


2018

Effective Strategies Used by Restaurant Managers to Reduce Employee Absenteeism

Dawn Renita Johnson-Tate
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Dawn R. Johnson-Tate

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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2018

Abstract

Effective Strategies Used by Restaurant Managers to Reduce Employee Absenteeism

by

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2018

Abstract

Employee absenteeism costs organizations in the U.S. restaurant industry more than 15% of profits each year. Some restaurant managers lack strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. Using the expectancy theory, the purpose of this single case study was to explore effective strategies that restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The target population was managers of a single restaurant, known for successfully implemented strategies to reduce employee absenteeism, located in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Data collection included semistructured face-to-face interviews with 3 managers and a review of company archival documents such as memorandums, training documents, employee records, and employee performance reviews. Data were analyzed using inductive coding of words and phrases from the interviews and noted from the company archival documents. The findings revealed themes that represented restaurant managers' strategies for reducing employee absenteeism including communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive environment. Managers who used the strategies of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment reduced employee absenteeism, which might increase productivity and profitability in the restaurant industry. The implication for positive social change is that restaurant managers might reduce employee absenteeism through implementation of these effective strategies and, in turn, encourage new or sustained employment opportunities, organizational sustainability in the community, and sustained financial well-being of employees and their families.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my husband Paul. Thank you for your loving support and the sacrifices you made throughout my entire doctoral journey. To my daughter TJ, my son-in-law LeVar, and granddaughter Isabelle, thank you for understanding when I could not spend time with family or attend family events. To my mother Yvonne (Grammie) for encouraging me to continue my education and to keep working, no matter how difficult things got, as you passed away quietly. To my sister Camillia (Milly), your words of reassurance and encouragement helped me work through this process. To my grandson Isaiah, who left us too early, but spent countless hours with me as I worked late into the evening completing my coursework, thank you for your companionship. To the rest of my immediate family, I could not have completed the DBA program without each one of you. I will never forget your labor of love.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank God for allowing me the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Gergana Velkova, my committee chair, for your continuous guidance, feedback, patience, and words of encouragement to remain engaged to the end. I could not have asked for a better chair, mentor, and teacher. To Dr. Erica Gamble, my second committee member, thank you for your insightful comments that challenged me to reach a higher level of excellence. To Dr. Scott Burrus, the university research reviewer, thank you for your guidance and ensuring that my research study met the requirements of the university and the standards of the research community. Last but not least, I would like to thank my Bowie State University friends for supporting me on this challenging, yet rewarding, journey.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Absenteeism is a common and costly problem for many businesses in the United States (Johnson, Holley, Morgeson, LaBonar, & Stetzer, 2014). Lost productivity, sick-time wages and benefits, low performance, and low employee satisfaction increase the organizational costs of absenteeism (Mahy, Rycx, & Volral, 2016; Sandal, Click, Dowling, & Guzik, 2014). Employee absences place financial stress on the organization, and they compound the problems of reduced productivity, overworked staff, and potential loss of customers (Kocakulah, Kelley, Mitchell, & Ruggieri, 2016). Leaders of organizations strive to minimize the cost of productivity while improving performance (Lechmann & Schnabel, 2014), and the cost of productivity increases when employees are absent from work, thus affecting organizational performance (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Organizational sustainability is predicated on strong organizational performance (Ljungholm, 2016). Most managers agree that employee motivation and performance are critical to organizational sustainability (Onikoyi, Awolusi, & Ayodeji, 2015). Increased employee productivity and performance, and the use of incentive strategies, might reduce absenteeism and result in increased organizational profitability (Mahy et al., 2016). In this qualitative single case study, I sought to understand the successful strategies that restaurant managers have used to reduce employee absenteeism.

Background of the Problem

The overall cost of employee absenteeism is difficult to measure because of the many factors that influence the behavior (Marzec, Scibelli, & Edington, 2015). The average employee is absent from work 9 days each year (Kocakulah et al., 2016), with

52% of those absences related to stress and personal needs rather than family or personal illness (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2016). Incentive programs might motivate employees to avoid absenteeism, but at a possible cost to the organization (Kocakula et al., 2016; Mulvaney, 2014). Implementing an effective strategy to sustain employee involvement and mitigate absenteeism is critical to organizational success, particularly in the restaurant industry (Kocakulah et al., 2016; Mathe & Slevitch, 2013). Employee lost productivity (Sandal et al., 2014), health issues (Gosselin, Lemyre, & Corneil, 2013), workplace stress (Kocakulah et al., 2016), job dissatisfaction (Giorgi, Shoss, & Leon-Perez, 2015), workplace bullying (Lee, Bernstein, Lee, & Nokes, 2014), and ineffective leadership (Hassan, Wright, & Yukl, 2014) influence employee performance, motivation, and absenteeism in the restaurant industry (Mathe & Slevitch, 2013). Examining the causes, factors, and effects of absenteeism on organizational productivity and profitability could help restaurant managers develop effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

Problem Statement

Workplace absenteeism contributes to reduced productivity and increased financial costs to organizations (Magee, Caputi, & Lee, 2016). Each year in the United States, businesses lose approximately \$16,000 per employee (Lally, 2014) or an estimated \$46 billion due to absenteeism (Duff, Podolsky, Biron, & Chan, 2015). The general business problem that I addressed in this study is that employee absenteeism negatively affects productivity and profitability of organizations. The specific business

problem that I addressed in this study is that some restaurant managers lack strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore the strategies that restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The targeted population consisted of restaurant managers from a restaurant in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area of the United States who have experienced employee absenteeism and implemented successful strategies to reduce it. The implications for positive social change resulting from this study include the potential to reduce employee absenteeism and promote organizational profitability, which could improve the financial stability of the community and local families through sustained employment and enhanced community economic development.

Nature of the Study

I chose the qualitative research case study method for this study. A qualitative research method is best for researchers who seek to use an inductive and natural approach to study people in social situations, progression of a phenomenon in natural settings, and world experiences (Yilmaz, 2013). The qualitative research method was most appropriate for this study because it enabled me to determine how restaurant managers use absenteeism reduction strategies to improve employee productivity to achieve organizational profitability. Quantitative research methods would not have been suitable to answer the research question. Quantitative methods are appropriate when the researcher seeks to test predefined hypotheses (Starr, 2014) and generalize findings from

a sample to a targeted population (O'Rourke, Duggleby, & Fraser, 2015). Another option—mixed-method research—was not appropriate because mixed method studies involve using qualitative and quantitative methods concurrently or sequentially to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013).

A variety of qualitative research designs exist (Yilmaz, 2013), including phenomenology (Khattak, Ramzan, & Rehman, 2015), ethnography, and case study (Guercini, 2014). Researchers use the phenomenological design to study the meanings of participants' shared lived experiences (Khattak et al., 2015). Because my intent was not to study the participants' shared lived experiences, the phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study. Ethnography is an appropriate design for the study of group cultures through time; researchers engaged in ethnographic studies immerse themselves in the culture and collect participation, observational, and interview data (Blount, Jacob, Weeks, & Jepson, 2015). Ethnography was not suitable for this study because I did not intend to collect cultural data. Researchers apply case study design when their intent is to understand the dynamics present in a particular setting (Sato, 2016; Turner & Danks, 2014) or explore a constrained system through collection and analysis of data reflecting multiple types of information (Singh, 2014). Case study was the most appropriate design to explore in-depth strategies that managers of a restaurant use successfully to reduce absenteeism.

Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What effective strategies do restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism?

Interview Questions

I used the following interview questions in this study:

1. As a restaurant manager, what role do you play in reducing employee absenteeism?
2. Who else is involved in reducing employee absenteeism?
3. What strategies have you used to reduce absenteeism in your organization?
4. How did employees respond to those strategies?
5. What methods or techniques for implementing the strategies were most effective in reducing absenteeism?
6. What are some of the benefits of implementing absenteeism reduction strategies?
7. What barriers did you encounter in implementing the absenteeism strategies?
8. What steps did you take to address the barriers?
9. Which strategies were least effective in reducing employee absenteeism?
10. What other information regarding employee absenteeism would you like to share that we have not addressed yet?

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

Expectancy theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. Vroom (1964) is credited with having developed the expectancy theory (Chen, Ellis, & Suresh,

2016; Ghoddousi, Bahrami, Chileshe, & Hosseini, 2014). Researchers use expectancy theory as a conceptual model of motivation to explain the choices people make as they engage in behaviors to achieve positive outcomes and avoid behaviors associated with unpleasant outcomes (Chen et al., 2016; Ghoddousi et al., 2014). Lazaroiu (2015) identified the key tenets of expectancy theory as follows: (a) the significance of rewards is considerably positive (valence), (b) the endeavor generates satisfactory performance (expectancy), and (c) performance is recompensed (instrumentality). According to Vroom's theory, employees consciously choose a particular course of action based on their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes to enhance their performance and achieve results that are important to them (Chen et al., 2016; Ghoddousi et al., 2014). Motivation is the impetus to carry out a specific undertaking and assumes a positive valence will accompany the individual's performance (Lazaroiu, 2015). In this study, expectancy theory served as the lens through which I explored participants' perceptions and experiences relative to employee absenteeism. Vroom's expectancy theory aligned with this study by providing a potential means for understanding the strategies that restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism.

Operational Definitions

Absenteeism: A situation resulting from an employee's failure to report for or stay at work as scheduled, regardless of the intended reason (Gangai, 2014).

Expectancy: An individual's belief that increasing his or her effort can result in high self-performance (Hsu, Shinnar, & Powell, 2014).

Financial cost: The operational burden resulting from workplace lost productivity, absenteeism, health insurance claims, overtime wages, and legal claims (Magee et al., 2016).

Goal attainment: Organization managers' commitment to influence employees to have a high affective and continuance commitment to the organization through a displayed positive attitude and a strong desire to come to work (Dasgupta, Suar, & Singh, 2013).

Instrumentality: The belief that an increase in an individual's performance is necessary to attain a specific goal or outcome (Hsu et al., 2014).

Organizational commitment: Organization managers' ability to enhance employees' self-esteem through the application of employees' improved job performance and acceptance of organizational goals (Dasgupta et al., 2013).

Presenteeism: A condition represented by employees attending work when ill, resulting in lost productivity for the organization (Miraglia & Johns, 2016).

Productivity: The relationship between inputs and outputs that reflects the efficiency of employees' outputs (Mousavifard, Kazemi, & Ayoubi, 2016).

Transactional: The leadership ability to appeal to employees' self-interest through establishing a clear relationship between the leader and the employee (Prasad & Junni, 2016).

Transformative: The leadership ability to enhance organizational innovation through intellectual stimulation and encouraging openness among all members of the organization (Prasad & Junni, 2016).

Valence: The evaluation of individuals' performance goals and outcomes (Hsu et al., 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are truths believed to be factual that the researcher cannot substantiate (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). For this study on employee absenteeism, I made three assumptions. The first assumption was that restaurant managers who participate in the study would provide honest responses to interview questions about the strategies they use to reduce employee absenteeism. The second assumption was that the participants would fully understand each interview question and relate their experiences without personal bias. The final assumption was that the interview questions would enable me to collect data that were useful for answering the research question.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the research study (Deb et al., 2016; Henderson, 2016). One limitation was the small sample size. I interviewed only three restaurant managers. Morse (2015) noted that having a small sample limits the research findings. Another limitation was a potential for biased responses from the participants. Participants may have limited recall or poor articulation (Baškarada, 2014), which may limit the information collected from the interview. The final limitation was conducting a case study on a single restaurant. The researcher should focus on the identified limitations and the research problem of the study (Clement et al., 2015).

Delimitations

Barros-Bailey and Saunders (2013) defined *delimitations* as the constraints or scope of the research. There were three delimitations in this study. The first delimitation was the use of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory as the conceptual framework. The second delimitation was the use of open-ended interview questions and artifacts to collect data. The final delimitation was the geographic location. Participants were recruited from a single restaurant in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area of the United States.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The results of this study might provide information on the strategies that managers have used successfully to reduce employee absenteeism in the restaurant industry. Employee absenteeism increases organizational financial cost (Gosselin et al., 2013; Lambert, Griffin, Hogan, & Kelley, 2014) and reduces employee productivity (Gangai, 2014; Sandal et al., 2014). Absenteeism might have a long-term effect on workplace productivity and contribute to increased financial costs for the organization (Magee et al., 2016). Organizations lose an estimated \$46 billion each year due to absenteeism (Duff et al., 2015); reducing employee absenteeism could lead to improved employee productivity and increased organizational profitability in the restaurant industry. Kocakulah et al. (2016) concluded that managers need to integrate employee absenteeism management into the organization to sustain productivity and profitability.

Implications for Social Change

This study could offer implications for positive social change in terms of improved understanding of effective strategies for reducing employee absenteeism and promoting organizational profitability, the consequences of which could improve local families' financial stability through sustained employment within the community and promote economic community development. A sustained community (Phillips & Stein, 2013) is a key factor in social change (Shove, 2010). At the community level, economic development requires organizations to invest in attracting and promoting growth (Phillips & Stein, 2013). These investments require organizations to be financially successful (Phillips & Stein, 2013). To achieve financial success and allow for investment in the community, organization managers should focus on performance and profitability of the organization (Amah & Ahiauzu, 2013), which often calls for improved employee performance (Sarfaraz, Jenab, & Bowker, 2015). Improved employee performance not only benefits the organization, but also reduces financial strain on the family (Jolley, Newman, Ziersch, & Baum, 2011), putting both the organization and the families of its employees in a better position to contribute to economic development in the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore the strategies restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. This literature review was the foundation for the research exploring the strategies managers use in the restaurant industry to reduce employee absenteeism. Factors that influence employee absenteeism include workplace stress, job dissatisfaction, and leadership. Understanding

the strategies managers use to counteract or mitigate these factors might help organization stakeholders to improve organizational productivity and profitability. Applying effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism enables business leaders to sustain profitability by avoiding costs associated with lost productivity, overtime pay, or the hiring of temporary employees to replace absent employees (Frick, Goetzen, & Simmons, 2013; Kocakulah et al., 2016).

This review of literature is organized and presented according to themes. These themes include expectancy theory and other theories of motivation, employee absenteeism, factors known to contribute to absenteeism, the effects of absenteeism on organizational performance, and the strategies used to reduce employee absenteeism. To prepare this literature review, I compared the various points of view on and connections between previous research and findings.

My search for literature on the topic of employee absenteeism involved conducting inquiries using numerous databases for scholarly, peer-reviewed articles, books, publications relevant to the research topic, industry reports and articles, and government data reports. Keywords and key phrases used in these searches included *employee absenteeism, workplace stress, employee absenteeism strategies, employee absenteeism in the restaurant industry, health-related absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, leadership, workplace bullying and absenteeism, expectancy theory, and theories of motivation*. Databases that I searched included the Walden University Library, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Premier, Business Source Complete, Sage Journal, Emerald Insight, ABI/INFORM Collection, Google Scholar, industry websites, and

government websites and databases. I applied filters to limit the results to articles or other sources published within the past 5 years (2013–2017) and verified, using the Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, whether the publication was peer reviewed. This review of literature includes 164 references, of which 141 (85.9%) were published within the past 5 years, and 136 (96.4%) were peer-reviewed references.

Expectancy Theory

Vroom (1964) developed the expectancy theory in 1946 (Chen et al., 2016; Ghoddousi et al., 2014). The theory represents a conceptual model of motivation. In essence, the theory is an explanation of people's choices to engage in behaviors that have positive outcomes and to avoid behaviors that have unpleasant outcomes (Chen et al., 2016; Paull & Geneste, 2014). Vroom identified three tenets of expectancy theory: (a) the valence or significance of rewards will be considerably positive, (b) expectancy or endeavor will generate satisfactory performance, and (c) instrumentality or performance will be recompensed (Dey, 2015; Lazaroiu, 2015). Employees' activities and past performance could shed light on employees' beliefs of how well they can respond to a certain action (Schaarschmidt, 2016). Vroom posited that employees consciously choose a particular course of action based on their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes to enhance performance and to achieve outcomes that are important to them (Chen et al., 2016; Paull & Geneste, 2014). From Vroom's perspective, the tenets of valence, expectancy, and instrumentality are key in determining how employees' motivation can result in a change in behavior, leading them to make better choices.

Employees believe that increased efforts in performance can lead to valued rewards and employee behavioral change (Vroom, 1964). Lazaroiu's (2015) study revealed employees decided on a particular action that drove them to carry out a specific undertaking, based on the assumption that a positive valence accompanies their individual performance. The employees in Lazaroiu's study were motivated to change their behaviors when under the assumption that these efforts reflected the goal of satisfactory performance (Ljungholm, 2015a, 2015b). Employees motivated to engage in undertakings that lead to positive outcomes could also serve as encouragements to avoid behaviors that lead to negative outcomes (Hayibor & Collins, 2016). Lazaroiu concluded that an employee's satisfactory performance could also lead to other desired outcomes and motivate other employees' actions. Although Lazaroiu suggested that employees' actions to improve their performance through motivational influences were individual efforts, the effectiveness of leadership and leaders' ability to connect with employees to advance employee performance were directly affected by work incentives.

Organization leaders and their employees have different notions about work performance and expected outcomes. According to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, employees' motivations improve when their actions result in rewards from leadership. Vroom believed that the more effort leaders make to increase their knowledge of employees' needs and expected rewards, the better leaders can motivate and influence employee performance and outcomes. Vroom recommended that leaders should learn their employees' needs and desires to know how best to motivate employees to meet leaders' expected performance outcomes.

