A LONGITUDINAL EXAMINATION OF PUBLIC RECOGNITION AND
EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

by

James C. Wimbush

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APPROVED:

K. Dow Scott, Ph.D., Chairman

Frederick S. Hills, Ph.D.           Steven E. Markham, Ph.D.

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(ABSTRACT)

The study extended the Scott et al. (1985) research by examining the influence of public recognition on employees' attitudes and perceptions toward absenteeism. The main focus was on why the public recognition program was effective in reducing employee absenteeism.

To better understand the effectiveness of recognition in reducing absenteeism, a model of the absenteeism/recognition relationship was developed. The model was based on the integration of the need, expectancy, reinforcement, and goal setting theories. It implies that the influence of recognition on attendance behavior is a function of an employee's (1) desire for recognition; (2) belief that attendance is related to recognition; (3) personal attendance goal setting which is a function of an employee's (a) perceived congruency between individual and management's attendance goals, (b) perceived reasonableness of management's goals, and (c) perceived ability to attend in order to meet goals; and (4) recognition reward.

It was concluded that even though recognition programs have been shown to yield greater reductions in absenteeism than other approaches (e.g., lotteries, financial incentives, etc.), the reasons for its effectiveness are still not known.
Acknowledgements

To my committee, family, and friends, we have reached another milestone. Thanks for your support.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Nature of the Problem

Although some research has been conducted concerning ways of controlling absenteeism (Scott, Markham, & Robers, 1985), it continues to be problematic for many organizations (Goodman & Atkin, 1984). This is confirmed by the results of a survey conducted by the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. which found that 60 percent of all participating companies considered absenteeism to be their most serious discipline problem (BNA, 1985). Consequently, for these organizations, the effects of a high absenteeism rate are decreased productivity and increased costs. In terms of productivity, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1982) reported that in 1980, over 89 million working hours were being lost each week due to employee absences.

Absenteeism has been estimated to cost the U.S. economy $38 billion dollars annually (Steers & Rhodes, 1984). These costs are based on direct salary expenses associated with increased overtime and/or temporary replacement of the absent employee; fringe benefit expenses which the absent employee continues to receive; loss
of profit because products are not delivered on time or because they are of poor quality; and the cost of maintaining and administering an absence control program.

Absenteeism also takes its toll on both the employee and his or her co-workers. The costs of absenteeism to the employee may include loss of pay, disciplinary action and negative performance evaluations. In addition, on returning to work the employee may face the difficult task of catching up with work that has accumulated (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). For the co-workers of the absentee, the worker’s absence increases the workload and may interfere with their off-work responsibilities. This may generate resentment towards the employee and put undue stress on interpersonal relationships among employees. At the work group level, the introduction of a replacement for the absent employee may diminish overall group effectiveness and create intra-group conflict.

Therefore, since absenteeism is relatively expensive, it is not surprising that companies and researchers continue to experiment with innovative methods for controlling it. Many of these experiments have often focused upon positive approaches (e.g. lotteries, incentives, etc.) to control absenteeism (Scott, Markham, & Robers, 1985); however, their overall effectiveness results are inconclusive. For example, in a review of positive attendance approaches for reducing absenteeism, Kopelman and Schneller (1981) showed that some of the most widely cited successful approaches were actually less effective than they initially appeared to be. These inconclusive results have been obtained because, as many researchers have noted (e.g. Schlotzhauer & Rosse, 1985; Scott et al., 1985), these studies have been plagued with shortcomings such as the following: (1) usually only one type of attendance improvement program was implemented; (2) most programs were of short duration usually not lasting more
than four months; (3) few studies used control groups for comparisons; and (4) the results of these experiments were often compared to absence rates from months immediately prior to the experiment without regard for the control of seasonal influences or national economic conditions (Markham, Dansereau, & Alutto, 1983).

Scott et al. (1985) conducted a study that utilized three positive attendance improvement approaches that were designed to respond to the shortcomings noted above. The study was conducted over a one year period as part of a field experiment to simultaneously compare the three approaches under similar conditions. Three control groups were used and the results were compared to absenteeism rates averaged over the two years prior to the experiment. Of particular importance, significant decreases (36.9 percent) in absenteeism occurred for the public recognition treatment for all four quarters of the experiment (Scott et al., 1985). This result is consistent with a study that was conducted by Scott and Markham (1982) which showed that organizations which provided public recognition for good attendance had an absence rate a full percentage point below those that did not provide such recognition (3.6 percent vs. 4.6 percent, respectively). The two other treatments, financial incentive and lottery, had equivocal effects with regard to the results at the three control sites.

Of considerable importance to practitioners and researchers are the reasons why public recognition programs consistently show positive results. As stated by Schmitz and Heneman (1980), "...the reasons given will have direct implications for organizations to design new reinforcement programs that will be more effective and potentially less costly than the programs to date" (p. 93). Scott et al. (1985) in their study did not attempt to analyze the reasons why the public recognition program
received positive results but instead tried to argue that unique features in the way
the good attendees were recognized may have contributed to its success. Based on
the findings from the other treatments, they discount the possibility that certain
theoretical notions may have had a role in explaining the absenteeism reduction.
For example, they considered it to be unlikely that employees were responding to
either the perceived economic value of the reward or the establishment of clear goals,
because of the weak results of the financial incentive and lottery programs, respec-
tively. Also, based on the lack of a positive result from the information feedback
control, they reject the alternative that the public recognition program merely alerted
employees to the importance management placed on good attendance.

Because of the design of the Scott et al. (1985) study (i.e. three treatments admin-
istered under similar conditions, control plants, etc.), it is reasonable to assume that
some reasons for the positive results of the public recognition program may be ob-
tained from an analysis of the employees’ attitude and perception data toward both
absenteeism and recognition. Furthermore, despite their initial discounting of goal-
setting theory as a potential explanation for the positive results of the program,
with further investigation, the theory may prove to have influenced employee be-
havior. Either way, further investigation should provide researchers and practitioners
with additional insight in understanding the influence of public recognition on the
absenteeism phenomenon.
Purpose and Significance of the Study

The current study is an exploratory examination of why public recognition reduces employee absenteeism. The study attempts to extend the findings of the Scott et al. (1985) research by examining the influence of public recognition on employees’ attitudes and perceptions toward absenteeism. The main focus is on why the public recognition program consistently rendered positive results for all four quarters of the experiment and generated the greatest overall reduction in absenteeism compared to the two other treatments that were utilized.

For both practitioners and researchers, the significance of the study lies in the additional insight that will be contributed to the understanding of the implementation of recognition programs, and the theories upon which they rest. Clearly, the reasons for the positive result of the recognition program will have direct implications for practitioners and researchers to design new programs that will be more effective and have potentially greater utility than current programs (Schmitz & Heneman, 1980).

Summary of the Chapters

This summary of the chapters is a description of how the purpose of the study is materialized to demonstrate pragmatic and theoretical significance.

Chapter One: In this chapter an overview of the nature of the absenteeism problem and the positive approaches that researchers and practitioners have devised in their
effort to improve attendance was provided. Also included was a description of the purpose and significance of the study.

**Chapter Two**: This chapter reviews the absenteeism and recognition literature. Based on the literature, need, expectancy, reinforcement, and goal setting theories are shown to provide the rudimentary building blocks to explain why the influence of public recognition is effective in significantly reducing absenteeism. Integrated with each other, these theories are formulated into a conceptual model of the absenteeism/recognition relationship. The model and hypotheses from which the model is tested are presented and discussed.

**Chapter Three**: In this chapter a discussion of the methodology employed in the study including the research location, measures of absenteeism, measures of employee attitudes and data analysis methods is provided.

**Chapter Four**: Presented in this chapter are the results of the initial analyses, the measurement of the variables, and tests of the hypotheses.

**Chapter Five**: The final chapter is a discussion of the results and limitations of the study, upon which, practical and research implications are presented.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Public recognition for employee attendance has been shown to have a significant impact on the reduction of absenteeism (Scott et al., 1985). But the reasons why recognition has this influence, to date, are only speculatively known. In order to begin to empirically examine the absenteeism/recognition relationship, this chapter reviews basic components of both the absenteeism, motivation, and recognition literatures which serve as building blocks in the formulation of a model to illustrate a proposed relationship. These components include what absenteeism is and the methods that have been used to control it; the nature of attendance recognition programs and recognition as a construct; and need, expectancy, reinforcement, and goal setting theories. When integrated with each other, these components form a conceptual model that helps to explain why recognition is effective in reducing absenteeism. This model and its hypotheses are presented.
Definition of Employee Absenteeism

In order to understand the influence of recognition on absenteeism, it is first necessary to understand how the meaning of absenteeism has been interpreted in past studies and practice, and how it is defined for the purpose of this study. This section provides a review of the absenteeism literature with respect to its definition.

In over 100 studies Chadwick-Jones, Nicholson, and Brown (1982) found no uniform operational definition of absenteeism. Yet, it is obvious that employee absenteeism is an important phenomenon within the realm of work behavior (Gibson, 1966). Absenteeism generally refers to the state of not being present when scheduled or expected to be at work (Jones, 1971; Johns, 1978; Brooke, 1985; BNA, 1987). This quasi-definition does not include other forms of nonattendance such as vacations and jury duty. Neither does it attempt to segregate legitimate absence from nonlegitimate absence, voluntary from involuntary, nor distinguish between paid and unpaid absence.

However, regardless of how absenteeism is defined, it should be evaluated in a relative sense (Gandz & Mikalachki, 1980). That is, not all absenteeism is as negative as it was presented in Chapter One. Staw and Oldham (1978) recognized this notion in their suggestion that by virtue of the human condition alone, some absenteeism may be functional for both the employee and the organization. To illustrate, it is unlikely that a company would expect or want an employee with a debilitating or contagious illness to be present for work. The attendance of the ill employee could not only risk reducing the level and quality of his/her productivity, but possibly in-
crease the chances of on-the-job injury and the spread of illness to other employees, thereby resulting in increased absenteeism and reductions in productivity. As another illustration, Staw (1977) suggests that employees may feel the need to escape from a stressful situation. Therefore, by not attending work the employees will contribute to the maintenance of their mental health. These and similar scenarios underscore the dysfunctionality of some attendance. To avoid these potentially detrimental effects of attendance, some level of absenteeism appears to be appropriate since many legitimate reasons exist for being absent from work.

For the purpose of this study, a broad definition of absence is appropriate since the concern is with the influence of recognition on total employee absenteeism. Therefore, employee absenteeism is defined in this study as any failure of an employee to report for work when scheduled regardless of the reason (i.e., legitimate or illegitimate, voluntary or involuntary).

**Methods to Control Absenteeism**

For many years organizations have utilized a number of strategies in their effort to grapple with employee absenteeism. Researchers (e.g., Johnson & Peterson, 1975; Steers & Rhodes, 1984) have generally grouped the approaches into three general categories: discipline approaches (e.g., Johnson & Peterson, 1975; Nicholson, 1976), mixed-consequences programs (e.g., Kempen & Hall, 1977; Kopelman & Schneller, 1981), and positive reinforcement programs (e.g., Robertson, Johnson, & Bethke, 1980; Scott et al., 1985). In a consideration of the efficacy of these approaches Johnson and Peterson (1975) inquired as to whether or not these methods have
actually helped reduce or solve the absenteeism problem in organizations. They concluded, after a review of the literature, that the approaches have neither solved the problem nor have done much to reduce its magnitude. However, since their conclusion (1975) more researchers (see Muchinsky, 1977; and Schlotzhauer & Rosse, 1985) who conducted studies using positive reinforcement programs have reported reductions in the magnitude of absenteeism which they attribute to the implementation of the programs. These programs are employed to explicitly reinforce improved attendance behavior by reducing voluntary absences. Such systems include lotteries, employee assistance programs, financial incentive programs, and important to the purpose of this study - employee public recognition programs (e.g., Wallin & Johnson, 1976; Scott et al., 1985).

