

Determinants of Absenteeism in a Retail Department Store

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
Management

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May, 1982
Blacksburg, Virginia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express his gratitude to his thesis committee, Dr. Jerald F. Robinson, Dr. K. Dow Scott, and Dr. Robert M. Madigan, for all of their valuable comments, patience, and assistance. The expertise of each committee member made the completion of this thesis an excellent professional experience and a fulfilling personal achievement.

Special thanks go out to the many friends who offered assistance or words of encouragement during the completion of this project. Finally the author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of his wife, Karen, whose love, support, and encouragement were crucial in finishing a project of this magnitude.

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Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 NATURE OF PROBLEM

Employee absenteeism is a problem which costs business billions of dollars annually.¹ Researchers have reported possible causes of absenteeism and have proposed solutions to such problems for several decades. However, the retail industry, which experiences a high absentee rate, has been the focus of limited investigation. This study examines possible causes of absenteeism in retail department stores.

As an introduction, the following items will be discussed: definitions and formulas for measuring absenteeism, the cost of absenteeism, the uniqueness of the retail industry, and the purpose and significance of this study.

1.1.1 Absenteeism: Measures and Definitions

Although often of much concern and of numerous studies, absenteeism has no simple definition due to a lack of consistency in defining and measuring absenteeism. In fact research has found that use of different methods leads to contrasting results. A common method for calculating

¹ Cost estimates are presented in section 1.1.2.

absenteeism, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS),² is:

$$\text{Inactivity Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Hours Absent}}{\text{Number of Hours Usually Worked}} \times 100$$

This formula aids an organization in determining the absolute loss of hours due to absenteeism in a given work period, and helps in comparing absentee rates within the same industry. However, the BLS method has significant limitations for use in controlling absenteeism.

If employers are interested in reducing absenteeism, they must know which employees contribute most to the company's problem. This knowledge will allow the company to evaluate why absences occur among different kinds of employees, and thus give the company a vehicle to develop methods for correcting the problems. The BLS method does not provide adequate information for this purpose. For example, an employee who misses forty consecutive workhours due to an illness during a 400 hour work period, will have a ten percent inactivity rate ($40/400=10\%$). Using the same formula, an employee who misses five nonconsecutive eight hour workdays also will have a ten percent absentee rate. Despite the

² Daniel E. Taylor, "Absent Workers and Lost Work Hours, May, 1978," Monthly Labor Review, Vol.102 (August 1979), p.50.

same absentee rates, the latter employee may be considered the "problem employee" requiring discipline, because frequent absences are disruptive to the organization. This deficiency in the BLS measure of inactivity indicates the need for other measures of absenteeism.

A method for measuring absences which overcomes the BLS formula deficiency is the frequency rate, defined as follows:

Frequency Rate = Incidents / Average Number of Employees
(where "incidents" means occasions or continuous periods of absence unseparated by return to work),³

Using the frequency rate on an individual basis, the employee who missed forty consecutive work hours would have one incident, while the other employee who missed five nonconsecutive eight hour days work would have five incidents. Though this method is deficient in measuring the absolute absentee rate, it is effective in identifying absenteeism "problems." For this reason, many researchers and organizations use both methods to provide for a complete analysis in measuring absenteeism.

³ R. W. Kempen, "Absenteeism and Tardiness," Handbook of Organizational Behavioral Management (New York: John Wiley Press, In press), Manuscript edition available.

Another measure of absenteeism, but one that determines over-all company performance, is the incidence rate shown in the following formula.

$$\text{Incidence Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of workers absent}}{\text{Total Number of Employees}} \times 100$$

In this measure, if a company employs 1000 people and 100 different individuals are absent during a given week, the company's incidence rate would be ten percent (100/1000=10%) for that given week. This absentee measure allows the employer to see how widespread absences are among employees during various time periods. The BLS reported a weekly national incidence rate of 6.1% in 1980.⁴

Other methods for measuring absenteeism are used by various organizations and researchers to obtain different interpretations of the absentee problem. Those methods include:⁵

1. Severity rates (average amount of hours lost by absent workers per absence during a given time period).

⁴ J. N. Hedges and D. E. Taylor, "Fewer Absences Reported, But Time Lost Remains Steady," News, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, June 26, 1981, p.4.

⁵ Paul J. Porwoll, Employee Absenteeism: A Summary of Research (Arlington, Virginia: Educational Research Service Inc., 1980), pp. 6-8.

2. Medical absences (frequency of absences that are three days or more).
3. Attitudinal absences (frequency of one day absences).
4. Worst day absences (difference between absentee rates on the week's best and worst days).
5. Average number of days lost per absence.
6. Number of absences by reason.

Other methods may be used by particular firms.

Despite the varying methods of measuring absenteeism, the most frequently used formula is:

$$\text{Absence Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of workdays lost due to job absences during a month}}{\text{average number of employees} \times \text{average number of workdays}} \times 100$$

This formula, recommended by both the BLS and the Bureau of National Affairs, is used by three-fourths of all companies that have a method for measuring absenteeism.⁶ It derives from the BLS formula first mentioned in this section. The advantage of this formula is that it is easy to calculate, but it and other absenteeism measures have several disadvantages.

⁶ Mary G. Miner, "Job Absence and Turnover: A New Source of Data," Monthly Labor Review, Vol. 100 (October 1977), p.26.

One disadvantage with this formula and many others is that absences may be left out due to absence recording rules. For instance, how many hours in a day must be missed before such absence is counted as an absence? Employees who leave work early or arrive late may not be counted as absent due to recording rules, but could be creating significant problems. Another problem is that there are no common definitions as to what constitutes an absence. Most companies exclude paid vacations and other excused leave time from absence statistics. Some exclude absences due to jury duty and military leave. Usually, absence statistics include illness, transportation problems, children's sickness, and other reasons acceptable to the particular organization.

Questions about what is included as an absence and what is not, along with the different methods for calculating absenteeism, lead to inconsistencies in absentee rates. The researcher as well as the business firm must define an absence before beginning to measure absentee rates, and then must keep the limitations in mind when using the calculation. A good definition of absenteeism clearly specifies when an absence has occurred and what constitutes an absence.⁷

⁷ Kempen, pp.3-5.

1.1.2 The Cost of Absenteeism

Employee absenteeism is a costly problem for the U.S. economy, the retail industry, and individual organizations. The exact cost of this problem to the economy is not known, but a review of the literature through 1981 has identified many different estimates regarding the cost of absenteeism to our economy.

Reports by Cruikshank in 1976 and Kuzmits in 1979 have estimated absenteeism costs at between 15 and 20 billion dollars. In 1978, Steers and Rhodes estimated the cost of absenteeism to our economy at 26.4 billion dollars.⁸ These estimates were based on a large list of costs associated with employee absenteeism, including direct wages and salaries, fringe benefits, loss profits, costs of replacing employees (training, and supervisory time spent looking for replacements), and other costs incidental to absence (i.e scrap rate increase).⁹ These three studies illustrate the magnitude of the problem.

⁸ G. E. Cruikshank, "No-shows at Work, High Priced Headache," Nation's Business, September, 1976, pp.37-39; Richard M. Steers and Susan R. Rhodes, "Major Influences on Employee Attendance: A Process Model," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 63 (1978) pp.391-407; Frank E. Kuzmits, "How Much is Absenteeism Costing Your Organization?" Personnel Administrator, Vol. 24, No. 29, 1979, p.29.

⁹ Kuzmits, p.29.

The severity of the national absenteeism problem should be cause for concern in most organizations, particularly those in the retail industry. Over 15 million workers are employed in the retail industry (approximately 15 percent of the labor force),¹⁰ and a recent Prentice-Hall study indicated the retail industry of all the industries has the highest absentee rate, 6.74 percent.¹¹ A retail firm with 500 employees and a paid absence program will pay out over one million dollars in yearly absenteeism costs if the absenteeism rate is average (6.74 percent). This costly figure should alarm employers interested in reducing labor costs, and indicates a severe absenteeism problem that may have significant impact on the total economy.

1.1.3 Retail Department Store Definition

According to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) manual, Retail Trade consists of establishments engaged in selling merchandise for personal or household consumption and in rendering services incidental to the sale of goods. Retail establishments are classified by kinds of businesses

¹⁰ Supplement to Employment and Earnings Revised Establishment Data, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Vol.28, No. 12, October 1980, p.237.

¹¹ "Absenteeism and Lateness," P-H Personnel Management: Policies and Practices (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1981), pp.2-3.

according to the principal lines of commodities sold. The SIC manual breaks down the Retail Trade division into major groups. Group 53 is General Merchandise stores, which includes group 531, Department Stores. The SIC listing includes 448 department store and chains.

The SIC manual describes department stores as those retail stores carrying a general line of apparel such as suits, coats, dresses, accessories; home furnishings, such as furniture, floor covering, curtains, draperies, linens, major appliances; and housewares such as tables and kitchen appliances, dishes, and utensils. These lines of merchandise are arranged in separate sections or departments with the accounting done on a departmental basis.¹²

The sales for retail stores totaled 723 billion dollars in 1977¹³ with a payroll of 78.687 billion dollars for non-supervisory employees. This amounted to 10.9 percent of sales.¹⁴ Department stores had over 76 billion dollars in sa-

¹² Superintendent of Documents, Standard Industrial Classification Manual, Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget (U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1972), pp.262,269.

¹³ 1977 Census of Retail Trade, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census (Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1978), pp.52-54.

¹⁴ Supplement to Employment and Earnings, Revised Establishment Data, p.237.

les¹⁵ and a payroll to nonsupervisory workers of 10.002 billion dollars, which amounted to 13.2 percent of sales in 1977.¹⁶ In an industry that is so labor intensive, absenteeism is very troublesome. Uncontrolled absenteeism reduces profits for stockholders, increases prices for consumers, and lowers morale for those employees who must carry the work of those who are absent.

Some unique features of the retail industry which compound its absentee problems include labor intensity, wages lower than those of most other industries,¹⁷ and a higher percentage of female and part-time employees.¹⁸ In particular, department stores employ females for sixty-seven percent of all positions.¹⁹ (Research indicates female absentee rates are higher than male rates.)²⁰ The large number of part-time employees complicates the problem, because it is believed that part-time employees are more absent-prone than

¹⁵ 1977 Census of Retail Trade, p. 52-20.

