that the participants' responses are common but not necessarily similar (Morse, 2015b).

To ensure an accurate recording of the participants' responses, I provided them with a copy of the summarized transcript for member checking purposes. Member checking involves the verification of the participants' insights based on the researcher's interpretation of their responses to the interview questions (Vance, 2015). The participants reviewed the transcription and provide any necessary feedback to confirm the accurate interpretation of their responses (Leung, 2015). Qualitative researchers assume that member checking assists in the rigorous methods and systems for exploring qualitative inquiries and recognizes the importance of the process assuring validity (Roche et al., 2015).

Another approach in supporting validity is triangulation (Koelsch, 2013). Triangulation includes the collection and cross-verification of data through two or more sources, such as interviews, observations, and archival documentation (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2015). Although researchers can use cross-validation methods to validate the

findings, the purpose of triangulation is to capture different dimensions of information of the same phenomenon (Nelson et al., 2013). Therefore, I utilized methodical triangulation to support the validation process of the research data by interviewing managers, as well as reviewing current corporate and archival documentation.

Triangulation helps researchers reduce bias by cross-examining the integrity of the interviewees' responses to maintain consistency of the findings (Anney, 2014). By utilizing the data triangulation methodology, I obtained a better understanding of the phenomena by using more than two triangulation techniques. Archbold, Dahle, and Jordan (2014) suggested that the validity of the results of a study occurs by capturing different dimensions of the same phenomena and validating cross-verifying concepts and themes from two or more data methods. Similarly, Cooper and Hall (2014) argued that employing data triangulation allows the researcher to produce potentially complementary datasets based on two or more data collection methods.

Credibility. Anney (2014) defined credibility as the confidence and believability of the findings. Elo et al. (2014) found that creditability establishes whether the information derived from the results of the study is plausible and supports the ideas drawn from the participants. Qualitative research can set the rigor of inquiry by utilizing (a) sampling strategies, (b) triangulation, (c) member checking, (d) conducting interviews, and (e) employing peer-examinations (Anney, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013).

The objective of the researcher is to determine which data collection methods attempt to demonstrate the holistic view of the social phenomenon (Matamonasa-Nennett, 2015). Confirmation of creditability of this study included the use of

methodical triangulation, which strengthened the purpose of the study. Methodical

triangulation involve the use of multiple data collection methods about the same research

problem (Heale & Forbes, 2013). For this reason, I chose (a) semistructured interviews,

(b) current corporate documents, and (c) archival documentation to ensure the

creditability of the research findings on strategies used to reduce employee absenteeism

(Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). For this study, I adopted

the following seven strategies suggested by Nobel and Smith (2015) to enhance the

credibility of the study's findings. The first three strategies are to (a) account for

personal biases that could influence the research findings, (b) acknowledge biases in

sampling and critically reflect on the methods used to allow for sufficient depth and

relevance of the data collecting and analysis process, and (c) maintain detailed and

accurate record keeping that that evidenced a clear trail in any decisions made while

ensuring consistency and transparency of the interpretation of the data. The remaining

four strategies are to (a) include rich and detailed descriptions of the participants

observations to support findings, (b) demonstrate clarity of the thought process during the

data analysis phase, (c) arrange for participants to review transcribed responses to ensure

accuracy of information recorded, and (d) engage in data triangulation by using various

data sources and perspectives to help corroborate a more comprehensive analysis of the

research findings.

Transferability. Transferability involves the applicability of the research

findings to other contexts (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Qualitative studies meet the

transferability criterion when the results create meaning to others not involved in the

study and could relate their experiences to the findings (Cope, 2014). The applicability of the results to other occurrences and situations confirms the transferability of the findings related to the phenomenon (Sousa, 2014). Additionally, transferability of the results also highlights alternative options to the researcher on how the concepts and theories of the study could apply to other settings (Elo et al., 2014).

Moreover, Tong, Chapman, Israni, Gordon, and Craig (2014) indicated that naturalistic inquirers should demonstrate generalizability of the results by providing sufficient textual information of the fieldwork observations to enable the confident transfer of the findings. To this end, I gathered detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation to allow for a holistic understanding of the issues associated with the research problem. By assessing transferability of the research findings, I included the use of purposive sampling and certain data collection and analysis techniques. These techniques involved (a) transcribing participants' responses, (b) coding and organizing data, (c) conducting triangulation processes, and (d) presenting the results in a logical and repeatability manner to determine the generalizations of the study as recommended by Anney (2014) and Sousa (2014).

Dependability. Anney (2014) defined dependability as the stability of findings over time. Dependability involves the evaluation of the information derived and interpreted from the participants of the study in a logical and traceable manner (Cuthbert & Moules, 2014). Additionally, dependability includes the use of an audit trail concept to analyze the inquiry process and establish the trustworthiness of the research findings (Jones, 2014). Audit trails is a systematic and methodical record-keeping process for all

researcher's actions and decisions by validating the collection, organization, and analysis of the information post data saturation (El Hussein, Jakubec, & Osuji, 2015; Jones, 2014). Anney also found that judging dependability of a study requires a detailed assessment of the participants for extended periods to identify, learn, and provide an explanation of any changes. The audit trail also involves the establishment of confirmability of the study (Anney, 2014). To ensure dependability of the study, I (a) utilized a journal to document all personal and field notes, (b) recorded the participants' responses, and (c) provided copies of the transcribed audio recordings of the interviewees for member checking purposes.

Confirmability. According to Zitomer and Goodwin (2014), confirmability builds on the audit trail and involves the use of field notes, personal notes, and a journal. Researchers ensure confirmability by revealing the interpretation of the data collected during the study and supports the research findings and not personal biases (Rapport, Clement, Doel, & Hutchings, 2015). Nura (2014) further noted that confirmability is the degree to which others can confirm or corroborate results of the study. To achieve confirmability, clear and concise record keeping, as well as data preservation are essential components of research validity (Jones, 2014). Similar to ensuring dependability, achieving confirmability of the study included utilizing the same audit trail and triangulation procedures. Additionally, I continued to achieve confirmability through being bias during the data collection process based on the corroboration of the participants' responses. Moreover, the participants received a copy of their transcribed responses for member checking and accuracy of the data. Achieving data saturation

resulting from the analysis of the information collected further supports the results of the study. Cope (2014) advocated that achieving confirmability demonstrates and describes the establishment and how of the interpretations and conclusions of the research findings.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included detailed information on (a) the review of the role of the researcher; (b) participants; (c) research method; (d) design; (e) population and sampling; (f) ethical research; (g) data collection, analysis, instruments, techniques, (h) reliability; and (i) validity. Section 3 will focus on the presentation and analysis of the findings of the study, highlighted the applications to professional practice, and implications for social change. Section 3 will also include recommendations for future action based on the results of the study and identified options for future research by reflecting on the issues related to the research problem.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies that insurance managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The data, derived from three managers from a private insurance firm in Bermuda, yielded information that assisted with the results of the study. I addressed the research question by transcribing the participants' responses from face-to-face interviews and used secondary data consisting of the participating company's annual reports from 2014 to 2016 and the Employee Engagement Survey 2016 (archival documents). To validate the data collected, I triangulated the information gathered from two data sources: member checking and the use of the archival documents for the final analysis. Based on the participants' responses, several themes emerged which included (a) employee engagement, (b) managerial communication, (c) employee wellness and health promotion programs, (d) work-life balance programs, (e) training and development, and (f) organizational culture. However, based on the responses, all three participants concurred that (a) employee engagement, (b) managerial communication, (c) employee wellness/health promotion programs, and (d) work-life balance programs were the most overarching contributors to employee absenteeism.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question critical to exploring the social phenomenon for this study was: What strategies do insurance managers use to reduce employee absenteeism? After analyzing the data, I identified four major themes and two sub-themes related to

business practices. The major themes were (a) employee engagement, (b) managerial communication, (c) wellness/health promotion programs, and (d) work-life balance. The subthemes were employee assistance programs and financial wellness programs highlighted under employee wellness and health promotion programs.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a topic of organizational behavior in which managers explore the level of commitment employees have toward their organization and its goals (Anitha, 2014). Similarly, Rao (2017) defined employee engagement as the connection of the hands, heads, and hearts of the employees with the vision and mission of their organization. Subsequently, organizational success occurs with the alignment of employee engagement and a company's financial results (Carasco-Saul, Kim, & Kim, 2014). All of the participants implied that senior management firmly believed that employee engagement is a fundamental factor in their organizational success because of their commitment towards employee job satisfaction and happiness. In particular, participant 1 (P1) said, "according to management's perceptions, for us, employee engagement is more of a motivational factor that works towards the company achieving its objectives. If we can motivate the employee, we can achieve engagement resulting in better organizational success."