Due to their noteworthy results, positive reinforcement programs have become the most frequently cited absenteeism control approaches in the literature (Schlotzhauer & Rosse, 1985). It has been postulated that this method is more effective than discipline approaches at lowering absenteeism for three main reasons. First, it has been empirically shown that discipline may produce undesirable side effects (Nord, 1970), such as employee anxiety and negative attitudes toward the punishing agent (Johnson & Peterson, 1975). Second, studies of the effectiveness of punitive sanctions in reducing absenteeism have produced divided opinions and conflicting results (Steers & Rhodes, 1984). Third, positive reinforcement programs have been shown to achieve significant reductions in absenteeism (Schmitz & Heneman, 1980), and therefore are more effective (Steers & Rhodes, 1978) and efficient (Nord, 1970) at limiting absenteeism (compared to a discipline or mixed consequence approach).
In a review of ten studies of positive approaches for reducing absenteeism, Schmitz and Heneman (1980) found a consistent pattern of evidence to suggest that absenteeism is decreased when positive reinforcement programs are implemented. However, they concluded that it could not be determined with certainty which reinforcement program components, intended or unintended, may have caused the changes. For instance, in Heneman and Schimitz's (1980) review, they found that in addition to the intended monetary reinforcers (e.g., bonuses), most of the programs contained additional features that alone or in combination with the intended positive reinforcement characteristics could have caused the reductions. For example, the programs are likely to have heightened supervisor's awareness of absenteeism, which in turn could have been reflected in new supervisory behaviors that functioned as reinforcers such as verbal praise for improved attendance. Thus, the employees may have been responding to the recognition instead of, or as well as, the intended monetary reinforcer. If that was the case, then the verbal praise dimension of the reinforcement which is a component of an employee public recognition approach (Mathis, 1981) alone or as a component of an overall recognition program, may have significantly explained some of the reduction in absenteeism. Therefore, to better understand the function of recognition as a tool for reducing absenteeism, it is important to discuss what recognition programs are within the domain of absenteeism control approaches, as well as in general.

Robert Mathis (1981) defines an employee recognition program as "any formal program that identifies employees for service or performance using tangible and intangible rewards" (p. 71). For the purpose of discussion, in this study the recognition programs will be dichotomized as attendance and general recognition programs.
**Attendance Recognition Programs:** Based on the above definition of a recognition program, an attendance recognition program would recognize employees with tangible or intangible rewards for attendance ranging from good to perfect. These rewards could include placing the names of good attenders on in-house bulletin boards, plaques, or in newsletters; awarding them gifts (e.g., jewelry) and attendance awards (e.g., certificates); and giving good attenders verbal praise and letters or postcards of attendance recognition.

Even though an extensive search of the absenteeism literature was conducted, no empirical studies on recognition programs for controlling absenteeism could be found except by Scott et al., (1985). In their 12 month study, a unified thematic attendance recognition program using posters, cards, and awards were used. At the end of each quarter, employees with no more than one absence received a card signed by the manager notifying and congratulating them of their good attendance. Employees who had perfect attendance or who missed one or two days during the entire year qualified for a custom-designed piece of engraved jewelry. During the first year of the program, absenteeism decreased significantly by 36.9 percent. The program cost approximately $10,000 to implement and absenteeism costs were reduced by over $58,000 in terms of direct labor costs.

Although this was the only empirical study of an attendance recognition program that could be found, programs like this are apparently widely used. According to a survey of 987 personnel managers, Scott and Markham (1982) found that 25 percent of the organizations used recognition programs to reward good attendance.
Moreover, the survey results showed that the organizations that reported using such programs had an absence rate a full percentage below those that did not report utilizing recognition approaches (3.6 percent vs. 4.6 percent).

Despite the dearth of empirical evaluations of the merits of a recognition program, researchers have acknowledged employee public recognition as a viable component of a comprehensive absenteeism control program. For example, Johnson and Peterson (1975) advocate monthly publishing the names of employees with perfect attendance as a means of social reinforcement. Schmitz and Heneman (1980) found in most of the ten studies that were reviewed that “feedback mechanisms” such as posting attendance records were involved in the programs. However, the effects of the employee recognition were not examined. Moreover, the personal recognition techniques were not stated in either study as being a part of what could be developed into an absenteeism control approach exclusively based on recognizing employees for good attendance.

In order to optimize one’s understanding of recognition as it is used in work settings, it is necessary to review the recognition literature of other disciplines to examine their research findings. This review is provided below.

General Recognition Programs: In the literature of other disciplines (i.e., marketing, sales, etc.) the topic of recognition programs has been addressed extensively. Yet, as it was with the absenteeism literature, only a few empirical studies have been found. Furthermore, the studies that have been found have generally been attitudinal surveys without any experimental treatments (e.g., Mathis, 1981), or simply concep-
tual articles that articulate individuals' implicit theories and experiences concerning the subject (e.g., Cherrington & Wixom, 1983; Hayes, 1979).

Contained in the marketing literature is a recognition study that was conducted by Mathis (1981). Twenty-one focus group discussions were held in 16 U.S. cities made up of employees who represented a diversity of industries. For 90 minutes the participants discussed topics related to recognition. The results revealed that employees generally feel insecure about their jobs and self-worth when they do not receive recognition. Conversely, the employee's self-worth and a sense of accomplishment is reinforced when they receive recognition from peers and supervisors.

In a follow-up study, Mathis (1981) surveyed 346 employers who were attending a national conference for personnel administrators to test the hypotheses derived from the original study (described above). The results are noteworthy: (1) 85 percent of the practitioners felt that the relationship between recognition and motivation needs to be better understood; (2) 86 percent felt that organizations, particularly their own, did not fully recognize employees for accomplishments; (3) 84 percent believed that recognition should be given for consistent or outstanding achievement; and (4) 84 percent believed that "the way in which recognition is given is far more important than the tangible award itself" (p. 75).

In order to better understand the effectiveness of recognition in reducing absenteeism via recognition programs, what recognition is as a construct and the theories upon which it rests is explicated below.
Employee Public Recognition

Recognition is the giving of approval, acknowledgement, and the showing of appreciation to an employee for an achievement (Magnus, 1981). The expression of recognition can be done formally via a recognition program (e.g., public announcements of praise, giving of tangible gifts, etc.) or informally (e.g., pat-on-the-back, a supervisor thanking a subordinate, etc.). The achievements may include reaching a milestone for years of service (e.g., five, ten, twenty, etc.), generating a certain sales volume, maintaining good attendance, etc. By singling out individual achievements, recognition fulfills multiple functions beyond simple human courtesy (Kanter, 1987). It boosts employees awareness of the organization, builds employee pride, raises morale, and ultimately, increases productivity (Magnus, 1981). Recognition also creates role models within the organization who communicate what the standards are that constitute great performance (Kanter, 1987). Furthermore, recognition can be administered very easily and inexpensively.

Practitioners, in particular, often relate to the individual and organizational benefits from the use of recognition. From firsthand experience, they have witnessed the operation of recognition as an important employee need that motivates the workers to work toward personal and organizational achievements or goals (Mathis, 1981). For examples of practitioner's "implicit theories" concerning the purpose and efficacy of recognition, quoted below are a number of business executives who have shared their views on the subject:

"The reasons for recognizing top performers start with the obvious- to let valued salespeople know that they are, indeed, valued. Trophies, rings, and other symbolic motivators instill a sense of pride that a paycheck, no matter how big, can't" (Kelley, 1986). Bill Kelley, Sales and Marketing Management
"Awards are important to employees... I don’t care how successful or talented employees are, there is something in an award that touches all our lives. Money is important, but it’s the extra things that companies do to make people feel good that is important" (Magnus, 1981). *Robert H. Sweet, The Robbins Company*

"Recognition is critical and, after reasonable pay, is what employees want most. People like to know that they are doing a good job... the recognition is symbolic, not financial... what’s important is that it is done in some public way and treated with respect. What matters to these people are the symbols or points that they can use to see that they are doing better. If you have a recognition program, you are giving them something else to keep score with, and they love it" (Kelley, 1986). *Richard Boyatzis, McBer and Company*

These testimonials relate to how the managers have been able to successfully motivate their employees by using recognition. Von der Embse and Brown (1979) refer to this notion of recognition as “psychological touching”. They purport that “the essence of motivation lies in providing the psychological touching (recognition) on the job that employees want in return for their working toward achieving management’s objectives” (p. 20).

Practitioners who have been successful in using recognition as a motivation tool have carefully designed and implemented programs consistent with the theories of motivation (Cherrington & Wixom, 1983). These theories are discussed in the next section.

**The Theoretical Basis for Recognition**

Recognition has been acknowledged by practitioners and theorists as an important dimension in motivating and reinforcing organizationally desired behavior. Motivation is concerned with action (arousal) and the internal and external forces that influence one’s direction (choice) of action (Mitchell, 1982). Thus, motivation be-
comes the degree to which an individual wants and chooses to engage in certain specified behaviors. Different theories (e.g., Lawler & Suttle, 1973; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; McClelland, 1961) propose different reasons, but almost all of them emphasize an individual and intentional choice of behavior analysis. Therefore, motivation theories can be categorized as theories of arousal (e.g., need theories) and theories of choice (e.g., expectancy theory, goal setting, reinforcement theory) (Mitchell, 1982). Each theory is discussed briefly below as they relate to employee recognition.

Need Theories

Need theorists (e.g., Maslow, Murray, and Alderfer) argue that individuals have certain physical and psychological needs that represent the primary driving force behind employee behavior in organizational settings (Steers and Porter, 1987). One category of these needs is esteem needs, within which lies recognition. Esteem needs are a basic component in Maslow's (1954) “hierarchy of needs,” Alderfer’s (1969) “ERG theory,” and Murray’s (1938) “manifest needs theory.” Although these three theoretical models differ with respect to the order of need fulfillment, these theorists agree that esteem needs, that is, recognition, are basic physical and psychological human needs that individuals strive to have satisfied. Motivation comes through the individual’s desire to satisfy these needs (Brown, 1986).

According to Steers and Porter (1987) there are two major implications that have come about as a result of the need theory research. First these theories focus upon individual differences as the nucleus of the need concept (Alderfer, 1977). It is intuitively accepted and empirically evident that different people are motivated by
different things (Maslow, 1943). But, a taxonomy of different needs can and has been developed to categorize the basic needs that have been considered by need theorists (e.g., Maslow, Alderfer, Murray) to be generalized to all people. Thus, motivation is a product of the individuals efforts to meet the basic needs.

The second implication that was identified by Steers and Porter (1987) is that organizations have generally focused upon the fulfillment of employee lower level needs rather than upper level. The lower level needs are fulfilled via motivational systems that emphasize meeting physiological and other lower level needs such as pay, hours of work, physical setting, etc. Thus in order for the organization to provide the impetus for fulfilling employee's upper level needs, organizations need to extensively utilize systems that promote employee autonomy, public recognition, creativity, and variety (Mitchell, 1982).

In addition to the need theories, various other "choice" theories form the basis of employee recognition efforts. These include expectancy theory, goal setting, and reinforcement theory. Each of these theories is discussed below.