¹⁶ Supplement to Employment and Earnings, Revised Establishment Data, pp. 238-239.

¹⁷ Employment and Earnings.

¹⁸ Supplement to Employment and Earnings, Revised Establishment Data, August, 1981, p.267.

¹⁹ Supplement to Employment and Earnings, Revised Establishment Data, August, 1981, p.269.

²⁰ Discussed with references in Chapter 2.

full-time employees.²¹

A 1981 Prentice-Hall study provides information regarding some aspects of the retail industry's problems with absenteeism. First, sixty-two percent of all firms keep records of average absence rates, with manufacturers and public utilities leading the way at seventy-three percent. At thirty-eight percent, retailers made the lowest effort to record attendance.²² This indicates retailers are either not aware of, or are not interested in absenteeism problems, which explain part of the industry's problems.

Second, the retail industry's most common method for recording attendance is to use time clocks. The use of time clocks by 59.3 percent of retailers was twenty percent more than other industries,²³ and may indicate to the employees that the employer distrusts them.

The Prentice-Hall study indicated that retailers, despite a 6.74 percent absentee rate, were not concerned with their absenteeism. When asked the conditions most often responsible for poor attendance, a majority of retailers indicated reasons such as job boredom, low work ethics, and childcare

²¹ Ibid.

²² "Absenteeism and Lateness," p.2.

²³ Ibid. p.5.

problems.²⁴ The employer can control these problems and thereby reduce absenteeism.

1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine employee-related and job-related characteristics of workers in a large retail department store in order to determine which characteristics are related to absenteeism. The identification of absenteeism relationships is a necessary step in the development of potential solutions to the problem.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

An analysis of absenteeism in a retail department store is significant because past research on absenteeism has focused on blue-collar factory workers and has not included retail employees. Absenteeism should also be studied in the retail industry, since the employee and job-related characteristics associated with that industry are potentially different from other industries. The cost and significant strain that high absenteeism places on a company encourages more research.

²⁴ Ibid. pp.7,9.

Since this study examines absenteeism in a seldom-researched industry, past studies from other industries are used to determine potential employee and job-related characteristics that may be related to absenteeism. Furthermore, new absenteeism relationships relevant only to the retail industry are examined.

1.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter the nature of the absenteeism problem has been identified by describing its magnitude, the costs associated with absenteeism, and the various measures and definitions of absenteeism. Furthermore, a definition of the retail industry and department stores was given to clarify the differences between that industry and typically researched industries, such as manufacturing. Finally, the purpose and significance of this study were stated to define better the direction of this research and develop a framework from which to work.

The next chapter is a review of the literature examining employee and job-related variables and their relationship to absenteeism. The chapter also includes a discussion of the new absenteeism relationships explored in this study. Chapter 3 will explain the hypotheses, the research methods used, and the nature of the survey instrument. Chapter 4

contains the research findings, while Chapter 5 suggests the findings' significance and implications.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL MODEL

The literature on absenteeism is vast, covering a number of decades of research from several disciplines of the social sciences. Because of this volume of literature, it is impossible to review all of it here.²⁵ Therefore, only the portion of the literature directly related to predicting absenteeism is discussed in this chapter.

The general model used in this research is that of Steers and Rhodes.²⁶ They found that the attitudes employees had about their work and other factors relating to their work were relevant to the employee's absentee rate. Steers and Rhodes suggest that an employee's attendance is a function of two variables: an employee's motivation to attend work and an employee's ability to attend work.

²⁵ Several reviews of the literature recommended for a complete examination include: Paul M. Muchinsky, "Employee Absenteeism: A Review of the Literature," Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 10 (June 1977), pp. 316-340; Paul J. Porwoll; L. W. Porter, and R.M. Steers, "Organizational, Work, and Personal Factors in Employee Turnover and Absenteeism," Psychological Bulletin, 1973, Vol. 80, pp. 151-176; Steers and Rhodes, pp. 391-407.

²⁶ Steers and Rhodes, pp. 391-407.

An employee's motivation to attend work is determined by a combination of the employee's affective responses to the job situation, and by the internal and external pressures to attend work. Employees with high job satisfaction are more likely to attend work than employees with low levels of satisfaction. Seven variables were identified as important in affecting employee satisfaction on the job: job scope, job level, role stress, work group, leader style, co-worker relations, and opportunities for advancement. Thus job situation is hypothesized to affect attendance through its impact on job satisfaction.

Steers and Rhodes further proposed that employee values and expectations have an impact on one's ability to be satisfied. Employees come to work with different values and expectations because of their different personal characteristics (age, tenure, sex, education). However, no matter what expectations are brought to the job by the employee, these expectations must be met if the individual is to be satisfied. Other factors influencing motivation to attend are external and internal pressures to attend work, which include economic and market conditions, incentive/reward systems for positive attendance, work group norms, personal work ethics, and organizational commitment.

The second major variable Steers and Rhodes considered in their analysis was the employee's ability to attend work. The inclusion of this variable in the analysis was necessary, because even if an employee wants to work, there are instances when he/she is unable to do so. Examples of this are illness and accidents, family responsibilities, and transportation problems.

Steers and Rhodes' model includes the majority of the possible absenteeism determinants. The next section reviews the research findings regarding factors affecting motivation and ability to attend.

2.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE CHARACTERISTICS AND ABSENTEEISM

AGE: Researchers have suggested different hypotheses regarding age as a predictor of absenteeism, and studies have resulted in mixed findings.

Studies by Conostas and Vichas (1980),²⁷ Shore (1975),²⁸

²⁷ K.Constas and R.P. Vichas, "An Interpretative Policy-Making Model of Absenteeism with Reference to the Marginal Workers in Overseas Plants," Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 1980), pp. 149-164.

²⁸ Harvey Shore, "Absenteeism Part 1: How to Analyze Causes and Effects," Supervisory Management, Vol. 20, No. 9 (September 1975), pp. 9-16.

²⁹ N. Nicholson, C.A. Brown, and J.K. Chadwick-Jones, "Absence from Work and Personal Characteristics," Journal of

Nicholson, Brown and Chadwick-Jones (1977),²⁹ and Johns (1978),³⁰ generally support the statement that younger workers are absent more often than older workers (frequency of absences). Nicholson et al. found that as male blue collar workers got older their frequency of absences decreased, but total absences remained constant. Similarly, Johns reported that age was negatively related to frequency of absence. Gibson(1966) reported that work identification became more positive with increasing age, resulting in less frequent absences except for employees fifty-five and older, who, due to increasing illness, will tend to have more frequent absences.³¹

In a BLS report, Hedges(1973)³² found part-week absence rates to be higher and full week absence rates to be lower for sixteen to twenty-five year olds than other age groups. Hedges also found that age affected the differences in absence rates between males and females. For instance, teen-

Applied Psychology, Vol.62, 1977, pp. 319-327.

³⁰ Gary Johns, "Attitudinal and Nonattitudinal Predictors of Two Forms of Absence From Work," Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, Vol. 22, No. 3 (December 1978), pp. 431-444.

³¹ R. O. Gibson, "Toward a Conceptualization of Absence Behavior of Personnel in Organizations," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol.11 (1966), pp.107-133.

³² Janice N. Hedges, "Absence from Work- A Look at some National Data," Monthly Labor Review (July 1973), pp.24-29.

age males have higher incidence and inactivity rates than other age groups. Both rates decline through age thirty-five to forty-four, and then rise in older age groups. However, females, twenty-five to thirty-four years old, have a higher incidence and inactivity rate than either younger or older females. The greatest difference in absence rates between male and female groups existed in the age group twenty-five to thirty-four due to increasing family responsibility during that age period. It seems reasonable that female absentee rates increase as family responsibilities increase, while males will attend work more regularly to insure a responsible and consistent income. As family-related values change, this occurrence may not be as clearly recognizable.³³

Numerous other studies have also reported a negative relationship between age and absence frequency,³⁴ but only one study (conducted on female clerical workers) has found total

³³ Janice N. Hedges, "Special Labor Force Report: Absence From Work - Measuring the Hours Lost," Monthly Labor Review, October, 1977, pp.16-22.

³⁴ L. R. Sellet, "Age and Absenteeism," Personnel Journal, Vol.43 (1964), pp.309-313. M. Hill, "Who Stays Home?" New Society, Vol. 9 (1967), pp.459-460; N. Nicholson, and P.M. Goodge, "The Influence of Social, Organizational and Biographical Factors on Female Absence," Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 13 (1976), pp.234-254; H. J. Bernardin, "The Relationship of Personality Variables to Organization Withdrawal," Personnel Psychology, Vol.30 (1977), pp.17-27.

absences to be negatively related to age.³⁵ Many studies, on the other hand, have found no correlation between total absences and age.³⁶

To summarize, it is likely that frequency of absence is negatively related to age (at least up to the forties), but there is little evidence to support a negative relationship between age and total absences. These two statements can both be true since the number of "other" absences are greatest for young employees, and absences due to sickness are greatest for older employees. Furthermore, it is likely that absences due to other reasons besides sickness are shorter in duration, but more frequent. This occurrence leads to the typical zero correlation that researchers find between age and total absences.

MARITAL STATUS: Another personal characteristic that has been widely examined is marital status. Five major studies found no correlation between marital status and absenteeism, (three with frequency measures, one with total absences, and

³⁵ D. R. Ilgen and J.H. Hollenback, "The Role of Job Satisfaction in Absence Behavior." Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, Vol.19 (1977), pp.148-161;

³⁶ J. E. Naylor and N.L. Vincent, "Predicting Female Absenteeism," Personnel Psychology, Vol.12 (1959), pp.81-84; R. J. Flanagan, G.Strauss, and I. Ulman, "Worker Discontent and Work Place Behavior," Industrial Relations, Vol. 13 (1974), pp.101-123; Nicholson, et al.

one with both measures).³⁷ But studies by Isambert-Jamati,³⁸ and Constas and Vichas found that married employees are more likely to have a better attendance record than those unmarried. Constas and Vichas went on to say that as society changes (increased divorces, cohabitation), it would be more correct to say that the primary income recipients would more likely have a better attendance record than the secondary income recipients.³⁹ Similarly, Hedges reported in 1973⁴⁰ and again in 1977,⁴¹ that married males have lower absentee rates than single males, and married woman have higher absentee rates than single women. This was attributed to increased family responsibilities, since the male, traditionally being the major income source, is absent less as family

³⁷ Naylor and Vincent, pp.81-84; L. K. Waters and D. Roach, "Relationship Between Job Attitudes and Two Forms of Withdrawal From the Work Situation," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol.55 (1971), pp.92-94; J. Martin, "Some Aspects of Absence in a Light Engineering Factory," Occupational Psychology, Vol.45 (1971), pp.77-91; L.K. Waters and D. Roach, "Job Attitudes as Predictors of Termination and Absenteeism: Consistency Over Time and Across Organizations," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol.57 (1973), pp.341-342; Nicholson and Goodge, pp.234-254.