Employees must trust that their leaders understand the association between employee motivation and performance, and how to modify and to influence employee behavior (Pouramini & Fayyazi, 2015). Chang, Hsu, and Wu (2015) applied expectancy theory to examine how rewards inspired managers to make good decisions about the environment to motivate their employees. Based on results of a survey administered to 271 managers, Chang et al. found that, measured against expectancy theory, managers used motivational factors that engaged individual behaviors that led to a desired reward, resulting in employees' increased positive motivational behaviors toward managers. Positive change in managers' behavior increased employees' confidence in the managers' knowledge of workplace motivations, leading to employees' higher levels of performance (Chang et al., 2015).

Leaders can succeed in motivating employees when they understand that employees react better to influence than to command (Bandow & Self, 2016; Van Dierendonck & Driehuisen; 2015). Isaac, Zerbe, and Pitt (2001) applied expectancy theory to measure leader insights and interactions to motivate employees through efforts, performance, and outcomes. They found that leaders who can motivate and inspire high levels of performance through the use of creative interactions without issuing commands to employees have a better understanding of employees' needs and desires (Isaac et al., 2001). Isaac et al. concluded employees' motivation to change their behavior is measured by leaders' honesty, perception of fairness, and behavioral consistency. Bandow and Self (2016) expanded on Isaac et al.'s study and suggested that leaders' knowledge and capabilities are critical to influencing a motivational change in employee behavior. They

concurrent with Isaac et al. in finding that leaders and employees must have a clear understanding of performance, expected outcomes, and rewards (Bandow & Self, 2016). Based on the principles of expectancy theory, until and unless leaders invest the time and effort to motivate employees, absenteeism will continue to increase and performance will continue to decrease.

Although expectancy theory is one of the most widely used theories for measuring employee motivation, some researchers have identified limitations (Asaju & Yarie, 2017; Honkaniemi, Lehtonen, & Hasu, 2015). For example, Lawler (1971) asserted that rewards made by the employer, such as a promotion or a financial bonus, might be enough to increase employees' productivity, but not if the employees' immediate needs lack motivation. A promotion offers an employee a higher status in the organization, but the higher status requires the employee to adjust his or her schedule to work longer hours or weekends, making the promotion a possible deterrent to an employee who values work-life balance (Honkaniemi et al., 2015).

Expectancy theory does not address motivation from the employer's perspective (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Managers might have difficulty determining how best to motivate an employee to perform an additional task, even if the additional task comes with a reward (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Each employee might require a different motivation, and managers must determine how to motivate each employee (Parijat & Bagga, 2014). Other researchers criticized expectancy theory for lacking explicitness between actions and outcomes to motivate the employees and the different expectancies of each action and outcome (Ghoddousi et al., 2014). Despite these criticisms, expectancy

theory is still widely used to measure employee absenteeism. In the following section, I present a review of the literature on supporting and opposing theories of motivation.

Supporting and Opposing Theories of Motivation

Researchers have used multiple theories to explore motivation to change employee behavior to reduce absenteeism. To understand absenteeism and employee motivation, I conducted a review of the most commonly used theories of employee motivation to change employee behavior. This section includes information on two-factor theory; existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory; and hierarchy of needs theory.

Two-factor theory. Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory consists of two psychological dimensions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Chen, Lu, Gupta, & Xiaolin, 2014). The two-factor theory describes two types of factors: motivating factors and hygiene factors. Motivational factors represent satisfaction, and hygiene factors represent dissatisfaction. These two types of factors influence employee commitment to the organization (Bhatti, Aslam, Hassan, & Sulaiman, 2016). The motivational factors of achievement, advancement, responsibility, and recognition are intrinsic, whereas the hygiene factors, which include job security, working conditions, salary, and supervision, are extrinsic (Chen et al., 2014). Regarding work, intrinsic factors relate to psychological growth and development or job satisfaction, whereas extrinsic factors relate to the conditions of work or job dissatisfaction (Kalhor, Jhatial, & Khokhar, 2017; Sdrali, Goussia-Rizou, Giannouli, & Makris, 2016). Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to employees' overall job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction (Liu, 2016).

According to two-factor theory, employees become motivated when the motivational factors meet their needs, resulting in their increased productivity (Lo, Lin, & Hsu, 2016).

Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015) used two-factor theory to explore the influence of leadership behavior on employees' job satisfaction. Based on a survey of 212 employees, the results suggested that employees are intrinsically motivated by challenges when the relationship between job satisfaction and supportive leadership enable employees to achieve success (Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Dasgupta, Suar, and Singh (2014) posited that employees consider emotional comfort as an intrinsic factor leading to job satisfaction; in other words, employee performance is the result of added intrinsic value and instilled rewards.

Thibodeaux et al. (2015) surveyed 212 employees and found workers were motivated by challenges in environments that included a relationship between job satisfaction and supportive leadership, which resulted in employees achieving success. Dasgupta et al. (2014) posited employees consider emotional comfort as an intrinsic factor of job satisfaction, and that employee performance translated to intrinsic value and instilled rewards leading to employee job satisfaction. Leaders in tune with employees' job satisfaction factors can minimize discontent and create an environment in which employees are at their happiest, thus improving performance (Dasgupta et al., 2014). The intrinsic factors associated with employees' behavioral changes traced to leadership motivating employees to change, resulting in positive job satisfaction and reduction of employee absenteeism (Dasgupta et al., 2014; Thibodeaux et al., 2015).

In a study that involved applying two-factor theory to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that influence job satisfaction, Okan and Akyüz (2015) hypothesized that extrinsic motivation spurred job satisfaction and influenced employee motivation. Okan and Akyüz reported a significant and positive correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and job satisfaction. Researchers have also suggested that both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are predictors of job satisfaction (Jarkas, Radosavljevic, & Wuyi, 2014; Okan & Akyüz, 2015).

ERG theory. Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory focuses on the three levels of human needs that influence employee behavior: existence, relatedness, and growth. The existence need is a physiological and safety need that is met through the employee's interpretation of his or her working conditions and earnings, as well as personal needs such as food and water (Alderfer, 1969; Cady, Shoup, & Hennig, 2015). The relatedness need is the employee's need for maintaining meaningful, social workplace relationships (Alderfer, 1969; Ibrahim, 2017). The growth need reflects the employee's internal self-esteem needs through workplace growth opportunities and developments (Alderfer, 1969; Ibrahim, 2017). According to this theory, employees strive for self-realization and growth to fulfill work obligations (Ibrahim, 2017). Furthermore, employees whose growth and motivational needs are not met become frustrated, which could result in employees regressing to lower levels of needs (Alderfer, 1969).

Osabiya (2015) applied ERG theory to measure employee motivation factors relative to performance and productivity. Findings indicated unsatisfied employees produce undesirable results that affect their job performance and work behavior (Osabiya,

2015). Unsatisfied employees tend to demonstrate motivational withdrawal, which affects their work habits and health, resulting in increased absenteeism. Osabiya distinguished between employees who are motivated to perform their job duties and employees who are not motivated. Of note is that employee motivation changed when employees had a sense of belonging to the organization, which increased their performance and productivity (Osabiya, 2015).

Valaei and Rezaei (2016) applied ERG theory to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees and found a positive relationship between operating procedures and organizational commitment. Employee job satisfaction associated with changes in the employer's behavior can have a direct effect on organizational commitment, absenteeism, and retention (Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). This finding suggests that job satisfaction is connected with contingent rewards, fringe benefits, and the nature of employees' work. Job satisfaction can also reduce employee turnover, absenteeism, workplace stress, and can increase job performance (Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). Other researchers found that strategies managers used to address employee behaviors and motivational factors could foster a sustainable workforce with increased performance and reduced turnover and stress (Tung, Chen, & Schuckert, 2017) to improve absenteeism. Managers must understand that employees have multiple needs, all of which must be met simultaneously; focusing on one need at a time will not motivate employees effectively to reduce absenteeism (Guillén, Ferrero, & Hoffman, 2015).

Hierarchy of needs. Maslow's (1943a) hierarchy of needs theory focuses on the various components of job satisfaction. These components represent employees' basic needs for job satisfaction and include physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Maslow posited that employee growth and development needs must be satisfied first. Employees often have different ideas of their needs regarding growth and do not display physiological responses to having these needs met for job satisfaction (Kaur, 2013). Kaur (2013) suggested there was a need for research involving multiple organizations to identify the motivational level of each employee and to determine that each level of job satisfaction must be met before the next level can be met.

Bourne, Pavlov, Franco-Santos, Lucianetti, and Mura (2013) applied hierarchy of needs theory as a measurement of employees' physiological needs to attain the top level of self-actualization. Bourne et al. (2013) and Jarkas et al. (2014) suggested that the leadership of the organization must understand and address employees' needs in a particular sequence. The appropriate sequence for addressing employees' needs, according to Bourne et al., is physiological needs, followed by safety needs. The additional factors of self-esteem and self-love (Maslow, 1943a, 1943b) must also be taken into account. According to Bourne et al., some individuals need more self-esteem than self-love. Some employees might work to satisfy individual needs rather than physiological needs and might neglect secondary or tertiary needs (Boyd, 2014). Even before employees respond to the incentive to meet their non-essential needs, the psychological, safety, love, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization needs must be met (Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2015).

The theories developed by Vroom (1964), Herzberg (1966), and Alderfer (1969) provide a foundation of motivational factors for consideration in the development of employee motivation. Vroom's expectancy theory focuses on the premise that individual motivations can affect the anticipated outcome of employees' actions, whereas Herzberg's two-factor theory focuses on motivating factors and hygiene factors (Bhatti et al., 2016), and Alderfer's ERG theory categorizes the needs that influence human behavior. Application of Vroom's expectancy theory was instrumental in identifying the influence of workplace on employee behavior, which affected the employee's decision to be absent from work (Duff et al., 2015).

Both Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Maslow's (1943a) hierarchy of needs theory focus on employers understanding employees' basic needs to promote employee motivation. Despite these similarities, there are differences between the two theories. Vroom's expectancy theory mainly focuses on the outcomes of human behavior, whereas Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory focuses on employee needs and how to meet these identified needs. Maslow concentrated on employee needs and the fulfillment of those needs, but Maslow did not report the outcomes of those needs actuality fulfilled. Vroom explained that the motivation directed at the outcomes of employee motivation relates to expected rewards from the outcomes. As such, an employee's expected rewards could motivate him or her to make good work-related decisions (Chang et al., 2015). In the following section, I present a review of the literature on employee absenteeism in the restaurant/food service industry and other industries.

Employee Absenteeism

Employee absenteeism is a problem for many businesses concerned with performance and productivity (Magee et al., 2016; Silpa & Masthanamma, 2015). Absenteeism is the failure of an employee to report for or stay at work as scheduled, regardless of the reason (Gangai, 2014). Most of the literature on employee absenteeism published in recent years involved examinations of the effect of absenteeism on organizational performance (Alexander & Wang, 2015), lost productivity (Sandal et al., 2014), health issues (Gosselin et al., 2013), workplace stress (Kocakulah et al., 2016), job dissatisfaction (Giorgi et al., 2015), workplace bullying (Lee et al., 2014), and leadership (Hassan et al., 2014). The cost of the absent employee contributes to financial stress on the organization as well as reduced productivity, overworked staff, and potential loss of customers (Kocakulah et al., 2016).

A universal theme in the current literature was that reducing employee absenteeism is challenging because a variety of factors affect employee absenteeism. As such, there is a need for continued research on the factors and patterns of employee absenteeism and the behaviors associated with employees' decisions to be absent from work (Krpalek, Meredith, & Ziviani, 2014; Wang & Reid, 2015). The crux of the problem is that leaders of organizations are not prepared to manage employee absenteeism (Ford, 2014). Regardless of whether the problem begins with managers' preparedness or employees' behavior, employee absenteeism continues to affect the productivity and profitability of organizations (Diestel, Wegge, & Schmidt, 2014; Onikoyi et al., 2015). The ability of the organization to succeed by sustaining profitability

and containing costs depends on leadership to implement strategies to reduce employee absenteeism (Kocakulah et al., 2016).

Absenteeism disrupts workflow and increases costs for organizations in the restaurant/food service industry (Cucchiella, Gastaldi, & Ranieri, 2014; Frost, 2016). Profits decrease when leaders of the organization must hire temporary workers or pay current employees overtime to cover for the duties of absent employees (Frick et al., 2013; Ramadhan & Santoso, 2015). Frost (2016) posited that some reasons for employee absenteeism, such as health issues and injuries, are out of the control of the employer to some degree, but some employees will take advantage of leave policies. These general statements regarding absenteeism apply to virtually all industries. The restaurant/food service industry has particular concerns with absenteeism.

Employee absenteeism in the restaurant/food service industry. According to the National Restaurant Association (n.d.), leaders in the food service industry projected gross sales in 2017 to reach \$798.7 billion. In this same year, the food service industry was projected to employ 14.7 million people, which makes the food service industry the second largest employer in the United States, with 1 in 10 people working in the industry (National Restaurant Association, n.d.). By 2027, the restaurant/food service industry is projected to employ 1.6 million more workers, bringing the total employment for this industry to 16.3 million (Feerasta, 2017; National Restaurant Association, n.d.).

The problem of employee absenteeism affects not only the employing company, but also the general public because employee absenteeism has an adverse effect on profits and might reduce services offered to the customer (Han, Trinkoff, & Gurses, 2015; Mathe

& Slevitch, 2013; Worsfold, Fisher, McPhail, Francis, & Thomas, 2016). From the perspective of the employer, employee absenteeism negatively affects organizational productivity regarding payroll costs, which include planned and unplanned absences, extended absences, reduced coworker productivity, and supervisory productive time (Miraglia & Johns, 2016). On average, the cost of employee absenteeism exceeds 15% of company profits due to lost productivity, overtime pay, and costs incurred for staff replacement (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Employee absenteeism, whether excused or unexcused, undermines organizational productivity and profits. By reducing employee absenteeism, management in the restaurant/food service industry can focus on growth and profit maximization of the organization.

Employee absenteeism in other industries. Managing employee absenteeism is an important component of leaders' responsibility to the organization, along with sustaining business profitability and remaining competitive in the global market (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014). Leaders of organizations continue to value the need to reduce productivity costs while improving organizational performance (Lechmann & Schnabel, 2014). Organizational performance relies on employee performance (Alrawabdeh, 2014; Boyar, Wagner, Petzinger, & McKinley, 2016). Most managers agree that employee motivation, satisfaction, and overall performance are critical to organizational sustainability (Onikoyi et al., 2015). A number of factors are known to affect employee absenteeism, including voluntary turnover (Pizam & Thornburg, 2000), human resource managers' management of absence practices (Hopkins, Dawson, &

Veliziotis, 2016), stress and medical conditions (Marzec et al., 2015), and employees' behaviors influencing absenteeism (Magee et al., 2015).

Pizam and Thornburg (2000) examined the influences of employee absenteeism and voluntary employee turnover on organizational costs. They collected data from 62 human resource managers employed by hotels in central Florida and found that scheduled or unscheduled employee absenteeism and voluntary turnover influenced both the direct and indirect costs of an organization (Pizam & Thornburg, 2000). Hopkins et al. (2016) examined human resource practices regarding absenteeism management of migrant agency workers. Pizam and Thornburg collected data from agency workers in the food industry in the United Kingdom and found that human resource department practices concerning the management of migrant agency worker absenteeism varied from one location to another (Hopkins et al., 2016). Human resource management practices that involve tracking and identification of patterns of employee absenteeism can provide valuable information to leaders of an organization and serve as the foundation for the development of practices that reduce employee absenteeism rates.

Managing and identifying the factors that influence employee absenteeism is important for organizations to remain competitive and productive. Marzec et al. (2015) investigated the effect of stress and medical conditions on employee absenteeism. They collected data on 3,711 employees of a utility company through a 2-year period to identify the effect of stress on absenteeism (Marzec et al., 2015). Findings of Marzec et al.'s study, the objective of which was to report on stress, absenteeism, and the

implications of decreasing and managing absenteeism on the organization, suggested that medical conditions and stress are determinants of increased employee absenteeism.

Absenteeism is not just a concern of companies in the utility industry. Belita, Mbindyo, and English (2013) sought to understand the factors influencing absenteeism among health care workers in low-income countries such as Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Kenya, and Nigeria. They reviewed 107 studies on absenteeism published between 1982 and 2012 and reported that the factors influencing absenteeism among health care workers could be categorized as either planned or unplanned and voluntary or involuntary (Belita et al., 2013). Belita et al. also found three subcategories that further influenced health care workers' absenteeism: workplace workload, workplace conditions, and personal and organizational cultural factors. Magee et al. (2015) sought to understand the behaviors that influence employee absenteeism in Australia. Magee et al. examined 2,481 full-time employees across a 5-year period and reported on the different behaviors of absenteeism and the factors influencing changes in absenteeism. Magee et al. found that patterns of employee absenteeism through a short 2- to 3-day period of absenteeism each year, as well as longer 11- to 13-day periods of absenteeism each year, are consistent with the different behaviors and factors influencing employee absenteeism. Although these studies focused on different industries and different countries, the findings were similar: employee absenteeism is disruptive to organizations, and leaders of organizations must address employee absenteeism to reduce loss of productivity and increase profitability (Belita et al., 2013; Magee et al., 2015; Marzec et al., 2015).