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy-valence models (e.g., Vroom, 1964; Galbraith & Cummings, 1967; Porter & Lawler, 1968; Campbell, 1969; Graen, 1969) of work motivation have evolved as a basic paradigm for the study of human attitudes and behavior in work and organizational settings (Behling & Starke, 1973; Lawler & Suttle, 1973; House, Shapiro, & Wahba, 1974). These models are commonly referred to as Expectancy Theory (Locke, 1975) or VIE Theory (Vroom, 1964) and are designed to predict force to
act and not to predict the actual act itself (Parker & Dyer, 1976). While each of these models are in some way unique, they have as a common core three basic variables: valence of job outcomes - the value of the rewards; performance-outcome instrumentality - the belief that performance will be rewarded; and expectancy - the perceived relationship between effort and the ability to perform well. Each of the three variables is described below.

**Valence of Job Outcomes:** Vroom (1964) refers to valence as the affective orientations people hold toward particular outcomes. It denotes the degree to which the individual places a positive or negative value, importance, or utility on intrinsic or extrinsic outcomes (Mitchell, 1979) that could occur on a job according to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction they expect to receive from them. Desired outcomes are considered to be positively valent and those that are undesired negatively valent; thus valences are scaled over a virtually unbounded range of positive and negative values (Behling & Starke, 1973). Examples of job outcomes would be pay, promotion, feelings of accomplishment, and recognition. The most important feature of people's valences concerning work-related outcomes is that they refer to the level of satisfaction the person expects to receive from them, not from the real value the person actually derives from them (Pinder, 1984).

**Performance-Outcome Instrumentality:** Vroom (1964) posits that a given level of performance is positively valent if the employee believes that it will lead to other outcomes, which are called second-level outcomes. That is, if an employee believes that a high level of performance (e.g. good to perfect attendance) is instrumental for the acquisition of other outcomes that are expected to be gratifying (e.g., promotion, recognition, etc.), and/or if the individual believes that a high performance level will
be instrumental for avoiding other undesired outcomes (e.g., dismissal, reprimand, etc.), then that employee will place a high valence on performing the job well. In short, something is said to be instrumental if it is believed to lead or help achieve or attain something else (Campbell & Pritchard, 1976). Thus, an outcome is positively valent if the individual believes that it holds high instrumentality for the acquisition of positively valent consequences, and the avoidance of negatively valent outcomes. But in order for an outcome to be positively valent, the outcomes to which the person believes it is connected must themselves, in turn, be seen as positively valent (Pinder, 1984). Hence, the valence of such second-level outcomes is determined by the nature of the person’s most salient needs and values.

**Expectancy:** The third component of the theory is expectancy which refers to the strength of an individual’s momentary belief about whether acting in a particular way will be actually followed by a given outcome (Behling & Starke, 1973). This is determined by the person's beliefs about the probability of whether or not the outcome will be instrumental for acquiring and avoiding those things that are either desired or undesired, respectively. Thus, if a person believes that an outcome can be achieved, the individual will be more motivated to try for it, assuming that other things are equal (Lawler & Suttle, 1973).

The literature contains reports of numerous attempts to test the various formulations of expectancy theory (e.g., Schmidt, 1973; Mitchell, 1974). For the most part, these have incorporated methodological and conceptual limitations that make it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the descriptive validity of the basic expectancy idea (Behling & Starke, 1973). Nevertheless, studies designed to test expectancy theory have consistently found that expectancy type attitude measures are signif-
icantly correlated with measures of job performance (Lawler & Suttle, 1973). For example, Heneman and Schwab (1972) reviewed nine studies of the model and found general support for it. Finally, as stated by Campbell and Pritchard (1976), “when all is said and done, we think the heuristic value of the expectancy framework will remain as a powerful force in organizational psychology” (p. 92).

Goal Setting

Locke’s (1968) goal theory rests upon the basic premise that conscious goals regulate behavior. Once formulated, goals are likely to guide and direct behavior by forcing the individual to focus attention and effort in specific directions.

Steers and Porter (1979) have identified three types of goals: organizational, task, and personal goals. Organizational goals are established by the organization that represent statements concerning future directions. These goals would, for example, include a company statement announcing a goal to reduce absenteeism by a certain percentage over a given period of time. This type of goal may affect employee effort by giving individuals a general notion of the types of performance that is desired (Steers & Porter, 1979). Task goals are specific objectives assigned to an employee, or group of employees. They are generally organizational goals translated into individual portions. Personal goals are internally generated; they are set by the individual employee.

According to goal theory, when these three types of goals are considered together, goal-setting becomes a bargaining process between the employee and organization (Steers & Porter, 1979). For in this process the organization is attempting to set
task goals that are consistent with organizational goals, while the employee must
determine the agreement of the organizational goals with his or her personal goals.
The degree of agreement, as postulated by Locke (1968), will determine the level
of goal acceptance by the employee.

Research has been shown to support goal settings' three basic theoretical principles
which state that:

1. The more difficult the goal, the higher the level of performance (Latham &
Yukl, 1975; Steers & Porter, 1974). Locke (1968) suggested that, provided
they are accepted, difficult goals will result in higher levels of performance
than easy goals. In addition to Locke, numerous researchers have conducted
goal-setting experiments and have found a positive, linear relation between
group difficulty and the level of task performance (e.g., Campbell & Illgen,
1976; Yukl & Latham, 1978; Latham, Mitchell, & Dossett, 1978; Locke,

2. Specific goals are better than broad general goals in improving performance
(Latham & Baldes, 1975; Becker, 1978) or setting no goal at all (Latham et
al., 1978). Bandura and Schunk (1981) found that subjects with specific goals
developed a greater sense of task mastery than subjects with general goals.
They concluded that the sense of mastery enhanced an individual's intrinsic
interest in the task, and that a person who is interested in a task will try
harder. Specific goals may also have a beneficial effect on effort because the
goal makes clear what is expected of the individual. Role ambiguity has been
found to have emotionally disruptive consequences (Rakestraw & Weiss, 1981; Lee & Schuler, 1982; Earley & Kanfer, 1985).

3. Assigned goals will affect behavior only to the degree that they are accepted consciously by the employee to whom they are assigned (Latham & Yukl, 1976). Goal acceptance is viewed in terms of a congruence between assigned task goals and individual aspiration level with respect to these goals. Locke's theory states that task goals will influence behavior only to the extent that this congruence exists.

Researchers generally agree that the setting of a goal that is both specific and challenging leads to an increase in performance because it makes clear to the individual what is expected by the organization (Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). According to Latham and Baldes (1975), this in turn may provide for the employee a sense of achievement, recognition, and commitment. Thus the employee is not only incited to expend greater effort, but may devise better or more creative tactics for attaining the goal.

**Reinforcement Theory**

Reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953) postulates that individuals will be most likely to engage in desired behavior if they are rewarded for doing so. Conversely, behavior which is not rewarded or is punished is less likely to be repeated. The theory rests upon two basic principles: (1) if a behavior is followed by rewarding consequences, then people are more likely to repeat the behavior; and (2) it is possible to influence people's behavior by providing the proper rewards (Wallin & Johnson,
There are four basic types of reinforcement contingencies: punishment, extinction, avoidance, and positive reinforcement. Of these four, the contingency most frequently cited in the absenteeism literature is positive reinforcement (Schmitz & Heneman, 1980). In fact, positive absenteeism control methods (which were described earlier) are based on the positive reinforcement contingency (Schmitz & Heneman, 1980) and are often called Positive Reinforcement Programs (Wallin & Johnson, 1976; Schmitz & Heneman, 1980; Schlotzhauer & Rosse, 1985).

Positive reinforcement occurs when a stimulus (reinforcer), upon being added to a situation, strengthens the probability of an operant response (Skinner, 1953). The response is strengthened because behavior that tends to lead to a positive consequence (reward) is typically repeated, and behavior that leads to a negative consequence is typically not repeated (Thorndike, 1911).

Skinner (1953) argues that the only tool needed for worker motivation is the presence or absence of positive reinforcement. He further asserts (1969) that the reason that organizations are ineffective is because they insist on using avoidance or punishment techniques, and because they fail to use a positive reinforcement program in an effective manner.

Reinforcers, either positive or negative, fall into two categories: (1) primary reinforcers; or (2) secondary reinforcers. Primary reinforcers are intrinsically rewarding independent of past experiences. These include food, sex, etc. Secondary reinforcers, however, derive their effects from a dependent relationship with other reinforcers from past experience and the individual's past reinforcement history.
Secondary reinforcers include praise and recognition (Cherrington & Wixom, 1983).

Organizational recognition (e.g., praise, plaques, etc.) may act as the reinforcer from which an employee may be motivated to behave in a desired manner that will bring about a positive consequence, i.e., recognition rewards. Based on Hamner's (1974) model (italicized), recognition as a reinforcer can be modeled as follows:

\[
\text{(Stimulus)} \quad \text{(Desired behavior)} \quad \text{(Positive consequences)}
\]

Recognition > Good attendance > Recognition rewards

Researchers generally agree that the main criterion in assigning social (secondary) rewards is the need to select reinforcers that are meaningful to the participants (Robertson, Johnson, & Bethke, 1980). Once it has been determined that the consequence has reward value for the individual, it can be used to modify the individual's behavior. In addition, in a discussion of how to design and implement the positive reinforcement system, Johnson and Peterson (1975) state that the key is to select desired rewards (reinforcers). Then, after the reward(s) and schedule have been selected, "...it is important to again determine that the employee understands the linkage between the desired behavior and the reward" (p. 571).

Theoretical Summary

The above theoretical approaches can be summarized via a discussion of the most salient differences and similarities that exist between them. The most prominent difference lies in each of the basic underlying motivational mechanisms that is pur-
ported to motivate the individual to engage in a certain behavior (Mitchell, 1982). These motivational mechanisms are need fulfillment (need theory), expectations of payoff (expectancy theory), intentions to reach a goal (goal setting) and past reinforcement histories (reinforcement theory).

According to Mitchell (1982) there are three major similarities that exist between the theories. First, and probably foremost, all four approaches define motivation as an individual and an intentional process. That is, individuals make deliberate decisions whether or not to engage in a certain behavior contingent upon the motivational mechanisms from each of the theories. Secondly, with the exception of reinforcement theory, the three others focus on relatively current information processing. In this respect, arousal (i.e., need theories) and choice (i.e., expectancy theory and goal setting) models seem to be congruent. Finally, expectancy and reinforcement theory define motivation as directly influenced by outcomes while goal setting establishes outcomes as indirectly influencing motivation through goal level and intentions.

The preceding discussion and review of the literature has presented the building blocks of a model from which the relationship between the influence of recognition and absenteeism can be illustrated. In the next section this model is developed and research hypotheses based on the model are derived and presented.

A Conceptual Model of the Influence of Recognition on Attendance

In this section a model of the absenteeism/recognition relationship is developed. The model is consistent with the frameworks of expectancy, reinforcement, need and
goal setting theories. When these theories and their relation to absenteeism are integrated together to form the model, the factors that contribute to an individual's behavioral attendance response to recognition can be examined. The model, therefore, attempts to explain the recognition/absenteeism relationship and why recognition is effective in reducing absenteeism.

A model of the relationship of the influence of recognition on attendance behavior is presented in Figure 1 on page 28.
This model postulates that the influence of recognition on an employee’s attendance behavior is a function of six variables which are shown in Figure 2 on page 29 in the attendance behavior equation.
Attendance Behavior = f [ 1. Employee’s desire for recognition.
2. Employee’s belief that attendance is related to recognition.
3. Employee’s attendance goals.
   = f ( a. Perceived Agreement with Management’s Attendance Goals.
   b. Employee’s Perceived Reasonableness of Management’s Goals.
   c. Perceived Ability to Attend.)
4. Recognition reward.]