³⁸ V. Isambert-Jamati, "Absenteeism Among Women Workers in Industry," International Labor Review, Vol.85 (March, 1962), pp.248-261.

³⁹ Constas and Vichas, p.155.

⁴⁰ Hedges, 1973, p.29.

⁴¹ Hedges, 1977, pp.21-22.

responsibilities increase, and the female, traditionally being the secondary source, is absent more as family responsibilities increase.

In summary the variable, marriage status, may be of more value if it is used in association with other variables such as age, sex, and number of dependents when predicting absenteeism.

SEX: Since over half of all retail employees⁴² (sixty-seven percent of department stores employees)⁴³ are female, the variable sex could be important in predicting absenteeism in the retail industry. A majority of prior studies have found female employees to have a higher number of total day absences and to be absent more frequently than male employees.⁴⁴

Recently Conostas and Vichas reported that females have higher absentee rates than males because some females (non-career) perceive their jobs as a temporary link between

⁴² Supplement to Employment and Earnings, Revised Establishment Data, August, 1981, pp.269.

⁴³ Ibid.p.269.

⁴⁴ S. F. Yolles, P. A. Carone and L. W. Krinsky, Absenteeism in Industry (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1975); R.J. Flanagan, G. Strauss, L. Ulman, "Worker Discontent and Work Place Behavior," Industrial Relations, Vol.13 (1974), pp.101-123; H. G. Heneman III, and C.J. Murphy, "Correlates of Absenteeism Among Race-Sex Groups," Academy of Management Proceedings, 1974, pp.344-347; Johns, pp.431-444.

school and marriage. If the female is still living "at home," she may not be dependent on a regular or consistent income. Furthermore, female rates tend to be higher because married women often place a higher priority on their family responsibilities than work responsibilities. However, females who are the main income source of a family, or are career-oriented, will be absent less than females who are not.⁴⁵ Similarly, Gibson has reported that females are absent more often and longer than males because the married female's income is often supplemental to her spouse's income; or the single females may have lighter financial demands because they are not saving money, but are waiting for marriage.⁴⁶

Isambert-Jamati (1962) reported that absenteeism was higher among female employees than male employees because a higher proportion of females were in lower level occupations which tended to be associated with higher absentee rates. Furthermore, they found that highly trained women occupying responsible and skilled positions are seldom absent, even if they had children at home.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Constat and Vichas, pp.154-155.

⁴⁶ Gibson, p.124.

⁴⁷ Isambert-Jamati, pp.251-255.

These studies indicate it may not always be the sex variable that is the determinant of absenteeism, but rather the occupation or other personal characteristics of the employee that are the determinant.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES: Another personal characteristic that is often cited in the literature is family responsibility or number of dependents. Jones (1973) reported that while existence of more dependents leads to fewer absences for the primary family income source, the opposite is true for the secondary family income source.⁴⁸ More family responsibility tends to heighten work attachment for males, while reducing it for females.⁴⁹ This implies that as family responsibilities increase, male absentee rates will decrease, while female rates will increase.⁵⁰

Several other studies also identified positive correlations between female absentee rates (total absences and absence frequencies) and family responsibilities.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Jones, "Absenteeism," Occupational Psychology, Vol. 27, No. 1-2, pp.75.

⁴⁹ Constas and Vichas, p.156.

⁵⁰ Hedges, 1977, pp.21-22.

⁵¹ Naylor and Vincent, pp. 81-84; R. W. Beatty and J.R. Beatty, "Longitudinal Study of Absenteeism of Hard-Core Unemployed," Psychological Reports, Vol. 36 (1975), pp.395-406; Isambert-Jamati, pp.248-261; Nicholson and Goodge, pp.234-254.

WAGE RATE: Several research studies have indicated that wage rates may be inversely related to absenteeism as a result of the function of the job. Low-level jobs are paid less and are traditionally associated with higher absentee rates. At least four studies found a relationship between wage rate and absenteeism with two studies finding this relationship using absence rates, the third using frequency of absences, and the fourth using both measures.⁵²

TRAVEL DISTANCE TO WORK: Researchers have theorized that the farther an employee lives from work the greater that worker's absentee rate will be, due to the increasing possibility of transportation problems.⁵³ Two studies have identified this positive relationship.⁵⁴

TENURE: It has been assumed that as an employee's tenure increases and work attachment grows, his/her absentee rate would decrease. Results of research studies have ended

⁵² A. Lundquist, "Absenteeism and Job Turnover as a Consequence of Unfavorable Job Adjustment," Acta Sociologica, Vol. 3 (1958), pp.119-131; J. Fried, M. Wertman, and M. Davis, Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 56 (1972), pp.428-429; Bernardin, pp.17-27; Beatty and Beatty, pp.395-406.

⁵³ J. M. Black, Positive Discipline (New York: American Management Association, 1970).

⁵⁴ Ronald D. Johnson and Tim O. Peterson, "Absenteeism or Attendance: Which is Industry's Problem?" Personnel Journal, Vol. 54 (1975), pp.568-572; Isambert-Jamati, pp. 248-261.

in mixed conclusions, with four studies reporting a negative relationship between absence frequency and tenure⁵⁵ and at least one study with a positive correlation.⁵⁶

Since age and tenure are highly interrelated, age becomes an important moderator in the analysis of the variable tenure. However, one study by Gibson found that the longer the period of service, independent of age, the lower the frequency of absence.⁵⁷

OTHER VARIABLES: Two other variables explored in this study have been previously examined. The variable race has been examined several times with only one study finding a difference in absentee rates between races. The study by Flanagan et al. (1974) found nonwhite industrial workers have higher absentee rates than white industrial workers.⁵⁸

The variable education level has also been explored in several studies, typically ending in zero correlations bet-

⁵⁵ H. Metzner and F. Mann, "Employee Attitudes and Absences," Personnel Psychology, Vol. 6 (1953), pp.467-485; Waters and Roach, 1971; Waters and Roach, 1973; Bernardin, pp.17-27.

⁵⁶ H. Baumgartel and R. Sobol, "Background and Organizational Factors in Absenteeism," Personnel Psychology, Vol. 12 (1959), pp.431-443.

⁵⁷ Gibson, pp.126-127.

⁵⁸ Flanagan et al., pp.116-123.

⁵⁹ Waters and Roach, 1971; C. A. Weaver and S.L. Holmes, "On

ween education and absenteeism.⁵⁹

2.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB-RELATED CHARACTERISTICS AND ABSENTEEISM

SATISFACTION: Research examining the relationship between absenteeism and employee satisfaction with his/her work and different aspects of his/her work (i.e. promotion, pay, workmates, and supervisors), has been conducted by many investigators. The results of those studies are presented in this section.

While at least five research studies have identified the negative relationship between over-all job satisfaction and absenteeism,⁶⁰ two studies have refuted the existence of this relationship. In 1976, Nicholson et al. questioned previously conducted research supporting a negative correlation between absenteeism and job satisfaction.⁶¹ Ilgen and Holenback (1977) stated that previous studies have falsely

the use of Sick Leave by Female Employees," Personnel Administration, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1972), pp. 46-50; Waters and Roach, 1973.

⁶⁰ A. Brayfield and W. Crockett, "Employee Attitudes and Employee Performance," Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 52 (1955), pp.396-424; F. Herzburg, B. Mausner, R. Peterson, and D. Copewell, Job Attitudes: Review of Research and Opinions (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: Psychological Service of Pittsburg, 1957); Muckinsky, pp.316-340; Victor Vroom, Work and Motivation (New York: Wiley Press, 1964); Porter and Steers, pp.151-176.

⁶¹ Nicholson et al., 1976.

assumed employees attend those jobs they anticipate will lead to satisfaction and are absent from jobs they anticipate will not lead to satisfaction. Due to inconclusive research results, Ilgen and Hollenback feel this assumption cannot be made. They theorize that constraints, both external (co-workers and job structure) and internal (individual value systems) influence or moderate employee satisfaction levels, thus providing another force on the employee to attend work. Ilgen and Hollenback expect this to be true even under low constraints, because the decision to stay away from work is only partially related to one's job satisfaction.⁶²

Despite Ilgen and Hollenback's argument, six studies have found a negative correlation between over-all job satisfaction and absenteeism (total absences and absence frequency).⁶³

⁶² Ilgen and Hollenback, pp. 153-155.

⁶³ W. J. Giese and H.W. Roter, "An Objective Analysis Of Morale," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 33 (1949), pp.421-427; A. Lundquist, pp.119-131; S. Talacchi, "Organizational Size, Individual Attitudes and Behavior: An Empirical Study," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 5 (1960), pp.398-420; Waters and Roach, 1971; Waters and Roach, 1973; L. G. Hrebiniak and M.R. Roteman, "A Study of the Relationships Between Need Satisfaction and Absenteeism Among Managerial Personnel," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 58 (1973), pp.381-383; K.R. Garrison and R.M. Muchinsky, "Attitudinal and Biographical Predictors of Absenteeism," Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 10 (1977), pp. 221-230.

Furthermore, negative relationships between absenteeism and other job-related satisfaction levels have been found. Generally, in these studies a stronger negative relationship exists between worker satisfaction and frequency of absence, than other measures of absenteeism.