According to Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, and Saks (2015), engaged employees adopt behaviors that discourage absenteeism. Therefore, business managers could implement engagement strategies that motivate employees (Anitha, 2014; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Rao, 2017). Employees with higher motivation levels are aware of the

(a) skills, (b) knowledge, (c) attitudes, (d) norms, (e) values, and (f) behaviors within their organization (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Participant 3 (P3) noted that although managers put an emphasis on financial factors to achieve organizational success, senior management thought that the success of their company was more indicative of the employees' engagement and attitude toward the organization's mission and vision. Thus, any strategy created by management focused on how to motivate or sustain motivation and positive attitudinal behaviors among its workers (Participant 1). Consequently, an employee's shared perception will emerge relating to their behavior, values, and norms, which are vital to an organization's strategic goals (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). Therefore, the concept of employee engagement supports the basic principles of TPB whereby an individual's (a) attitude(s), (b) subjective norms, (c) behavioral control, and (d) intentions determine their behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

For managers to achieve favorable results from implementing employee engagement initiatives, they need to invest in long-term strategies (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014). Companies with disengaged employees are susceptible to (a) increased absenteeism levels, (b) higher employee turnover, and (c) lower productivity (Marrelli, 2011). The actions of disengaged workers could further lead to individuals developing (a) increased stress levels, (b) lower morale, and (c) unfavorable withdrawal behaviors that disrupt business operations (Bagga, 2013). Conversely, engaged employees influence positive outcomes for a business such as (a) increased employee loyalty, (b) reduced absenteeism, (c) increased productivity, (d) decreased employee turnover, and (e) improved profitability (Zhang, Avery, Bergsteiner, & More, 2014). Thus, business

managers with the capabilities to leverage employee engagement strategies could further increase worker commitment to the organization (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014).

According to all of the participants, the collaboration between senior management and staff through ongoing discussion allowed them to create incentives to motivate all workers. The participants highlighted that such incentives include (a) involving employees to have input on finding solutions to problems, (b) developing and making available training programs for personal and technical growth, as well as cross training in job responsibilities, (c) implementing programs that provide information and assistance to reduce high levels of sickness ailments, or providing an option for managing an illness while still being able to receive an income, and (d) creating opportunities for full transparency in communication channels. Furthermore, each of the participants felt that senior management was very connected with the pulse of the organization and understood what approaches they needed to consider implementing to make employees remain engaged to their vision and mission.

Without dedicated efforts by managers to implement employee engagement policies, organizations might continue to face employee challenges in the future (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Throughout the interview process, all participants continued to stress the importance of employee engagement and revealed that in 2011 they conducted an annual Employee Engagement Survey (EES) to understand and measure workers' engagement to the organization. In 2014, management restructured the EES by reducing the number of questions to 54 focusing on three core principles: innovation, advocacy, and growth. All participants mentioned that during their internal discussions

with senior management and the staff, five elements emerged, which helped them to

focus on how to redesign the company's EES. The five elements were (a) meaning; (b)

autonomy; (c) growth; (d) impact; and (e) connection between the manager, subordinate,

and organization. By reviewing the results of the EES, I verified that senior management

successfully utilized the factors identified from their in-depth discussions. According to

the Argus Employee Engagement Survey (Argus EES, 2016), the results of the EES

illustrated the significance of employees' responses to management's development of

strategies based on these five factors critical to increasing employee engagement. As

noted on the Argus EES, *meaning* related to an employee's work purpose that extended

beyond the job itself, while *autonom*y illustrated the power for an individual to shape

their work and environment in ways that allowed for maximum performance. *Growth*

meant options for challenging tasks that resulted in professional and personal progress.

Seeing positive and worthwhile outcomes based on employees work results defined

impact and *connection* added a sense of belonging to something greater than the worker.

The vendor of the EES reported that the total number of engaged employees was

122 out of a population of 137. Engaged employees deliver improved performance that

might potentially result in higher profitability (Rao, 2017). An organization's operational

performance could become less effective when their workers lack the motivation to work.

Therefore, business managers might strive to understand what motivates or fails to

engage employees. The results of the EES further illustrated the participants' statements

that employees with higher levels of engagement have a higher likelihood to spread

positive behaviors to other workers (Argus EES, 2016). Conversely, Bersin (2014) found

that 13% of employees worldwide believed that work tasks made them more engaged

with the organization. Consequently, companies with less than effective employment

engagement strategies tend to have workers who participate in withdrawal behaviors

resulting in higher levels of absenteeism. Similarly, Blattner and Walter (2015) found

that managers who implemented employee engagement initiatives recorded higher levels

of employee engagement. The participants' response "our staff love to come to work"

supported the results documented in the EES. For example, 77% or 105 employees

agreed that they loved coming to work and 82% or 112 employees stated that they loved

their job (Argus EES, 2016).

Business managers who fail to incorporate strategies to improve employee

engagement potentially run the risk of developing disengaged workers (Mishra et al.,

2014). Kahn (1990) defined disengagement as the distancing and disconnection of

employees who emotionally withdraw from work duties and colleagues. According to

Rao (2017), disengagement occurs because employees begin to protect themselves and

adopt behaviors to withdraw from the work role. Thus, disengaged workers develop

complex relationships that hinder positive behavioral performance (Mackay, Allen, &

Landis, 2017; Rao, 2017). In this study, the TPB applied to absenteeism behaviors that

resulted in deliberate action based on a goal-oriented process causing employees to act

based on the evaluation of behavior grounded in their beliefs and consequences for

performing the behavior. To avoid employee disengagement, Nakamura and

Csikszentmihalyi (2014) suggested that managers should implement *flow* to improve

employee engagement. *Flow* is the holistic sensation that individuals experience when

they act and achieve total engagement (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Moreover, to ensure employee engagement, managers could create a value system to bridge the gap between the expectations and realities while eliminating organizational politics and conflicts (Rao, 2017). The combination of a person's intention to act in a particular way influenced performance and also aligned with Ajzen's (1991) perception of the TPB that perceived behavioral control predicted employee behaviors. An employee's social and normative beliefs guided their behavioral intention and anticipated behavioral control, which might influence an individual's decision to go to work.

According to Anitha (2014), various advantages exist for employees to engage effectively in the workplace. Engaged employees bring creative ideas to work, as well as passion and commitment to the organization's mission and vision (Mackay et al., 2017). As previously noted, P1 indicated that senior management often seeks employees' input when resolving issues, thus reinforcing the importance of their value to the company, which promote a worker's engagement to its strategic objectives. Furthermore, P1 and P2 suggested that by including employees in the decision-making process empowers them to develop their full potential and encourages creative ideas. P1 stated,

> Engagement is a two-way street we have to create situations to allow employees to gravitate to our goals, as we need other members of staff to gravitate towards them. End result, everyone working and committed to the same objective.