Figure 2. The Influence of Recognition on Attendance Equation

According to the theories upon which this model is based, the influence of public recognition on employee attendance behavior is attributed to an individual seeking to fulfill a basic need for recognition. Therefore in an attempt to fulfill this need, if an employee perceives that a positive relationship exists between attendance and recognition, then his or her subsequent attendance behavior should improve. This attendance improvement is contingent upon: (1) the perceived agreement between management’s and employee’s attendance goals; (2) his or her perception of the reasonableness of management’s established attendance goals; and, (3) his or her perceived and actual ability to attend in order to meet management’s goals. Thus, if the employee’s perception of what is an acceptable level of absenteeism is agree with management’s, then the model further implies that the employee will set a
personal attendance goal which he or she will strive to achieve in order to receive public recognition.

The next component of the model is the expectancy that specific attendance behavior will or will not accomplish the recognition that the employee covets. This component denotes that if the employee has set an attendance goal and clearly understood the link between good attendance and recognition, then he or she will expect to be recognized for good attendance and thus put forth the effort to improve his or her attendance.

In conjunction with the above, the recognition reward, upon its receipt by the employee, acts as a reinforcer of the good attendance behavior. This happens because the need for recognition will serve as a stimulus from which the employee, based on past reinforcement history (initial receipt of the reward - time one), expends effort to accomplish the attendance goals in order to receive the recognition reward again in future time periods. However, the reinforcement theory is operative contingent upon the employee's continued need for recognition and the value of the reward.

To test the model, six research hypotheses have been derived and are presented in the next section.

Hypotheses

The model of the influence of recognition on individual attendance is a conceptual model that is based on six variables that are purported to explain the influence of
public recognition on employee attendance. In order to test the model, the following hypotheses have been formulated.

**Hypothesis 1:** Employees who have a high desire for recognition will reduce their absenteeism during an attendance recognition program.

According to practitioners (see Kelley, 1986) and need theorists (e.g., Maslow, Murray, Alderfer), recognition is a need that employees desire to have fulfilled. Empirically, researchers (e.g., Wanous & Zwany, 1977; Beer, 1966) have found that esteem needs (e.g., recognition) are both comprehensive, independent, and the most defensible of all the need categories. Thus, with respect to the absenteeism/recognition relationship, it is postulated that employees who have a need for recognition will seek to have that need fulfilled. Therefore, with the introduction of a recognition program, it is logical to assume that those who desire recognition will improve their attendance behavior in order to fulfill this need.

**Hypothesis 2:** Employees who strongly perceive that attendance is rewarded will have low absenteeism.

Vroom (1964) purports that if an employee believes that a high level of performance (e.g., good to perfect attendance) is instrumental in the acquisition of other outcomes that are expected to be gratifying (e.g., recognition), then the employee will place a high valence on performing the job well (improving attendance).
**Hypothesis 3:** Employees who highly perceive that there is agreement between their individual acceptable levels of absenteeism and management's will have less absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception.

It has been empirically shown that employees who set specific performance goals improve performance more than those who do not (Latham et al., 1978). Thus, employees who set attendance improvement goals should actually improve their attendance. However, it follows that if there exists an incongruency between what employees perceive to be an acceptable level of absenteeism vs. management's, then goal setting will not take place. This notion is also contingent upon the employees' perception of the reasonableness of management's goals and their ability to attend work.

**Hypothesis 4:** Employees who highly perceive that management's attendance goals are reasonable will have less absenteeism than employees with a low perception.

Research suggests that individuals are more likely to accept a goal if they perceive it to be reasonable (Latham & Yukl, 1975). Therefore, it follows that employees who regard management's goals for attendance as too high will not accept the goals and will, consequently, not set personal attendance goals. The employees will exhibit little or no improvement in attendance behavior.

**Hypothesis 5:** Employees who highly perceive that they have the ability to attend work will have less absenteeism than employees with a low perception.
The ability to attend work accounts for employee involuntary attendance behavior. If the employee does not have the ability to attend work, then the he or she does not have behavioral discretion or choice (Herman, 1973) in the decision to attend. This behavior is influenced by illness and accidents; degree of family responsibility; and availability of dependable transportation. An employee’s ability to attend is often outside the control of the individual and organization (Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Therefore, an employee may not be able to come to work even though she or he is motivated to attend.

**Hypothesis 6:** Employees who receive formal recognition for good attendance at the end of the first quarter of the program are more likely to maintain good attendance during quarters two, three, and four.

Reinforcement theory postulates that (1) if a behavior is followed by rewarding consequences, then people are more likely to repeat the behavior; and (2) it is possible to influence people’s behavior by providing the proper rewards (Wallin Johnson, 1976). Relative to the absenteeism/recognition relationship, the recognition reward should serve as a secondary reinforcer (Cherrington & Wixom, 1983) to motivate the employee to repeat the improved attendance behavior once the reward has been received.

Examination of these hypotheses provides insight into the effects of recognition programs on employee attendance and attitudes. This insight should enhance the understanding of the operation of the theories that have been presented and help to explain why recognition programs have been effective in reducing absenteeism.
Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the absenteeism and recognition literature. Need, expectancy, reinforcement, and goal setting theories were shown to provide the rudimentary building blocks to explain why recognition is effective in reducing absenteeism. Based on an integration of the theories, a conceptual model of the absenteeism/recognition relationship was illustrated. The model implies that the influence of recognition on attendance behavior is a function of an employee’s (1) desire for recognition; (2) belief that attendance is related to recognition; (3) personal attendance goal setting which is a function of the employee’s (a) perceived agreement between individual and management’s attendance goals, (b) perceived reasonableness of management’s goals, and (c) perceived ability to attend in order to meet these goals; and (4) recognition reward.

The six hypotheses that were derived based on the model are as follows.

**Hypothesis 1:** Employees who have a high desire for recognition will reduce their absenteeism during an attendance recognition program.

**Hypothesis 2:** Employees who strongly perceive that attendance is rewarded will have low absenteeism.

**Hypothesis 3:** Employees who highly perceive that there is agreement between their individual acceptable levels of absenteeism and management’s will have less absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception.
**Hypothesis 4:** Employees who highly perceive that management’s attendance goals are reasonable will have less absenteeism than employees with a low perception.

**Hypothesis 5:** Employees who highly perceive that they have the ability to attend work will have less absenteeism than employees with a low perception.

**Hypothesis 6:** Employees who receive formal recognition for good attendance at the end of the first quarter of the program are more likely to maintain good attendance during quarters two, three, and four.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the procedures and methods employed to test these hypotheses.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology used in the study is explained in this chapter. The research site, attendance recognition program, variables used to test the hypotheses, data collection methods, and the analytical procedures employed in testing the hypotheses are described.

Research Site

This research was conducted in a "cut-and-sew" garment factory located in southeastern United States. The factory was one of six owned by a company which controlled them through a common corporate structure. The plants were geographically dispersed 50 to 190 miles apart from each other throughout southwestern Virginia and northern North Carolina. Plants ranged in size from 150 to 400 employees. There was one Vice President of Personnel and Administration, who
traveled to each of the plants to provide support services. He was aided by a personnel assistant at each plant. It was the policy of each plant to operate independently, as exemplified by their use of different names for each plant.

The factory which was the research site for this study employed approximately 300 employees. The company compensated employees on a piece-rate pay system. The average hourly wage was $4.50 per hour with a minimum wage of $3.35 and a maximum of $9.00 per hour.

An attendance control policy was in effect at the plant prior to implementation of the attendance recognition program. The plant’s attendance control policy had four principle components: (1) management’s goal was perfect attendance; (2) there were no excused absences according to plant management; (3) employees with excessive absenteeism were subject to progressive discipline and termination; and (4) absenteeism was tied to the paid vacation program, whereas the fewer days an employee was absent, the higher was the amount paid during vacation.

The plant’s absenteeism rate was calculated daily. It was computed by dividing the number of absentees (disregarding employees on vacation, jury duty, and layoff) by the total number on the payroll for that day. The plant had an average absenteeism rate of 5.7% which is moderate for the garment industry.
The Public Recognition Attendance Control Program

The recognition program was implemented for twelve months (July 1984 through June 1985) under the auspices of the Balfour Company. A one year time period was chosen in order to (a) control for the influence of seasonal variation, and (b) test the endurance of the program. A two-tier unified thematic program was professionally designed using posters, cards, and awards to publicly recognize and reward employees who had good attendance.

The first tier of the recognition program involved recognizing employees quarterly. At the end of each quarter, employees with perfect attendance or only one absence received a card, signed by the manager, notifying and congratulating them of this fact. The second tier of the program involved a tangible award for employees who had perfect attendance or missed no more than two days during the entire year (termed good attendance). The reward was a custom-designed engraved necklace or pen knife. The color (gold or silver) of the jewelry for each recipient was determined by the number of his or her absences. If the employee missed one day or less the jewelry was in gold, and for only two absences, the jewelry was silver. Supervisors were instructed on how to communicate the program.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected as part of a larger study described in Scott et al. (1985). Absenteeism data were compiled from employee records on a monthly basis. In order to control for seasonal influences, baseline data were collected for
13 months prior to the implementation of the program (June 1982 through June 1983). Data were then collected for the year during which the program was implemented (June 84 through June 1985).

Biographical and attitude data were collected by means of a questionnaire specifically designed to assess employee attitudes and perceptions toward absenteeism. The questionnaire data were collected at three times: immediately prior to the announcement of the program; after the program had been in effect for six months; and, after the program had been in effect for one year. All employees at the plant were asked to participate. The entire plant was shut down for approximately forty-five minutes for this purpose, and the employees were paid for their time. Employees who had other duties and were not able to complete the questionnaire at the designated time were given an envelope with which to mail it to the researchers at Virginia Tech. In addition, employees were asked to provide their names in order to allow for tracking their responses and attendance records from one time period to the next. Because of this, confidentiality of individual responses was assured.

The sample consisted of only non-supervisory employees for whom both absenteeism and usable questionnaire data were available. The sizes of the sample varied across the three six month periods because of employee turnover and new entrants. The sample contained 242 employees six months before the program, 243 for the first

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1 The database is the result of a two-year field experiment that was designed to compare three positive treatments for improving work attendance. The treatments were rotated among six factories that were independently operated and where plant intercommunication was virtually nonexistent. Waves 1, 2, and 3 represent the first year and implementation of the first treatments. Waves 3, 4, and 5 represent year two and the second treatments. The data site for this study was a control plant for year one, thus the recognition program was the only treatment exposed to the employees.
six months of the program, and 251 for the last six months.² Employees ranged from 18 to 75 years of age. The plant was 93% (n = 683) female and 7% (n = 53) male.

Measures of Variables

To test the hypotheses presented in chapter two, employee absenteeism and attitude and perception measurement variables are examined.

Absenteeism Measures

A multitude of absence measures (Gaudet, 1963) have been used by researchers such as: absence rate; absence frequency; absence severity; medical absence; worst day absence; blue Monday; days absent; absence duration; times absent; and many more. Out of all of these absenteeism measures, however, total days absent and absence frequency indices are the most commonly reported in published research (Metzner & Mann, 1953; Garrison & Muchinsky, 1977; Breaugh, 1981). Each of these indices have unique advantages over the others which makes them very favorable in absenteeism research, therefore, both are used in this study.

The absence frequency index has been found to be a stable measure of absenteeism because it suffers from few psychometric deficiencies (Breaugh, 1981; Hammer & Landau, 1981). In particular, it is bothered less by skewness and kurtosis which often is a problem with many other absence measures (Hammer and Landau (1981).

² The actual number of employees used in each hypothesis test differs due to missing data on variables of interest. The missing data is the result of the employee either not responding to a questionnaire item, not completing a questionnaire, or not having absenteeism data available.
Because of these advantages, frequency indices are preferable measures of both voluntary and involuntary absence.