Studies by Patchen, Dittrich and Carrell, and Smith have identified negative relationships between worker satisfaction, with pay or pay equity, and absenteeism.⁶⁴ Furthermore, at least three studies have identified negative relationships between satisfaction with promotion and absenteeism.⁶⁵

Two studies by Metzner and Mann (1953), and Smith (1977), have reported a negative relationship between satisfaction with supervision and absenteeism levels.⁶⁶ In addition, at least two studies have reported a negative relationship bet-

⁶⁴ M. Patchen, "Absence and Employee Feelings About Fair Treatment," Personnel Psychology, Vol. 13 (1960), pp. 349-360; J. E. Dittrich, and M. R. Carrell, "Dimensions of Organizational Fairness as Predictors of Job Satisfaction, Absence, and Turnover," Academy of Management Proceedings 1976, Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, Kansas City, Missouri, August 11-14, 1976; F. J. Smith, "Work Attitudes as Predictors of Specific Day Attendance," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 62, (1977), pp.16-19.

⁶⁵ Metzner and Mann, pp.467-485; Patchen, pp.349-360; Smith, pp.16-19.

⁶⁶ Metzner and Mann, pp.467-485; Smith, pp.16-19.

ween worker satisfaction with coworkers and absenteeism.⁶⁷

While a large number of studies have found a negative relationship between different types of job and job-related satisfaction levels and absenteeism, a lesser but still large number of studies have found no correlation between worker satisfaction and absenteeism. For this reason more research is needed to determine the boundary conditions which will explain the inconsistent results.

WORK UNIT SIZE: The size of a department or work unit may have a positive correlation with absenteeism.⁶⁸ This is attributed to several problems associated with larger units. First, employees may lose touch with their supervisor which may create an identity crisis. Second, the employees may feel their absence will be ignored or will not be as important to a larger unit. In ten of twelve studies examined by Porter and Steers, a positive relationship existed.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Metzner and Mann; Nicholson et al., pp.319-327.

⁶⁸ D. Hewitt, and J. Parfitt, "A Note on Working Morale and Size of Group," Occupational Psychology, Vol. 27 (1953), pp.38-42; H. Baumgartel, and R. Sobol, "Background and Organizational Factors in Absenteeism," Personnel Psychology, Vol.12 (1959), pp.431-443.

⁶⁹ Porter and Steers, p.159.

2.4 NEW ABSENTEEISM RELATIONSHIPS TESTED IN THIS STUDY

PART/FULL-TIME: The reason for examining the difference in absentee rates between part and full-time employees was to test different data collection methods. A 1980 BLS study found the retail industry's absentee rate was 2.7 percent,⁷⁰ while a 1981 Prentice-Hall study found the retail industry's absentee rate was 6.74 percent.⁷¹ The significant difference between rates can be attributed to different collection methods, since the BLS records only absences of full-time employees while Prentice-Hall records absences for all employees, full and part-time. Thus, one might predict that part-time employees would have higher absence rates than full-time employees.

SALES/NONSALES: A unique characteristic of the retail industry is the sales/nonsales status of employees. It is possible here that greater pressure and stress are on sales employees than on non-sales employees, thus resulting in higher absentee rates of sales employees.

WORK OTHER JOBS: Employees who work two jobs are expected to have higher absentee rates than those employees whose only job is in the department store. This is expected in the retail industry because employees may use their retail

⁷⁰ Hedges and Taylor, p.4.

⁷¹ "Absenteeism and Lateness."

income as a supplement to other income and may be absent more from the supplemental job than from their primary job.

2.5 SUMMARY

From the research findings presented in this review of the literature it is evident that several previously studied variables require further investigation, primarily due to past mixed results. In an attempt to clarify previous results, the relationships between absenteeism and variables such as age, marital status, tenure, race, education, and job satisfaction were included in this study and are discussed in the next chapter.

Other variables such as sex, family responsibilities, wage rate, and travel distance have been thoroughly studied before, but were included here due to the void of research conducted in the retail industry. Three new hypotheses related to absenteeism in the retail industry have been discussed in this chapter and were included in the study.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter develops the hypotheses, describes the research instrument and other tools used to obtain data, and presents general information on the research site.

3.2 HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses investigated were developed from the research literature and by identifying unique elements of the retail industry.⁷² Basically, the hypotheses fall into two categories of potential determinants of absenteeism: a) employee characteristics such as age, tenure, sex, number of dependents, marital status, race; b) job-related characteristics such as work unit size and satisfaction with work.

Each hypothesis is listed below with its relevant research questions and is followed by the personnel records or survey measures utilized. The personnel record data form and research questionnaire are shown in Appendices A and B, respectively.

⁷² The researcher in this study has five years of on-the-job retail experience and makes personal reflections based on this experience.

H1. Part-time employees in a retail department store are absent more than full-time employees.

RQ1a. What is the absentee rate for full-time employees?
(Appendix A, 8 and 9)

RQ1b. What is the absentee rate for part-time employees?
(Appendix, 8 and 9)

H2. The larger the number of employees in a department, the higher the absentee rate of the employees in that department.

RQ2a. What are the departments in the store? (Item A3)

RQ2b. What is the number of employees in a department?

RQ2c. What is the absentee rate per employee per department?
(Item A9)

H3. Age is inversely related to absenteeism.

RQ3a. What are the ages of employees? (Item B section II - 1)

RQ3b. What are the absentee rates for those age categories?
(Item A9)

H4. Wage rates of employees are inversely related to absenteeism.

RQ4a. What is the wage rate of each employee? (Item A5)

RQ4b. What is the absentee rate of each employee? (Item A9)

H5. Sales-related employees tend to have a higher absentee rate than nonsales employees.

RQ5a. What is the absentee rate for nonsales employees?
(Item A3 and A9)

RQ5b. What is the absentee rate for sales personnel? (Items
A3 and A9)

H6. The longer the company and job tenure of an employee,
lower his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ6a. What is the tenure of each employee with the company?
(Item B Section II - 8)

RQ6b. What is the tenure of each employee with his/her cur-
rent job? (Section (Item B Section II -6)

RQ6c. What is each employee's absentee rate? (Item A9)

H7. The larger the number of an employee's dependents,
the greater the employee's absentee rate will be.

RQ7a. What is the number of dependents for each employee?
(Item A4 and B Section II - 11)

RQ7b. What is each employee's absentee rate? (Item A4 and
A9)

H8. Female employees in the retail industry have a higher
absentee rate than male employees.

RQ8a. What are the absentee rates for male employees? (Item
A4 and A9)

RQ8b. What are the absentee rates for female employees?
(Items A4 and A9)

H9. Minority employees have a higher absentee rate than nonminority employees.

RQ9a What is the racial status of employees? (Item A7)

RQ9b. What is the absentee rate of minority groups? (Item A7 and A9)

RQ9c. What is the absentee rate of nonminority employees? (Item A7 and A9)

H10. Females who are dual/primary sources of family income, will have lower absentee rates than females who are secondary income sources.

RQ10a. What source of income describes the female's wages? (Item B Section II - 3)

RQ 10b. What is the absentee rate of female employees who are dual/primary sources of family income?

RQ 10c. What is the absentee rate of female employees who are secondary income sources? (item A9 and B Section II - 3)

H11. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her work, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ11a. What is the employee's satisfaction level towards his/her job? (Item B Section I - 1)

RQ 11b. What is the absentee rate for each employee? (Item A9)

H12. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her pay, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ12a What is the employee's satisfaction level towards his/her job? (Item B Section I - 4)

RQ12b. What is each employee's absentee rate? (Item A9)

H13. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her promotional chances, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ 13a. What is the employee's satisfaction level towards his/her promotional chances? (Item B Section I - 5)

RQ 13b. What is the absentee rate for each employee? (Item A9)

H14. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her supervisor, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ 14a. What is the employee's satisfaction level about his/her supervisor? (Item B Section I - 2)

RQ 14b. What is the absentee rate for each employee? (Item A9)

H15. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her workmates, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ 15a. What is the employee's satisfaction level towards his/her workmates? (item B Section I - 3)

RQ 15b. What is the absentee rate per employee? (Item A9)

H16. Absence rates and frequencies are greater for single and divorced employees than for married employees.

RQ 16a. What is the marital status of the employee? (Item B Section II - 2)

RQ16b. What is the absentee rate of each employee? (Item A9)

H17. The lower the educational level of an employee, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ17a. What is the educational level of each employee? (Item B Section II - 13)

RQ17b. What is the absentee rate of each employee? (Item A9)

H18. Retail employees who work on other jobs will have a higher absentee rate than will workers for a single employer.

RQ18a. How many hours do employees work in other jobs per week? (Item B Section II - 16)

RQ18b. What is the absentee rate for each employee? (Item A9)

H19. The lower the total household income of an employee, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ19a. What is the income level of each employee's household? (Item B Section II - 12)

RQ19b. What is the absentee rate for each employee? (Item A9)

H20. The farther an employee lives from work, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

RQ20a. What distances do employees live from work? (Item B Section II - 7)

RQ20b. What is the absentee rate for each employee? (Item A9)

H21. Employees perceive their absentee rates to be lower than they actually are.

RQ 21a. How many absences do employees think they have in a given year? (Item B Section II - 14)

RQ21b. How many absences do employees actually have? (Item A9)

H22. Performance appraisal ratings (1=excellent and 4=poor) will be higher for employees with higher absentee rates.

RQ22a. What is each employee's performance rating? (Item A10)

RQ22b. What is the absentee rate for each employee? (Item A9)

3.3 SURVEY INSTRUMENT AND DEFINITIONS

A major portion of this analysis was depended upon how absenteeism was measured. Two measures were used in the analysis, both of which were mentioned in chapter one. First, absence rates have been measured for all employees according to the formula appearing on page six. This measure insured consistent analysis despite varying work day totals in 1981 for each employee. However, as mentioned in chapter one, this formula does have its deficiencies. Because of these deficiencies, the number of individual absence incidents (frequency) was also used as a measure to make a more complete analysis. The formula for the frequency measure was shown on page four.

An example of the form used to record personnel information appears in Appendix A. Wage rates, job titles, department names, sex, method of pay, racial status, employment status, average hours worked per week, and appraisal ratings were obtained for all 181 employees in the store. Also, various absentee information was acquired.