According to the Towers Watson 2014 Global Workforce study, companies with a workforce that perceive both managers and employees are productive workers achieved a 72% engaged workforce and fewer days of employee absence. In another study

conducted by Gallup Management in 2015, results indicated that engaged employees showed commitment to their employer resulting in improved business outcomes, reductions in absenteeism, and turnover (Adkins, 2016). Therefore, engaged employees encourage innovation, growth, and supports the company's strategic mission and vision. Two out of three participants provided support to the Gallup Management's findings by suggesting that an organization a with strong corporate vision and mission interested in supporting, rewarding, and celebrating employees aid in their professional development while continuing to achieve the company's strategic objectives.

Managerial Communication Strategies

The inability among managerial staff to effectively communicate with employees to establish a connection can lead to low staff morale, productivity, and decreased profitability (Ludwig et al., 2014). Managerial communication is tantamount to organizational success (Emanoil, Ramona, & Lucia, 2013). According to Murshed, Uddin, and Hossain (2015), communication within an organization is a network activity that allows managers to build a relationship between the individual and the company. Managers who promote communication relationships create an overall pattern within the organization that supports employee engagement both locally and globally (Hossain, Murshed, & Uddin, 2013).

From a universal perspective, the demands of a global marketplace necessitate the need for managers to sustain organizational success (Gangai, 2014). How a manager communicates and promotes the company's strategic goals influences their effectiveness in motivating employees (Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013). Managers who alienate

subordinates deter individuals from being engaging and create communication challenges (Tanyaovalaksna & Li, 2013). Equally, managers who communicate and share ideas reap the rewards at all levels of the organization (Emanoil et al., 2013). In support of the participants' statements that managers who communicate well tend to be effective problem solvers, the EES highlighted that, 81% or 111 employees agreed that their manager communicated regularly and 78% or 107 individuals stated that "the organization values employee input, feedback, and suggestions." Tanyaovalaksna and Li (2013) argued that sharing knowledge through communication allowed managers to supervise behaviors, understand the pulse of the employee, and provide direction for a company's strategic vision. Tanyaovalaksna and Li further suggested that to eliminate barriers to communication and enforce positive behavior; managers might consider studying the TPB constructs; beliefs, subjective norm(s), and intention(s) to perform a particular behavior and the actual behavior that individuals traditionally performed. Consequently, business managers understanding the barriers that influence positive behaviors could develop strategies to encourage a behavioral change that minimizes the worker's action to engage in behavior such as absenteeism.

Voinea, Bush, Opran, and Vladutescu (2015) posited that managerial communication involves helping employees understand the flow of information in its desired form among managers and respective teams aimed towards meeting organizational objectives. All three participants emphatically emphasized that communication is crucial to a company's success. In particular, P1 said: "communication and feedback are the glue for achieving success. Without it, we fail all stakeholders." To

support the managers' commitment to implementing effective communication strategies,

all participants discussed the importance of the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) role in

filtering best communication initiatives from the top down. The CEO implemented a

meeting called *fireside chat*s. In the context of the organization, fireside chats involve

the CEO conducting monthly informal meetings with approximately 5-10 staff members.

The CEO, over lunch, sets out to learn more about the employee and to obtain insight into

any arising issues. The objective of the fireside chats was to improve the communication

channels between the C-suite and employee. According to Adelman (2012), CEOs often

set the tone for managerial communication within an organization beneficial to its

culture.

Despite the communication initiatives by the CEO, P1 noted that initially,

management failed to successfully use the feedback from the employees to create an

effective action plan to improve their communication efforts. Participant 2 (P2)

maintained that management had good ideas on how to mitigate poor employee

communication channels but lacked effective strategies to implement the action plan. By

examining the communication category on the EES, I noted that 94 (69%) employees felt

that the organization communicated well with all staff about what is going on. The

results, although favorable and highlighted some alignment of the employees' responses

on the EES to the participants' answers, still caused some concern to the management

team who decided that they should further improve the effectiveness of their

communication efforts. For example, all three participants indicated that the C-Suite,

immediately decided that the EES findings could be better and met with the HR

department to find additional solutions to improve the employees' perceptions, which could translate to improved behaviors. Daniela (2013) suggested that effective managerial communication, together with efficient management practices, provided a level of safety and trust within the organization. Conversely, the lack of effective communication could cause chaos (Daniela, 2013).

The second theme also aligned with the TPB theory. According to the theory's constructs, an individual's decision-making follows the underlying premise that a person's attitude(s), subjective norm(s), and perceived behavioral control predicted intentions (Ajzen, 1991). While behavioral intention depends on several factors, Ajzen (1991) argued that the central determinant of behavior is intentions. In the TPB, intentions relate to an individual's willingness to perform a behavior. If an employee feels that communication (e.g., sharing communication and listening to feedback) with their manager will lead to a positive outcome, they will engage in a particular behavior (Afzali et al., 2014). Thus, the employee's intentions influenced their perceived behavior to managerial communications as suggested by Dasgupta, Saur, and Singh (2014). As noted in the literature review, managers have an important role in motivating their employees by promoting positive outcomes and commitment to the company's strategic objectives (Schreuder et al., 2013). Managers who lack strategies in building positive relationships built on trust, open communication, and commitment towards a set of shared beliefs and values can lead to a less than favorable organizational image and demotivated employees as suggested by Nanjundeswaraswamy (2016).

Empowering employees to commit to the organization's strategic objectives requires two-way communication initiatives (Merrill et al., 2013). Employees can become change agents by sharing the company's goals while promoting engagement (Shantz & Alfes, 2015). For individuals to buy into the organization's mission and vision, management might consider cultivating an environment that includes respect, trust, openness, and opportunity for their workers. In support of the assertions made in the literature review, management could reduce high absenteeism levels resulting from the overall effectiveness of a manager's leadership approach (Ashraf et al., 2014). An employee identifying with an organization's climate of openness and supportiveness shapes their behaviors and attitudes influenced by the company's informal and formal communication by management both locally and globally (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2016). Employees do not necessarily need to have high humanistic values. However, what is important to the employee is the link between the individual's behavior and the organization's values. P2 stated,

> Employees' have heart and they are genuine. If they feel respected and are allowed to share in discussing the challenges as well as the positives, they will come to work because they feel valued about the work they are putting in and are part of the solution instead of being told what to do.

Conversely, P1 and P2 shared that one department received poor results from a performance appraisal. When the HR department met with the team, the employees' asked: "how can we work together to fix the problem?" According to P1, the workers felt that management cared enough to work with them to find solutions. Moreover,

Participant 1 noted that the scenario represented an environment built on showing employees that their viewpoint was important and workers felt confident that management would listen and welcome constructive feedback. Burris, Detert, and Romney (2013) expressed the importance of an employee's voice within the organization. Burris et al. suggested that employers granting employees an opportunity to express their thoughts could influence workers to have better communications with management and subsequently improve their behavior and intentions.

Employee Wellness / Health Promotion Programs

After interviewing the three participants and reviewing the EES, the theme of offering employee wellness / health promotion programs emerged. The theme aligned with Mitchell, Ozminkowski, and Serxner's (2013) suggestion that implementing health promotion programs provide services designed to educate employees to reduce health risks and actively preventing the onset of disease(s). Health promotion programs include, for example, interventions and programs to (a) reduce stress; (b) increase physical activity and fitness; (c) reduce high blood pressure and cholesterol; (d) reduce excess body weight; (e) improve nutrition; and (f) reduce tobacco, alcohol, and substance abuse (Go et al., 2013). In some cases, programs included cancer screening, health risk appraisals, and various health education activities (Go et al., 2013).