Factors Contributing to Absenteeism

For leaders of many organizations, the various factors that influence employee absenteeism in the organization are difficult to measure or rectify (Kocakulah et al., 2016). The main factors leading to employee absenteeism that have been identified to date include workplace stress (Amudha & Badrinath, 2014; Kocakulah et al., 2016), job dissatisfaction (Giorgi et al., 2015), workplace bullying (Lee et al., 2014), and leadership (Hassan et al., 2014). An average employee is absent from work 9 days each year, with only 35% of employee absences used for personal illnesses (Kocakulah et al., 2016). According to Mayfield and Mayfield (2016), 52% of the average 2-day absence episodes related to stress and personal needs, and not family or personal illness. Frequently absent employees also demonstrated reduced performance and were more likely to be absent from work in the future (Duff et al., 2015). Recurrently absent employees can also lead to a change in organizational dynamics and increase issues, such as reduced employee morale and hostility (Nowrouzi et al., 2015).

Workplace stress. Workplace stress is a widespread and costly problem for organizations (Vij, 2014). In the United States, workplace stress is reported to cost organizations an estimated \$200 billion annually (George & Zakkariya, 2015; Newton & Teo, 2014). Workplace stress is a physical and emotional response that influences employee performance (Vij, 2014). Vij (2014) noted that one quarter of employees report perceiving their jobs as a major factor of stress. Newton and Teo (2014) identified the factors associated with workplace stress as work environment, leadership support, organizational commitment, work autonomy, and turnover. Stress often leads to a change

in employee attitudes toward organizational commitment and behavior, resulting in increased absenteeism and poor job performance (Newton & Teo, 2014). George and Zakkariya (2015) reported six primary factors of work-related stress: organizational roles, career development, work relationships, organizational factors, home and work interference, and intrinsic factors. Results of Vij's (2014) study suggest that workplace stress influences employee attitudes and behavior and ultimately results in employee absenteeism. George and Zakkariya (2015) and Newton and Teo (2014) noted that absenteeism is a consequence of stress.

Marzec et al. (2014) found that increased stress causes absenteeism rates to increase and overall productivity to decrease. Stress can be a determinant of employee absenteeism, which can negatively influence productivity (Marzec et al., 2014). Employers can play a large role in reducing workplace stress and reducing employee absenteeism (Marzec et al., 2014): stress accounts for 12% of all company absenteeism each year (Kocakulah et al., 2016). According to *Health and Safety Executive* (as cited in Kocakulah et al., 2016), employees take 6.5 million days of time off each year as a result of stress alone. On average, one in five individuals is absent due to high levels of work-related stress (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Marzec et al. reported that 58% of employee absenteeism is attributable to some form of work-related stress.

In a study conducted on behalf of the U.S. Census Bureau (as cited in Kocakulah et al., 2016), the average employee commutes an average of 100 hours per year to and from work. Kocakulah et al. (2016) posited employee commutes might contribute to employee absenteeism because the commutes could lead to increased stress on an already

distressed employee. The stress of the absentee employee, shared by his or her coworkers who bear the burden of having to “cover” for the absent employee, can result in future absences of the absentee employee due to increased stress. Both Marzec et al. and Kocakulah et al. (2016) indicated that workplace stress contributes to employee absenteeism and suggested that employers should review the factors related to employee stress and consider implementing strategies to reduce workplace stress.

Occupational stress leads to increased employee burnout, turnover, and absenteeism (Babatunde, 2013; Genly, 2016). Occupational stress factors such as poor employee performance, health problems, and work-life conflict can increase employee absenteeism (Babatunde, 2013). Babatunde (2013) examined the challenges of occupational stress and absenteeism relative to occupational outcomes. Based on results of the study, Babatunde (2013) asserted that managers must understand the importance of organizational involvement and implement effective interventions to reduce occupational stress and the factors associated with it, which would both reduce occupational stress and increase productivity.

Chakraborty and Subramanya (2013) examined the association between occupational stress and stress-induced absenteeism linked to social and clinical factors. Using the process model of absenteeism as the platform, they posited that absenteeism frequency was high among the employees who frequently changed jobs due to stress at a former job. Results of Chakraborty and Subramanya’s study suggest that occupational stress is one of the barriers to employee attendance, and knowing the factors associated with absenteeism might be helpful for reducing occupational stress. As employee

workloads and responsibilities increase, occupational stress could result in increased employee absenteeism, affecting both employee productivity and company profitability.

Job dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction is an undesirable phenomenon affecting many organizations (Nantsupawat et al., 2017; Sekine, Tatsuse, Cable, Chandola, & Marmot, 2014). Job dissatisfaction has consistently found to have a negative effect on employee health, turnover, and increased employee work avoidance (D'Angelo et al., 2016; Mucci, Giorgi, Roncaioli, Perez, & Arcangeli, 2016). Giorgi et al. (2015) found employees displayed psychological effects of job dissatisfaction, which the researchers attributed to poor content and potential for future growth in the organization. Giorgi et al. reported employees who are not satisfied with performing their duties display uncertainty about future employment, demonstrate stress in the workplace, and exhibit increased absenteeism from work. They suggested that job dissatisfaction is often difficult for employees to personally control, leading to increased stress and reduced productivity (Giorgi et al., 2015).

Lumadi (2014) reported factors that influence employee job dissatisfaction include lack of job security, access to employee training, and job responsibility. Qian, Song, and Wang (2017) asserted that employee dissatisfaction is related to leadership intimidation. They suggested that employees who are dissatisfied with their job responsibilities often avoid the workplace to remove themselves from abusive supervisors, which is also a factor for increased employee absenteeism or work avoidance (Qian et al., 2017). Abusive supervision plays a key role in employee interpretations of jobs, often leading to job dissatisfaction (Qian et al., 2017; Whitman, Halbesleben, &

Holmes, 2014). Workplace stress is also a factor in increased employee absenteeism (Giorgi et al., 2015; Qian et al., 2017).

Azizi, Liang, and Zolfaghari (2013) explored methods for predicting human boredom concerning job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and performance. They suggested there is a correlation between absenteeism, reduced performance, job dissatisfaction, and human boredom (Azizi et al., 2013). In particular, Azizi et al. found that boredom in the workplace was the key contributor to employee absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and low performance. Managers who recognize the key contributors to employee boredom can take preventive measures to reduce absenteeism and increase job performance and satisfaction. Implementation of measures to combat employee boredom could increase organizational productivity (Azizi et al., 2013).

Similar to Azizi et al. (2013), Banerjee and Mehta (2016) explored the contributing factors of job stress and the effects of these factors on job performance, job dissatisfaction, and job avoidance. They noted factors contributing to job stress exacerbate poor job performance, absenteeism, and job dissatisfaction, leading to lateness to work and low productivity (Banerjee & Mehta, 2016). To collect data, Banerjee and Mehta administered questionnaires to 110 faculty and found that stress led to job avoidance and job dissatisfaction, which decreased overall performance and increased absenteeism. Further, Banerjee and Mehta found that the contributing factors led to job avoidance and poor interpersonal relationships in the school, which led to job dissatisfaction. Both Azizi et al. and Banerjee and Mehta indicated that the contributing factors of human boredom and job stress influenced performance, productivity, and

dissatisfaction, which affected employee absenteeism. In addition to human boredom and job stress, leadership—especially poor leadership—can be a factor in employee absenteeism.

Leadership. The leadership of an organization has been reported to be a major cause of employee behavior changes in the workplace (Lindblom, Kajalo, & Mitronen, 2015; Yao, Fan, Guo, & Li, 2014). Hassan et al. (2014) suggested that increased workplace stress traced to leadership could trigger negative employee behavior. They found that workplace stress influenced employee behavior, which was a result of the style of leadership favored in the organization (Hassan et al., 2014). Employee behavioral changes such as turnover, interpersonal conflict, and absenteeism are common issues influencing employee performance that harm the success of an organization (Hassan et al., 2014). The various styles of leadership (transactional or transformative) can influence behavioral changes in employees (Hassan et al., 2014; Prasad & Junni, 2016).

Henle and Gross (2014) found that abusive management reduced employee performance and increased employee turnover and absenteeism. At least 1.4 million employees report having experienced management abuse on a regular basis, and that this experience led to behavioral changes in employees, costing organizations \$24 billion annually in employee absenteeism (Henle & Gross, 2014). Without adequate and effective intervention to reduce abusive management styles in the organization, employee morale and psychological anxiety continue to increase, resulting in higher absenteeism and lower productivity (Henle & Gross, 2014). Both Hassan et al. (2014) and Henle and

Gross (2014) found associations between the leadership style of ineffectively managing employee behavior and employee absenteeism.

Elshout, Scherp, and van der Feltz-Cornelis (2013) explored the relationship between leadership styles and employee absenteeism and satisfaction. Employees who are less satisfied with a leadership style that involves communicating absenteeism protocols have higher levels of absenteeism (Elshout et al., 2013). Elshout et al. asserted that leadership style was a moderating factor of absenteeism. Different leadership styles (transformational or transactional) have a strong influence on the affect of employee absenteeism levels in organizations (Elshout et al., 2013). Leadership styles vary, but leaders with a clear understanding of their leadership style can effectively influence employees to improve job satisfaction, which ultimately can reduce absenteeism (McGuire et al., 2015). Effective leaders who support their employees report fewer employee absences than those leaders who are less effective at supporting their employees (Fiaz, Su, Ikram, & Saqib, 2017). Dasgupta et al. (2014) suggested that unsupportive or dominating leadership styles lead to increased employee absenteeism and resignation due to burnout. Yao et al. (2014) noted that leaders who adjust their style of interacting with employees can enhance employee involvement, job satisfaction, and decrease absenteeism. Employees who experience improved job satisfaction exhibit lower absenteeism and make informed decisions about the leadership of the organization (Bagul, 2014).

Workplace bullying. Workplace bullying affects organizational performance by leading to reduced employee productivity, excessive absenteeism, and increased

employee turnover (Magee, Gordon, Robinson, Caputi, & Oades, 2017; Olive & Cangemi, 2015;). In the United States, workplace bullying costs organizations over \$5 billion annually in health care expenses, absenteeism, and stress-induced unproductivity (Richardson, Joiner, & Hall, 2016). Leaders of organizations are largely unprepared to address the effect of workplace bullying on the low organizational commitment of employees with poor motivation to complete normal work tasks (McDaniel, Ngala, & Leonard, 2014). In examining workplace bullying, Kakumba, Wamala, and Wanyama (2014) found that workplace bullying leads to increased employee absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased employee turnover.

Lee et al. (2014) investigated bullying in the workplace and its physical, psychological, and occupational effects on employee behavior and outcomes. They found workplace bullying has physical, psychological, and occupational effects that contribute to decreased productivity and increased absenteeism in employees who feel unsafe in the working environment. According to Lee et al., bullying in the workplace is often a repeated action, resulting in employees perceiving inactive leaders of the organization in a negative light. When leaders of the organization are prepared to address workplace bullying and its effect on the financial welfare of the organization by demonstrating commitment and support to protect the employees, performance increases and absenteeism decreases (Lee et al., 2014).

Similar to Lee et al. (2014), Richardson et al. (2016) found workplace bullying is a contributing factor to low employee performance. Individuals who experience bullying in the work environment have negative perceptions of organization leaders' ability to

reduce bullying (Richardson et al., 2016). Employers must recognize workplace bullying as a serious problem that can be detrimental to the work atmosphere (Richardson et al., 2016). Overall, low performance due to lost motivation contributes to increased employee absenteeism, resulting from leaders of the organization failing to address workplace bullying (McDaniel et al., 2014). Both Lee et al. and Richardson et al. asserted that workplace bullying increases employee absenteeism and reduces productivity. Offering employees an effective means to report workplace bullying and providing organizational support might mitigate the damaging effects of employee absenteeism and improve productivity.

Devonish (2014) studied the relationship between workplace bullying and employee job demands, health and physical problems (such as exhaustion and chronic disease), and absenteeism. From a survey of 262 employees on the factors leading to depression, health issues, and uncertified absenteeism, Devonish found workplace bullying exacerbates employees' physical and mental performance, health issues, and absenteeism. Further, workplace bullying creates a work environment and organizational culture that undermines employee health (Devonish, 2014). Organization managers must carefully assess workplace norms, company culture, and behavior contributing to bullying and establish preventive measures to discourage such behaviors (Carroll & Lauzier, 2014; Devonish, 2014).

Crumpton (2014) investigated workplace bullying and the financial burden of employee absenteeism, poor morale, and turnover in a library setting. Organizations must identify the problems related to workplace bullying and take steps to train supervisors

and administrators on the potential issues associated with workplace bullying that affect the financial well-being of the organization (Crumpton, 2014). For an organization to grow, there is a need to reduce workplace bullying to allow for increased employee productivity, reduced absenteeism, and positive outcomes on employee turnover (Crumpton, 2014). In addition to curbing workplace bullying, management policies and knowledge can reduce employee absenteeism and increase rates of productivity (Ariza-Montes, Arjona-Fuentes, Law, & Han, 2017; Chavez, 2014; Fischer, van Reemst, & de Jong, 2016). Fischer et al. (2016) recommended managers seeking to develop intervention measures for bullying should consider the effect of workplace aggression on different levels of employees. Managers can reduce workplace bullying by adjusting working conditions for employees and providing a supportive organizational environment (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017). Despite best efforts to counteract the factors contributing to absenteeism, the problem of absenteeism might continue to have an affect on organizational performance.

Impact of Absenteeism on Organizational Performance

Absent employees compromise the profitability of the organization by decreasing the overall productivity and performance of the workforce (Alexander & Wang, 2015). The high cost of lost organizational productivity and the motivational factors of daily working employees influence the sustainability of organizational performance (Bankert et al., 2015; Halbesleben, Whitman, & Crawford, 2014). Lost employee productivity, leadership intimidation and abuse, and employee health problems can effect employee absenteeism, which affects organizational performance.

Employee lost productivity. In business, employee absenteeism is the primary reason for lost productivity (Sandal et al., 2014). Employee absenteeism, whether scheduled or unscheduled, can affect the financial wellbeing of the organization (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Employee absenteeism also contributes to reduced productivity and increased financial cost of operating organizations (Magee et al., 2016). In the United States, organizations lose approximately \$16,000 per employee annually due to absenteeism (Lally, 2014). Employee absenteeism costs as much as \$60,000 and \$3.6 million annually for a small business owner and a large organization, respectively (Kocakulah et al., 2016). The goal for leaders of organizations is to focus on the financial bottom line by increasing profits and workplace productivity, while decreasing organizational expenses.

Employee absenteeism has a long-term effect on reduced workplace productivity (Duff et al., 2015). Frick et al. (2013) asserted that employee absenteeism decrease organizational profits and productivity because other employees must cover for the work hours of absent employees. In essence, absenteeism results in organizations being understaffed, even though the employee roster is unchanged (Frick et al., 2013). Rost, Meng, and Xu (2014) claimed employee productivity decreases every day because managers must hire, train, and supervise new temporary personnel to meet business deadlines.

Lost productivity costs related to absenteeism, presenteeism, and unpaid work are rarely included in the valuation of health-related costs (Krol & Brouwer, 2014). Total lost productivity costs increase due to employee presenteeism; a condition were employees

attend work when ill, which results in increased employee absenteeism (Krol & Brouwer, 2014; Strömberg, Aboagye, Hagberg, Bergström, & Lohela-Karlsson, 2017). Despite the strong willingness by management to reduce employee absenteeism, unimplemented strategies intended to address absenteeism were found to decrease employee productivity and adversely affect organizational cost (Bankert, Coberley, Pope, & Wells, 2015). In particular, Krol and Brouwer (2014) noted that managers' failure to guide employees and understand the effect of absenteeism and presenteeism on the organization would likely result in continued lost productivity.

Business leaders in public and private industries where labor productivity loss occurs from illness often do not value the cost of lost productivity in their per capita evaluations, thus leaving unanswered questions about absenteeism and lost productivity (Rost et al., 2014). Rost et al. (2014) examined the cost of productivity loss due to the lack of leadership on health-related interventions to improve absenteeism and presenteeism from a survey of 325 companies in multiple industries. They concluded that leaders of organizations should disseminate information on productivity intervention programs to employees to reduce the effect of absenteeism and presenteeism and suggested leaders of organizations should collect data on lost productivity to target the need for productivity-enhancing interventions (Rost et al., 2014).

Organization leaders are responsible for improving growth by increasing productivity while remaining competitive in the global marketplace (Bankert et al., 2015; Taneja, Sewell, & Odom, 2015) and reducing organizational costs. VanWormer, Boucher, and Sidebottom (2015) asserted that, through time, lifestyle improvements such

as healthy habits and disease management could improve employee productivity and decrease absenteeism. Smaller organizations do not address employee absenteeism and the effect of lost productivity until there is a financial crisis visible in the bottom line (Zhang, Sun, Woodcock, & Anis, 2017). Unless the organization reduces employee absenteeism, sustained productivity will continue to decline and organizational cost will continue to increase. Again, the problem is not only absenteeism, but leadership behavior.

Leadership intimidation and abuse. Leadership intimidation can influence an employee's decision to not attend work (Hassan et al., 2014). In workplaces where employees experience intimidation, employee absenteeism increases and productivity decreases (Lee et al., 2014). Leadership abuse substantially influences employee absenteeism, productivity, and ultimately increases employee turnover (Henle & Gross, 2014). Senior-level managers must understand the need to address abusive leaders to prevent higher costs from further damaging the financial well-being of the organization (Webster, 2016). Employee performance decreases in the wake of leadership intimidation, even though employees continue to attend work for the fear of losing their job because of failure to attend work (Olive & Cangemi, 2015).

Webster (2016) found that leadership intimidation results in reduced performance and decision-making ability due to employees' increased stress. Other researchers determined that employee productivity and performance would continue to suffer as a result of increased absenteeism if leadership intimidation remains unaddressed at top levels of the organization (Hassan et al., 2014; Hernandez, Luthanel, Ramsel, & Ostuke, 2015; Omotayo, Falola, Akinbode, & Adeniji, 2015). Based on findings reported by

Henle and Gross (2014) and Webster, it is generally accepted that leadership intimidation can affect employee absenteeism, which can negatively effect the manager's ability to achieve organizational profitability through increased employee productivity.