A questionnaire was designed to collect the attitudinal data in addition to the information not available from personnel records. The attitudinal portion of the questionnaire was an adaptation of the Cornell Job Descriptive Index(JDI). This index measures employee attitudes

(satisfaction levels) towards their work, supervisor, work-mates, pay, and promotional opportunities. It was included in this study to determine if an employee's satisfaction with different job components determines his or her probability of attending work.⁷³

The JDI is a widely used and respected tool for measuring employee satisfaction. A review of the 1970-1978 period has found that the JDI was used in over fifty percent of all non-ad hoc measures of job satisfaction. This wide use has been attributed to the careful construction and validity of the measure.⁷⁴

The JDI asks employees about five areas of their job. For each area, there is a list of adjectives or short phrases that the employee is asked to respond to. Employees are asked to indicate whether each word correctly or incorrectly described that aspect of their work. Employees are requested to put "Y" for "YES" beside the word if it identified an aspect of their work, an "N" for "NO" beside the word if it

⁷³ The use and the scoring of the Cornell Job Descriptive Index(JDI) was adapted from Patricia C. Smith, Lorne M. Kendall, and Charles L. Hulin, The Measurement of Satisfaction in Work and Retirement, (Chicago, Illinois: Rand McNally and Company, 1969). A more recent adaptation of the original instrument has been copyrighted.

⁷⁴ Samuel J. Yeager, "Dimensionality of the Job Descriptive Index," Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1981), pp.201-212.

didn't describe an aspect of their work, and "?" for "UNDECIDED" by the word if they are unsure. The employees are given similar instructions to rate lists of words describing aspects concerning their supervisor, workmates, pay, and promotional opportunities. Each list of words for each factor is listed on separate pages with instructions to finish a page before going on to the next page. Each of the first three factors have lists of eighteen words or phrases, and the last two factors have nine items. The JDI has roughly one-half positive and one-half negative descriptors for each factor. In scoring the JDI three points are assigned to each word descriptor that has been determined as positive if it is answered "yes" by the respondent. Likewise, three points are assigned to each word descriptor that had been determined as negative if it were answered "no" by the respondent. If the employee answers "no" to positive descriptors or "yes" to negative descriptors, zero points are assigned. If the employee responds to the word with an undecided response the score is one point. Each area's total points are summed from the entire list of items for that area. The total scores (for each area) are then used to determine if different satisfaction levels are predictors of

⁷⁵ Patricia C. Smith and Bonnie A. Sandman, "Some, Past, Present, and Future Developments in the Understanding and

absenteeism.⁷⁵ The questionnaire also includes thirteen other questions regarding age, marital status and spouse's occupation, importance of income, tenure, distance from work, number of dependents, household income, educational level, sales or nonsales job, hours worked in other employment, and perceived number of absences. Some questions require the employee to check the correct response, others are openended (see Appendix B).

3.4 THE RESEARCH SITE

A large department store in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area in the Middle Atlantic States was selected as the study site for this research. The selection of this site was based on its location, size, and the availability of information. The store had approximately 181 employees and was large enough that a significant analysis of the causes of absenteeism was possible (excluding top management). Its location in a 225,000 person SMSA made it typical of other department stores in other cities. Furthermore the selection of this store was facilitated by the fact that

use of the Job Descriptive Index," Virginia Tech Symposium on Applied Behavioral Science (Lexington Books: Lexington Massachusetts, 1981) pp.257-275; Patricia C. Smith, The Development of a Method of Measuring Job Satisfaction: The Cornell Studies," Studies in Personal and Industrial Psychology (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1974).

the store recorded attendance information. This was an important characteristic, since many retail organizations (sixty-two percent) do not record such information.⁷⁶

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

In January, 1982, the Personnel Manager of the store approved the proposed project. Several weeks later the collection of attendance, demographic, and employment data from employee records began. Attendance information was collected on all employees working in 1981. Attendance information included incidents of absence (frequency), total absences, one day absences, absences due to sickness, and absences due to other announced reasons such as snow, funerals, transportation problems (See Appendix A).

A questionnaire was distributed to approximately 125 employees in February, 1981. Monday was used as a survey date because most employees were scheduled to work that day. Employees were handed the questionnaire form upon arrival to work (all employees enter through one entrance). Employees arrived at work throughout the day between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. The completed questionnaires were picked up personally on the sales floor, in the lunchroom, and when the employees left after their shift.

⁷⁶ "Absenteeism and Lateness, "p.5.

Respondents were asked to put their employee number on the questionnaire (allowing that information to be matched up with personnel records), but a considerable amount of concern was voiced by the employees about the request. However, seventy-eight questionnaire forms were completed from sales, nonsales, supervisory, and management employees (no upper level management or auto center employees were asked to respond to the survey).

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Two types of relationships were examined in this study. First, the differences between absence rates and frequencies of subsamples (part/full time status, race, performance, sales/nonsales, marital status, other hours worked, perceived absences, income recipient, and sex) were examined. T-tests and one-way analysis of variance (anova) were employed to determine whether significant differences in absence rates and frequencies existed between subsamples. Second, the relationships between absence rates/frequencies with age, wages, number of dependents, job and company tenure, department size, education, distance from work, and total household income, and the satisfaction measures were examined by means of Pearson's product-moment correlations. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized for all

statistical correlations with corrections made for unequal cell size.⁷⁷

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the research hypotheses, data sources, measurement instruments, data collection site, and data analysis techniques. The purpose of the chapter was to develop the methods used to collect and analyze the information pertaining to this study. The following chapter presents the over-all findings as well as the findings relevant to each hypothesis.

⁷⁷ Norman Nie, SPSS-Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

Chapter IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the population and sample characteristics as well as the research findings relevant to the hypotheses tested in this study. Discussion of results, limitations, and implications are reserved for Chapter 5.

4.2 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Job titles of the 181 permanent and temporary employees are displayed in Table 1. Fifty-two (28.7 percent) of the employees were engaged in nonsales jobs; the remaining 129 (71.3 percent) were in sales related jobs. Payroll records indicate that thirty-four of the sales jobs were paid an hourly wage plus a commission, the remaining ninety-five were paid a straight hourly wage.

Minority employees work in eight of 181 positions. Ninety-seven (53.6 percent) employees work less than thirty-five hours a week, eighty-four (46.4 percent) employees work over thirty-five hours a week. The mean hourly wage was 4.77 dollars (see Table 2 for range of wages). Employees enjoyed an average of 9.611 paid vacation and holidays.

TABLE 1Sample Department Store
Employee Job Titles (1982)

<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Job Title</u>
59	Customer Assistant
17	Merchandise Assistant
16	Selling Specialist
24	Managers, Trainees, Heads, Supervisors
11	Beauty Salon Operators
37	Service-Related (Stock, Maintenance, Credit, Alterations)
9	Auto-Related
<u>8</u>	Catalog (Sales/Services)
181	

TABLE 2

Sample Department Store
Employee Wage Rates (1982)

<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Wages (hourly rate)</u>
66	3.35 - 4.00
56	4.01 - 5.00
38	5.01 - 6.00
12	6.01 - 7.00
<u>9</u>	over 7.00
181	

TABLE 3

Sample Department Store
Distribution of Number of Days Absent (1981)

<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Days Absent</u>
33	0
89	1 - 5
26	6 - 10
18	11 - 20
11	21 - 40
<u>4</u>	41 or more
181	

TABLE 4

Sample Department Store
Absence Frequency (1981)

<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
32	0
47	1
33	2
21	3
13	4
14	5
5	6
5	7
4	8
1	9
2	10
3	11
<u>1</u>	34
181	

TABLE 5Sample Department Store
Employee Absence Rates (1981)

<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Absence Rates</u>
32	0.00
36	0.01 - 1.00
34	1.01 - 2.00
12	2.01 - 3.00
21	3.01 - 4.00
9	4.01 - 5.00
10	5.01 - 6.00
3	6.01 - 7.00
2	7.01 - 8.00
2	8.01 - 9.00
3	9.01 - 10.00
10	10.01 - 15.00
6	15.01 - 20.00
<u>1</u>	20.01 - 30.00
181	

Absenteeism information for the study site included a mean of 6.757 days absent per employee (see Table 3). The store's absence rate was 3.42 percent, well below the Prentice-Hall calculation for the retail industry. Employee absence frequencies are recorded in Table 4; 160 of the employees had five or less separate incidents of absence. Since the employees have worked different numbers of days during 1981, absence rates for each employee have been calculated and the totals appear in Table 5.

4.3 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

While the previous information was obtained for all employees based on a review of personnel data from the company, the information in this section was obtained from the seventy-eight surveys completed by employees.

Sample demographic information included a mean age of thirty-eight years (fifty percent of employees thirty-four years or less), 38.5 percent single, fifty percent married, 11.5 percent divorced or separated.

Educational background for the sample included eight non-high school graduates, fifty-five high school graduates, and fifteen college graduates. Employees depending on other work for financial resources totaled 16.7 percent.

Employees lived various distances from their job: 29.5 percent lived within five miles, 37.2 percent lived between five and ten miles, while one-third of all employees live over ten miles from work.

Table 6 presents information on several characteristics for both the population and sample. Generally, it would appear that the sample is representative of the population.

4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS RELEVANT TO HYPOTHESES

This section presents the research findings concerning the potential determinants of absenteeism. The findings are presented in four summary tables. Table 7 displays the over-all and subsample absence frequencies and rates. Table 8 presents absence frequency and rate comparisons of subsamples within variables including full/part-time, nonsales/sales, sex, racial status, income recipient, and performance appraisal. Table 9 presents an analysis of absence frequency and rate variance by marital status and other hours worked. In Table 10 the correlates of absence rates and frequencies with employee and job-related characteristics are displayed. Each table is followed by a brief discussion of the relevant findings.