The absence frequency index that is used in this study was based on the number of incidences of absence per employee, adjusted for the number of days worked; where an incidence is defined as any period of consecutive absences due to a single cause. It was computed as follows:

\[
\text{(Total incidences/Total workdays - Total clockouts) \times 100}
\]

The total days absent index is the total number of days an employee (or employees) is absent expressed in terms of a percentage. This is commonly known and referred to in this study as absence rate. It has two major advantages which make it appropriate for use in this study. First, the purpose of the study is to determine the effects of public recognition on employee attitudes and total absenteeism. Therefore, since the concern is with total absenteeism, a total days absent index is logically appropriate. Secondly, a total days absent index, expressed in terms of an absenteeism percentage, is a more realistic and practical metric for managers to use in applied settings. This logic is agree with that of Huse and Taylor (1962) who state that researchers should use those measures which best suit their needs.

The absence rate was based on total number of days absent per employee adjusted for the number of days worked. It was computed as follows:

---

3 Clockouts refer to situations in which employees reported for work but were sent home because of lack of work.
(Total days absent/Total workdays - Total clockouts) x 100

In addition to the individual merits of each of the absence measures discussed above, there is a major advantage that supports using both of them. Several authors have suggested the use of multiple measures (e.g., Muchinsky, 1977; Cheloha and Farr, 1980; Breaugh, 1981; Steers and Rhodes, 1984). Particularly, Cheloha and Farr (1980) postulate that studies of attitude-absence relationships should incorporate multiple measures in order to reveal possible complexities in these relationships. They further state that, “the use of multiple measures makes more explicit the less than desirable state of our measurement techniques but prevents one from overgeneralizing findings that are only found with a single measurement instrument” (p. 472).

Attitude and Perception Measures

Scott et al. (1985) developed a questionnaire based upon a number of absenteeism theories in the literature in order to comprehensively assess employee perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. This was the first instrument to be developed of this nature (Markham, Spencer, & Scott, 1984). The instrument was developed as a part of a larger field experiment to compare different positive attendance programs, thus, not all of the items related directly to this study and were not used.

The attitude and perception variables that are used to test the hypotheses related to employee perceptions are: a) employee desire for recognition; b) employee belief that attendance is related to recognition; c) employee perceived agreement between individual and management’s acceptable levels of absenteeism; d) employee perceived reasonableness of management’s goals; e) employee ability to attend; and f) recog-
nition reward (reinforcer). The following sections describe how each variable is operationalized.

*Employee Desire for Recognition* is operationalized by the following items:

- I would like to be recognized for doing a good job........ SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

The seven possible responses indicated:

A - Strongly Agree
A - Agree
A - Somewhat Agree
?D - Somewhat Disagree
D - Disagree
SD - Strongly Disagree
NA - Non Applicable

- I like the idea of being recognized for good attendance... SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

*Belief that Attendance is Related to Recognition* is operationalized by:

- Good attendance is rewarded here......................... SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

*Congruency Between Employee's and Management's Acceptable Levels of Absenteeism* is operationalized by the following items:

- Speaking for yourself, what is an acceptable level of absenteeism? |___| days per year
- What do you think management’s goal for absenteeism is for you? (Check only one below).

  ___Perfect attendance
  ___1 or 2 days a year
  ___3 or 4 days a year
  ___5 or 6 days a year
  ___7 days a year
  ___Management does not seem to have a clear goal.

*Perceived Reasonableness of Management's Goals* is operationalized by the following items:

- Management’s standards for attendance are too high........ SA A ?A ?D D SD NA
- Perfect attendance for a whole year is pretty easy to do.. SA A ?A ?D D SD NA
Ability to Attend is operationalized by the following items:

- If I tried harder, I could improve my attendance. SA A ?A ?D D SD NA
- Sometimes family problems make it impossible to get to work. SA A ?A ?D D SD NA
- I am absent sometimes because of car trouble or my ride doesn’t come. SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

The Recognition Reward variable is operationalized by tracking the attendance of those employees who received the formal recognition for good attendance at the end of the first quarter of the program to see if they received the formal recognition again, or rather, maintained good attendance for the remainder of the study period.

Initial Analysis

The initial analyses include a principal components factor analysis, Cronbach’s alpha, and tests for the violations of assumptions of normality. Each analysis is described below.

Principle Components Factor Analysis

Prior to hypothesis testing, a factor analysis is conducted to investigate the three scales (desire for recognition, reasonableness of management’s goals, and ability to attend) to determine whether each scale measures a separate factor. Although each scale is expected to measure a separate factor, it was recognized that some items might need to be eliminated or added in order to more accurately reflect an under-
lying dimension. The decision rule adapted for this study was to accept the factor analysis version of a scale if the variance of the factor explained by the item was greater than .50.4

Cronbach's Alpha

The items which comprise each scale (from the factor analysis) are tested for inter-item correlation by using Cronbach's alpha. The purpose of this calculation is to measure the internal consistency of the scale items. Coefficient alpha examines the average correlation among the items of a scale in conjunction with the number of items (Carmines and Zeller, 1981). Internal reliability coefficients of above .60 are adequate for research purposes (Nunnally, 1967) and thus are used as the criterion for inclusion of an item into a scale. Items that are not found to be closely associated are discarded and the remaining appropriate item(s) forms the scale.

It is important to note the criterion for determining which item, of a two-item scale, is used if the internal reliability coefficient of the scale is below .60. The item is intuitively selected based upon its appropriateness for most directly representing the variable of interest. In such cases, the researcher discards the item that appears to be less meaningful or representative of the variable of interest compared to the item that is left to form the scale.

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4 Although it is recognized that factor loadings greater than .30 are considered significant, loadings greater than .40 more important, and loadings greater than .50 very significant, with a sample size of 50 or more, the larger the absolute size of the loading, the more significant the loading is in interpreting the factor matrix (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Grablowsky, 1984). Thus, because of a sample size above 50, the .50 criterion is used.
Tests for Violations of Assumptions of Normality

Hammer and Landau (1981) stress the importance of examining absence data for violations of assumptions of normality. A suggested guideline for allowing an assumption of normality is a skewness moment less than 2.0 and a kurtosis moment less than 5.0 (Kendall and Stuart, 1958). These guidelines are followed in this study and reported in Chapter 4.

Descriptive Statistics

The following descriptive statistics are calculated:

- mean absenteeism rate and frequency by time period
- number of days of employee absences
- number of incidences of employee absences

Each of these descriptive statistics is reported in Chapter 4.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses which were discussed in the previous chapter were stated conceptually. For the purpose of describing how these hypotheses are tested, each is restated below in terms suitable for statistical analysis. (They are referred to as operational
hypotheses.) The specific procedures used to test these hypotheses are also described below.

**Hypothesis 1:** Employees who have a high desire for recognition will reduce their absenteeism during an attendance recognition program.

Restated operationally as:

**Operational Hypothesis 1:** Employees with a high desire for recognition will have significantly lower absence rates and frequencies the last six months of the program compared to six months before the program started.

Employees who have a high desire for recognition six months before the program starts and maintain employment through the last six months of the program will comprise a modified sample. The absence measures for six months prior to the program are compared to absenteeism for the last six months of the program. The absence rates and frequencies for these two periods are compared because they cover the same period (January - June) in each year. By doing this, differences due to seasonal influences are controlled (Markham, et al., 1983).

Since the absence rates and frequencies are compared for the same employees in both periods, a repeated-measures design using a matched-sample $t$ test (also known as paired comparisons) is used to calculate the comparisons. This method is appropriate since it reduces overall variability by using the attendance measures of the same employees for all time periods and does not consider effects due to employee differences (Howell, 1987).
**Hypothesis 2:** Employees who strongly perceive that attendance is rewarded will have low absenteeism.

Restated operationally as:

**Operational Hypothesis 2:** Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six months of the program who have a high perception that attendance is rewarded will have lower absence rates and frequencies compared to employees with a low perception.

This hypothesis is tested by comparing the absence rates and frequencies of employees with a high perception that attendance is rewarded for the first six months to those of employees with a low perception. The same is conducted for the high and low perceivers in the last six months of the program. The comparisons in both periods are made via a t test.

**Hypothesis 3:** Employees who highly perceive that there is agreement between their individual acceptable levels of absenteeism and management’s will have less absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception.

Restated operationally as:

**Operational Hypothesis 3:** Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six months of the program with a high perception that there is agreement be-
tween their individual acceptable levels of absenteeism and management's will have significantly lower absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception.

The absence rates and frequencies of employees who have a high perception that agreement exists between their acceptable levels of absenteeism and management's are compared to employees with a low perception. The high and low perception groups in each six month period are comprised of employees whose acceptable level of absenteeism is equal to management's goals (i.e., good to perfect attendance), while the low perceiver group comprises employees whose absenteeism levels are not equal to management's goals. The difference in absence rates and frequencies between the two groups in both periods are compared by using ANOVA.

**Hypothesis 4:** Employees who highly perceive that management's attendance goals are reasonable will have less absenteeism than employees with a low perception.

Restated operationally as:

**Operational Hypothesis 4:** Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six months of the program with a high perception that management's attendance goals are reasonable will have significantly lower absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception.

The absence rates and frequencies of employees with a high perception that management's attendance goals are reasonable are compared to employees with a low perception. The difference in absence rates and frequencies between the two groups are compared for the first and last six months of the program by using ANOVA.
Hypothesis 5: Employees who highly perceive that they have the ability to attend work will have less absenteeism than employees with a low perception.

Restated operationally as:

Operational Hypothesis 5: Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six months of the program with a high perception of having the ability to attend work will have significantly lower absence rates and frequencies compared to employees with a low perception.

The absence rates and frequencies of employees with a high perception for the ability to attend work are compared to employees with a low perception of ability to attend for the first and last six months of the program. ANOVA is used to make the comparisons during each six month period.

Hypothesis 6: Employees who receive formal recognition for good attendance at the end of the first quarter of the program are more likely to maintain good attendance during quarters two, three, and four.

Restated operationally as:

Operational Hypothesis 6: The absence rates and frequencies of employees who receive attendance recognition after the first quarter of the program will be nonsig-
significantly different between the first and second, second and third, and third and fourth quarters of the program.

To test this hypothesis, employees who meet the criteria for receiving formal attendance recognition (i.e., 0-1 absence) at the end of the first quarter comprise a modified sample. A comparison of their absence rates and frequencies is conducted between each succeeding quarter to detect whether or not significant differences occur between quarters. Since the same employees' absence measures are compared from quarter to quarter, a matched-sample t test is used. As described above (in hypothesis 1), this method is appropriate since it reduces overall variability by using the attendance measures of the same employees for all quarters and does not consider effects due to employee differences (Howell, 1987).

Summary

The research site and characteristics of the attendance recognition program have been described. The measures and analytical procedures employed to test the hypotheses have been explained. The findings of the study are reported in the next chapter.

---

5 See the section, The Public Recognition Attendance Control Program, for an elaboration on the criteria for receiving the recognition rewards and a description of the awards.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The results of the data analysis used to test the hypotheses are described in this chapter in three sections. First, the results of the initial analyses are described in section one. Next, the descriptive statistics are explained. Section three presents the findings relevant to each hypothesis examined and to the overall model.

Initial Analysis

Principal components factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha, and tests for the violations of assumptions of normality were conducted prior to hypotheses testing. The results of each of these initial analyses are presented below.

Principal Components Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha
### Table 1. Varimax Rotation Factor Analysis Matrices for Three Six Month Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Factor One</th>
<th>Factor Two</th>
<th>Factor Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Six Months Before Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car trouble...ride not come</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management’s standards high</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect attendance is easy</td>
<td>-.38</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized...good attendance</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized...doing good job</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Could improve attendance</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Six Months of Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car trouble...ride not come</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Could improve attendance</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management’s standards high</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized...good attendance</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized...doing good job</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect attendance is easy</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Six Months of Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized...doing good job</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized...good attendance</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management’s standards high</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect attendance is easy</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.41</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car trouble...ride not come</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Could improve attendance</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal components factor analysis utilizing varimax rotation was used to investigate whether the three proposed scales identified clearly separate factor structures.
Cronbach’s alpha was used to test the reliability of the items within each scale. The results of both analyses for each scale is discussed below.