Employers that incorporate employee wellness programs within their business strategy provide opportunities for individuals to receive access to resources that might not offer preventative or remedial measures for personal issues (Parkinson, 2013). According to Doo Kim, Hollensbe, and Schwoerer (2015), an employee wellness

program could provide stakeholders with the resources to implement individual wellness plans aimed at improving and managing employee absenteeism. In 2013, Smith and Duffy (2013) found that employees who participated in wellness programs had fewer absent days than those who chose not to participate. Based on the contents of the literature review, Kwasnicka et al. (2013) examined how implementing the TPB tenets could identify health-related behaviors. Managers utilizing the core principles of the TPB could inspire a change in employee health behaviors, which would address a range of health issues to mitigate high levels of absenteeism (Sniehotta et al., 2014). All three participants referred to the company's tagline "our interest is you" to illustrate their dedication to promoting an organizational culture that fosters healthy and happy employees. Additionally, P3 stated, "management thrives on making the environment fun to help lower stress levels." The responses from all three participants supported Mudge-Riley, McCarthy, and Persichetti (2013) assertions that managers incorporating employee wellness strategies ensure employers receive a tangible return on their investment by having healthy workers coming to work and being more productive.

Employee wellness is an essential organizational function (Mitchell et al., 2013; Mudge-Riley, McCarthy, & Persichetti, 2013). However, most companies fall somewhere along a continuum from healthy to unhealthy (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, & McGrath, 2013). Hence, employers should consider implementing health promotion programs designed to improve the health and well-being of their employees and the occupational impact on productivity and absenteeism (Davies, 2015). Although the well-being of an employee's life is important to an organization, the components of

the program might differ by company depending on cost factors or the frequency of the

medical concerns heightened by its workers (DeJoy et al., 2013).

An organization's culture plays a critical role in understanding its employees and

business leaders develop employee wellness programs for workers to improve their

physical and psychological well-being. Doo Kim et al. (2015) argued that wellness

programs might serve as a stimulus in triggering a resource gain cycle by increasing

wellness self-efficacy. Wellness self-efficacy is an individual's ability to plan for and

manage their wellness (Doo Kim, Hollensbe, & Schwoerer, 2015). Mudge-Riley et al.

(2013) suggested that incorporating employee wellness programs into employee benefit

strategies could help organizations achieve their strategic objectives. P1 stated,

> Employees often don't know all the factors relating to a disease or are too afraid
>
> to ask questions. By providing educational sessions, disseminating literature, and
>
> implementing programs that promote wellness and health objectives create an
>
> awareness wellness culture and also provides an avenue for them to be informed,
>
> not only for themselves but for their friends and loved ones.

P1 further identified various ways that the employee wellness program helped

their employees and organization through (a) improved organizational productivity; (b)

established educational opportunities and self-awareness of prevalent illnesses such as

stress, cancer, obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes; (c) reduced number and costs of

health claims; (d) improved profitability; and (e) improved employee absenteeism levels.

Employees equipped with information derived from the wellness programs could help

them to take better care of themselves (Doo Kim et al., 2015). The participants supported

Doo Kim et al.'s (2015) assertion when they advised that management implemented and

conducted an employee wellness survey every 2 years. In particular, P1 stated,

"Employees need to know their numbers and the employee wellness survey helps them to

do that." According to Dabrh, Gorty, Jenkins, Murad, and Hensrud (2016) incorporating

a wellness survey to identify and determine the status of health habits and trends over

time among employees allow employers to create incentive programs to support the value

of choosing a healthier lifestyle.

Tromp (2015) suggested that by obtaining measurable data from employees'

related health issues; managers can implement health promotion initiatives by utilizing

biometric screening, and preventative and medical care to improve employees' well-

being and engagement. According to all three interviewees, healthier employees improve

a company's productivity and allow them to realize personal and professional goals.

Employees having a healthier life and physical well-being tend to be more engaged at

work (Mitchell et al., 2013).

Participant 1 mentioned that generally, male employees seemed to be less

engaged in taking precautionary steps towards preventative health screening measures

and as a result, management introduced a male advocate to represent the company's male

population. According to P1, the male advocate assisted in promoting and providing

educational information related to men. Additionally, P2 and P3 noted that male

employees are not always focused on health issues and could benefit from taking a

proactive and preventative approach to their physical well-being. Based on the

managers' objective to have all employees share a common wellness goal, the company's

Wellness Committee appointed an advocate for the organization's male population. The Wellness Committee's appointment of a male designated representative within the overall objective of the wellness program involved the individual's assistance in promoting a wellness environment that encouraged positive health behaviors among the male workforce. Wein (2015) supported this notion in suggesting that having advocates or a wellness task force help to support the program internally, develop program ideas, and obtain feedback from employees to assist with the maintenance and improvement of the program.

With global challenges and workplace demands, organizations feel compelled to institute effective intervention programs to improve the quality of work life of employees (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). When health-related problems impact a company's absenteeism levels, managers have the opportunity to seek remedies and if necessary, implement disciplinary action if the absenteeism becomes a problem (Merekoulias & Alexopoulos, 2015). Merekoulias and Alexopoulos (2015) further implied that in some instances, the employer has to venture outside of standard practices and refer the employee to an independent third party specializing in issues that occur outside of the working environment and subsequently brought into the workplace. All three participants provided examples of personal concerns that a manager could refer to a third party, such as parenting, marital issues, or substance abuse issues. Merekoulias and Alexopoulos also noted these examples as possible concerns voiced to representatives of an employee assistance program (EAP).

Employee assistance programs. A subtheme of the major theme *Employee Wellness / Health Promotion Programs* emerged from the participants' discussions on employee wellness and health promotion programs was employee assistance programs (EAPs). This subtheme linked to the major theme *Employee Wellness / Health Promotion Programs* because the participants indicated that management found that having an independent counseling program allowed workers to manage personal issues, such as work related stress or substance abuse problems, which could negatively influence a worker's job performance. P1 indicated that companies who ignore workers with a poor job performance could experience an adverse effect on its strategic objectives. All participants highlighted that managers who incorporated EAPs into their wellness programs provide additional support to their employees. EAPs initially began as occupational alcohol program in industrial companies to focus on employee alcoholism and other substance abuse problems (Waehrer, Miller, Hendrie, & Galvin, 2016). Since the early 1940s, the objective of EAPs evolved to include services for work-life concerns while still addressing alcohol and substance abuse problems in the workforce (Waehrer et al., 2016). As a company's objective is not to focus their energies on unrelated work issues, providing employees with the opportunity to seek additional help might improve absenteeism levels and refocus the employee's engagement to the organization (Kocakülâh et al., 2016).

EAP volunteers also assist workers dealing with issues that occur inside of the workplace such as stress (Kemp, Kopp, & Kemp, 2013). Employers who incorporate EAPs into their wellness programs recognize that factors both internally and externally to

the working environment could provide adverse effects on the employee that potentially

impact their work engagement (Kocakülâh et al., 2016). Employees with access to EAP

services have the potential to maximize their wellness behaviors and provide a benefit to

the organization by reducing absenteeism levels and associated costs, as well as the

potential for increasing revenues and productivity (Kocakülâh et al., 2016). P1 indicated

that including the EAP was an essential component of a wellness program because such a

program could allow employees who have emotional or medical challenges, that an

employer is unable to manage effectively, find solutions to mitigate their behaviors that

might potentially impact their work attendance level. For example, P1 highlighted a

situation whereby an employee, diagnosed with an illness, was experiencing difficulty

reconciling their behavior and emotions. The individual's absence levels increased and

their productivity diminished because they lacked the ability to find a balance between

going to work while simultaneously managing the emotional effects of the illness.