Employees perceive abusive supervision in the forms of biased treatment, silent treatment, isolated intrusion, and rumors (Priesemuth, Schminke, Ambrose, & Folger, 2014). Nandkeolyar, Shaffer, Li, Ekkirala, and Bagger (2014) examined the effects of employees' avoidance-coping strategies between abusive supervision and job performance. They collected data from 105 employees who attended a workshop on leadership and reported that employees who adopt avoidance strategies showed signs of increased disengagement from work and increased work tardiness or absenteeism (Nandkeolyar et al., 2014). Nandkeolyar et al. also indicated that the relationship between the abusive supervisor and employee performance is weaker among highly diligent employees. Nandkeolyar et al. suggested the use of avoidance coping strategies facilitates a relationship reflected by a negative effect on abusive supervisors and employee job performance.

In another study on abusive leaders, Chan and McAllister (2014) examined the effects of perceived abusive supervision on employee behavioral characters. Abusive supervision leads to bitterness in the supervisor-employee relationship, which often includes fear and a lack of trust in the relationship (Chan & McAllister, 2014). Contrary to Nandkeolyar et al. (2014), Chan and McAllister found employees believe in the perception of abusive supervisor treatment, and the actual treatment of abusive superiors is perceived in the relationship between the supervisor and the employee. Empirical

research indicates abusive supervision fosters distrust, anxiety, psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and paranoid arousal (Chan & McAllister, 2014).

Employee health. Employee health issues can affect the financial well-being of the organization through reduced employee performance (Marzec et al., 2015; Zula, 2014). Gosselin et al. (2013) focused on the effects of employee absenteeism on performance indicators when employees are sick and not attending work, noting that organizational performance suffers from the lack of continued productivity.

Organizational factors such as work hours, employee behavior, and work commitment contribute to absenteeism (Gosselin et al., 2013). There is a direct link between multiple occurrences of employee absenteeism and individual health problems contributing to decreased organizational performance (Gosselin et al., 2013). Gosselin et al.'s findings were similar to those of Pohling, Buruck, Jungbauer, and Leiter (2016), who suggested health-related employee absenteeism directly influences organizational lost productivity. The mental and physical demands of work productivity and measures of outcomes are often predictors of employee absenteeism (Pohling et al., 2016). Employees will often report to work ill and work at reduced productivity levels (employee presenteeism), subsequently increasing the rate of absenteeism when these same employees stay home altogether the next working day (Miraglia & Kinman, 2017; Pohling et al., 2016).

The physical environment of the workplace can have an effect on employee absenteeism (Ali, Chua, & Lim, 2015; Bronkhorst & Vermeeren, 2016). To examine the effects of the physical environment of the workplace on employee absenteeism and productivity, Ali et al. (2015) administered questionnaires to 90 participants in three

workplaces. The questions addressed the effects of physical environment on absenteeism and productivity rates. Findings indicated the physical environment of the workplace had an effect on health issues, which increased absenteeism and decreased employee productivity that resulted in poor employee work performance. In addition to the work environment, employee illness was directly associated with stress in the workplace, leading to prolonged health-related absenteeism (Ali et al., 2015). Prottas (2013) found both internal and external stressors influence employees' need to perform at work based on pressure from management to complete work tasks. Stress related to the need to complete a job within an allotted timeframe contributes to physical and psychological illness that results in health-related absenteeism (Prottas, 2013). Based on the literature presented, poor health is one of the many contributing factors to increased employee absenteeism. Given the many factors that contribute to employee absenteeism and the effect of employee absenteeism on the financial well-being of organizations, there is a need to reduce employee absenteeism.

Strategies to Reduce Employee Absenteeism

Implementing a strategy to reduce employee absenteeism can have a positive effect on absenteeism in the organization (Kocakulah et al., 2016; Mulvaney, 2014). Researchers have found that incentive programs can motivate employees, but those programs must also fit the needs of the organization (Allisey, Rodwell, & Noblet, 2016; Kocakulah et al., 2016; Mulvaney, 2014). Absenteeism policies, incentive programs, flexible work policies, and health leave policies are just a few of the strategies some companies use to reduce employee absenteeism.

Absenteeism policies and management. In the restaurant industry, implementing an effective employee absenteeism strategy to sustain employee involvement is critical to the success of the organization (Mathe & Slevitch, 2013). The success of an organization is determined by the ability of its leaders to manage employee absenteeism (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Implementing absence policies and incentive programs to address employee absenteeism often bring uniformity to treatment of employees in an organization (Ford, 2014). Reviewing and revising absence policies has a positive effect on employee absenteeism (Johnson et al., 2014). An investigation into the patterns of employee absenteeism and the effect of absenteeism on the financial well-being of the organization revealed that implementing revised absence policies changed employee perceptions about the need to adhere to absenteeism policies (Johnson et al., 2014).

Similar to Johnson et al. (2014), Elliott (2014) examined problematic sickness and absence policies. Employers often conduct sickness meetings with employees to discuss employees' absenteeism rates, but do not clearly follow a set process (Elliott, 2014). Elliott found that when members of management review the process for oversight of sickness and absence policies with their employees, employees tend to adhere to the policy. Sickness and absence policies should have clear goals and objectives regarding how the policies are implemented and should outline the steps the manager should take if employee absenteeism increases (Elliott, 2014). Employees are motivated to manage their absenteeism when both their leaders and fellow employees understand the absence policy and the implications of managing that policy (Ford, 2014; Kocakulah et al., 2016).

Improving leaders' ability to manage employee absenteeism is another possible strategy to reduce the financial burden of absenteeism on companies (Hadjisolomou, 2015) because unmanaged absenteeism policies can increase organizational costs (Ford, 2014). For an absenteeism policy to be effective, management of the organization must be actively engaged in enforcement of the policy (Ford, 2014). An effective absence policy is good for both the organization and its employees because early absence management leads to reduced absenteeism and decreased leave costs for the organization, and helps employees manage the frequency of their absenteeism (Ford, 2014). Managers play a key role in executing and enforcing the company absence policy (Hadjisolomou, 2015). As leadership becomes engaged, absence policy management increases, increasing numbers of company employees understand the policy process, and employee absenteeism decreases, often resulting in employees returning to work quickly (Ford, 2014). Hadjisolomou's (2015) findings echoed those of Ford (2014).

When employees are absent from work, managers must first enforce the absence policy, despite the instinctive urge to find substitute workers for absent employees (Hadjisolomou, 2015). Once company leadership gets involved in managing employee absenteeism, the overall rate of employee absenteeism decreases, thereby reducing the bottom-line expenses of the organization (Hopkins et al., 2016; Pizam & Thornburg, 2000). Both Hadjisolomou (2015) and Ford (2014) remarked that managers being involved in handling and enforcement of the absence policy is a sustainable strategy organizations can use to reduce employee absenteeism.

Incentive programs. Another strategy to reduce employee absenteeism involves using incentive programs to recognize employee achievements (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Kocakulah et al. (2016) found a positive link between incentive programs and employee absenteeism. When managers are aware of the issues related to employee absenteeism and recognize employees' contributions for reducing absenteeism, the organization realizes greater success in implementation of the incentive program (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Lechmann and Schnabel (2014) found that creating an incentive program to reduce the number of absent days from work is an effective strategy for reducing workers' absences. They asserted that providing employees with a program that influences employee absence from work increased workplace career opportunities and reduces the cost of absenteeism for organizations (Lechmann & Schanbel, 2014). Both Kocakulah et al. and Lechmann and Schnabel found that incentive programs are a sustainable strategy to reduce employee absenteeism.

Another incentive program to reduce absenteeism involves the implementation of a work-life balance program. Chimote and Srivastava (2013) found that a work-life balance program reduces employee absenteeism and employee turnover while improving productivity. Employees quickly recognize job satisfaction, job security, reduced stress, and improved health as benefits of a work-life balance program (Chimote & Srivastava, 2013). In a study similar to Chimote and Srivastava's, Mohd, Shah, Anwar, and Mahzumi (2016) examined the company policy on a 5.5-workday week that increased employee absenteeism and skewed the relationship between work-life balance and absenteeism. Findings indicated that employees who worked long hours daily had increased

absenteeism on the final day of the workweek (Mohd et al., 2016). When an organization implements a work-life balance program to offer the employees 2 days off in a week, the organization improves employee morale and job satisfaction and reduces employee absenteeism (Mohd et al., 2016). Both Chimote and Srivastava and Mohd et al. noted that work-life balance incentive programs are a justifiable strategy to reduce employee absenteeism.

Employees with reduced job satisfaction and motivation and increased stress levels are absent from work more frequently than employees who are satisfied with their job (Ling & Wong, 2015). Ling and Wong (2015) examined strategies to boost work outcomes to improve internal motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction and to reduce absenteeism, stress, and turnover. They collected data from 42 facilities workers from four different work locations and found that internal incentives were a predictor of employee absenteeism (Ling & Wong, 2015). Workers provided with internal motivation through incentive programs focus on the job characteristics and work outcomes and have a significantly reduced rate of employee absenteeism (Ling & Wong, 2015). Employers with better job characteristics and job designs improve in other measurable areas related to absenteeism, such as work performance, stress, and employee turnover (Ling & Wong, 2015).

Ling and Wong's (2015) findings were opposite those reported by Mariappanadar and Kramar (2014). Mariappanader and Kramar examined high-performance work system program outcomes, such as employee well-being, performance, productivity, and absenteeism, and found that all the four predictors negatively influenced employee well-

being and organizational productivity increased absenteeism. Some incentive programs, such as telework and compressed workweeks, have a negative affect on organizational performance (Mariappanader & Kramar, 2014). A synthesis of practices and benefits offered to employees has a positive effect on organizational profitability and reduces absenteeism (Mariappanader & Kramar, 2014). Although Ling and Wong and Mariappanader and Kramar reported different outcomes of the incentive programs they studied, their findings suggest that policies and practices offering incentives could produce different results and reduce employee absenteeism.

Flexible working policies. An additional strategy to reduce employee absenteeism is a flexible working policy that allows for employees to tend to their personal needs and obligations (Ashoush, Elsayed, & Younis, 2015; Dasgupta et al., 2014). A flexible working policy is beneficial for both the employees and their employers (Bhalla, 2015; Caillier, 2016). By implementing a flexible working policy, employers allow employees to take more responsibility for working during their selected hours, therefore reducing absenteeism (Bhalla, 2015; Dasgupta et al., 2014). Implementing a flexible work schedule policy yields the benefits of job enrichment, higher productivity, reduced tardiness, and reduced absenteeism (Idris, 2014). In addition to reduced employee absenteeism, a flexible work schedule enables the organization to build management capacity, enhance employee performance, and expand knowledge of the organization (Idris, 2014). Continuous changes in work cultures and expected events in employees' family lives and needs contribute to making flexible working plans a useful strategy organizations can use to sustain productivity and reduce employee absenteeism

(Ashoush et al., 2015). Flexible working policies are sustainable strategies to reduce employee absenteeism, increase productivity, and build the ability of leadership to manage organizational operations (Bhalla, 2015; Idris, 2014).

Workplace flexibility practices can increase the likelihood of an organization being able to continue and thrive by increasing job satisfaction and productivity, while reducing absenteeism (Coenen & Kok, 2014; Whyman & Petrescu, 2014). Whyman and Petrescu (2014) examined the relationship between workplace flexibility practices and business survival among a sample of owners of small- and medium-sized businesses. They found that business owners who implemented workplace flexibility practices realized improved job satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, improved worker productivity levels, and had less turnover (Whyman & Petrescu, 2014). In addition to improved job satisfaction and reduced absenteeism, workplace flexibility practices can attract highly skilled workers who can influence business profitability (Whyman & Petrescu, 2014). Given the challenges faced by owners of small- and medium-sized business to survive in competitive industries, implementing a workforce flexibility practice is a good incentive to reduce employee absenteeism.

Wadsworth and Facer (2016) examined the connection between the transition to a compressed working schedule and its affects on the demands of employee work-life balance, productivity, absenteeism, and employee turnover. They found a compressed working schedule increased productivity and job satisfaction and decreased employee turnover and absenteeism (Wadsworth & Facer, 2016). Implementing a compressed working schedule benefits the organization by providing employees with the opportunity

to support the incentive program while balancing their work and family lives (Wadsworth & Facer, 2016). Deery, Walsh, Zatzick, and Hayes (2017) examined the effects of a compressed workweek and job satisfaction on absenteeism and physical health by administering a survey to 236 service workers. They found the employees' work schedules met the needs of the organization to remain profitable and helped employees sustain their work, family, and physical health (Deery et al., 2017). Employees who took advantage of a compressed workweek option exhibited lower employee absenteeism, but the compressed workweek did not necessarily improve employees' physical health (Deery et al., 2017). Both Wadsworth and Facer and Deery et al. agreed that a compressed workweek was a sustainable strategy to reduce employee absenteeism.

Health leave policies. A final strategy found in the literature to reduce employee absenteeism is to invest in health or wellness programs for employees (Campbell & Burns, 2015; Powers & Kocakülâh, 2015). Health-related issues are an ever-increasing cost for organizations, resulting in reduced employee productivity and added costs to cover employee absenteeism (Gosselin et al., 2013). A growing number of organizations have invested in health and wellness programs to reduce expenditures on health and employee absenteeism, and to increase productivity (Kunte, 2016; Mulvaney, 2014) because health interventions have a positive effect on reducing absenteeism (Davies, 2015). Organization-wide wellness programs can reduce employee absenteeism and increase productivity (Summerton & Mayor, 2015; Zula, 2014).

Employees who engage in wellness programs have lower rates of absenteeism (Madison, 2016; Tromp, 2015). Addressing employees' health problems and other related

issues has a positive effect on the rate of employee absenteeism (Gosselin et al., 2013). When leaders of the organization support and implement a wellness program, employee absenteeism decreases, resulting in employees who perform better and are absent less frequently, which has a direct and positive effect on employee absenteeism costs (Devonish, 2014; Olive & Cangemi, 2015). Davies (2015), Gosselin et al. (2013), Madison (2016), and Tromp (2015) all found that interventions such as employee wellness programs and business policy changes positively affect employee absenteeism.

Implementation of employee health programs can increase productivity and reduce employer costs for health-related care and absenteeism (Caloyeras, Liu, Exum, Broderick, & Mattke, 2014). Gillan et al. (2013) surveyed 136 school employees to identify how health and nutrition programs could be used as strategies for employers to reduce employee absenteeism and improve productivity. Employers spend an average of \$1,685 per employee for health-related lost productivity costs (Gillan et al., 2013). Gillan et al.'s findings suggested that an on-site program, such as the one promoting employees to reduce and manage stress, can lead to reduced health issues. Employers who offer an on-site health program to employees can reduce the cost of employee lost productivity by 25% and improve employee absenteeism, reduce workers' compensation, and reduce employees' stress (Gillan et al., 2013).

A workplace wellness program is an effective strategy to reduce employee absenteeism and increase productivity (Kohler, Contacos-Sawyer, & Thomas, 2015; Zula, 2014). Zula (2014) surveyed 35 human resource organization personnel and found that employers desire continuous health improvement from employees and often need to

implement wellness programs to improve health and wellness. Leadership engagement, commitment, and effective communication on workplace wellness programs to the employees are critical to the success of the program, which subsequently affects productivity, absenteeism, retention, and turnover (Zula, 2014). Kaspin, Gorman, and Miller (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of literature published between 2005 and 2011. They found that wellness programs help employees understand health-related risks, and understanding their health risks reduces employee absenteeism, increases productivity, and improves employees' overall quality of life (Kaspin et al., 2013). Kaspin et al. also found that companies with sponsored wellness programs achieved a reduction in employee absenteeism following implementation of a wellness program (Kaspin et al., 2013). Kaspin et al. suggested that companies whose leaders invested in wellness programs saw a shift in the culture of the organization and an increase in job performance and productivity.

Development of a sick-disability model can help employers to explore the health-related issues that lead to employee absenteeism and presenteeism; the resulting knowledge can aid employers in reducing these problem behaviors (Ramsay & Oguledo, 2015). Employees make decisions on when to attend work or when to remain at home based on health issues and lost benefits (Ramsey & Oguledo, 2015). Implementing a sick-disability model can help employees with recurring health issues and reduce the financial cost to the employees, thus reducing the financial effect on the employer (Ramsay & Oguledo, 2015). Similar to Ramsay and Oguledo (2015), Ammendolia et al. (2016) found that implementing workplace health and wellness programs influenced

employee presenteeism and absenteeism. In light of the struggle to sustain a healthy working environment, implementing a workplace health and wellness program can improve presenteeism, decrease absenteeism, and increase company leaders' awareness of the costs associated with employee health issues (Ammendolia et al., 2016).

Transition

Section 1 of this study included the problem statement, purpose statement, and the nature of the study to support the use of a single case study design. This section also included the research question, interview questions, and offered an explanation of the significance of this study. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory served as the conceptual framework of this study. Section 1 introduced the operational definitions, assumptions, limitation, and delimitations related to this study. Finally, Section 1 contained a critical analysis and synthesis of a review of the literature on employee absenteeism, theories and themes used by researchers on employee absenteeism, and other information used to understand employee absenteeism.

Section 2 contains a restatement of the purpose of the study and explains the role of the researcher. Other components of the section include information on the participants and justification of the research method and research design. The section includes a description of the participants, population and sampling, data collection, and data organization. The section also includes a discussion on ethical research and the reliability and validity of the study.