**Ability to Attend Scale:** Based on the results of the rotation, it was found that the ability to attend scale was intact. The factor loadings for the scale’s three items were not consistently above the a priori set criterion of .50 (i.e., six months before - .44, .43, and .46; first six months - .59, .58, and .52; and, last six months - .51, .49, and .40), as shown in Table 1 on page 53. However, the internal consistency (indicated by the alpha coefficients) of the scale measuring employees’ perceived ability to attend were marginal, yet sufficient, for all three time periods. They were .62, .64, and .63 for six months before the program and the first and last six months of the program, respectively. The three items that constituted the ability to attend scale were:

- If I tried harder, I could improve my attendance......SA A ?A ?D D SD
- Sometimes family problems make it impossible to get to work..SA A ?A ?D D SD
- I am absent sometimes because of car trouble or my ride doesn’t come. SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

**Desire for Recognition Scale:** The desire for recognition scale yielded mixed results. As presented in Table 1 on page 53, factor analysis showed the two items of the scale to load together for the three six month periods (i.e., .55 and .48; .58 and .57; and, .61 and .60) however, the alpha coefficients were too low to suggest inter-item reliability. The alpha coefficients were .38, .47, and .43 for the respective six month time periods. These coefficients fell too short of the recommended alpha of .60 for
research (Nunnally, 1967). Thus, instead of two items in the scale, one item was used.

As described in Chapter 3, the criterion to determine which item of a two-item scale would be used when the internal reliability coefficient between the two items was below .60, was based upon the item's intuitive appropriateness for most directly representing the construct of interest. In this case, the researcher discarded the following item:

- I would like to be recognized for doing a good job........ SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

This item was dropped from the scale because it does not speak directly to recognition for "good attendance" but only for "doing a good job". Therefore, compared to the remaining item in the scale, it was considered to be less representative of the desire for recognition variable. The remaining scale item was:

- I really like the idea of being recognized for good attendance... SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

**Reasonableness of Management's Goals Scale:** For the reasonableness of management's goals scale, the factor analyses for each six month period, as shown in Table 1 on page 53, did not suggest that the two proposed items measured a separate factor structure. The item loadings were .43 and -.38, .38 and -15, and, .45 and .41, for the respective time periods. The alpha coefficients for the six month periods were -.14 prior to the program, -.09 during the first half, and -.19 for the last half of the program. Therefore, since the factor loadings were insufficient to suggest that the items were measuring the same perceptions in the proposed scale and the inter-item correlations indicated a lack of reliability, one item was used to
measure the variable. As described above and also in Chapter 3, the criterion used to determine which item would be used, was based upon the intuitive appropriateness of the item for most directly representing the variable of interest. In this case, the researcher discarded the following item:

- Perfect attendance for a whole year is pretty easy to do. SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

This item was dropped from the scale because it does not speak directly to “management’s standards” but only to “perfect attendance”. Therefore, compared to the remaining item in the scale, it was considered by the researcher to be less representative of the reasonableness of management’s goals variable. The remaining scale item was:

- Management’s standards for attendance are too high.... SA A ?A ?D D SD NA

Tests for Violations of Assumptions of Normality

In accordance with Hammer and Landau’s (1981) suggestion to examine absence data for violations of assumptions of normality, the skewness and kurtosis moments were generated and are shown in Table 2 on page 57. Using a skewness moment of less than 2.0 and a kurtosis moment of less than 5.0 as a guideline (Kendall & Stuart, 1958), it was found that the absence measures used in this study supported the conclusion of Hammer and Landau (1981) that the absence rate index is subject to skewness and kurtosis. Nevertheless, the absence frequency had skewness and kurtosis moments (each less than 2.0) well within these guidelines. Therefore, all interpretations of the research findings are based on the absence frequency index even though both absenteeism measures are reported.
Table 2. Results of Tests of Violations of Assumptions of Normality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Absence Rate Moments</th>
<th>Absence Frequency Moments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mos. Before</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>33.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First 6 Mos.</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>9.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last 6 Mos.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>24.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Statistics

Absenteeism data for the sample is presented in Tables 3-4. Table 3 on page 58, indicates the mean absenteeism rate and mean frequency by time period. The table shows that during the first six months of the program there was a 17% decline in the mean absence rate and a 15% decline in the frequency of incidences of absence compared to six months before the program started. However, compared to the first six months of the program, during the last six months the average absenteeism rates increased 38% to above what they were in the first period.
Table 3. Mean absenteeism Rate and Frequency by Time Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Mean Absenteeism Rate</th>
<th>Mean Absenteeism Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Mos. Before</td>
<td>3.627 (n = 225)</td>
<td>.451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First 6 Mos.</td>
<td>2.997 (n = 240)</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last 6 Mos.</td>
<td>4.138 (n = 237)</td>
<td>.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>3.587</td>
<td>.457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Number of Days of Employee Absences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Days Absent</th>
<th>6 Mos. Before</th>
<th>First 6 Mos.</th>
<th>Last 6 Mos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 &lt; 1</td>
<td>65 (29%)</td>
<td>70 (29%)</td>
<td>55 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>101 (45)</td>
<td>121 (50)</td>
<td>111 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>38 (17)</td>
<td>29 (12)</td>
<td>41 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15</td>
<td>9 (4)</td>
<td>14 (6)</td>
<td>19 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20</td>
<td>7 (3)</td>
<td>3 (1)</td>
<td>7 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>1 (.4)</td>
<td>1 (.4)</td>
<td>2 (.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 25</td>
<td>4 (2)</td>
<td>2 (.8)</td>
<td>2 (.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 and Table 5 on page 59, present a frequency distribution of the number of days absent and the number of incidences of absence, respectively. In both tables, the distribution is shown for the three six month periods whereas, the first column lists the categories for the number of days absent (Table 4), while in Table 5 the
The first column lists categories for the number of incidences of absence. The remaining columns in both tables give the absolute number of people absent for each category with the percentage number of people absent in parentheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Incidences</th>
<th>6 Mos. Before</th>
<th>First 6 Mos.</th>
<th>Last 6 Mos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 &lt; 1</td>
<td>65 (29%)</td>
<td>70 (29%)</td>
<td>55 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>132 (59)</td>
<td>142 (59)</td>
<td>138 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10</td>
<td>23 (10)</td>
<td>27 (11)</td>
<td>39 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 15</td>
<td>5 (2)</td>
<td>1 (.4)</td>
<td>4 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both tables indicate that there was only a slight improvement in attendance during the first six months of the program compared to the previous six months. For example, during this period, 29% of employees had perfect attendance which was the same as the percentage six months before the program started. However, there was a 5% increase in the number of employees with 1-5 absences from six months before the program (45%) to its last six months (50%). Attendance declined in the last six months with only 23% of employees having perfect attendance and 47% missing 1-5 days of work, which was still above the 45% for this category six months prior to the start of the program.
Results of Hypothesis Testing

This section presents the findings relevant to the operational hypotheses concerning the impact of a formal recognition program on attendance behavior and attitudes.

**Operational Hypothesis 1:** Employees with a high desire for recognition will have significantly lower absence rates and frequencies the last six months of the program compared to six months before the program started.

Employees who had a high desire for recognition six months before the program started and maintained employment through the last six months of the program comprised a modified sample of 145 employees. Their absence measures for the six months prior to the program were compared to their absenteeism for the last six months of the program. Absence rates and frequencies for these two periods were compared because they covered the same period (January - June) in each year. By doing this, differences due to seasonal influences were controlled (Markham et al., 1983).

| Table 6. Mean Absence Rates and Frequencies for the Recognition Desire Modified Sample |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|
| Measure                        | n   | 6 Mos. Before   | Last 6 Mos.     |
| Absence Rate                   | 145 | 3.475           | 3.781           |
| Absence Frequency              | 145 | 0.419           | 0.517           |
Prior to comparing the mean differences in absenteeism between the periods, the means for the absence measures were generated. These means are presented in Table 6 on page 60. For the six months prior to the program the absence rate and frequencies were 3.475 and .419, respectively. During the last six months of the program the absence rate and frequency, respectively, were 3.781 and .517.

To determine if the mean differences between the time period six months before the program started and the last six months of the program were significant, a matched-sample t test was used which is shown in Table 7. The results show that the mean difference for the absence rate between six months before and the last six months was -.5223 with a nonsignificant t value of -1.00 (p > .3218). For the frequency, the mean difference was .0516 and also with a nonsignificant t value of 1.03 (p > .3062).

Thus, the hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the absence rates and frequencies of employees who have a desire for recognition six months before the program starts and during the last six months of the program was not supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p &lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence Rate</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>-.5223</td>
<td>.5234</td>
<td>-.88</td>
<td>.3218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence Frequency</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>.0516</td>
<td>.0501</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.3062</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Operational Hypothesis 2: Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six of the program who have a high perception that attendance is rewarded will have lower absence rates and frequencies compared to employees with a low perception.

This hypothesis was tested by comparing the absence rates and frequencies of employees with a high perception that attendance is rewarded for the first six months of the program with employees who had a low perception. The comparisons were also made between the high and low perceivers in the last six month period. Table 8 on page 63, presents the results of the $t$ test which shows that for both time periods, there was a nonsignificant difference between the absence rates of employees with a high perception that attendance is rewarded and employees with a low perception. Likewise, Table 8 on page 63 shows that the same result was found for absence frequency. More specifically, during the first six months for the high ($n = 42$) and low ($n = 56$) groups the $t$ values based on the absence rate was $-0.722$ ($p > .4720$) and frequency was $-1.145$ ($p > .2552$). The absence rate and frequency $t$ values for the last six months for the high ($n = 51$) and low ($n = 47$) groups were $-0.653$ ($p > .5152$) and $-0.183$ ($p > .8553$), respectively.

Therefore, the hypothesis that employees with a high perception that attendance is rewarded will have lower absence rates and frequencies compared to employees with a low perception during the first and last six months of the program was not supported.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p &gt; T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First 6 Mos.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2.663</td>
<td>3.180</td>
<td>-.722</td>
<td>.4720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2.179</td>
<td>3.407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last 6 Mos.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.692</td>
<td>5.137</td>
<td>-.653</td>
<td>.5152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.117</td>
<td>3.295</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Absence Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>p &gt; T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First 6 Mos.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>-1.145</td>
<td>.2552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last 6 Mos.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>.510</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td>-.183</td>
<td>.8553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>.512</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Operational Hypothesis 3:** Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six months of the program with a high perception that there is agreement between their individual acceptable levels of absenteeism and management's will have significantly lower absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception.

The difference in absence rates and frequencies based on the perceived level (high vs. low) of agreement of employees' acceptable levels of absenteeism and management's goals were compared for the first and last six months of the program. The
high group was comprised of employees who perceived management’s goal (good to perfect attendance) to be 0-2 days only and at the same time perceived their individual acceptable level of absenteeism to be 0-2 absences. The low perceiver group was made of employees who perceived management’s goal to be 0-2 absences but did not perceive their individual acceptable level of absenteeism to be equal to management’s goal (i.e., 0-2 absences). In other words, all employees who were not in the low acceptable level of absenteeism group and simultaneously in the low management’s goal group were categorized as low perceivers. The comparisons between the high and low perceiver groups for both time periods was conducted by using ANOVA. Table 9 on page 65 and Table 10 on page 66 show the results of the ANOVA for absence rates and frequencies for the first and last six months of the program, respectively. The ANOVAs for the groups on both absence measures indicated that there were nonsignificant differences between the two groups in each period.
Table 9. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceived Agreement of Employees’ and Managements’ Goals for the First 6 Mos.