Consequently, management suggested EAP to the individual, which the worker was able

to take advantage of and improve both their attendance levels and a coping mechanism

for addressing the circumstances of their diagnosis.

    Financial wellness management. Another subtheme of the major theme

Employee Wellness / Health Promotion Programs that emerged from the participants'

discussions on employee wellness and health promotion programs was the importance of

financial wellness management of their employees. This subtheme linked to the major

theme *Employee Wellness / Health Promotion Programs* because the participants

indicated that as a result of the economic downturn, employees became distressed at

being unable to meet certain financial obligations. All three participants discussed that to avoid employees becoming overwhelmed with trying to meet additional financial obligations, which could subsequently impact a worker's job performance and ultimately the organization's strategic objectives, senior management decided to implement a financial wellness program into their wellness program.

According to P1, in Bermuda, the inclusion of financial wellness into overall employee wellness programs is a trend not readily embraced as in the United States. According to Pervaaz and DiLorenzo (2016), employers in the United States continue to move toward integrated health and benefits that combine financial wellness with physical wellness. P1 further indicated that as a result of the challenging economy, management decided to assist employees with providing education on how to capitalize on their financial objectives. Both P1 and P3 revealed that management created an initiative that included the development of a staff loan program. P1 and P3 confirmed that the purpose of the staff loan program allows employees to apply for a small personal loan for purposes such as minor home/furnishing improvements, medical, and education, which might not be readily available by a financial institution. According to P1, the financial initiatives allow employees to establish objectives to fulfill their financial goals without causing any increased stress, which could potentially lead to increased withdrawal behaviors from work as a result of working multiple jobs to meet their financial needs. An employee who believes that they are unable to manage their financial and physical wellness effectively could potentially influence their decision to go to work (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Pervaaz & DiLorenzo, 2016). Such employee decisions support Ajzen's

(1991) supposition that an individual's behavioral intention is a motivator of a person's conscious objective to perform an action that is an immediate precursor to the behavior. In this example, the worker's decision is not to go to work.

The objective of financial wellness management is to incorporate into programs information that helps educate employees about managing and overcoming financial challenges (Miller, 2017). Training topics include debt reduction, asset management, and saving for current and future needs (Miller, 2017). The SHRM noted in its 2016 employee benefits survey report that 61% of HR professionals described the financial health among their employees as "fair" and 17% said that their employees were "not at all financially literate." Employees concerned with financial challenges augmented their stress levels, which potentially lead to increased absent days from work (Hassan et al., 2014). To assist employees with their financial well-being, P1 indicated that the company provides and offers subsidized financial initiatives to their workers. Providing such an incentive helps the individual to reduce their focus on any financial issue that ultimately decreases absenteeism levels and improves employee engagement (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014).

Business managers that engage in promoting employee well-being could achieve positive results in reducing absenteeism. Eradication of employee absenteeism is unlikely, but organizations that create strategies to support wellness and health initiatives might benefit from lower worker absences and increased productivity (Devonish, 2014). Moreover, Gillan et al. (2013) suggested that companies investing in employee wellness programs could obtain a higher probability of reducing employee absenteeism. All three

participants maintained that incorporating a wellness culture by providing (a) educational opportunities such as seminars, (b) health benefits that include the establishment of an onsite gym or alternatively subsidizing membership fees to a local gym, (c) creation of an environment that encourage fun activities when stress levels rise, and (d) incorporating reduced health insurance deductibles, could improve absenteeism levels. The participants further noted that if managers incorporated these potential strategies into their employee wellness programs, they could contribute to a culture of wellness and assist employees with improving or maintaining their health for maximum productivity.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance policies and strategies are critical for both business and society (Singh, 2013). Employers who implement work-life balance programs experience (a) increased employee engagement, (b) job satisfaction, (c) productivity, (d) profitability, and (e) reduced absenteeism levels (Mohd, Shah, Anwar, & Mahzumi, 2016; Singh, 2013). All participants discussed the importance of having a work-life balance program. According to the participants, having work-life balance initiatives help employees understand the concept of preventative maintenance and general wellness. P3 noted that management encouraged employees to reduce their stress levels by creating a "playroom" whereby individuals could go to the room and relieve any stress. According to P3, management purchased several softballs so that employees could go to the "playroom" and toss the ball around for a while. By implementing work-life balance programs, organizations could achieve a long-term competitive advantage because of supportive work-family cultures (Leary et al., 2013). Companies with or actively promoting work-

life balance policies further experience higher employee performance levels (Bloom, Liang, Roberts, & Ying, 2013; Wells-Lepley et al., 2015). Additionally, organizations with such programs also have lower absenteeism rates attributable to illness (Bloom et al., 2013).

The effects of work-life balance programs cannot be understated (Shagvaliyeva & Yazdanifard, 2014). The pressures of work are one of the leading causes that impact individual's lives resulting from such ailments as stress (Kung & Chan, 2014). The implications of increased stress levels can further lead to (a) various cardiovascular complications, (b) high blood pressure, (c) musculoskeletal disorders, (d) obesity, and (e) mental illness (Burgard & Lin, 2013). Stress can also lead to the onset of other issues such as alcoholism and other addictions (Burgard & Lin, 2013). Tabatabaei and Hashemi (2014) demonstrated that the adverse effects of higher stress levels could increase absenteeism rate and decrease productivity and performance. Individuals with higher stress levels could also develop an attitude toward specific withdrawal behaviors, which influence their intentions and actions (Tabatabaei & Hashemi, 2014). Such health problems could have an adverse economic impact on the organization and the society as a whole by increasing absenteeism levels and causing managers to spend additional funds on temporary hires, thus reducing the amount of profit available to develop or assist with community initiatives (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013).

Work-family relationships or work-family conflicts are difficult concepts to separate the competing roles (Benjamin, 2015). Both roles interact either positively or negatively depending on contextual factors that could increase an individual's stress level

causing employees to make unsound decisions (Ahmad & Omar, 2013; Davis, Shevchuk, & Strebkov, 2014). One such contextual factor is the flexibility to have alternative working hours to address family issues as they arise. Adame-Sánchez, González-Cruz, and Martínez-Fuentes (2016) and Ahmad and Omar (2013) suggested that having flexible working hours reduces job stress, absenteeism, and turnover intentions. Employees knowing that they have the opportunity to work alternative hours to reconcile work-family conflicts have a higher probability to refrain from engaging in work withdrawal behaviors.

The participants all noted that flexi-time and caretaker's leave are two key policies aimed to assist employees in managing work-family conflicts. The interviewees further discussed that by integrating the employees' roles with their work responsibilities helped solve the imbalance between work-family conflicts by providing flexible working arrangements. P1 suggested that implementing flexible working hours is important to employees who can adjust their work schedules to accommodate and avoid work-life conflicts. Similarly, P2 and P3 emphasized that having flexi-time and other work-life balance initiatives allowed management to increase employee morale by committing to the tagline "our interest is you." P3 agreed with P1 and P2's responses but also noted that creating an after school program "whereby children could stay in the workplace while waiting on their parents" also shows management's commitment to developing strategies to balance work-life conflicts. Finally, all three participants indicated that implementing flexible working hours improves employee morale and productivity; and reduces absenteeism.

According to Thompson, Payne, and Taylor (2015), flexi-time is common in the United States. Conversely, all three participants voiced concern that in Bermuda employers rarely engage in offering flexible working hours to their staff. P1 disagreed with this common perception and said: "implementing a flexible working schedule benefits the organization as well as the employee, in particular, reducing costs associated with employee absenteeism." Consequently, any organization recognizing that implementing such an initiative shows that they care about their employees' welfare. Furthermore, managers who understand that implementing work-life balance initiatives are beneficial to ensuring an employee's commitment to the company could potentially resolve work-family conflicts (Thompson et al., 2015).