Section 3 includes with an overview of the study findings based on collected data, a discussion of the application of professional practice, and implications for social

change. Section 3 includes my recommendations for action and future research on employee absenteeism. The section concludes with a discussion of my reflections on the doctoral journey, and the study summary and conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

Managing employee absenteeism in the restaurant industry is challenging for leadership interested in sustaining profitability and productivity (Mathe & Slevitch, 2013). The average employee is absent from work 9 days each year (Kocakulah et al., 2016), which can affect up to 63.8% of the productivity cost of the organization on a payroll to cover the cost of absenteeism (Kronos International, 2015). Conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews and an analysis of company supporting documents formed the basis for this qualitative single case study to explore the strategies restaurant managers use to improve employee absenteeism.

Section 2 contains a restatement of the purpose of the study and a synopsis of my role as the researcher. Also in Section 2 are a discussion of the participants and justification of the research method and research design. I include a description of the participants, population and sampling, data collection, and data organization. Finally, Section 2 contains a discussion on ethical research and the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore the strategies that restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The targeted population consisted of restaurant managers from a single restaurant in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area of the United States who have experienced employee absenteeism and implemented successful strategies to reduce it. The implications for positive social change include the potential to reduce employee absenteeism and promote

organizational profitability, which could improve the financial stability of the community and local families through sustained employment and enhanced community economic development.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a single case study data collection process is to capture in-depth experiences of the participants through interviews, document analysis, and focus groups (Baskarada, 2014). As the researcher for this single case study, I actively engaged in the recruitment of participants and the data collection process by conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews, posing open-ended questions, taking notes, and analyzing and interpreting the data. I also used archival data to complement and support the primary data collected through the interview process. Researchers play an active role in qualitative research (Johnson, 2014). The researcher must consider any challenges involved in the process of data collection during a case study (Yu, Abdullah, & Saat, 2014). As the researcher, I conducted interviews to collect data that allowed me to understand or discover the strategies that restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism.

Critical to qualitative research, the researcher must be transparent about any potential relationship between the researcher and the potential participant (Nelson, 2016). Although I teach in the culinary field, there was no potential of a professional relationship between a prospective participant and me. As the researcher for this single case study, I considered any possible relationship with a potential participant before allowing him or her to join in this study.

As the researcher of this study, I abided by the tenets of the Belmont Report, which is an established framework for legal and ethical protection of research participants (Marrone, 2015). The Belmont Report includes three basic principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015). Researchers abide by the Belmont Report by (a) respecting the participants of the research, (b) maximizing benefits and minimizing harm to the participants through carefully considering the risk-benefit ratio, and (c) providing fairness on principle and distributing the risks and benefits across society equitably (Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2015). It is the responsibility of the researcher to protect the confidentiality of the participants and any participating organization (Johnson, 2014) and to use informed consent to protect participants from any harm if they choose to participate voluntarily in the study (Ross & Athanassoulis, 2014).

A researcher must be aware of any potential bias that can distort the truth (Mauceri, 2014). Researcher bias is the intrusion of the researcher's opinions and perceptions into the research (Chowdhury, 2015). To avoid bias, a researcher must self-monitor any affect of potential bias by gaining an understanding of how personal biases, beliefs, and experiences can influence the outcomes of the study while conducting research (Mauceri, 2014; Nelson, 2016). My role as the researcher was to separate my personal perceptions of absenteeism strategies and employee absenteeism from the opinions of managers participating in the semistructured interviews. As the researcher with no direct relationship with any of the interviewees, I used my perspective as an outsider to mitigate any potential bias. The outsider has no access to privileged or

intimate information about the group under study (Probst, 2016; Southgate & Shying, 2014) before the data collection process is begun.

Using an interview protocol can provide clarity for conducting case study interview sessions (Gross, Wallace, Blue-Banning, Summers, & Turnbull, 2013). To make certain research ethics are maintained and bias is prevented, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) as a guideline during the interview with participants. Researchers use protocols to collect reliable data and to retain their focus on the identified research problem during the interview process (Li et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). In addition, I followed an interview protocol in this single case study to outline the procedures to use before, during, and after the interview to remind myself of the information to collect during the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016), to refrain from interjecting personal bias during the interviews, and to ensure systematic treatment of each participant. Using a strong interview protocol allows research scholars to follow the emerging themes (Shen-Miller, Forrest, & Burt, 2012). Finally, the researcher should respect the participants' schedules and availability during the interview process (Yin, 2014).

Participants

Determining the eligibility criteria for the participants of a study requires a researcher to identify the suitability of participants to contribute to the research (Ibrahim & Sigani, 2015). The researcher must define the individuals who are eligible to participate (Yin, 2014). Killawi et al. (2014) suggested the researcher should establish inclusion and exclusion criteria before recruiting and selecting participants. According to

the National Restaurant Association (n.d.), the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area has more than 13,000 eating and drinking establishments. For this single case study, the participant inclusion criteria were restaurant managers who participated in the implementation and execution of strategies to reduce employee absenteeism and who operated an eating and drinking establishment in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Managers are typically familiar with the operations of the organization (Koyuncu, Burke, Astakhova, Eren, & Cetin, 2014). Restaurant managers are aware of the performance objectives and measures of their restaurant (Lin, Tou, & Yeh, 2014).

Gaining access to potential participants requires the researcher to explore possible pathways through public websites and professional organizations (Smith, Sabat, Martinez, Weaver, & Xu, 2015). I contacted professional associations such as the National Restaurant Association and the Restaurant Association of Maryland to gain access to potential participants. Gaining access to potential participants includes contacting the identified organization and providing the organization with the researcher's background, a description of the working relationship, and a clear purpose of the study (Adesoro et al., 2016). Karjalainen, Niemistö, and Hearn (2015) suggested that gaining access to potential participants requires permission from the top management in the organization. The strategies used to gain access to potential participants included contacting local professional associations or trade affiliations. During the initial contact with the local professional association, I explained to leaders of the professional or trade association the purpose and the nature of the study to gain permission to conduct the

research study with the aid of their members. Finally, I shared the protection strategy to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

Establishing a working relationship with the participants requires the researcher to understand the position and perspective of the potential participants through a review of the proposed research (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). It is important for researchers to build and understand the relationship with the participants of the research project (Baskarada, 2014). To build a working relationship with the participants, and after verifying a prospective participant's suitability for an interview using the participant selection criteria, I explained the purpose of the study and the purpose of the interview to each participant. During the initial contact with the potential participant, I reviewed the informed consent form and protocol (Getz, 2014). Finally, before the start of the interview, I followed the steps of the informed consent process documented in the interview protocol and provided each participant a copy of the signed informed consent form (Knepp, 2014).

Protecting the confidentiality and privacy of the participants is vital to a researcher conducting research (Kendall & Halliway, 2014; Yin, 2014). It is the researcher's responsibility to protect participants' confidentiality (Johnson, 2014), and a well-constructed research projects requires the protection of the research participants (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014). In addition to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants, the researcher is also responsible for securing the research data (Hickson, Poulton, Connor, Richardson, & Wolski, 2016). To protect the confidentiality of the participants of this study, I removed any identifying information

from the data. Upon completion of the study, all interview data and forms retained from the interview will be placed in a secured location for 5 years to protect the confidentiality and rights of the participants. After the required 5 years of storage, I will physically destroy the media (printed papers and flash drive containing data) related to this study.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Researchers must familiarize themselves with the various research methods available (Salvador, 2016) to identify on the most appropriate methodology to use in conducting a research study. The qualitative research method is most appropriate for researchers who seek to use an inductive and natural approach to study people in social situations, the progression of a phenomenon in natural settings, and world experiences (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014; Yu et al., 2014). Researchers use qualitative research methods to reflect the experience of the participants through primary data collection (Haneef, 2013). In conducting qualitative research, the researcher uses his or her interpretation of the data for analysis and findings associated with the identified themes and patterns (Haneef, 2013). The qualitative research method was most appropriate for this study because it enabled me to research how managers of restaurants use absenteeism reduction strategies to improve employee absenteeism.

The quantitative research method was not suitable for this study because I was not investigating a relationship between variables, generalizing findings from a sample population, or testing a predefined hypothesis. The quantitative approach is most appropriate for the researcher who seeks to generalize findings from a sample to a

targeted population (Humphreys & Jacobs, 2015; O'Rourke, 2015) by testing predefined hypotheses (Starr, 2014). Researchers use the quantitative research method to investigate a relationship between predefined variables (Venkatesh et al., 2013), whereas qualitative research focuses on the findings associated with identified themes and patterns (Haneef, 2013). Quantitative research is used to answer the *what* of the predefined variables in addition to the *how* of the research conducted (Yu et al., 2014). The qualitative research design involves using analysis and findings associated with identified theory testing (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Quantitative researchers conduct statistical tests and analyses of the data collected with the goal of discovering the connection or relationship between the variables and making predictions (Haneef, 2013). I concluded the quantitative research method was not suitable for use in researching strategies restaurant managers used to reduce employee absenteeism.

Mixed method research was not an appropriate method for this study because using the mixed method requires the researcher to use both the qualitative and quantitative methods concurrently or sequentially to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon of interest (Abro, Khurshid, & Aamir, 2015; Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Imran & Yusoff, 2015). The mixed-method researcher focuses on multiple worldviews of the research conducted using several types of collected data (Abro et al., 2015; Haneef, 2013). In qualitative research, the researcher focuses on a single research inquiry (Venkatesh et al., 2013). As the researcher, I concluded mixed-method research was not suitable for researching the strategies restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism.

Research Design

The single case study design is best suited for researchers who wish to focus on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting (Sato, 2016; Turner & Danks, 2014) and for researchers who seek to explore a constrained system through detailed, in-depth analysis of data collected from multiple types of information (Gaya & Smith, 2016; Singh, 2014). Researcher uses the case study design to understand a real-life phenomenon under conditions relevant to the intended investigation of the current event (Gaya & Smith, 2016). In many instances, case study research connects to social science research (Anthony & Jack, 2009) through a snapshot at one point in time to inspire new ideas, expand a theory, or develop a new theory connecting empirical theory bases for the research (Elman, Gerring, & Mahoney, 2016). The case study design was the most appropriate design because my goal was to explore in-depth strategies that managers in a restaurant use to reduce employee absenteeism.

I considered using the phenomenological and ethnography qualitative research designs to answer the research question. However, the phenomenological and ethnography research designs were not suitable to explore the strategies used by restaurant managers to reduce employee absenteeism. Researchers use a phenomenological design to study the meanings of participants' shared lived experiences (Asmat, Ramzan, & Chaudhry, 2015; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014). In contrast, researchers use the case study design to understand a real-life phenomenon under conditions relevant to the intended investigation of the current event (Gaya & Smith, 2016). Researchers use the phenomenological design to uncover essential invariant features of the individuals'

lived experiences (Mtshelwane, Nel, & Brink, 2016; Ziakas & Boukas, 2014) through interviews (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014; VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015) and other collection methods, such as observations and documentary analysis (Mtshelwane et al., 2016). The phenomenological design is helpful for the researcher in collecting information by uncovering, analyzing, and understanding how individuals perceive their lived experiences and the meanings attached to those lived experiences (Mtshelwane et al., 2016). Because of these reasons, the phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study.

Ethnographic design is appropriate for researchers studying the culture of a group within a specific period of time through collecting primarily participation, observational, and interview data (Blount et al., 2015; Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017). In contrast, the case study design is best suited for researchers who wish to focus on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting (Sato, 2016; Turner & Danks, 2014) at a single point in time. In conducting research following an ethnographic design, researchers collect data by studying people or participating in social interactions to understand the everyday contexts of their world (Bamkin, Maynard, & Goulding, 2016). Researchers who use the ethnographic design spend time in the field to collect rich observational data and interview data (Bamkin et al., 2016; Brown, 2014) that reflect the participant culture until the researchers conclude the data collected are sufficient for the research (Abraham, 2014). The ethnographic design was not suitable for the present study because I did not intend to collect cultural-focused data from a group setting within a specific period.

For a qualitative research single case study, data saturation is understood to be achieved based on the researcher's determination that further interviews or data collection do not reveal any new data, themes, or codes from the participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). The quality of interviews, sampling procedure, and researcher experience can influence the sample size needed to reach data saturation (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). The researcher must consider if the sample size is adequate to reach data saturation and answer the research question (Roy et al., 2015). In this single case study, I was committed to continue to collect and analyze data until no new data, themes, or codes emerged from the restaurant managers' interview data.

The rationale for selecting participants should involve both inclusion and exclusion criteria (Killawi et al., 2014) to identify participants with unique perspectives of the research topic in question (Robinson, 2014) and exclude participants who do not meet the criteria. The researcher must define the individuals who are eligible to participate (Yin, 2014) before recruiting participants. I developed the participant criteria and identified the participants who could share knowledge and experiences to address the research question of this study. To empower each potential participant to make a knowledgeable decision about participating in the study, I provided precise information in the informed consent process that outlined the participation criteria of the study.

Determining the eligibility criteria for participants of a study requires a researcher to identify the suitability of the participants who can contribute to the research (Ibrahim & Sigani, 2015). For this study, I based the eligibility criteria for each participant on his

or her management experience in the restaurant and experience related to reducing employee absenteeism. I purposively recruited participants from a restaurant located in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area who were employed at the management level and had experience in implementing and executing effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. Managers are typically familiar with the operations of the organization (Koyuncu et al., 2014). The optimal interview location is one that provides a comfortable environment and is suitable for the participants to actively respond to questions (Paulo, Albuquerque, Saraiva, & Bull, 2015). I met each participant in a location of his or her choice that was private and in which the participant felt at ease to engage in the interview.

Population and Sampling

The population that I identified for this qualitative single case study was restaurant managers. A population is a group of individuals identified by the researcher's sample criteria who have some common characteristics (Landers & Behrend, 2015). A well-defined population can become the basis for applying research results to other relevant populations (Eldredge, Weigel, & Kroth, 2014). Landers and Carlson (2017) suggested that researchers use a sample of the larger population group to complete their research studies. The sample population for this research study was managers of a restaurant located in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area.

In qualitative research, researchers select a sampling method to provide insight and an understanding of the proposed research (Linos & Carlson, 2017). Purposeful sampling is a technique that is widely used in qualitative research for the selection of

information-rich participants for the research (Bungay, Oliffe, & Atchison, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015) because information-rich participants can provide the researcher with a wealth of information about the purpose of the research (Duan, Bhaumik, Palinkas, & Hoagwood, 2015). Researchers use purposeful sampling as a research approach to identify the participants likely to have the richest information to address the research objectives (Ahmed & Carrim, 2016; Curry, Mwavita, Holter, & Harris, 2016). I chose purposeful sampling as the sampling strategy for this study.

The purposeful sampling method involves selecting participants based on the identified characteristics of the participant (Frock, 2015). Sound and careful purposeful sampling is critical to the researcher's investigation results (Dean, 2014; Frock, 2015). Purposeful sampling is ideal for capturing and describing experiences based on the genuineness of participants' perspectives and documenting the information in a qualitative study (Demirbas, Flint, & Bennett, 2014). In contrast, convenience sampling involves choosing potential participants from among those convenient to participate in the research study (Robinson, 2014). Convenience sampling was too broad an approach for this research study because not all the participants might have fit within the required inclusion criteria (Robinson, 2014). In conducting snowball sampling, the researcher expands the participant group asking participants to identify and recruit other potential participants for the study (Emerson, 2015; Lucas, 2014), but snowball sampling might lead to referred participants who are outside the requirements of the study (Hyysalo et al., 2015). Because the participant characteristic of interest was restaurant managers who use

absenteeism reduction strategies, purposeful sampling was best suited for this single case study.

An exact sample size for conducting a qualitative research study can be difficult to determine (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015). The sample size for specific single case studies depends on the purpose of the study (Malterud et al., 2015). In some instances, interviewing at least 10 participants for a qualitative single case study is adequate to answer the research question (Marcella & Kelly, 2015). Boddy (2016) asserted a sample size of six to 12 in-depth interviews is appropriate for a qualitative research study. In this qualitative single case study, I focused on a single restaurant. The projected sample size consisted of 10 criteria-eligible restaurant managers, which I believed would enable me to reach data saturation, collect rich data, and understand the strategies restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. However, my study consisted of 3 eligible managers from a single restaurant who implemented successfully strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

In a qualitative research study, data saturation is the point in the data collection process at which the researcher determines little to no additional evidence of themes, insights, or information will be obtained from conducting additional interviews (Boddy, 2016). Qualitative researchers aim to interview until data saturation is achieved, thereby justifying the identification of a particular sample size in any qualitative study (Boddy, 2016). For a qualitative research study, the researcher uses various factors to determine the sample size needed to reach data saturation (Marshall et al., 2013). This qualitative single case study was focused on a single restaurant. I determined I had reached data

saturation when no additional participant who met the established criteria were available to be interviewed.

Researchers should have an established participant criteria protocol to select the participants for the research study (Maki, Floyd, & Roberson, 2015). A properly planned participant protocol can enable the researcher to avoid delays or wasteful participant recruitment (van Wijk, 2014). Researchers should not consider including in their studies individuals who do not fit the identified criteria (DeFeo, 2013). I developed the participant inclusion criteria around restaurant managers to answer the research question.