### Absence Rate

**ANOVA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15.081</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Absence Frequency

**ANOVA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceived Agreement of Employees' and Management's Goals for the Last 6 Mos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence Rate ANOVA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68.800</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53.900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Absence Frequency ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the first six months there were 21 high and 18 low perceivers. The F-values for the groups were .01 (p > .908) for absence rate and .01 (p > .921) for the frequency. During the last six months there were 22 high and 20 low perceivers. The F-values for the groups were 1.28 (p > .265) and .80 (p > .375) for the absence rate and frequency, respectively.

Thus, based on the above findings, the hypothesis that employees with a high perception that there is agreement between their individual acceptable levels of absenteeism and management's will have significantly lower absenteeism during the first

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS
and last six months of the program compared to employees with a low perception was not supported.

**Operational Hypothesis 4:** Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six months of the program with a high perception that management’s attendance goals are reasonable will have significantly lower absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceptions of the Reasonableness of Management’s Goals for the First 6 Months of the Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absence Rate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANOVA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absence Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANOVA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceptions of the Reasonableness of Management's Goals for the Last 6 Months of the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.816</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>29.113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>.305</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference in absenteeism based on employee's high vs. low perception that management's goals are reasonable were compared for the first six months of the program and also for between the high and low perceivers in the last six months by using ANOVA.

As presented in Table 11 on page 67 and Table 12, the results of the ANOVA for the differences in mean between the high and low groups based on absence rates and frequencies are presented. The ANOVAs for both measures in both six month periods indicated that there were nonsignificant differences between the absence rates and frequencies of the two groups.

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The comparison for the first six months of the program between high (n = 73) and low (n = 61) perceivers yielded F-values of .28 (p > .595) and .02 (p > .875) for absence rate and frequency, respectively. For the last six months, F-values of .20 (p > .656) and .00 (p > .948) for absence rate and frequency, respectively, were generated for the comparison between the high (n = 59) and low (n = 64) perceivers.

Thus, the hypothesis that employees with a high perception that management’s attendance goals are reasonable will have significantly lower absenteeism during the first and last six months of the program compared to employees with a low perception was not supported.

**Operational Hypothesis 5:** Employees in the first six months and employees in the last six months of the program with a high perception of having the ability to attend work will have significantly lower absence rates and frequencies compared to employees with a low perception.
Table 13. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceptions of Ability to Attend Work for the First 6 Months of the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p &lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>79.726</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>.0149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>13.073</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duncan’s Multiple Range Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3.461</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.850</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceptions of Ability to Attend for the Last 6 Months of the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p &lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>238.341</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>.0115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35.921</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duncan’s Multiple Range Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6.075</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3.017</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceptions of Ability to Attend Work for the First 6 Months of the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.657</td>
<td>18.21</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>.146</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>146</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Duncan’s Multiple Range Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.519</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16. Comparison of High vs. Low Perceptions of Ability to Attend for the Last 6 Months of the Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absence Frequency</th>
<th>ANOVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duncan’s Multiple Range Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 on page 70 and Table 14 on page 71 show the results of the ANOVA and also Duncan’s Multiple Range Test used for the first and last six month time periods to detect differences in the absence rates for employees who perceived themselves as having high ability to attend work and those who perceived low.

The ANOVAs revealed significant mean differences for both time periods. Furthermore, the Duncan’s Multiple Range Tests were conducted to show that in both time periods the group who perceived themselves as having high ability to attend work had higher absence rates compared to the low perception of ability to attend group. More specifically, the F-values for the ANOVA for absence rates for the first and last six months were 6.10 (p > .0149) and 6.64 (p > .0115), respectively. The mean absence rates for the first six months for the high (n = 62) and low (n = 61)
groups were 3.461 and 1.850. For the last six months the mean absence rates for the high (n = 50) and low (n = 52) groups were 6.075 and 3.017, respectively.

The ANOVA F-values for the frequencies for the periods, as shown in Table 15 on page 72 and Table 16 on page 73, were larger than for the F-values for the absence rates ANOVAs during both times. They were 18.21 and 17.69 and both significant at the .0001 level of significance. The mean frequency differences as shown by the Duncan's Multiple Range Test for the high and low groups were .519 (n = 62) and .225 (n = 61) for the first six months and .854 (n = 50) and .391 (n = 52) for the last six months, respectively.

Thus, the hypothesis that employees with a high perception of having the ability to attend work will have a significantly lower absence rate and frequency compared to employees with a low perception for the first and last six months of the program was not supported.

**Operational Hypothesis 6:** The absence rates and frequencies of employees who receive attendance recognition after the first quarter of the program will be nonsignificantly different between the first and second, second and third, and third and fourth quarters of the program.

Employees who met the criteria for receiving formal attendance recognition (i.e., 0-1 absence) at the end of the first quarter comprised a modified sample of 87 recipients. Since the same employees' absence measures were compared from quarter to quarter, a matched-sample $t$ test was used to make the comparisons.
Prior to comparing the mean differences between the quarters, the means for the absence rate for the first, second, third, and fourth quarters for the recognition recipients were generated. These means are shown with the matching plant absenteeism rates for the same three month periods of the two years preceding the introduction of any experimental treatment. The matching plant absenteeism means are shown with the award recipient absenteeism means in order to show the cyclical effect of absenteeism for the plant. These means are presented in Table 17 on page 76. For the first quarter the absenteeism rates were .55 and 4.22; second quarter -.88 and 3.66; third - 2.50 and 4.90; and fourth quarter - 1.982 and 4.10 for the recognized employees and plant matching absenteeism rates, respectively.

The comparisons of the mean differences for absence rates and frequencies for the recipients of the award during the first quarter of the program yielded mixed results. There was a nonsignificant difference between the absence rates of the formal recognition recipients between the first and second quarters and the third and fourth quarters of the program. However, for the absence frequency there was a significant difference in attendance for each quarter after the first. As shown in Table 18 on page 77, the respective mean difference and t value between quarters one and two were .3259 and 1.77 (p > .0805) for absence rate and .0460 and 1.56 (p > .1220) for absence frequency. Between quarters two and three the respective mean difference and t value were 1.62 and 3.59 (p > .0005), and, .1916 and 3.78 (p > .0003) for the absence rate and frequency. Quarters three and four had a mean difference and t value of -.5213 and -1.10 (p > .2744), and, -.0920 and -2.22 (p > .0289) for the absence rate and frequency, respectively.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS
In addition to the results of the test of this hypothesis, consideration must be given to the cyclic nature of absenteeism for this plant (see Markham, 1985). As represented by the matching plant absenteeism means for each of the quarters of the program, there seems to exist a pattern of a decline in absenteeism from the first quarter to the second, followed by a rise from the second to the third, and a slight reduction in the fourth quarter. Unlike the matching plant pattern, the recognized recipients increased their absenteeism from the first to the second quarter however, their absence pattern was similar to the plant pattern for the remainder of the program. In other words, the absence patterns for the plant and the recognized recipients were almost the same. Thus, with the the results of the analysis and the consideration of the absenteeism pattern from quarter to quarter, the findings for the hypothesis suggest that there may be some support for the proposition that employees who receive the award in the first quarter would be more likely to maintain good attendance in subsequent quarters when compared to non-recipients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17. Mean Absence Rates of Quarterly Formally Recognized Recipients with Matching Plant Absence Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absence Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized Recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching Plant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS
Table 18. Comparison of Absenteeism of Formally Recognized Recipients from Quarters 1-4 of the Program

| Quarters         | n  | Mean Difference | Standard Error | T    | p <  
|------------------|----|-----------------|----------------|------|------
| 1 and 2          | 87 | .3259           | .1843          | 1.77 | .0805
| 2 and 3          | 87 | 1.6245          | .4521          | 3.59 | .0005
| 3 and 4          | 87 | -.5213          | .4739          | -1.10| .2744

Absence Frequency

| Quarters         | n  | Mean Difference | Standard Error | T    | p <  
|------------------|----|-----------------|----------------|------|------
| 1 and 2          | 87 | .0459           | .0294          | 1.56 | .1220
| 2 and 3          | 87 | .1916           | .0507          | 3.78 | .0003
| 3 and 4          | 87 | -.0920          | .0414          | -2.22| .0289

Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the study. Sample characteristics and variable measures were described. The results indicate that no support was found for six hypotheses which were formulated based on the variables of the recognition/absenteeism model.

The next chapter provides an indepth discussion of the interpretation of these findings and their implications. Also discussed are the limitations of the study and areas for future research.

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CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of this research study. This discussion includes a summary of the study, interpretation of the findings, and a discussion of their implications. Finally, limitations of the study are identified and recommendations made for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to extend the Scott et al. (1985) research by examining the influence of public recognition on employees' attitudes and perceptions toward absenteeism. The main focus was on why the public recognition program consistently rendered positive results for all four quarters of the experiment and generated the greatest overall reduction in absenteeism in comparison to the two other treatments that were utilized.
A review of the absenteeism literature resulted in the finding of only one empirical study on the use of recognition programs for controlling absenteeism which was by Scott et al. (1985). Despite the dearth of empirical evaluations of the merits of a recognition program, in the absenteeism or literature of other areas, researchers have acknowledged employee public recognition as a viable component of a comprehensive absenteeism control program. Therefore, in order to better understand the effectiveness of recognition in reducing absenteeism, a conceptual model of the absenteeism/recognition relationship was developed. The model was based on the integration of the need, expectancy, reinforcement, and goal setting theories which provided the basic building blocks to demonstrate why recognition is effective in reducing absenteeism. The model implies that the influence of recognition on attendance behavior is a function of an employee’s (1) desire for recognition; (2) belief that attendance is related to recognition; (3) personal attendance goal setting which is a function of an employee’s (a) perceived agreement between individual and management’s attendance goals, (b) perceived reasonableness of management’s goals, and (c) perceived ability to attend in order to meet goals; and (4) recognition reward. To test the model, six hypotheses were formulated and tested based on the six variables of the model. In the next section, the results of the findings from the tests of the hypotheses are discussed.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study are discussed in relation to each of the variables examined.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION
Employees' Desire for Recognition

It was hypothesized that employees who had a high desire for attendance recognition would reduce their absenteeism as a result of the attendance recognition program. This hypothesis was based on the contentions of need theorists (e.g., Maslow, Murray, Alderfer) who postulate that recognition is a basic intrinsic need that employees seek to have fulfilled.

Although there was a reduction in absenteeism of the employees who indicated a desire for recognition after the recognition program started, the reduction was non-significant. This finding raises questions concerning what we know or think we know about recognition. Researchers (e.g., Wanous & Zwany, 1977; Beer, 1966) and theorists (e.g., Maslow, 1954; Herzburg, 1959; Alderfer, 1969) alike have postulated that both physical and psychological needs are the primary driving force behind employee behavior in organizational settings. Motivation is said to be the result of the individual's attempt to satisfy these needs (Brown, 1986). However, this notion was not supported.

Two reasons for this result could be that attendance behavior for this particular sample, due to its unique characteristics, may not be a good measure of general employee behavior. In other words, the employees may have desired recognition for other aspects of their jobs such as, for example, production increases. They may have the attitude that as long as a job is done well, their attendance is not as important. Another reason may be that the employees may not have liked to have been recognized in the way the company chose to do so. It is highly conceivable that some employees who desired recognition may have chosen not to seek the re-
wards for fear of being perceived by his or her co-workers as being a "rate buster" or "company stooge". This would most likely be true if a strong work group attendance norms had been well established in the plant.