Epstein, Marler, and Taber (2015) found that managers who showed empathy towards their workers by providing family supportive behaviors such as flexible working hours resulted in positive outcomes. Firms that provide policies for flexi-time and other family-oriented initiatives might also recruit more qualified and motivated candidates. For example, Galea, Houkes, and Rijk (2014) noted that having flexible hours to balance work-family life is important and contributed to happier employees resulting in the realization of personal and organizational goals. Work-life balance programs to decrease employee absenteeism are also of more importance, especially in the millennial generation when more competition exists between career expectations and other aspects of life (Moriarity, Brown, & Schultz, 2014). Consequently, work-life balance programs are of more importance to the millennial generation who are the future leaders of the next generation (Ehrhart, Mayerb, & Ziegert, 2012).

All participants unequivocally indicated that the company's CEO advocated work-life balance and led by example by insisting that employees' sign-off from work once they leave the office. P1 and P3 highlighted an example whereby an employee was working from home and sending e-mails late at night. The CEO contacted the employee and insisted that they stop working at a "decent time" and to go and enjoy quality time with family members. All the participants noted that having a CEO committed to creating an environment that encouraged a balance between work life and an individual's personal life improved an employee's commitment to the organization. Managers who recognize that workers have to bear additional domestic responsibilities that conflict with their professional life could provide flexibility and autonomy at the workplace as well as adopt related family oriented programs and policies (Khan & Agha, 2013). According to all three participants, one policy that management implemented was the caretaker's policy. The caretaker's policy, as explained by the participants, allow employees to take time off, outside of their annual leave to care for loved ones who are unwell. According to Srivastava and Singh (2016), implementing a caretaker's policy could reduce an employee's burden of having to choose between staying at home to care for their family member or loved one versus the penalty incurred for repeatedly being absent from work.

Business managers, who seek to create an environment where employees feel that their contribution is not all about the bottom line, foster an atmosphere that motivates its workers to remain committed to the organization (Bankert et al., 2015). Providing flexible working arrangements and other work-life balance programs moderates the effect of an individual's workload on work-family conflicts (Goh, Ilies, & Wilson, 2015).

Subsequently, managers could consider implementing work-life balance initiatives to reduce absenteeism levels as suggested by Cooper and Baird (2015). According to Hofäcker and König (2013), managers encouraging work-life balance could experience positive impacts on an employee's wellness allowing the individual to fulfill both family obligations and work demands. Minimizing undesirable outcomes resulting from inconsistencies in access to work-life balance programs help to promote favorable outcomes to employees challenged with work-family conflicts (Young Woo & Jiseon, 2015). Therefore, managers who support work-life balance strategies could contribute to reducing employee absenteeism levels (Mubanga & Nyanhele, 2013).

The fourth theme also related to the TPB. Ajzen (1991) suggested that a person's intention to perform a behavior positively correlated with their behavior. Furthermore, McCarthy, Darcy, and Grady (2010) found that managers with more positive attitudes towards work-life balance programs, who experience more social pressure (subjective norms) to implement work-life balance policies and initiatives, and who perceive they have more control of the development and implementation of the work-life policies and implementation (behavioral control) will have greater intentions to adopt and implement such programs compared to managers with less favorable attitudes. Therefore, when an individual has more positive beliefs about their behavior, they engage in a more positive attitude. In the context of this study, flexible working hours contributed to an employee's positive behavior regarding work attendance. Individuals feel less stressed and show commitment to the organization because they can modify their working hours to accommodate family obligations and work demands. All of the participants indicated

that management supported the development of work-life balance policies, starting from the CEO. According to P1 and P3, some of the initiatives included the implementation of a charitable day policy. The objective of the policy granted individuals interested in charitable endeavors to take a day(s) off for those charitable purposes. Additionally, all three participants noted that employees also have the option to take their birthday off.

Ignoring the high demanding realities of the workplace is no longer acceptable (Khan & Agha, 2013). Thus, developing strategies to reduce work-life-family conflict, which is all-inclusive in nature when considering all stakeholders, will help business managers engage employees more effectively. Engaged employees create a win-win situation that promotes improved employee productivity, reduces employee absenteeism, turnover, withdrawal, and conflicts (Wei, Yili, & Tian, 2013). All three participants noted the importance for management to develop a work-family culture that is sensitive to employees' familial responsibilities. They further maintained that managers who supported work-life balance efforts were less likely to experience work-family conflicts among their workers.

Applications to Professional Practice

Managers could potentially use the finding of this study to improve their business practices in various ways. First, managers could identify strategies to reduce employee absenteeism and develop actionable solutions to reduce absenteeism levels and increase productivity and profitability. Second, business managers could use the results of this study to identify what strategies could support job sustainability and job satisfaction among its workers, which correlates to individual and firm performance, as suggested by

Gajendran, Harrison, and Delaney-Klinger (2015). Thus, managers should see the need

and importance in developing strategies that could potentially support employee

commitment. Similarly, researchers could also use the results of this study to engage in

further research, which could potentially improve the gap in business practice regarding

the determinants of absenteeism. Historically, the insurance industry is one of the major

revenue earners for an economy and managers are known to go above and beyond to

implement specific recruitment strategies to attract key staff (Gupta et al., 2014). Despite

management's efforts to recruit and retain key employees, they still experience

challenges trying to implement strategies to reduce additional employee expenses as a

result of constant high absenteeism levels (Bankert et al., 2015; Gosselin et al., 2013).

The increased changes to workplace demographics continue to highlight many

competing and multifaceted demands of work and home life that cause employee

withdrawal behavior (Banerjee & Yang, 2013). The changes include single parent

challenges, dual career couple relationships, and an individual's reluctance to work

longer hours (Banerjee & Yang, 2013). Employees working extended hours could

potentially lead to increased conflict in workers contributing to work-life pressures that

result in a person's retreat from work (Goh et al., 2015). The growing concern in an

individual's withdrawal from work leads to increased absenteeism levels that result in

higher costs to recruit temporary employees making worker fulfillment, commitment, and

engagement a concern for organizational leaders (Adkins & Premeaux, 2014).

Extended working hours and other interrelated factors can contribute to work-

family conflict (Goh et al., 2015). The increasing concern for employees' withdrawal

behavior from work plays a critical role in the success of mitigating the effects of employee absenteeism by demonstrating appropriate employee behaviors (Bethrads, 2014). Globally, employee behaviors that contribute to absenteeism consume 15% of an organization's payroll (Faulk & Hicks, 2015). An employee's adverse behavior can lead to inefficient operations and increased health-related issues (Roche & Haar, 2013). Therefore, organizations tend to face additional consequences resulting from higher costs to provide temporary training and recruitment necessary for repetitive absences, which might also lead to employee turnover (Faulk & Hicks, 2015).

To improve conflicts generated from employee withdrawal behavior, managers continue to face challenges to develop policies to reduce employee absenteeism while ensuring work and family commitments (Umer & Zia-ur Rehman, 2013). The implications of the research data supported the assertion of the importance of having the right policies or systems in place to decrease employee absenteeism. Organizations with low absenteeism levels could remain competitive and enable managers to encourage productivity, support growth, and promote an increased competitive advantage. For managers to be sustainable, flexible, and willing to change their existing business practices to reduce employee absenteeism, they could adopt different strategies to meet the changing needs of their workers. Deploying effective employee absenteeism strategies could lead to improved organizational policies and practices that raise worker engagement and productivity.