TABLE 6

Sample Department Store
Comparison of Population and Sample Characteristics (1981)

<u>Example</u>	<u>Population</u> (n = 181)	<u>Sample</u> (n = 78)
<u>Job Titles</u>		
Customer Assistant	59 (32.6%)	22 (28.2%)
Merchandise Assistant	17 (9.4%)	11 (14.1%)
Selling Specialist	16 (8.8%)	7 (9.0%)
Supervisor, Manager, Trainee, Head	24 (13.3%)	11 (14.1%)
Beauty Salon Operator	11 (6.1%)	6 (7.7%)
Service-Related	37 (20.4%)	17 (21.8%)
Auto-Related	9 (5.0%)	0 (0)
Catalog	8 (4.4%)	4 (5.1%)
 <u>Wage Rate</u>		
Mean Rate \$	4.77	4.75
 <u>Number of Days Absent</u>		
0	33 (18.2%)	15 (19.2%)
1 - 5	89 (49.2%)	34 (43.6%)
6 - 10	26 (14.4%)	9 (11.6%)
11 - 20	18 (9.9%)	15 (19.2%)
21 - 40	11 (6.1%)	5 (6.4%)
41 or more	4 (2.2%)	0 (0)
 <u>Sales Status</u>		
Nonsales	52 (28.7%)	23 (29.5%)
Sales	129 (71.3%)	55 (70.5%)
 <u>Absence Frequency</u>		
0	32 (17.7%)	15 (19.2%)
1 - 5	128 (70.7%)	53 (67.9%)
6 - 10	17 (9.4%)	9 (11.5%)
11 or more	4 (2.2%)	1 (1.3%)

TABLE 6 (continued)

<u>Example</u>	<u>Population</u> (n = 181)	<u>Sample</u> (n = 78)
<u>Absence Rates</u>		
0.00	32 (17.7%)	15 (19.2%)
0.01 - 2.00	70 (38.7%)	33 (42.3%)
2.01 - 4.00	33 (18.2%)	8 (10.3%)
4.01 - 6.00	19 (10.5%)	12 (15.4%)
6.01 - 8.00	5 (2.8%)	4 (5.1%)
8.01 - 10.00	5 (2.8%)	3 (3.8%)
10.01 - 15.00	10 (5.5%)	2 (2.6%)
15.01 - 20.00	6 (3.3%)	1 (1.3%)
20.01 - 30.00	1 (0.5%)	0 (0)
<u>Employment Status</u>		
Part-time (≥ 35)	97 (53.6%)	36 (46.2%)
Full-time (≤ 35)	84 (46.4%)	42 (53.8%)
<u>Sex</u>		
Males	42 (23.2%)	15 (19.2%)
Females	139 (76.8%)	63 (80.8%)
<u>Racial Status</u>		
Minorities	8 (4.4%)	4 (5.1%)
Non-minorities	173 (95.6%)	74 (94.9%)

TABLE 7

Sample Department Store
Absence Frequencies and Absence Rates, 1981 (Overall and Subsamples)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Absence *</u> <u>Frequency</u> <u>(incidents)</u>	<u>Absence **</u> <u>Rate</u> <u>(percentage)</u>
Overall Population	181	2.713	3.42%
Part-time (< 20 hours)	36	1.806	3.42%
Full-time (≥ 20 hours)	145	2.938	3.42%
Part-time (< 35 hours)	97	3.021	4.06%
Full-time (≥ 35 hours)	84	2.357	2.68%
Male	42	2.143	2.55%
Female	139	2.885	3.68%
Minority	8	2.000	1.78%
Non-minority	173	2.746	3.50%
Female			
Dual/Primary Income Source	36	2.972	3.31%
Secondary Income Source	23	2.652	3.25%
Nonsales	52	2.9038	2.635%
Sales	129	2.6357	3.736%
Performance Rated Employees			
Excellent/Good	58	2.276	2.34%
Average	107	3.131	3.84%
Noncommission Sales	147	2.816	4.69%
Commission Sales	34	2.265	3.47%
Temporary	17	2.000	4.54%
Permanent	164	2.787	3.30%

*Absence Frequency = Separate Incidents of Absence During 1981

**Absence Rate = $\frac{\text{Number of Workdays Lost Due to Job Absences in 1981}}{\text{Number of Workdays Scheduled in 1981}} \times 100$

Table 8

Sample Department Store
Absence Frequency and Rate Comparisons of Subsamples

<u>Subsample</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Sd</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Signif. *</u>
<u>Full/Part-time</u> <u>(≥ 20 hours)</u>					
Rate:					
Part	36	3.417	3.749		
Full	145	3.421	4.674	-0.01	
Frequency:					
Part	36	1.806	1.582		
Full	145	2.938	3.680	-2.81	*
<u>Full/Part-time</u> <u>(≥ 35 hours)</u>					
Rate:					
Part	97	4.059	4.811		
Full	84	2.682	4.003	2.10	*
Frequency:					
Part	97	3.021	3.995		
Full	84	2.357	2.511	1.36	
<u>Non-sales/Sales</u>					
Rate:					
Non-sales	52	2.635	4.065		
Sales	129	3.736	4.635	-1.58	
Frequency:					
Non-sales	52	2.9038	5.108		
Sales	129	2.6357	2.407	.36	
<u>Sex</u>					
Rate:					
Male	42	2.554	4.446		
Female	139	3.682	4.493	-1.44	
Frequency:					
Male	42	2.143	2.445		
Female	139	2.885	3.624	-1.52	

TABLE 8 (continued)

<u>Subsample</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Sd</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Signif. *</u>
<u>Racial Status</u>					
Rate:					
Minority	8	1.781	2.020		
Non-minority	173	3.496	4.566	-2.16	*
Frequency:					
Minority	8	2.000	2.070		
Non-minority	173	2.746	3.445	-0.96	
<u>Income Recipient (female)</u>					
Rate:					
Dual/Primary	36	3.3056	3.642		
Secondary	23	3.2500	3.824	.06	
Frequency:					
Dual/Primary	36	2.9722	2.667		
Secondary	23	2.6522	2.534	.46	
<u>Performance Appraisal</u>					
Rate:					
Excellent/Good	58	2.3448	3.1235		
Average	107	3.8365	5.0705	-2.33	*
Frequency:					
Excellent/Good	58	2.2759	2.368		
Average	107	3.1308	3.981	-1.73	

* significant at .05 level (2-tail)

TABLE 9

Sample Department Store
Analysis of Absence Frequency and Rate Variance by Marital Status (1981)

	<u>Differential</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Signif. *</u>
Frequency	2	15.597	2.624	
Rate	2	13.517	1.126	

Analysis of Absence Frequency and Rate Variance by Other Hours Worked

Frequency	4	3.039	.477
Rate	4	7.641	.622

* significant at .05 level (2-tail)

TABLE 10

Sample Department Store
Correlates of Absence Rates and Frequencies, 1981.

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Absence Frequency (r)</u>	<u>Absence Rate (r)</u>
<u>1. Employee Characteristics</u>		
a. Age (n = 78)	.0715	.1979*
i. Females (n = 63)	.0235	.1491
ii. Males (n = 15)	.3469	.4994*
b. Wages (n = 181)	-.1235*	-.1974*
i. Females (n = 63)	-.0607	-.1590*
ii. Males (n = 15)	-.2219	-.1997
c. Job Tenure (n = 78)	.1719	.2508*
i. Females (n = 63)	.1190	.2263*
ii. Males (n = 15)	.4762*	.4659*
d. Company Tenure (n = 78)	.1892*	.2013*
i. Females (n = 63)	.1936	.2137*
ii. Males (n = 15)	.2442	.2921
e. Number of Dependents (n = 78)	.0061	.0979
i. Females (n = 63)	-.0089	-.1086
ii. Males (n = 15)	.1914	.3708
f. Education (n = 78)	-.0589	-.1230
i. Females (n = 63)	-.0325	-.1045
ii. Males (n = 15)	-.0874	-.0492
g. Distance From Work (n = 78)	.0803	-.0126
h. Total Household Income (n = 78)	-.0754	-.0017

* significant at .05 level (2-tail)

TABLE 10 (continued)

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Frequency (r)</u>	<u>Rate(r)</u>
<u>2. Job-Related Characteristics</u>		
a. Satisfaction With Work (n = 78)	-.1763	-.0716
i. Females (n = 63)	-.1121	-.0487
ii. Males (n = 15)	-.5195*	-.2954
b. Satisfaction With Pay (n = 78)	-.2641*	-.1991*
i. Females (n = 63)	-.2445*	-.2178*
ii. Males (n = 15)	-.4570*	-.2481
c. Satisfaction With Promotional Opportunities (n = 78)	-.2404*	-.0397
i. Females (n = 63)	-.1541	.0613
ii. Males (n = 15)	-.5528*	-.3798
d. Satisfaction With Supervisor	-.0825	.0230
i. Females	-.0311	.0471
ii. Males	-.5115*	-.3861
e. Satisfaction With Workmates	-.0341	.0610
i. Females (n = 63)	.0654	.1508
ii. Males (n = 15)	-.7216*	-.6221*
f. Department Size (n = 181)	-.1262*	-.1963*

* significant at .05 level (2-tail)

While Table 7, over-all and subsample absence frequencies and rates, and Table 8 the findings with respect to the significance of subsample mean differences, are basically self-explanatory, three items deserve additional comment here. First, the full/part-time status variable was operationalized by two measures. The store defined part-time as less than twenty hours worked a week, while the BLS defined part-time as less than thirty-five hours a week. Thus both definitions were used in the analysis.

Two significant full/part-time differences were determined. Using the store definition, part-time employees were absent less frequently than full-time employees. This would be expected because of fewer conflicts between personal and work demands due to the fewer days worked in a week. Part-time employees generally worked two to four days a week, while full-time employees worked five days a week. Using the BLS definition a significant difference was found between the absence rates of full-time employees and part-time employees, with part-timers absent more than full-timers. Permanent employees who worked over twenty hours a week were extended full benefits.

Second, a statistically significant difference in the absence rates of minority and nonminority employees was found. However, the small sample ($n = 8$) prohibits attaching any practical significance to this finding. Third, absence

rates for employees with excellent/good appraisals were significantly lower than employees with average appraisals. However, since absenteeism was used as a criterion in employee appraisal, this finding must be cautiously interpreted. Again, this point will be further discussed later.

Table 9 presents analysis of absence frequency/rate variance results from the marital status and other hours worked variables. No significant differences were obtained.