Employees' Belief That Attendance Is Related to Recognition

This hypothesis was formulated to test whether high versus low perceptions that employees held concerning the link between rewards and absenteeism would relate to their attendance behavior. It was found that the absenteeism of employees who had a high perception that good attendance was rewarded was nonsignificantly different from employee's with a low perception. This finding reveals that for this sample regardless of whether employees have high or low perceptions that attendance is rewarded, their attendance behavior does not appear to be effected.

This notion challenges the contentions of Vroom (1964) and his followers who assert that employee perceptions of the instrumentality of positive reinforcement in achieving the desired positive reinforcer may vary across individuals. Employee perceptions of the instrumentality of positive reinforcement in achieving a desired reward may be deduced from their perceptions of whether the particular behavior is rewarded. Thus, in the context of the recognition/attendance relationship, if an employee believes that a high level of performance (e.g., good to perfect attendance) will lead to the acquisition of gratifying outcomes (recognition), then the employee will place a high valence on performing the job well (i.e., improving attendance). The finding, does not support this theory.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION
Employee’s Attendance Goals - Congruency Perceptions

It was hypothesized that employees with a high perception of congruency to exist between their individual acceptable levels of absenteeism and management’s would have less absenteeism than employees with a low perception. According to the findings of this study, no support was found for this hypothesis. For the three six month periods (before, first, and last) of the program, the differences in absence rates and frequencies between employees with a high and low perception of agreement between their acceptable levels of absenteeism and management’s were non-significant.

On the surface, this finding is quite baffling since it has been empirically well documented that employees are most likely to accept an organizationally developed goal if it is agree with their personal goals. One explanation for the finding could be that the employees’ perceptions that were assessed may have been what they perceived to have been the “ideal” acceptable absenteeism levels that they should each have had for themselves as “ideal” employees. By the same token, their perceived knowledge of management’s absenteeism goal may also be flawed by implicit prototypic or schematic notions of what a company would “ideally” set as an attendance level. If this is true, then what was measured in this study may not have been what employees believed to actually have existed but, instead, what they believed should have ideally existed. Certainly more research is needed in the person-perception research area.
Employee’s Attendance Goals - Reasonableness of Management’s Goals

It was hypothesized that employees with a high perception of management’s attendance goals to be reasonable would have less absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception. This hypothesis was not supported. In all six month periods, the difference in the mean absence rates and frequencies between employees with a high perception that management’s goals were reasonable and those with a low perception were nonsignificant.

This finding does not support the propositions of researchers (e.g., Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, 1978) who suggest that reasonable, specific, and clear goals solicit greater goal acceptance and thereby achieve improved performance. However, the issue here could be merely the notion of goal acceptance. If employees perceive management’s goals to be reasonable, and yet their behavior is unrelated to the perception, then the employees may not have accepted management’s attendance goals. This could be due to possible employee perceptions that management was not serious about reducing absenteeism or management was just complying with the whims of a group of researchers and therefore the attention to attendance goals was only ephemeral. The result of the test of this hypothesis suggests that much research needs to be conducted concerning goal acceptance and its antecedents.

Employee’s Attendance Goals - Perceptions of Ability to Attend

It was hypothesized that employees who had a high perception of themselves as having the ability to attend work would have less absenteeism compared to employees with a low perception. Although significant results were found in each six
month period, this hypothesis was not supported by the tests because the high perceivers also had higher absenteeism compared to low perceivers. This finding does not support the contentions by theorists (e.g., Herman, 1973; Steers & Rhodes, 1978) that an employee's ability to attend work is often outside the control of the individual and organization. Instead these findings intuitively, as well as empirically, suggest that although employees perceive themselves as having a high ability to attend, other factors also play a significant role in determining whether employees will attend work or not.

On the other hand, low perceivers, realizing that their ability to attend is more restricted, compared to high perceivers, may make a greater effort to attend whenever possible in order to maximize on their attendance. The low perceivers may come even when they do not "feel" like coming to work because they never know when they will not be able to attend due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., lack of transportation, health or family problems, etc.). This of course, suggests that the high perceivers may possibly not feel as restricted and thus are inclined to be absent whenever the "urge" presents itself.

Another explanation is merely conjecture that suggests that low perceivers may, by the nature of their situation, feel more pressured to attend compared to high perceivers. For example, if an employee does not have an automobile and car pools with peers, then the transportation peer group may inadvertently establish implicit attendance norms. If the low perceiver seeks group acceptance, then he or she may feel pressured to ride (attend work) regularly.
To give another hypothetical example, if childcare is a problem for a low perceiver, having a dependable babysitter to provide childcare services on a routine basis may implicitly pressure the employee to attend work. This would possibly happen because the parent would want to appear to the babysitter as being a responsible and dutiful parent who works hard and regularly.

Both examples are hypothetical, yet, further research into this area may provide a better understanding of why these findings were obtained.

**Recognition Reward**

The recognition reward hypothesis was not supported. The hypothesis stated that employees who received formal attendance recognition at the end of the first quarter would most likely maintain good attendance during times two, three, and four of the attendance recognition program. It was found that employees who were recognized after the first quarter of the program, maintained their absence rate in the second quarter. But, in the third quarter there was a significant difference in their attendance: attendance actually increased. However, in the fourth quarter their attendance fell again but only to a level that was still higher than after the first quarter of the program. On the other hand, the absence frequency was found to yield significant results from quarter to quarter. Thus, the good attendance of the recognition recipients was not maintained as hypothesized.

Based on these findings the hypothesis was not supported. This finding also does not support the basic premise of reinforcement theory which postulates that if a behavior is followed by rewarding consequences, then people are more likely to re-
peat the behavior. However, it must be recognized that the quarterly recognition award was a post card signed by the plant manager at the end of each quarter. Even though these employees were also eligible for custom jewelry if good attendance (i.e., 0-2 absences) was maintained for a year, it is possible that the recognition award was not stimulating enough to reinforce continued good attendance behavior. Only a replication of the study using a more tangible attendance reward at the end of each quarter (e.g., jewelry) would reveal whether or not the recognition reward made a difference in this study.

The Model of the Absenteeism/Recognition Relationship

A model of the absenteeism/recognition relationship was developed to suggest why recognition is effective in reducing absenteeism. The model as shown in Chapter 2, in Figure 1 on page 28, postulates that the influence of recognition on an employee's attendance behavior is a function of the four variables which were tested and discussed above.

According to the model, employees seek to fulfill a basic need for recognition. In an attempt to attain this fulfillment, employees' perception of a positive relationship between attendance rewards and attendance behavior will effect their behavior. If the link between rewards and attendance is understood then employees will expect to be rewarded and therefore modify their attendance behavior based upon their perception of the reasonableness of management's goals and their ability to attend. Furthermore, the recognition reward, upon receipt, will serve to reinforce good attendance behavior.
The components of the model were tested based on the hypotheses which were formulated. According to the findings, none of the hypotheses were supported. Nevertheless, the model should not be hastily dismissed, or even discounted. What has been made more cognizant by these findings is that behavioral research concerning beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes needs to be conducted in varied settings and under a variety of conditions before generalizations are made concerning their relationship on employee behavior. Thus, before the model is discounted, it should be tested again in a replication of this study in a different setting in order to help satisfy some of the curiosities that have come about as result of these findings.

Limitations of the Study

The most salient limitation of this study is the predominance of one-item scales to measure the variables of interest. All of the hypotheses that were tested with one-item scales resulted in nonsignificant results whereas, with the only hypothesis that was tested with a three-item scale, the findings were significant for both six month periods. Clearly such findings could be a reflection of reality, but since previous findings have added support to some of the same hypotheses that this study does not support, the one-item scales suggest that caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings and particularly generalizing them. There is no certainty that the questions measured by the one-item scales actually measured what they purported to measure.

In addition, the measurement instrument used in the study utilized a Likert measurement scale which is often used for measuring the direction and strength of peo-
ple's beliefs in behavioral studies. However, despite its widespread use, Likert scaling has a number of weaknesses. One in particular is that it represents only an ordinal level of measurement (Lodge, 1981). Therefore, the statistical methods which could be employed in the study were limited. Also, by offering a fixed number of categories, the scales may have inadvertently affected employee responses.

Another major limitation of this study is that the research location may not be representative of other organizations. The study focused exclusively on the garment industry, and on only one company within that industry and one plant within that company. This company (located in rural Virginia) may not be representative of the industry and the industry may not be representative of other industries. In addition, the sample was limited to females, to employees engaged in piece-work and to employees who were not paid when absent. The findings of the study, therefore, have limited generalizability.

Finally, a limitation may rest with the design of the recognition reward program itself. Although the program was professionally designed, the way the program was implemented may have affected employees attitudes toward it. Moreover, the employees may not have liked recognition in the way it was given (i.e., method and/or award) and therefore responded indifferently to the program.

However, given the potential limitations of the attendance recognition program and the instrument used, these hypotheses should not be dismissed without further research. Since the findings concerning theories of motivation have been mixed, and given the dearth of empirical studies concerning the effectiveness of recognition and

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION
employee attitudes and behavior, a replication of this study with a different instrument, setting, and sample of employees would be most appropriate.

**Implications of Research Findings**

The results of this study have implications for researchers as well as practitioners. For researchers the findings suggest that more work needs to be done in the area of employee perceptions and attitudes and how they effect employee behavior. For example, Chris Clegg (1983) found in a study that attendance behavior predicted employees' subsequent attitudes concerning attendance more than attitudes predicting attendance behavior. This notion of a reverse causation may play an integral role in explaining some of the results of this study. More research as to the causal relationships between attitudes and behavior, and the reverse, and their relationship to attendance behavior is needed.

Research is certainly needed concerning recognition as a construct in general. There are still many unanswered questions that address what recognition is; when is it appropriate and how often; is it a basic need or is it peripheral; do all employees want to be recognized; what are the best methods for recognizing achievements; how does recognition of an employee effect his or her co-workers; what are the negative effects of recognition; etc. Attitude and perception research can potentially provide some answers to these questions.

For practitioners, a word of caution is appropriate. Although this study found that high perceivers of ability to attend had higher absenteeism than employees with low
perceptions, evidence from previous research show that an employee's ability to attend work is a major determinant of his or her attendance behavior. Thus, issues concerning transportation, child care, elder care, health and fitness, etc. are primary concerns that should continue to be addressed in addition to considering motivational type programs for improving worker attendance behavior. For it has been shown that regardless of the motivational level of the employee, basic needs (e.g., child care, transportation, etc.) effect a worker's ability to attend work.

As practitioners have lauded the merits of recognition and recognition reward programs, it has been empirically shown that employee recognition programs do tend to yield greater reductions in absenteeism than others (Scott et al., 1985). Yet, based on the results of this study the reasons for the program's effectiveness are still not known. Nonetheless, practitioners and researchers alike need to continue to develop and test different methods of recognizing employees in order to find what ways are most effective in meeting both the individual and organizational needs and to gain insight as to why the programs are effective.

Conclusion

The focal point of this study was on understanding why the Scott et al. (1985) study was effective in reducing absenteeism. In an attempt to examine the program's effectiveness, a model was presented to show the conceptualized absenteeism/recognition relationship. Based on the model, hypotheses were formulated to help provide insight for why the program was effective. Although absenteeism decreased when the recognition program was administered, the results of the
tests did not support these hypotheses. Thus, why recognition is effective in reducing absenteeism is still not known. Furthermore, the effect of perceptions and attitudes on employee behavior has become more unclear.

Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of recognition and its relationship to behavior, more empirical research is needed. By addressing this area of research, this study has opened the door for the understanding of an important vehicle for potentially effecting employee attitudes and behavior.
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