Implications for Social Change

Business managers might use the results of this study to identify essential data for developing resolutions that contribute to social change. Managers could also use the findings to identify key causes of effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. Business leaders could further incorporate the findings of the study to affect social change through improvements to individuals and communities. Managers who can reduce employee absenteeism levels could potentially help employees gain more disposable income, which in turn could improve the quality of life within local communities. An increase in consumer spending has the potential to stimulate the overall economy of the community and subsequently the country (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). Furthermore, at the macro level, increased economic activity could encourage community leaders to improve the well-being of their population to reduce unemployment levels, attract new business, and grow existing companies while investing in community programs that enhance the quality of life (Bankert et al., 2015; Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013).

Business managers who ignore the impact of high absenteeism levels often fail to understand how important an employee's absence could effect a company's profitability and its contribution to economic stability (Kocakülâh et al., 2016). Low productivity costs resulting from increased absenteeism levels cause businesses to lose billions of dollars annually, and some of the reasons impacting these costs include absenteeism, job stress, burnout, and turnover (Livanos & Zangelidis, 2013). Successful companies have more chances to improve local business relationships, provide local job opportunities,

and create new business ventures in the industry and market (Frick et al., 2013). The

success of business managers might further translate to improved employee practices

potentially that result in providing a healthy work-life balance.

Recommendations for Action

Employee absenteeism is an increasing challenge to an organization's

effectiveness (Thornton, Esper, & Morris, 2013). Although managers seek to foster and

empower employees' engagement and commitment levels to the company's strategic

goals, workers can become detached from their work for multiple reasons (Shantz &

Alfes, 2015). Consequently, managers look for strategies that minimize the impact and

consequences that high absenteeism rates have on business (Bankert et al., 2105;

Gosselin et al., 2013). According to Parakandi and Behery (2016), managers are more

aware of the necessity to develop and implement policies and practices to reduce

employee absenteeism and improve employee commitment, satisfaction, and

profitability. The implications of one such strategy might involve managers allowing

employees to have a work-life balance. Workers achieving work-life balance could feel

empowered towards achieving personal goals, have less stress, and feel healthier (Rathi

& Barath, 2013). Additionally, work-family conflicts also contribute to adverse physical

and psychological outcomes among employees (Nohe, Meier, Sonntag, & Michel, 2015).

Based on the results of this study, which highlighted some potential solutions to reduce

employee absenteeism, I recommend the following actions:

- Organizational leaders and managers should encourage a culture that

  fosters employee engagement and allow employees to understand the

company and stakeholders' strategic objectives including the employer's understanding of the needs of the employee to discourage high levels of absenteeism.

- Organizational leaders and managers should implement certain policies and procedures that clearly identify the company's mission and goals.

- Organizational leaders and managers should encompass a holistic approach to address the reasons for high employee absenteeism and clearly outline accountability measurements and reporting requirement in addition to equally enforcing such policies.

- Organizational leaders and managers should implement employee work-life balance programs conducive to avoiding work-family conflicts among their workers.

- Organizational leaders and managers should undertake training to improve their objective of being a role model for employees by continuously demonstrating acceptable workplace behaviors.

- Organizational leaders and managers should be accessible to staff members and maintain an open-door policy to foster better communications.

- Organizational leaders, managers, and HR Managers should form a partnership to create and champion programs to improve employees' well-being and foster on building a healthier workforce.

Business leaders and managers throughout different management levels of varying organizations could use the information that I gathered from this study to improve employee retention. According to Saracho (2013), one critical criterion of research progression is the distribution of the study's conclusions. Consequently, I will strive to distribute the results of this study to HR managers, industry periodicals, academic journals, seminars, and conferences to support reducing employee absenteeism and organizational profitability. Managers could benefit from the results of this study in implementing institutional policies and procedures to reduce work-family life conflicts that ultimately impact employees work attendance, improve the quality of life, and reduce high absenteeism levels. In summation, managers could also use the results of this study to support work-life balances and improved workplace practices that in turn provide incentives for higher employee retention.

Recommendations for Further Research

I recommend that future researchers further explore the correlational relationship between employee absenteeism and the three primary tenets of the TPB. Quantitative researchers could conduct further research to investigate the relationship of an employee's behavior(s) such as their perceptions and personal, societal, or cultural beliefs on respecting acceptable work absences and the linkage to employee absenteeism. Kehoe and Wright (2013) conducted a similar study and found a relationship between an employee's perception to their manager, which impacted their attitude and behavioral outcomes on absenteeism.

Another prospective research direction is to explore how work-family conflicts impact an employee's decision not to attend work. Such conflicts include employee traits, job characteristics, family dynamics, and employee coping styles (Carlson, Hunter, Ferguson, & Whitten, 2014). As noted by Punnett et al. (2008), past absenteeism can be a predictor of future absenteeism. Thus, researchers could also examine how job attitudes and behaviors measure relative to absenteeism and at the predictive value of the suggested model, an idea proposed by Punnett et al. However, Punnett et al. noted that this approach might cause potential issues on future absenteeism in an environment where attitudinal measurement is rare to non-existent, as is the case with Bermuda. Finally, an observation noted from the collected data was that none of the participants identified musculoskeletal diseases or disorders as a constant health factor that contributed to high levels of absenteeism. Maybe, such medical factors did not significantly influence their organization's employee absenteeism levels. Therefore, future researchers could explore if there is any correlation in the behavior of employees with musculoskeletal ailments that determine whether they decide or not decide to attend work.

Similar to all research studies, there were limitations in this research. First, I interviewed only managers from a private insurance company in Bermuda. The findings of the study were specific to one organization and may not apply to other companies or industries. Therefore, generalizability of the study's results might not be possible to a larger private insurance population. Future researchers might find replicating the study beneficial by utilizing multiple companies in the insurance sector or chose another

industry (e.g., banking, retail, or government). Second, by using a case study in which I only interviewed three participants, in addition to triangulating data with the participating company's annual reports from 2014 to 2016 along with the EES conducted in 2016, limited the results to a specific sample. Researchers could consider expanding the sample to include a larger representation of the populations. By studying outcomes of this research, business managers might develop strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

Other issues that arose as limitations to the study included the accuracy of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Chau et al. (2013) noted that research findings are only as accurate as the participants' honest responses. Therefore, the likelihood of the participants being dishonest during the study was minimal, because the selected interviewees all came from one organization. Researchers should use other data collection techniques such as anonymous surveys to reduce the likelihood of other reliability issues such as dishonesty or employee self-reporting (Merchant et al., 2014). The final limitation was the limited scope of information gathered on the various causes of absenteeism based on time constraints. The parameters of the study included focusing only on factors that managers have control over that could potentially influence absenteeism levels and productivity. As a result, there might be other elements, such as (a) involuntary illness both long-term and short-term, (b) family responsibilities, or (c) cultural influences as noted by Addae, Johns, and Boies (2013) not considered for exploration that may exist outside the scope of managerial control.

The delimitations of the study consisted of self-imposed boundaries necessary for the researcher to achieve their research objective (Snelson, 2016). The delimitations of

this study included (a) the sample size, which consisted of three participants, (b) the geographical location (c) focusing on a single sector of the targeted population, (d) the timeframe and resources necessary to conduct the study, and (e) not focusing on other causes of absenteeism that fall outside of a manager's responsibility. Future researchers could consider using all of the delimitations noted above into the scope of their study to improve the study's results. Alternatively, researchers could focus on expanding the sample size to several organizations in countries more receptive to research studies such as the U.S. and the United Kingdom. By expanding the sample size across multiple case sites, business managers could achieve a better understanding of the more frequent causes of employee absenteeism and what strategies to implement to achieve improved rates of absenteeism and reduced financial liabilities.