Recruitment of participants for a research study might be a challenge if the researcher has not considered the interview setting or location (Rimando et al., 2015). Participants may be hesitant to engage in the process if the interview setting or location poses a concern for them (Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014; Rimando et al., 2015). The interview setting chosen should allow for few distractions (Adesoro et al., 2016; Brubacher, Poole, & Dickinson, 2015). Namageyo-Funa et al. (2014) suggested the researcher should secure locations for the interviews that are private and noiseless. It is particularly important for the interview location to be a quiet setting if the researcher plans to use a recording device (Brédart, Marrel, Abetz-Webb, Lasch, & Acquadro, 2014; Urhuogo, Addo, & Williams, 2014). Researchers should offer various interview setting options to the participants to reduce their anxiety and increase participation (Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). Participants are more likely to give truthful, complete, and thoughtful answers if they are relaxed and engaged during the interview process (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). I had carefully considered the locations where the interviews took place to

ensure the environment was comfortable for the participants. In deference to the participants' work locations, I made every effort to accommodate an offsite interview location of the participants' choosing to reduce interruptions and protect the privacy of the participants' responses.

Ethical Research

The primary tenet of ethical research is to make certain the study participants are not subject to risk or harm (Kendall & Halliday, 2014). Ssali, Poland, and Seeley (2016) discussed steps the researcher should take to ensure the participants experience no harm from participating in the research by following the ethical standards of informed consent, voluntary participation, and anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure the ethical protection of the participants is adequate and meets the ethical standards, I complied with the ethical guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). To protect participants' rights and confidentiality relative to my research, I followed the guidelines set out in the informed consent around withdrawal from the study, incentives for participation, participant confidentiality, and data security and disposal.

It is essential that potential participants receive information about the study and sign an informed consent form before their involvement in the study begins (Alahmad, Al Jumah, & Dierickx, 2015). Researchers follow the informed consent process to obtain permission from a potential participant to engage in a research study (Johnson, 2014; Schrems, 2014). The informed consent form, which contains detailed information on the purpose of the study, is used to collect the signed permission of each participant. Each

participant received a copy of the signed consent form after a detailed review of the form content and prior to commencement of the study.

Participants have the right to withdraw consent at any point during a research study (Alahmad et al., 2015). Researchers sometimes include incentives to entice hard-to-reach participants for a study (Ibrahim & Sidani, 2014). Participants were able to withdraw their consent to participate in the study at any time by contacting me via e-mail or telephone. I did not extend any incentives to participate in the study because this population was not a hard-to-reach population. This study concluded when only all participants who volunteered completed the interview. Upon completion of the study, I shared a summary of the findings with the participants.

Given the new technological advancements, a researcher must develop and execute a data management policy for securing the data during and after completion of a research study (Cliggett, 2013). This policy should include how the data will be stored and eventually destroyed. To ensure confidentiality and protection of the participants, I will continue to store the printed transcripts of the data and the USB drive containing the electronic files in a safe for which no other person but me has the combination. After the 5 years of data storage required by Walden University, I will permanently delete the electronic data files, destroy the USB drive, and shred the printed transcripts of the data.

The institutional review board (IRB) is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects (Suter & Suter, 2016). The researcher must provide detailed information to the IRB on how human subjects can participate in the research study and how their rights are protected (Hamilton & Stichler, 2015). Once approved, researchers

must follow the agreed plan (Shore et al., 2015). The IRB approval number for the study was 09-27-17-0060068. No participant inquiry, contact, or data collection commenced until I received approval received from the Walden University IRB.

Ethical codes of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of the participants (Johnson, 2014) are a critical step of the research process when conducting interviews. Chiasson, Terras, and Smart (2015) suggested each interview transcript should be assigned a code to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Typically, researchers assign a unique participant number to represent each participant's identity and protect the confidentiality of the participants (Doshy & Wang, 2014; Welsh et al., 2014). I used a unique participant coding system to protect the identity of each participant.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection for a qualitative single case study is the first stage in the research process (Rimando et al., 2015). The researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Kock, Niesz, & McCarthy, 2014; Twining, Heller, Nassbaum, & Tsai, 2017) when he or she uses an interview process to collect data from study participants (Hedlund, Börjesson, & Österberg, 2015). I was the researcher and the primary data collection instrument in this study.

Data collection sources typically used in a qualitative case study include interviews, observations, and other supporting artifacts (Cronin, 2014; Kock et al., 2014). One of the most common methods of qualitative data collection is the interview (Kock et al., 2014; Morrison & Stomski, 2015). Options for formats of interviews include structured, unstructured, and semistructured (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014).

Semistructured interviews allow the researcher to obtain additional information during the data collection process to facilitate development of a complete perspective through the information sharing process (Hashim, Noordin, & Saifuddin, 2015). Archival records used in a case study in conjunction with other data sources support the study (Yin, 2014). As the primary data collection instrument, I collected the data using open-ended interview questions presented in a semistructured fashion (see Appendix A). In addition, I collected company archival documents from the participants to support the data collected through the interviews. Finally, I allowed participants optimum flexibility to respond to the questions during the interview.

Qualitative researchers often use procedural guides, such as the interview protocol, to guide the data collection process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) because using an interview protocol can reduce potential inconsistencies during the data collection process (Morton, Rivers, Charters, & Spinks, 2013). An interview protocol is a guide researchers can use to gather additional information during the interview (Jansen, Capesius, Lachter, Greenseid, & Keller, 2014). The interview protocol is a best practice used in qualitative research to ensure the data connect to the research question and the findings of the study (Andriopoulos & Slater, 2013). During the data collection process, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) to guide the interview process and reduce possible inconsistencies.

The data collection process I used for this single case study involved me posing open-ended questions in semistructured interviews and collecting archival data from the participants. Posing open-ended questions provided participants the opportunity to

communicate comprehensive answers without constraints (Cole, Chen, Ford, Phillips, and Stevens, 2014; Kock et al., 2014). Upon completion of the interviews, I collected company archival data from participants for additional information to answer the research question. Other sources of documentation are essential for corroboration of evidence (Madhlangobe, Chikasha, Mafa, & Kurasha, 2014). Rhodes, Bergstrom, Lok, and Cheng (2014) asserted that researchers should incorporate company archival data in the data collection plan to answer the research question. Upon completion of the data collection process, I conducted member checking to validate the interpreted data collected from the participants.

Qualitative researchers use member checking as a strategy to improve the reliability and validity of the data collected during an interview (Flicker et al., 2015). Member checking enables the researcher to correct and validate the data findings upon completing interpretation of the data (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016) and increases the validity and reliability of the data collected from the participants (Milosevic, Bass, & Combs, 2015). Member checking adds rigor to a study by providing participants an opportunity clarify their input and decrease researcher bias (Islam & Oremus, 2014) and provides an opportunity for the interviewees to review the interpreted data for accuracy (Cooper, 2015). Researchers use member checking as an element of triangulation to diminish misinterpretation by the researcher (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). As the primary data collection instrument, I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collection process by providing the participants an opportunity to verify that I had captured and interpreted their responses accurately.

Data Collection Technique

Interviews

The face-to-face interview was one of the data collection techniques I used to collect data on the strategies restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The second data source was company archival data. Interviews are one of the richest data collection techniques used in qualitative studies (Singh, 2014). Interviews are an effective technique for gathering information through human conversation (Qu & Dumay, 2011) because they allow the researcher to gain a complete perspective of the information shared during the data collection process (Hashim et al., 2015). The semistructured interview process allows the researcher to ask additional questions and to prompt the participant for more data, as needed, to clarify responses or if new information emerges (Baškarada, 2014).

Interviews offer a variety of advantages and disadvantages a researcher must consider. One major advantage of conducting interviews is the amount of quality data collected that can be during the interview process (Cardamone, Eboli, & Mazzulla, 2014). Face-to-face interviews allow the researcher and the participant to interact and communicate with each other at a high level (Cardamone et al., 2014). Another major advantage is the researcher can ensure the participant understands the question; the researcher can provide clarification if needed (Caramone et al., 2014). In face-to-face interviews, the researcher can observe participants' nonverbal gestures and behaviors (McIntosh & Morse, 2015; Seitz, 2016). A disadvantage of using interviews is the participant might misinterpret the question (Baškarada, 2014) and not ask for

clarification, thereby providing an answer unrelated to the question. Other disadvantages of face-to-face interviews include the potential for interviewer bias, geographical limitations, cost of travel to conduct the interviews, and time pressure on participants (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). After reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of using the interview as the primary data collection technique, I determined the advantages outweighed the disadvantages.

The interview setting chosen offered few distractions, which allowed for clear information gathering (Brédart et al., 2014; Urhuogo et al., 2014). Researchers should propose different interview settings and options to the participants to reduce anxiety and increase participation (Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). The interview location should be a quiet room to allow the researcher to use a recording device with minimal noise interference (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I selected a suitable date, time, and setting prior to the interviews. To reduce participants' concern regarding the interview location, I offered several secure interview locations that were private and quiet. I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix B) as a guide through the interview process to obtain consent and to collect data and additional information through clarification of interview questions.

Archival Data

The second data collection technique I used was to review company archival data. Using secondary data allows the researcher to access data not normally included in the research design (Yin, 2014). Madhlangobe et al. (2014) recommended researchers use other sources of data in a single case study to corroborate the evidence. Archival records in conjunction with the primary data source can support the study (Yin, 2014).

Examining company archival data is a best practice for single case study researchers (Green & Gooden, 2014).

Pilot Study

A pilot study is a process researchers use to refine the data collection plans and procedures (Yin, 2014). Conducting a pilot study can help the researcher identify and filter out potential problems in the research design (van Wijk, 2014). Dikko (2016) recommended a pilot study to test a research instrument or the quality of the interview protocol. After I received IRB approval, I did not conduct a pilot study. The extensive review process and the use of the interview protocol (see Appendix B) did not warrant a pilot study.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers construct an organizational system by using folders according to the participant name or alias (Margarian, 2014). Researchers should use a separate Microsoft Word file for each participant and transfer the data collected after the interview into each participant's respective folder (van Wijk, 2014). As a secondary option, researchers should store the interview data collected by each participant identification number on a compact disk (van Wijk, 2014). The researcher's results should be organized and maintained by data type, collected data, and data analysis results (Margarian, 2014). I kept track of the data using electronic and paper folders. I categorized the data system using electronic folders by the interview dates; each folder contained subfolders that included (a) manager pseudonyms, (b) transcribed interviews, (c) scanned company archival records, (d) reflective journals, (e) data analysis, and (g) findings. In addition,

file folders contained copies of transcripts and company archival data organized by each manager's pseudonym.

The researcher must develop and execute a data management policy for securing the data during and after completion of a research study (Cliggett, 2013). Given the technological advancements in data management, there are several ways to secure data and protect participants' confidentiality (Brett, O'Neill, & O'Gorman, 2014; Cliggett, 2013). Researchers should store collected data on a compact disk according to the interview date (van Wijk, 2014). As an alternative to compact disk, researchers can use external hard drives or USB drives for storing confidential research data and secure these media in a locked cabinet; electronic filing on a password-protected computer is also acceptable (Wahyuni, 2012). As the researcher, and to comply with Walden University IRB and DBA program requirements on participant confidentiality and protection, I stored the printed data as well as electronic files on a USB drive in a safe to which only I have the access code. After the required 5 years of data storage, I will permanently delete the electronic data files, destroy the USB drive, and shred the printed transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began with member checking and ended with member checking. To begin the data analysis process, the researcher provided each participant with the transcript of his or her interview for review of accuracy and completeness of the transcribed data. After data analysis was completed, the researcher provided the findings to participants to confirm the researcher's interpretations of the meanings of their interview responses were accurate and complete. The ultimate purpose of member

checking is to enable the researcher to correct and validate the data findings upon completion of data analysis (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking involves the researcher providing the interpreted data to the participants for validation of the data collected during the interview (Morse & McEvoy, 2014) so participants can review the information for accuracy (Cooper, 2015). Participants should be encouraged to correct, confirm, or negate any errors of transcribed data using the member checking process (Birt et al., 2016). For accuracy and transparency of data, I used the member checking process to validate the data collected from the interview by using face-to-face meetings or by e-mailing the transcripts to the respective participants. I presented the options for a face-to-face meeting or e-mail validation to each participant upon completion of each interview session. The member checking process continued until the participant validated the interview data.

Triangulation involves the researcher developing an understanding of a phenomenon using multiple methods or data sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Derahman, 2017). Using triangulation diminishes researcher bias and misinterpretation of the data sources and viewpoints during data checking against the various data sources (Cho & Lee, 2014). Researchers perform triangulation to test the validity of the data collected from the different sources (Carter et al., 2014; Poee, Mafini, & Makhubele, 2015). There are four types of triangulation used for correlating: (a) data (people, time, and space); (b) investigator (findings from multiple researchers); (c) theory (multiple theoretical strategies); and (d) methodology data from multiple data collection methods (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

For this single case study, I used methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation is the data collection process using multiple methods about the same phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). Methodological triangulation enriches the credibility of data interpretation during data analysis (van Dijk, Vervoort, van Wijk, Kalkman, & Schuurmans, 2016). Researchers can use methodological triangulation to reduce data misinterpretation and thereby increase the quality and reliability of the research (Cho & Lee, 2014; Joslin & Müller, 2016). I used methodological triangulation via multiple data collection sources, including semistructured interviews and company archival records, to validate the data during the data analysis process.

Methodological triangulation includes the use of more than one data collection source (Graue, 2015; Mayer, 2015). One of the steps in data analysis is to review interview transcripts to remove unclear comments, nondescript words, and irrelevant responses (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). Upon completion of the interviews, collection of company archival data, and member checking, I conducted a review of the transcript to remove unclear comments and irrelevant responses from the participants.

During the data analysis process, I incorporated each participant's coded identifier using a coding system of PI for *participant interview* followed by a number, which removed all identifying information. For example, PI3 referred to the third participant interviewed. Assigning a code to each participant ensures the confidentiality of that participant during data analysis (Chiasson et al., 2015; Tobe, Ames, & Carolan, 2016). Next, I entered the interview information and secondary data into coding and analysis software. After the coding and analysis, I conducted a review of the conceptual

framework and the literature review against the data analysis to identify data patterns against the themes and emerging patterns from the collected data.

Several software programs exist to code and assist the researcher in conducting data analysis, including Atlas.ti, MAXDQA, NVivo (Franzosi, Doyle, McClelland, Putnam Rankin, & Vicari, 2013), GABEK-WinRelan, QDA Miner, and Microsoft Excel (Raich, Müller, & Abfalter, 2014). NVivo is well suited to helping the researcher analyze a wide variety of document types; the software interfaces with and allows for uploading of Microsoft Word documents and other portable document formats, such as rich text and plain text formats (Castleberry, 2014). NVivo is a software program that researchers use to code and group data, extract themes, and conduct textual encoding for data analysis (Derobertmeasure & Robertson, 2014; Waller, Hockin, & Smith, 2017). Researchers use NVivo software to quickly generate themes and reduce researcher error during the data coding process (Edwards-Jones, 2014; Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). I used QSR International NVivo, Version 11, to facilitate coding and analysis of themes derived from the data collected through interviews and company archival data, and to assist me in the data analysis process by exploring themes and emerging patterns in all the data collected during the interview process.

The coding process is the core of data analysis (Raich et al., 2014). The practice of coding involves the researcher connecting interpretations, data sources, and report writing parts in the data analysis (Raich et al., 2014). Identifying key themes noted from the review of the data is part of the coding process in qualitative research data analysis (Sümen & Calisici, 2016). Researchers regularly identify key themes during word

frequency searches from the collected data (Houghton et al., 2016; Yin, 2014). Using the conceptual framework to guide the data analysis process can help the researcher to identify the key themes (Cameron, Naglie, Silver, & Gignac, 2013). Validation involves the researcher identifying key themes that emerge from data and aligning the key themes to the study (Chan et al., 2013). During the data coding process, I focused on connecting the key themes and the newly published literature from the data collected by concentrating on the concepts and theories of absenteeism identified in the conceptual framework and literature review. As new literature and themes on absenteeism emerged, I incorporated all newly identified information as part of the presentation of findings.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research relies on the dependability of the research (Olson, McAllister, Grinnell, Gehrke Walters, & Appunn, 2016). Dependability is the assessment of the theory development, data collection, and data analysis process (de Ceunynck, Kusumastuti, Hannes, Janssens, & Wets, 2013). Also, dependability is the ability to take the data results from the study and apply them to a similar process within a specific period of time using different circumstances (Elo et al., 2014; Pompeii, 2015). De Ceunynck et al. (2016) explained that dependability indicates agreement between the outcomes of the research and the documented data. The researcher's role is to provide rich descriptions of the participants, definitions of key themes, data collection process, and data analysis procedures that contribute to dependability of the research study (Lishner, 2015). Morse (2015) argued that dependability increases when another

researcher can readily follow the decision process used by the original researcher. To ensure reliability, I utilized member checking to validate the accuracy of the data collected. Member checking enables the researcher to correct and validate the interpretation of responses upon completion of data interpretation (Birt et al., 2016) and provides an opportunity for the interviewees to validate the accuracy of the collected and interpreted data (Cooper, 2015). Member checking adds rigor to a research study by providing participants an opportunity clarify their input and decrease researcher bias (Islam & Oremus, 2014), as well as increases the validity and reliability of the data collected from participants (Milosevic et al., 2015).

Validity

Validity of data is contingent on the credibility of the data collected during the research process (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). Credibility is determined based on evaluation of the research findings from the data obtained from the viewpoint of the participants (de Ceunynck et al., 2013; Naumann, Bowden, & Gabbott, 2017). To ensure credibility, I used methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation is the use of multiple data collection processes regarding the same phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). Methodological triangulation enhances the credibility of the data interpretation during the data analysis process (van Dijk et al., 2016). Researchers use methodological triangulation to reduce data misunderstanding and increase the reliability of the research (Leon, 2015). For this study, I conducted triangulation using data collected from semistructured interviews and company archival data. Transferability is the degree the context of the findings fit outside the study (Pompeii, 2015). Providing thorough

descriptions of the research helps future readers of the study to transfer the findings to another context (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016; Poore et al., 2015). To satisfy the requirement for transferability, I provided rich and detailed descriptions to validate the research context for future researchers.