Correlation coefficients of absence frequency and rates with employee and job-related characteristics are shown in Table 10. Coefficients for male and female groups are listed where pertinent. Three general comments are appropriate here. First, only fifty percent of the hypothesized relationships were found to be statistically significant and in some cases the coefficient is so low as to raise questions about the practical significance of the results. Second, sex is apparently an intervening variable since significant relationships in a number of cases were found only within male or female samples. Third, the wage variable findings are based on the population ($n = 181$) rather than sample data. Further discussion is presented in Chapter 5.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter highlighted the basic data findings relevant to this research. Population and sample characteristics were described, and the sub-sample and correlational analyses were presented with interpretive comments. The purpose of this chapter was to simply display the important findings acquired from the research in a concise fashion. Discussion of specific research hypotheses, implications, and limitations is now appropriate.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the study, implications of findings, and conclusions. In addition, a brief discussion of limitations is made as well as some recommendations for future study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF STUDY

The purpose of the study was to identify potential determinants of absenteeism in a retail department store. The significance of this study is based on inconsistent/conflicting research findings, the lack of absenteeism research in the retailing industry despite a 6.74 percent absentee rate, and the large cost associated with absenteeism.

Information for testing hypotheses relating absenteeism with employee and job-related characteristics was obtained through two sources: personnel records and an employee survey. Employee characteristics examined include age, sex, marital status, tenure, sales/nonsales, full/part-time, number of dependents, hours worked in other employment, racial status, income recipient, appraised work performance, educa-

tion, distance from work, wages, and total household income. Job-related characteristics examined were workunit size and satisfaction with work, pay, promotional opportunities, supervision, and workmates.

The study site used had over 181 employees, over ten million dollars in 1981 sales, and was located in a medium size SMSA in the Middle Atlantic States. Seventy-eight employees completed useable survey questionnaires.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section presents findings related to hypotheses about each of the employee and job-related characteristics and how these results relate to previous studies.

5.3.1 Employee Characteristics Relationship to Absenteeism

The relationships between fifteen employee characteristics and absenteeism were examined in this study. Seven significant relationships were determined and are discussed below by hypothesis.

H4. Wage rates of employees are inversely related to absenteeism.

In this study a negative correlation existed between employee wage rates and absence rates/frequencies. This finding is consistent with previous research studies indicating as

employees' wages increase their work attachment also increases, leading to lower absence rates and frequencies. Furthermore, employees with good attendance may receive large pay increases.

H3. Age is inversely related to absenteeism.

A positive correlation existed between age and absence rates. The age effect was stronger for male than female employees. Previous studies indicated that as employees got older they had more absences due to sickness, but had fewer absences due to non-health reasons and were absent more total days, but not as frequently. To a degree this relationship was true in this study, since older employees were not absent more frequently, but apparently were absent for longer durations.

Younger employees were expected to be absent more frequently than older employees. However, in this study no relationship existed between absence frequency and age. The variable age may be closely related to job and company tenure which were both determined to be positively correlated with absence rates and frequencies.

H6. The longer the company and job tenure of an employee, the lower his/her absentee rate will be.

While male and female job tenure were found to be positively correlated with absence rates, only male job tenure was

found to be positively correlated with absence frequency. Company tenure was also positively correlated with absence rates and frequencies.

Past studies have found mixed results regarding these relationships. The results from this study were contrary to expectations, since it was believed that as tenure increased work attachment would increase, resulting in lower absenteeism. The reported findings may be due to the company's paid absence policy, which becomes more liberal as employee tenure increases (see Table 11).

H1. Part-time employees in a retail department store are absent more than full-time employees.

Employees who worked less than thirty-five hours a week had a significantly higher absence rate than employees working over thirty-five hours a week. This difference was hypothesized based on discrepancies between BLS and Prentice-Hall surveys of absenteeism. The impact of this difference is important because retailers depend heavily on part-time employees for flexible scheduling. The study site had over fifty-three percent of its employees working less than thirty-five hours a week. Employees who worked twenty or more hours a week earned full benefits.

TABLE 11

<u>Study Site's Absence Pay Policy</u>			
<u>Length of Employment</u>	<u>Days Worked Per Week</u>	<u>Waiting Period Before Benefits Begin</u>	<u>Absence Benefits Begin on the _____ Workday Absent</u>
Less than one year	3	3	4th
	4	4	5th
	5	5	6th
At least one year but less than three years	3 or 4	2	3rd
	5	3	4th
At least three years but less than five years	3 or more	1	2nd
Five or more years	3 or more	1st day out	

Retail employers must determine if the advantages and monetary savings received from scheduling part-time employees overcomes the higher absenteeism costs associated with part-time employment. Permanent employees working twenty or more hours a week receive a proportional amount of benefits compared with full-time employees. If part-time employees are absent more than full-time as indicated by the findings, retailers are burdened with extra labor costs for the part-time group.

H9. Minority employees have a higher absentee rate than nonminority employees.

Racial status was examined to determine if any significant difference in absence rates and frequencies existed between minority and non-minority employees. It was hypothesized that minority employees would have higher absence rates and frequencies than non-minority employees based on a study conducted by Flanagan et al.⁷⁸ In this study the opposite was found: minority employees had a significantly lower absence rate than non-minority employees. A note of caution should be added since only eight minority employees (4.4 percent) were included the sample. Even though the difference was significant, this small a subsample size may not be representative of the population. In this situation it was

⁷⁸ Flanagan et al.

possible that the small number of minority employees encouraged minorities to attend work more regularly.

H22. Performance appraisal ratings (1=excellent and 4=poor) will be higher for employees with higher absentee rates.

A significant difference existed between absence rates of employees with excellent/good performance appraisals and employees with average appraisals. Employees with excellent/good appraisals had significantly lower absence rates than average appraised employees. This difference was expected since the company used absenteeism as one of its criteria in assessing performance.

Nine of the examined employee characteristics had no significant correlation with absence rates/frequencies or differences between subsamples in regard to absence rates/frequencies. Those relationships are discussed by hypothesis below.

H5. Sales-related employees tend to have a higher absentee rate than nonsales employees.

The examination of the nonsales/sales variable was new to absenteeism research, so a comparison of this study's results with previous results was not possible. It was expected that sales-related employees would have a higher absence rate than nonsales employees because of additional job

stress. Although a significant difference was not determined, further research is recommended. Reasons for this recommendation and others are discussed later.

H7. The larger the number of an employee's dependents, the greater the employee's absentee rate will be.

The relationship of number of dependents with absence rates and frequencies was examined without any significant correlations determined. Past studies had indicated that female absence rates increase with more dependents, while male absence rates decrease. This pattern did not appear in this study.

H8. Female employees in the retail industry are absent more than male employees.

The variable sex was examined with the expectation that females have higher absence rates than males. The findings here are not consistent with previous studies since no difference in absence rates was found. However it was in the predicted direction and sex was found to be an important moderator in the analysis of other absenteeism relationships. Further discussion of this effect is included with the analysis of the other relevant hypotheses.

H10. Females who are dual/primary sources of family income, will have lower absence rates than females who are secondary income sources.

The absence rates and frequencies of female primary and secondary income recipients were compared without any significant differences determined. Although no previously conducted studies have examined this relationship, it was felt that female primary income recipients would require a more consistent income than secondary income recipients.

H16. Absence rates and frequencies are greater for single and divorced employees than for married employees.

No significant differences were found between marital status and absence rates and frequencies. Previous research findings on this issue were mixed, but no support for the hypothesis was found here.

H17. The lower the educational level of an employee, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

No relationship between educational levels and absence frequencies/rates was found, either in the total sample or among males and females. These results are consistent with previous studies finding no correlation between education and absenteeism.

H20. The farther an employee lives from work, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

The relationship between distance from work and absence rates/frequencies was examined without any significant correlations determined. It was expected that increased dis-

tance from work creates a higher propensity for transportation problems leading to increasing absenteeism. Past studies have yielded mixed results.

H18. Retail employees who work other jobs will have a higher absentee rate than will workers for a single employer.

No significant difference existed between the absence rates/frequencies of workers with and workers without other jobs. Although no research had been conducted on the relationship between moonlighting and absenteeism, it was expected that increased work hours outside the retail job would lead to higher absentee rates.

H19. The lower the total household income of an employee, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

The examination of this relationship is new to research on absenteeism, but it was expected that increased household income would suggest more responsibility and therefore lower absence rates. This relationship was not supported by this study.

5.3.2 Job-Related Characteristics Relationship to Absenteeism

The relationship of absenteeism with five facets of job satisfaction and work unit size was examined. For the five

job satisfaction facets over-all, male and female scores were correlated with absence frequencies and rates. Each satisfaction and work unit relationship with absenteeism is discussed.

H11. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her work, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

While no significant correlations existed between satisfaction with work and absence rates of the total sample, a significant negative correlation did exist between absence frequencies of male employees and satisfaction with work. In other words, as male employees' satisfaction with work increases, absence frequencies decrease. This finding exemplifies two trends identified in this study. One, male satisfaction scores are more often negatively correlated with absenteeism than female scores, and two, more negative correlations were determined between absence frequencies and satisfaction than between absence rates and satisfaction.

H12. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her pay, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

Absence rates and frequencies were found to be negatively correlated with employee satisfaction with pay for both males and females. Mean pay satisfaction scores were very low, indicating a potentially serious problem for the company, especially in a high inflation economy. Employees were

not being paid what they felt they deserved and the more dissatisfied they were the more absent they were.

H13. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her promotional chances, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

No significant correlations were found between over-all employee satisfaction with promotional opportunities and absence rates. However, a negative correlation existed between satisfaction with promotional opportunities and male absence frequencies (not females). One reason could be because male employees are generally more career-oriented than females.

H14. The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her supervisor, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

No significant correlations were found between over-all employee satisfaction with their supervisor and absence rates. However, a negative correlation existed between male absence frequencies and satisfaction with his supervisor.

H15 The lower an employee's satisfaction with his/her workmates, the higher his/her absentee rate will be.

Female satisfaction with workmates was not correlated with absence rates or frequencies. However, male employee satisfaction scores were negatively correlated with absence rates and frequencies. It is not known why this occurred.

In general, previous studies have found mixed results between job-related satisfaction and absenteeism. It was hypothesized in this study that different facets of job satisfaction would be negatively correlated with absenteeism. All five facets of satisfaction were negatively correlated with male absence frequencies. Both male and female groups satisfaction with pay were negatively correlated with absence frequencies. From this analysis it appears that employee satisfaction is a more important factor in predicting male absenteeism than female absenteeism.

H2. The larger the number of employees in a department, the higher the absentee rate of the employees in that department.