Reflections

Through the research endeavor, the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) process made me a stronger person after facing some personal challenges during the journey. My initial focus was to gain a doctoral degree in the field of business administration and HRM while learning how to create a positive social change. I conclude that attainment of this goal was achievable based on Walden's rigorous program and knowledgeable professors. During this journey, I also became more focused, patient, a better listener, and a keener observer. Moreover, I gained a better appreciation for objectivity over personal biases. I started this journey thinking of absenteeism in one siloed perspective but quickly found a multitude of different alternatives and potential possibilities exist for absenteeism. I learned to set aside initial thoughts and beliefs that

restricted new ideas and concepts about employee absenteeism and the theory of planned behavior.

Additional reflections also include being able to achieve enhanced scholarly knowledge on some causes of absenteeism that managers have to mitigate and certain behaviors employees' adopt based on specific behavioral traits. In my organization, there is no known emphasis on finding solutions to reduce employee absenteeism. Therefore, the information I took from this study may benefit my current and future professional development in my role as a corporate manager. For example, I might be more cognizant on identifying and implementing strategies to reduce the employee absences among my staff.

Bermuda is a small island, 21 square miles with a population of approximately 63,000 (Government of Bermuda, 2016). The culture of the island is one that involves deep privacy among an organization's internal policies. I initially faced many challenges securing a company with individuals willing to share their personal experiences on strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. Despite the participants' initial concern to not having enough information to disclose, they shared sufficient knowledge to complete the data collection, organization, and analysis processes, which were time-consuming and labor-intensive. I found the entire journey enlightening, rewarding, and challenging. The professors and peers at Walden University were an instrumental part of my journey, and I built some satisfying relationships that made me a better person.

Conclusion

The economic costs associated with employee absenteeism remains high, impacting an organization's bottom line (Nguyen, 2016). As a multifactorial and complex problem, the implication of employee absenteeism involves the interplay of a company's characteristics, societal, and personal factors (Shantz & Alfes, 2015). Although each organization is different, all business managers face similar challenges in developing and implementing strategies to reduce absenteeism levels (Kocakülâh et al., 2016). Conducting various levels of analysis may help management determine the best strategy to recapture lost revenues and reduced productivity associated with employee absenteeism (Kocakülâh et al., 2016). Therefore, the challenge for business managers is to find solutions to mitigate the adverse effects of employee absenteeism.

Absenteeism potentially results in the disruption of scheduled work process and business managers will never eradicate the phenomenon. Every day, employees engage in behavior that makes them either voluntarily or involuntarily be absent from the workplace (Ritesh, 2014). Understanding why individuals adopt certain behaviors was a guiding contributor of the study to explore strategies to reducing employee absenteeism. Using the theory of planned behavior as a guide, I developed theoretical arguments that explored if an employee's behavioral intentions influenced their actions to be absent from work. The findings from this research study could help managers develop and implement strategies and programs necessary for the successful execution of their absenteeism mitigation action plan by improving employees' physical, mental, and financial lives.

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Appendix A: NIH Human Research Participant's Certification

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Allison Forte** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 09/07/2015.

Certification Number: 1831724.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The interview questions are:

1.   What strategies are you using to reduce employee absenteeism?

2.   What method did you find worked best to reduce employee absenteeism?

3.   How did your employees respond to your different techniques used to

        reduce employee absenteeism?

4.   What other information not addressed you would like to share?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

The objective of this interview is to explore strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

The participants in the interview process will consist of managers from a private

insurance company in Bermuda. I will ask each participant the same set of questions

based on the following interview protocol.

1.   I will introduce myself to participants as a doctoral student of Walden University

and give a brief overview of the purpose and time required for the interview based

on the following script.

Introduction script

"Good Day, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview process. My

name is Allison Forte, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University

conducting my doctoral study on strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. The

conclusion of the doctoral study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements to

complete the Doctor of Business Administration (with a specialization in Human

Resource Management) degree. Before I begin the interview process, I would

like first to take this opportunity seek your permission to digitally record this

interview, which will allow for the creation of a transcript of our conversation.

All responses will be kept confidential, and you will have the opportunity to ask

for me to repeat any question or seek further clarification of the questions.

I will use your responses to develop a better understanding of your views and

experiences on strategies that could help reduce employee absenteeism. As the

responsible investigator, I would also like to remind you of your written consent

to participate in this study, and I will provide you with a copy of the fully

executed and dated consent for your records (at this time I will give the

participant a copy of their consent). For your information purposes, I will keep

the original version of the consent in a locked safety box with a combination lock,

for 5 years, at which time I will destroy by placing in a paper shredder.

Your participation in this interview process is voluntary and at any time during

the interview process should you wish for me to stop recording or take a break

please feel free to notify me immediately. Furthermore, you may withdraw your

participation at any time without consequence. At the conclusion of the

interview, I will schedule an appointment for member checking purposes based on

your availability. Do you have any questions or concerns at this time? If there

are no other questions, and with your permission, we will begin the interview."

2.   On conclusion of the introductions, I will begin the interview process and speak

into the recorder indicating the date and time as a marker for the commencement

of the participants' interview sessions as a use of an identification mark per

participant.

3.   I will commence the interview session by asking each question in a sequential

order based on the research instrument and recording the participant's answers.

The anticipated time of completion for each interview session is 1 hour and may

only extend for a longer period after seeking the participant's approval to

continue.

At the conclusion of the interview session, I will extend my appreciation and gratitude to the participant for taking the time to assist in the doctoral study. Each participant will receive information regarding the possibility of a follow-up interview to clarify his or her responses further. Finally, the participant will also receive information about the member checking process. Upon completion of the concluding remarks, I will stop the audio recording and end the appointment.

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation

████████

Head of Global HR & Organizational Development

████████

Bermuda

February 24 2017

Dear Allison Forte,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Strategies for Reducing Employee Absenteeism for a Sustainable Future: A Bermuda Perspective within ████████.

As part of this study, I authorize you to (a) facilitate the recruitment of participants for your study, with my assistance, as discussed via telephone on September 6 2016; (b) circulate an e-mail to the selected participants outlining the purpose of the study, requesting confirmation of their eligibility to be a participant, requesting confirmation of the time of their availability to conduct a face-to-face meeting, asking their consent to participate in the study, and notifying them of the audio recording proceedings of the interview; (c) collect data for the research question, which will include the answers from the four interview questions as provided on the Interview Instrument identified as Appendix C of the Doctoral Proposal (see p. 131); (d) transcribe the collected data and

return a summary transcript to the participants for member-checking purposes, which will

require each participant to review and verify the accuracy of the collected information as

a truthful representation of their experiences and views; and (e) dissemination of the

results to the lead representative of the participating organization and myself. We further

confirm that an individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: (a) providing and

arranging the set-up for the boardroom for the conducting of the interviews but will have

no information disseminated to them regarding the names of those individuals

participating in the study, (b) providing copies of the Company's annual report for the

last three years, and (c) providing any additional resources that could be beneficial to

collecting data related to the research study.

Kindly note that I will be your main point of contact for any help in resolving a crisis

situation relating to the participants, access to onsite facilities, or require assistance in the

preparation of the interview meetings. We further confirm that we reserve the right to

withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan

complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be

provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission

from the Walden University IRB.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Global HR & Organizational Development

Bermuda

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid

as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction

electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions

Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the

email, or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic

signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying

marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate

from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden)

Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer: Allison Forte

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "Strategies for Reducing Employee Absenteeism for a Sustainable Future: A Bermuda Perspective" I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in anyway divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of

the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: *Allison Forte* **(electronic signature) Date: 10 March 2017**