In qualitative research, a threat to transferability derives from the researcher's failure to provide detailed and thick descriptions in the research (Morse & McEvoy, 2014; Pompeii, 2015). Transferability is the degree to which the study findings can fit within a context outside the study (Pompeii, 2015) and future researchers can evaluate future findings to another context (Brooks & Normore, 2015; Elo et al., 2014). As such, the researcher should provide detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, data analysis process, and research findings (Elo et al., 2014; Sarma, 2015). To satisfy transferability, researchers should provide detailed, thick descriptions to assist other readers in extrapolating the findings and constructs meaningful to other places and people (Pompeii, 2015). To reduce threats to transferability, I provided rich and detailed descriptions of the participant, research context, and data analysis. By providing thorough descriptions, analysis, and findings in this study, I enabled current and future readers and researchers to make an informed decision about the transferability of findings derived from the research study.

Confirmability is the perspective of the inquirer's interpretation to bias, interest, and motivation (Pompeii, 2015) and is the result of making the research process so transparent that readers can verify, if similar research is conducted, the research achieves similar conclusions (van der Merwe & Nienaber, 2015). To address confirmability, I used

member checking, collect data from multiple data sources, and prepare an audit trail. The use of member checking ensures confirmability (Killawi et al., 2014) and increases the accuracy and validity of the researcher's findings (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). Researcher bias in the study findings may result in the collection of data from only one data source (Ellram & Tate, 2016). To enhance the confirmability and reduce researcher bias, I collected data from multiple sources, which included semistructured interviews and company archival data. An audit trail is composed of details of data collection, the methods used to collect the data, and the data analysis process (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). A research study audit trail should include the researcher's interview notes, journal, and complete description of the interview process (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). For this study, the audit trail consisted of the research proposal and justification, and the data collection and interview notes. The NVivo software was the study record used for data analysis and data analysis process.

Boddy (2016) and Pillay and Mafini (2017) defined data saturation as the point at which the researcher determines no new themes or information will be observed from further data collection through additional interviews or cases. Fusch and Ness (2017) and Adham et al. (2015) added that data saturation is the point at which additional coding is no longer feasible. To achieve data saturation, I interviewed managers until no new data, themes, or codes emerged from the interviews.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 contained a restatement of the purpose of the study and the role of the researcher. I described the participants and justified the research method and research

design. I also included a description of the participants, population and sampling, data collection, and data organization. This section included a discussion on ethical research and the reliability and validity of the study.

In Section 3, I include an overview of the study, the analysis of the findings of the collected data, a discussion of the application to professional practice, and implications for social change. Also in Section 3, I present my recommendations for action and future research on employee absenteeism. Section 3 concludes with a discussion of my reflections on the doctoral journey, and the study summary and conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 includes an overview of the purpose of the study, the study research question, and a presentation of the findings. I collected data for this study from interviews and company archival documents. The data collected was then transcribed, uploaded into data analysis software, compiled, and interpreted, allowing for the development of a conclusion to answer the central research question. Section 3 concludes with the study application to professional practice based on the research findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research actions for managers on employee absenteeism. The section concludes with a summary addressing the importance of implementing effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism in the restaurant industry.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore the strategies that restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The study consisted of three recruited participants from a single restaurant located in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area that had successfully implemented strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. I posed 10 interview questions (see Appendix A) to each of the participant restaurant managers to gain an understanding of the strategies they used to reduce employee absenteeism. All three participants (PI1–PI3) held management positions in the restaurant and were involved in implementing strategies to reduce employee absenteeism.

In addition to conducting semistructured interviews, I reviewed company policy documents, employee performance reviews, and company memorandums. Each participant signed an informed consent form before the interview began. Information revealed by participants in the interviews indicated the managers were effective in improving employee absenteeism by consistent enforcement of policies, engaging in clear communication between the management and the employees, and providing a positive work environment. These themes emerged from the analysis of data collected through the interviews and a review of company archival documents.

In Section 3, I provided the study research question, an overview of the purpose of the study, and a presentation of the findings. The data that I collected from the interviews and company archival documents presented conclusions based on my actions of transcribing, compiling, and interpreting. Conclusions were used to answer the central research question. Section 3 concludes with the application of the study to professional practice based on the research findings, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research actions for managers to take on employee absenteeism. I then address the importance of implementing effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism in the restaurant industry.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question in this descriptive single case study was: What effective strategies do restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism? On average, an employee is absent 9 days each year (Kocakulah et al., 2016). In the United States, employee absenteeism cost exceeds 15% of company profits (Kocakulah et al.,

2016), or approximately \$16,000 per employee annually (Lally, 2014). To discover the themes that might provide insight into the strategies restaurant managers used to reduce employee absenteeism, I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews with three managers of a restaurant located in the Baltimore-Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Each participant's interview lasted 45 minutes, and all interviews took place in a private area of the restaurant. I used QSR International NVivo Version 11 data analysis software to organize, code, and query the uploaded data to identify and connect the major themes in the transcribed audio files of the semistructured interviews with each of the participant's responses and notes from the review of company documents related to the research question. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) communication, (b) consistent enforcement of management policies, and (c) positive work environment.

Theme 1: Communication

The first theme that emerged from analysis of the data collected in this study was communication. All three participants referred to communication between the manager and the employee as a critical part of their strategies to reduce employee absenteeism. Managers use communication to keep employees informed about all information related to company policies, especially employee absenteeism. Managers who use effective communication practices can reduce employee absenteeism (PI1 and PI2). Participant PI1 shared, "Managers must communicate with each employee daily to build a connection of trust. The trust built between managers and employees opens the lines of communication, therefore presenting an opportunity to discuss employee performance, especially absenteeism issues" (PI1).

Employees are more inclined to share information about themselves when they are comfortable communicating with management (PI2). Participant PI3 stated, “Communicating daily with each employee, no matter how quick the conversation is, builds trust between the manager and the employee.” Participant PI3 further noted that when an employee is struggling with maintaining good attendance, a quick conversation about the need to maintain good attendance with the employees often results in the employee making an effort to improve attendance by mitigating his or her future absenteeism. Communication and building trust with the employees can influence and improve absenteeism (PI1, PI2, and PI3). The findings of the outcomes associated with building trust and having good communication between the manager and the employee were similar to the findings of Sutanto and Kurniawan (2016). Their findings suggested that improvement of the working relationship between employee and employer could build trust and open the lines of communication.

Concerning the importance of communication, Participant PI2 stated that managers should use clear and concise communication to encourage the employee, not intimidate or scare the employee to change. Some former managers used communication to intimidate the employees to change their absenteeism habits, often resulting in that employee, who was intimidated by the manager, absenteeism increasing, or even quitting altogether (PI2). As long as the manager openly communicates what the standards are, and management is transparent, employees will respect that clear communication and will improve their attendance (PI2). Participant PI1 specified, “Since the management team determined clear and concise communication to be a vital part of employees’ response to

change, training in effective communication with employees is a standard part of the manager's training program." Training managers to use clear and concise communication with the employees has resulted in reduced misunderstandings about absenteeism (PI3). Management training on communication has also helped new managers communicate using positive words of encouragement rather than intimidation to get employees to change their absenteeism habits (PI2). These findings concerning the importance of using clear and concise communication are similar to those reported by Justin, Kaitlynn, Bharat, and Jitendra (2017). Justin et al.'s findings indicate that a good practice for motivating and empowering employees is clear and concise communication from the management team. Employees often respond quickly when the communication between the manager and the employee is clear and concise, and that response with decreased levels of absenteeism.

One-on-one meetings are another effective method of communication with the employees (PI1, PI2, and PI3). One-on-one meetings with the employees were the most efficient way to communicate with the employee, especially when addressing violations of the absenteeism policy (PI2 and PI3). Participant PI3 shared that communicating in a group format is not always effective, especially when only a small number of the employees are violating the absenteeism policy. In addition to management holding one-on-one meetings to communicate policy violations, managers used the one-on-one meeting format as an initial step to the disciplinary process (PI1, PI2, and PI3). Employees often share more information about why they have been absent from work when meeting with the manager in a one-on-one meeting (PI3).

Managers use the one-on-one meeting to discuss absenteeism to help employees develop absenteeism reduction strategies, improve trust and performance, and expand the lines of communication with management (PI2). PI1 underscored the importance of holding one-on-one meetings as a means of helping to expand the communication efforts, increasing employees' accountability for their actions, and contributing to improvements in reduced employee absenteeism. The findings concerning managers' use of one-on-one meetings to expand communication efforts between management and employees were similar to those of Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, and Moye (2015). The researchers found that communication through one-on-one meetings can help employees solve problems while providing opportunities for managers. This one-on-one meeting time with the employees provides an opportunity for managers to reinforce policies to encourage change.

Communicating accountability from the managers to the employees is another effective strategy to reduce employee absenteeism. Employees often share among themselves their knowledge about the company absenteeism policies and practices (PI1, PI2, and PI3). Managers rely on employees to communicate attendance and absenteeism policies from one employee to another (PI1 and PI2). Employees work with each other every day, usually on the same shift. When an employee is consistently absent, other employees working that shift must cover for the absent employee. Participant PI1 stated, "We have a small management staff. Therefore, we use employees as peer-to-peer communication channels to hold employees accountable when another employee is consistently absent." Participant PI3 shared that employees hold each other accountable more often than the managers hold the employees accountable. Consequently,

communicating attendance policies with the employees through accountability from the manager and employee-to-employee means that employees hold each other accountable for showing up for work or finding a replacement for the shift (PI2).

Overall, participants PI1, PI2, and PI3 reported believing that employee accountability, from both manager to employee and from employee to employee, helps to reduce employee absenteeism. More recently, Pulakos et al. (2015) asserted that to motivate change in employees, managers should use a group of champions (other employees) within the organization. These champions help to open communication channels, eliminate barriers, and contribute toward modeling a new mindset that fosters communication between managers and employees and between employers and employees.

A review of the employees' annual performance documents revealed information on several previous meetings between individual employees and the manager on the topic of absenteeism along with a history of the employees' absenteeism. Noted on each employee's performance record was a summary of the employee's absenteeism patterns between review cycles. The findings from the review of the employee performance records revealed the tracking process of employees' absences is still a work in progress. Some of the employees' performance records included detailed accounts of absenteeism patterns, whereas other records mentioned the employee absenteeism problem but contained no detailed information on patterns of employee absenteeism.

Participant PI1 shared that absenteeism documentation by management lacks consistent tracking of the employee absenteeism record. Although the absenteeism

documentation was lacking on the employee record, there were enough data collected on the employee to determine whether the employee has an absenteeism issue that must improve during the next review cycle. Participant PI3 underscored that management must do a better job, consistently noting employee absenteeism history and meeting notes to address an absenteeism problem before the employee reaches the performance review process. Consistent with the findings, each participant mentioned the performance review process, noting an employee absenteeism history is valuable information in management's strategy for reducing future employee absenteeism.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 1 supports Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory that leaders must discover how to communicate with employees to inspire employees to achieve personal goals that constitute acceptable performance. Vroom noted that leaders can motivate and influence employee performance and outcomes through increased knowledge about the needs and desires of employees. A leader's ability to understand the expectancy of the employee as related to improving the employees' motivation, performance, and expected outcomes is vital to influencing the employee to change (Vroom, 1964). Communication is important to increasing motivation (Hancock, 1995). When a manager communicates the expected performance outcomes desired by the organization, and the employee perceives his or her goals are congruent with the goals of the organization, the employee is motivated to satisfy the performance outcomes if the necessary behavior results in a desirable reward. Therefore, when a manager uses communication with employees to address absenteeism

policies and expectations, the interaction can influence a motivational change in the employees' behavior, thus reducing absenteeism.

Theme 2: Consistent Enforcement of Management Policies

The second theme that emerged from analysis of the data was consistent enforcement of management policies. Each participant emphasized that consistent enforcement of management policies between the managers is an essential strategy for reducing employee absenteeism (PI1, PI2, and PI3). Participants PI1 and PI2 underscored the importance of managers' support of other managers' decisions related to absenteeism. Although another manager's decision may not be the best decision at that time, the management team must support that manager's decision while in the presence of the employee, which shows consistent policy enforcement within the management team (PI2). During each management meeting, each manager reviews and discusses all policy changes to ensure that the entire management team understands all policy changes and the enforcement process of the policy (PI3). Once each manager is clear about the content of all policies and how to enforce each policy, the key is to inform each employee about the policy to sustain consistent management enforcement practices.

Informing employees of all policies is a critical step in management's enforcement of the policy on absenteeism (PI1 and PI3). The findings concerning the importance of consistency between policy enforcement among all managers in the organization are similar to those reported by Chen, Ramamurthy, and Wen (2015). Chen et al.'s findings indicated that there is a positive response to policy enforcement when management's enforcement of policies is consistent and employees are aware of all of the

policies and the implications of policy violation. Employees often have a keen awareness of management's lack of consistent policy enforcement and will use lack of consistent policy enforcement to violate a policy (PI1 and PI2). Participant PI1 remarked, "All managers play an important role in reducing absenteeism by strictly enforcing company policies." Comparatively, employers review and enforce company policies, and employee awareness of all policies must be consistent when management must document employee violations of company policies (Ford, Willey, White, & Domagalski, 2015). Consistent enforcement of management policies by each manager leads to each manager's compliance with the policy guidelines, thus reducing employee absenteeism.

Consistent enforcement of management policies leading to policy compliance of all managers with company policies on absenteeism is a critical part of the strategies for reducing employee absenteeism. The strategy of management policy enforcement consistently validates the employment agreement and the acceptance of the policy. Managers who comply with executing the policies of the company and employees who comply with those policies on absenteeism authenticate the management practices regarding consistent execution (PI1, PI2, and PI3). The manager who does not continually enforce management's policies, such as the several incidences in which the manager forgot to follow up with employees who were absent and who had not complied with the policy to find coverage for their missed shifts (PI2), has an adverse effect on the consistency of policy enforcement practices. This lack of consistent enforcement of management policies can reduce employee morale and increase employee absenteeism.

In case studies, researchers collect data through interviews, observations, and company archival document artifacts (Cronin, 2014; Kock et al., 2014), such as memoranda, company policies, and employee records. I reviewed the absenteeism policy, memoranda on absenteeism, and many employee performance review records from the company for the past year. The company policy on absenteeism outlined call-out procedures and the systematic process to address a policy violation, which included a notation on the employee's record.

Employee records included notations about the frequency of employee absenteeism and the reasons for the absence. Employees who did not comply with the “no call/no show” absenteeism policy for a work shift received a notation of the policy violation in his or her employee file (PI1, PI2, and PI3). Notations in the employee's record indicated a one-on-one meeting about the absence conducted between the manager and the employee. Participants PI1 and PI3 commented there are some times when policy follow-up—a one-on-one absence meeting between the manager and the employee—is not held and the employee not counseled on the policy standards. This lack of follow-up is a missed opportunity for the manager to enforce an absenteeism policy violation and outline the need for the employee to improve attendance. Although the policy clearly outlines employee call-out and policy violation procedures, management should consistently enforce the policy by reminding the employees of the policy and the consequences of failing to follow the policy (PI3). The company memorandums and the notations in the employee records supported the findings that managers may accomplish consistent enforcement of absenteeism policies through policy enforcement, informing

employees of policy requirements and execution, ultimately reducing employee absenteeism strategies. Overall, 90% of the time, employees are compliant with the company policies on employee absenteeism.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 2 supports Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory that leaders should know their employees' needs and desires to know how best to motivate employees to meet leaders' expected performance outcomes. In this study, all three participants spoke about the importance that managers must have a clear process for motivating employees through policy enforcement. The findings represented in this theme convey that leaders' knowledge and capabilities are critical to influencing a motivational change in employee behavior. These findings are similar to those reported by Bandow and Self (2016). Bandow and Self reported that providing employees with a clear understanding of performance, expected outcomes, and rewards is important for motivating employees to change. Therefore, when employees have a clear understanding of the policies related to absenteeism, employees can self-modify individual behavior to meet the expected performance outcomes outlined by management. Vroom asserted that the more effort leaders make to increase their knowledge of employees' needs and expected rewards, the better leaders can motivate and influence employee performance and outcomes. Therefore, managers who consistently enforce company policies on absenteeism could influence a motivational change in the employees' behavior, thus reducing absenteeism.

Theme 3: Positive Work Environment

The third theme that emerged from analysis of the data was a positive work environment. Participants PI1, PI2, and PI3 emphasized that one of the key strategies to reduce employee absenteeism is maintaining a positive work environment. The results of this study revealed employee observations of the workplace environment are either positive or negative on a daily basis (Cascio, 2015). Participant PI3 shared that when an employee leaves work at the end of the day with the perception of a positive work environment, that employee will show up for work on his or her next scheduled shift. However, if that same employee leaves for the day with the perception of the environment at work as being negative, that employee will think negatively about the next shift and whether or not he or she wants to come to work (PI3). Employees' perceptions of the work environment as positive and supportive affects their decision to report to work.

Maintaining a positive work environment in which the employee wants to come to work is essential for reducing employee absenteeism. For the service industry, such as the restaurant industry, understanding how employees view the work environment is critical because the influence that a negative environment can have an adverse effect on an employee's decision to attend work. If the environment is not positive, the employee starts to dread coming to work every day, thereby increasing the possibility of being absent (PI1). Gohar, Bashir, Abrar, and Asghar's (2015) findings revealed that employees who have a perception of the work environment as a positive one are less likely to be absent. In keeping with Gohas et al.'s findings, Jiménez, Dunkl, and Peißl (2015) found

that employees with a negative perception of the work environment have elevated levels of absenteeism. Employee perceptions of the working environment affect their decisions to attend work or to be absent for the day.

Analysis of the data collected for this study indicated managers concur that employees apparently prefer a supportive working environment. The notion of a supportive environment based on the employees' perceptions of a supervisor's support, fairness, and open communication (Johansen & Cadmus, 2015). An employee often adjusts to a work environment quickly if the employee appreciates how the manager supports the employee. Participant PI3 indicated that a supportive work environment in which the management team is concerned about employees' problems experiences reduced absenteeism. Managers found that employees with work ethics and a culture of belonging to part of a team have low incidences of absenteeism (PI1).

A manager showing appreciation for an employee's hard work and recognizing that employee by praising his or her work builds an environment that is supportive, which contributes to reduced absenteeism (PI3). The manager who takes the time to value an employee, recognize an employee for reaching a set goal, and following company policy helps maintain a work environment that supports employees' accomplishments (PI2). The findings concerning the importance of all managers providing a supportive working environment are similar to those reported by Colquitt and Zipay (2015). Colquitt and Zipay's findings revealed that a supportive environment builds employee confidence, which can change an employee's behavior. Overall, all three participants in the present study expressed similar sentiments: when a management team provides a positive,

supportive, and fair working environment, employees perceive the environment as a place where they want to come to work, thus reducing their absenteeism.

During a review of company artifacts, some of the notes from management meetings and employee performance review records were found to contain information about the positive work environment in the restaurant. From the information viewed, sustaining a positive work environment was essential to the management team as well as employees. Notes from one meeting mentioned the discussion of a previous meeting in which the importance of maintaining a positive work environment to build manager and employee trust. Several notations from the meetings stressed the importance that the management team must engage in positive but firm interaction and communication practices with the employees to sustain the employee's perception of the restaurant as a fair and positive work environment. Some employee performance review records contained comments on efforts of the management team to sustain a positive work environment, which was one of the reasons the employee continued to work at the restaurant. Several other employee performance records included notes that the restaurant was fun and had a positive atmosphere. However, one employee performance record included a note that the work environment was not positive.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Theme 3 supports Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory that leaders must discover what employees value to reduce absenteeism. Vroom explained that employees make conscious choices and motivational adjustments in an environment conducive to levels of performance relative to completing a task. Employees often make decisions to adjust

their behavior, such as reduced absenteeism, which indicates a correlation between the efforts and the performance. The findings represented in this theme indicate that the workplace environment can have an effect on employee absenteeism. These findings are similar to those reported by Ali et al. (2015). Ali et al. indicated the environment of the workplace has an effect on employees' levels of performance, which influences employees' absenteeism. Vroom asserted that when leaders increase their knowledge of what employees value, leaders can influence the employee decision process, which reduces employee absenteeism.

Applications to Professional Practice

Since absenteeism disrupts workflow and increases costs for organizations in the restaurant/food service industry (Cucchiella et al., 2014; Frost, 2016), profits are lost when leaders of the organization must additional hire workers or pay current employees to cover the duties of absent employees (Frick et al., 2013). As noted by Kocakulah et al. (2016), on average, the cost of employee absenteeism exceeds 15% of company profits each year due to lost productivity, overtime pay, and costs incurred for staff replacement. Business leaders are not prepared to manage employee absenteeism (Ford, 2014). Regardless of whether the problem begins with managers' preparedness or employees' behavior, employee absenteeism continues to affect the productivity and profitability of organizations (Diestel et al., 2014; Onikoyi et al., 2015).

The results of this single case study indicated that restaurant managers used strategies of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment to establish an atmosphere conducive to reducing

absenteeism. I limited the participants to managers of a single restaurant who had created and implemented successful strategies to establish an atmosphere to reduce employee absenteeism. The study findings could add to refining business practices within the restaurant industry. Restaurant managers could use the strategies identified by the themes of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and positive work environment to sustain financial well-being, improved employee productivity, and increased organizational profitability in the restaurant industry.

Business leaders could use the strategies of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and positive work environment within their organization to achieve similar objectives of reducing employee absenteeism. As evidenced by this study, open communication, the consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment are effective ways to develop long-term reductions in employee absenteeism, which could have a positive effect on organizational financial outcomes (Lambert et al., 2014) and employee productivity (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Chen et al. (2015) identified the importance of consistent enforcement of management policies as a positive response to employee absenteeism when employees are knowledgeable about all policies. Gohar et al. (2015) concluded that employees who have a positive perception of the work environment are less likely to be consistently absent. Justin et al. (2017) acknowledged motivating and empowering employees through communication from the management team is a good practice. Business leaders could use effective strategies to incorporate communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment in many of their business

practices to reduce employee absenteeism and contribute to a change in the organization, especially financial change.

My goal in conducting this single case study was to identify strategies restaurant managers use to address employee absenteeism. The findings from this study provide restaurant managers and owners with evidence of how effective strategies can reduce employee absenteeism in the organization and sustain productivity and profitability. Members of the restaurant/food service industry have expressed particular concerns with employee absenteeism (Ukandu & Ukpere, 2014), but these statements regarding absenteeism could apply to other industries.

Implications for Social Change

This qualitative descriptive single case study on employee absenteeism is significant to social change because it provides insights on how restaurant managers reduce employee absenteeism through implementation of effective strategies. Other restaurant managers and members of management in other industries can use these findings to understand how to reduce employee absenteeism through the implementation of effective strategies. The primary objective of this research was to explore strategies used by restaurant managers to reduce employee absenteeism. Employee absenteeism affects not only the company that employs these individuals, but also the community in which the company is located and the employees reside because employee absenteeism has an adverse effect on profits and might reduce the quality and number of services offered (Mathe & Slevitch, 2013). Ultimately, employee absenteeism can affect the

ability of the company to sustain employment and remain in business by having an adverse effect on its financial well-being.

Researchers have suggested employees display psychological effects of job dissatisfaction, which attributed to poor organization content; employees who reported not being satisfied with performing their duties demonstrate stress in the workplace and exhibit increased absenteeism from work (Giorgi et al., 2015). Furthermore, researchers have suggested that leadership in an organization is a major cause of employee behavior changes in the workplace (Lindblom et al., 2015; Yao et al., 2014), which influences employee absenteeism. Managers and leaders can use the strategies revealed from the findings of this study to implement their own strategies to reduce employee absenteeism and to promote organizational profitability. Investment in these strategies can enhance the financial success of the organization (Phillips & Stein, 2013). Investment in the economic development of the community requires organizations to sustain their business and attract and promote future growth (Phillips & Stein, 2013). Reducing employee absenteeism empowers managers and leaders to improve profitability and productivity, which can lead to new opportunities in employment and organizational sustainability and position the families of employees to sustain and advance their own financial status.

Recommendations for Action

Restaurant managers can use the findings of the study to incorporate effective strategies into their business operations to reduce employee absenteeism. In an industry that in 2017 employs nearly 15 million people (National Restaurant Association, n.d.), implementing some of or all of the strategies shared by the participants in this study—

communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment—might result in improved productivity, profitability, and sustainability. The knowledge based on experience shared by the participants in this study could be helpful to restaurants managers and owners who seek to reduce employee absenteeism.

Findings derived from data collected as part of this study may inspire business leaders to develop parallel or new strategies similar to those of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment that the three restaurant managers who participated in this study believed were effective in reducing employee absenteeism. By improving employee absenteeism, restaurant managers can promote financial stability for their business, their employees, and their community through reduced costs and increased productivity and profitability. The findings from this study also may provide restaurant managers experiencing high levels of employee absenteeism with helpful ideas of how to implement and increase employee productivity, improve organizational profitability, and expand sustainability in a competitive restaurant industry.

I recommend restaurant managers and leaders review the findings of this study as a first step to developing strategies that could be useful to their organization. Managers need to implement effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism; these strategies may aid in promoting employee accountability and show employees the meaning of work ethic by consistently attending work. Restaurant managers could use the results of this study to establish strategies of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment throughout the operations of the organization

to mitigate absenteeism. In addition to restaurant managers benefiting from the findings of this study, business leaders in other industries could implement and integrate the strategies of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and a positive work environment to improve employees' perception of their work atmosphere and thereby reduce employee absenteeism.

I plan to disseminate the findings of this single case study through various methods. Each participant in the study received the opportunity to receive a two-page summary of the findings of the study. The participants can share this two-page summary with their peers, as well as with other business managers, owners, and employees. The study will also be published and available through the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database for use by scholars and other organizations. Additionally, I will seek opportunities to present the findings at business-related conferences, forums, and events. Finally, I will inform the National Restaurant Association and the Restaurant Association of Maryland of the study findings, offer an executive summary, and seek permission to present the results at any of their conferences and events.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single case study was to explore the strategies that restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism. The participants in this study provided valuable information and insights into how they have reduced employee absenteeism, but further research on this topic recommended in a future study. The limitations discussed in Section 1 addressed future research through the use of alternative interview questions. The participants were comfortable during the interview

session. There were times during each interview when the participants' answers were too brief, which resulted in the interviewer trying to elicit more details (Baškarada, 2014) to supplement the answers to the primary questions. Another limitation could be the participants' poor memory (Baškarada, 2014; Yin, 2014), which might have undermined the richness of the data collected during the interviews. Shortcomings in memory on any question supplemented with information collected from other data sources (Baškarada, 2014).

Recommendations for further research include extending the research into different geographical locations, the use of a variety of different types of restaurants, and more managers to expand the sample size. Exploring strategies to reduce employee absenteeism in other geographical settings and the use of a broad variety of different restaurant types in future research might further advance the general knowledge base of approaches to resolve employee absenteeism in the restaurant industry. Future researchers might wish to consider conducting a similar study in other industries. For example, researchers might examine employee absenteeism in the education industry, the health care industry, and the social service industry. Research might be extended to include other internal and external environments. Further research may provide managers, leaders, and owners of restaurants with insight on how to improve employee absenteeism, which could add to the knowledge base of strategies used to reduce employee absenteeism and increase employee productivity, organizational profitability, and survival in a highly competitive market.

Reflections

The journey during the DBA doctoral study process was a challenge that was sometimes frustrating, but also rewarding. Every scholarly process at this level needed to be rigorous to ensure the student meets the requirements of the university. Although achieving this degree was essential to advancing toward my career goals, there were times when I questioned whether I could complete this process. Now that I have completed this process, I feel ready to take on the next challenge of becoming a tenured faculty. Additionally, completing this study has helped me to refine my research skills, and helped me to enhance my understanding of employee absenteeism.

My interest in employee absenteeism started with a conversation between a group of students and me during an entrepreneurship class. The class focused on the steps to become a business owner and the challenges of owning a business, especially a restaurant. In one class session, the students and I started listing ways to mitigate the problem of employee absenteeism. Each week, we focused on one of those improvements and determined how to solve the issue the issue of absenteeism so that restaurant managers could focus on the customer experience. Although the students and I developed a detailed list of possible solutions to employee absenteeism that were easy to implement, in this study, I took the process a step further by exploring the issue in depth and in person. I reached out to restaurant managers who had solved the issue of employee absenteeism. The responses of the managers in this study helped me to realize addressing the problem of employee absenteeism involves more than just listing solutions, but also implementing to change. Change is the key to successfully reducing employee

absenteeism. Finally, I realized that the restaurant industry could be a profitable and worthwhile business for new and seasoned owners if management gains and implements a better understanding of strategies used to reduce employee absenteeism.

Conclusion

Employee absenteeism is a common and costly problem for many businesses. Lost productivity, sick-time wages and benefits, low performance, and low employee satisfaction increase the organizational costs of absenteeism (Mahy et al., 2016). Within the restaurant industry, employee absenteeism costs organizations over 15% of the company profits each year (Kocakulah et al., 2016). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies restaurant managers use to reduce employee absenteeism.

The findings from this descriptive single case study revealed that restaurant managers can improve employee absenteeism through communication, the consistent enforcement of management policies, and maintaining a positive work environment in the organization. Participants in this study shared their knowledge, which could prove to be helpful to restaurant managers and owners who seek to shift employee behavior and improve the working environment to reduce employee absenteeism. Analysis of data collected as part of this study indicated that ways to reduce employee absenteeism might be as simple as employers implementing strategies of communication, consistent enforcement of management policies, and maintaining a positive work environment. The findings from this study may encourage restaurant managers to take appropriate actions to reduce employee absenteeism, and future researchers could investigate the problem by

adding additional questions that may uncover other employee absenteeism intentions within the restaurant industry, as well as in other industries. Managers implementing effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism can encourage employee accountability and show employees the meaning of work ethic by consistently attending work.

Restaurant managers may reduce employee absenteeism, which can affect performance and profitability of the organization, by implementing the strategies recommended in this study. Peer-reviewed sources referenced in this study provided some terminology on employee absenteeism, insight on factors contributing to absenteeism, and strategies leaders follow to reduce employee absenteeism. The knowledge shared by the participants in this study may contribute to the success of other restaurants struggling with high levels of employee absenteeism. Company archival records such as memorandums, employee records, management meeting notes, and employee performance records may help the manager understand that employees want to change past behavior by reducing their absenteeism rate. The findings from this study may inspire restaurant managers experiencing high levels of employee absenteeism to address the problem by implementing strategies to increase employee productivity, which will improve organizational profitability and expand sustainability in a competitive restaurant industry.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview Questions (Restaurant Managers)

1. As a restaurant manager, what role do you play in reducing employee absenteeism?
2. Who else is involved in reducing employee absenteeism?
3. What strategies have you used to reduce absenteeism in your organization?
4. How did employees respond to those strategies?
5. What methods or techniques for implementing the strategies were most effective in reducing absenteeism?
6. What are some of the benefits of implementing absenteeism reduction strategies?
7. What barriers did you encounter in implementing the absenteeism strategies?
8. What steps did you take to address the barriers?
9. Which strategies were least effective in reducing employee absenteeism?
10. What other information regarding employee absenteeism would you like to share that we have not addresses yet?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Title: “Restaurant Managers’ Effective Leadership Strategies to Reduce Employee Absenteeism.” This study is being conducted to explore the restaurant managers’ role in implementing effective strategies to reduce employee absenteeism, and how absenteeism impacts their company.

What I will do	What I will say—Included in script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest coffee (beverage) or a snack 	<p>Script: Are you hungry or need a beverage before we begin with the interview?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce myself 	<p>Script: Hello, I am Dawn Johnson-Tate, doctoral student at Walden University. I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in the study on employee absenteeism. Your input is appreciated and valuable to the study.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review informed consent form 	<p>Script: I want to review the consent form you signed and provide you the opportunity to ask any follow-up questions. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study. Here is your signed copy of the consent form.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide again a brief overview of the research study on employee absenteeism and why this study is important 	<p>Script: I want to provide you with a brief background on employee absenteeism and why this study is important. Evaluating your absenteeism strategies practices will enable me to compare your program and provide valuable strategies other restaurants can use to reduce employee absenteeism and increase productivity. I want to remind you that the interview will be confidential. A coding system will ensure confidentiality of the identity of the restaurant and the participants.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to record the session Turn on audio recorder 	<p>Script: I will turn on the audio recorder now and I will start by noting the date, time, and location of the interview. Remember, you can ask me to turn off the recorder at any time.</p>

What I will do	What I will say—Included in script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide each participant the time to fully answer each interview question in detail • Pose additional follow-up questions directly after each question, if necessary, to probe for more details. • Remember to watch body language, • Ask the questions clearly and concisely. • Follow up on key terminology, • Use active listening skills 	<p>Script: I will now begin asking you the interview questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What role do you play in reducing employee absenteeism? 2. Who else is involved with reducing employee absenteeism? 3. What strategies have you used to reduce absenteeism in your organization? 4. How did employees respond to those strategies? 5. What methods or techniques for implementing the strategies were most effective in reducing absenteeism? 6. What are some of the benefits of implementing absenteeism reduction strategies? 7. What barriers did you encounter in implementing the absenteeism strategies? 8. What steps did you take to address the barriers? 9. Which strategies were least effective in reducing employee absenteeism? 10. What other information regarding employee absenteeism would you like to share that we have not addresses yet?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask additional questions 	<p>Script: Do you have any questions for me?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss transcript review 	<p>Script: Following the interview, I will summarize my interpretations of the interview data to confirm accuracy. I will send you the transcribed data. If you find errors or miscommunication, please contact me immediately. This review will provide both of us with the opportunity to make corrections or clarifications to the data and assist with ensuring the reliability and validity of the data.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn off the recorder 	<p>Script: I am now turning off the recorder.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close the interview and thank the participant 	<p>Script: Thank you for participating in this research study on employee absenteeism. I will be sending you a transcript soon, and will contact you to schedule a follow-up meeting.</p>

Appendix C: Organizational Permission

Letter of Cooperation

Date:

Manager Name:

Company Name:

Company Address:

Dear Dawn Johnson-Tate,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "Effective Strategies Employed by Restaurant Managers to Reduce Absenteeism" within the (). As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct recruitment of participants for face-to-face interviews, collect archival data, which includes company policies and practices, verify the transcribed interview with the participant, and disseminate a summary of the final research results to the participants of the study. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: provide access to potential participants, and access to review any attendance policies or practices that your organization has. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization or the participants in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

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's International Review Board.

Sincerely,

Signature:

Name:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Appendix D: NIH Certificate of Completion