Significant negative correlations existed between department size and absence frequencies and rates. This relationship was determined for the entire population and is interpreted to mean larger departments have employees with lower absence rates and frequencies. This relationship is the opposite of what was expected. Previous research indicated employees in large work units lose their worker identification, resulting in higher absentee rates.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

The major limitation of the study is it focuses exclusively on one department store. Although this store may be representative of other stores, generalizations may not be warranted. Department stores represent only one type of retail trade and vary according to types of products sold, annual sales, number of employees, geographic location (type of city), town or area located in, location within an area (high versus low income neighborhood), type of shoppers attracted, and company employee requirements (i.e. educational level). Different management emphasis can be pertinent since some stores are more service-oriented than others.

At least one other limitation to this study must be cited. Since the store used in this study recorded absences, it was in a minority of stores recording such absenteeism information. It is not known why certain retailers record attendance or if they are representative of the population. Management officials who record absenteeism information may have an absence problem and are sensitive to the situation. Those not recording absenteeism information may be doing so because there is not a problem or because they do not recognize the issue. This uncertainty places limitations on the interpretation of results.

Other specific limitations include: a) employee attitudes collected only on one occasion; b) data was not causal in nature; c) study site had an absence rate of 3.42 percent well below the industry rate of 6.74 percent; d) study site had a personnel manager, unlike other retailers with only a personnel clerk.

5.5 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the study was to determine potential predictors of absenteeism in a retail department store. Seven employee characteristics and six job-related characteristics were found to be correlated with absenteeism or had significant differences between subsamples in regard to absenteeism. Important conclusions are listed below.

1. Part-time employees have higher absence rates than full-time employees. This difference had not been examined before but is very important to an industry such as retail, that depends heavily on part-time employment. The costs associated with this difference depend on company benefits offered to part-timers, but could be a tremendous problem in the retail industry if benefits are offered to permanent part-time employees. For example, the participating store in this study has approximately half of the employee hours going to part-timers. A one percent greater absence rate by

part-time employees (Permanent part-time employees receive full benefits) could cost an extra 40,000 dollars annually (based on Chapter 1 calculations).

2. Age, job and company tenure are usually interrelated and results here indicate that as employee tenure/age increases, so do absence rates. This occurrence may be related to the company's paid absence program which becomes more liberal as tenure increases. If this policy does encourage increased absences, the company may want to consider a positive reinforcement policy to discourage absences or change the current policy.

3. In general, satisfaction is negatively correlated with absenteeism in this study. Absence frequency is more likely to be correlated than absence rates with satisfaction scores. Male satisfaction was a better predictor of absenteeism than female satisfaction. It is possible that female employees were not as career-oriented as males and therefore did not miss work because of dissatisfaction. Management should consider alternatives to improve satisfaction, especially for men.

4. Employees with excellent/good ratings had lower absence rates than employees with average performance ratings. This was expected since absenteeism was a criterion for rating performance and should alert management that they are

probably successful in using absenteeism in their rating of employees. However, absence frequencies of excellent/good employees were not significantly lower than for employees with average rates. Since the absence frequency measure has been regarded as a better predictor of a "problem employee" the lack of a significant difference should be further investigated.

5. Minority employees having a significantly lower absence rate than nonminorities was not expected. The reason for this finding is unknown, but management should determine if more pressure was placed on minorities to attend work than on nonminorities. Also, careful selection of minority employees may have led to this difference.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Several specific recommendations for absenteeism control can be made at this point and are listed below.

1. Costs of absenteeism could be reduced by relying less on part-time employees.

2. An absence policy that becomes more generous as tenure increases could be causing more absences. A positive reinforcement plan for employees who do not abuse the paid absence program may be helpful, as an alternative to a revamping of the system.

3. Satisfaction scores indicated (particularly for pay and promotion) that employees were very dissatisfied with employee and job-related characteristics. In particular, male employees allow this dissatisfaction to affect work attendance. Managers will want to find ways to increase satisfaction. For example, an expansion of career opportunities may be facilitated by career workshops.

From the findings determined in this study management should evaluate possible causes for each finding and groups of findings and then correct the real cause of the problem. Absenteeism is only a symptom of the problem, not the actual problem.

5.7 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS/SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The results of this study confirm several findings about absenteeism in previous studies. Perhaps the most significant of these relationships is worker satisfaction and absenteeism. If low satisfaction leads to higher absenteeism, researchers will want to examine ways to improve satisfaction and then determine if absenteeism is reduced accordingly.

The relationships between absenteeism and several other characteristics ended in nonsignificant determinations, but additional analysis is suggested for two of the relation-

ships. The variables nonsales/sales and sex require further investigation based on results of this study. The variable sex was an important intervening variable in other analyses indicating a potential difference between male and female absence rates. Although the nonsales/sales variable did not have a significant difference between subsamples at the significance level ($p < .05$) used in this study, at lower significance levels a difference does exist suggesting further research may be productive. A replication of this study with a larger sample size may be practical. A potentially larger "n" could be achieved by not asking workers for their employee numbers. Then, it would be necessary to ask for more demographic information on the questionnaire and from personnel records to allow a computer match-up of information.

More research is needed in retail and other service-related industries. This is especially true as America becomes more service-oriented rather than production-oriented. The major importance of this study is not what it adds to research on absenteeism in general, but as an introduction to research on absenteeism in retailing and non-manufacturing industries. Very few times has the retail industry been so intimately examined as in this study. Further research will assist the industry in its effort to become more effi-

cient. The retail industry, as the last link between producer and consumer, requires additional analysis to help reduce consumer costs and increase stockholder profits.

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Appendix A

PERSONNEL RECORDS

This was utilized to collect data from store personnel records for research purposes.

1. Employee number
2. Job title
3. Department
4. Sex of employee
 - a. male
 - b. female
5. Hourly wage level
6. Method of pay a) straight b) commission
7. Racial status
8. Employment status
9. Absenteeism
 - a. frequency
 - b. days
 - c. one day
 - d. due to sickness
 - e. due to other reason
 - f. personal holidays/vacation
10. Performance rating

Appendix B
RESEARCH SURVEY



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT (703) 961-6353

Research Survey

As a Graduate Degree student in the College of Business at Virginia Tech, I am examining employee attitudes. By filling out the following questionnaire, you will help me in completing my degree.

More than one hundred people are being asked to respond to this questionnaire. No questionnaire will be studied individually. All will be combined into statistical tables for analysis. Let me assure you that your response will be strictly confidential. Neither the personnel department, management, nor anyone else in your department or company will ever see your completed questionnaire or have access in any way to the answers that you as an individual give.

Please complete the questionnaire before the end of your shift. I will be around to collect your questionnaire and answer any questions that you may have throughout the day.

Thanks for your assistance,

Dennis A. Mabes
Virginia Tech

EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE SURVEY

This questionnaire is designed to obtain information about your attitudes towards particular aspects of your job. Therefore, for the survey results to be reliable you must follow all instructions carefully. If necessary, feel free to ask questions. Please respond to all questions.

SECTION I

In this section it is important that you respond to all items on each page before going ahead to the next page.

On this page you should score the following items in regard to the work that you do. You should put "Y" (for yes) beside an item if the item describes that particular aspect of your work, put an "N" (for no) by the item if it does not describe that aspect, or put a "?" if you cannot decide.

- _____ Fascinating
- _____ Routine
- _____ Satisfying
- _____ Boring
- _____ Good
- _____ Creative
- _____ Respected
- _____ Hot
- _____ Pleasant
- _____ Useful
- _____ Tiresome
- _____ Healthful
- _____ Challenging
- _____ On your feet
- _____ Frustrating
- _____ Simple
- _____ Endless
- _____ Gives sense of accomplishment

DO NOT CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE
UNTIL YOU HAVE RESPONDED TO ALL
ITEMS ON THIS PAGE.

On this page you should score the following items in regard to your department manager or supervisor. You should put "Y" (for yes) beside an item if the item describes that particular aspect of your supervisor, put an "N" (for no) by the item if it does not describe that aspect, or put a "?" if you cannot decide.

- _____ Asks my advice
- _____ Hard to please
- _____ Impolite
- _____ Praises good work
- _____ Tactful
- _____ Influential
- _____ Up to date
- _____ Doesn't supervise enough
- _____ Quick-tempered
- _____ Tells me where I stand
- _____ Annoying
- _____ Stubborn
- _____ Knows job well
- _____ Bad
- _____ Intelligent
- _____ Leaves me on my own
- _____ Around when needed
- _____ Lazy

DO NOT CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE
UNTIL YOU HAVE RESPONDED TO ALL
ITEMS ON THIS PAGE.

On this page you should score the following items in regard to your workmates. You should put an "Y" (for yes) beside an item if the item describes that particular aspect of your workmates, put an "N" (for no) by the item if it does not describe that aspect, or put a "?" if you cannot decide.

- _____ Stimulating
- _____ Boring
- _____ Slow
- _____ Ambitious
- _____ Stupid
- _____ Responsible
- _____ Fast
- _____ Intelligent
- _____ Easy to make enemies
- _____ Talks too much
- _____ Smart
- _____ Lazy
- _____ Unpleasant
- _____ No privacy
- _____ Active
- _____ Loyal
- _____ Hard to meet
- _____ Narrow interests

DO NOT CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE
UNTIL YOU HAVE RESPONDED TO ALL
ITEMS ON THIS PAGE.

On this page you should score the following items in regard to your promotional opportunities. You should put "Y" (for yes) beside an item if the item describes that particular aspect about your promotional opportunities, put an "N" (for no) by the item if it does not describe that aspect, or put a "?" if you cannot decide.

- _____ Good opportunity for advancement
- _____ Opportunity somewhat limited
- _____ Promotion on ability
- _____ Dead-end job
- _____ Good chance for promotion
- _____ Unfair promotion policy
- _____ Infrequent promotions
- _____ Regular promotions
- _____ Fairly good chance for promotion

DO NOT CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE
UNTIL YOU HAVE RESPONDED TO ALL
ITEMS ON THIS PAGE.

On this page you should score the following items in regard to your pay. You should put "Y" (for yes) beside an item if the item describes that particular aspect about your pay, put an "N" (for no) by the item if it does not describe that aspect, or put a "?" if you cannot decide.

- _____ Income adequate for normal expenses
- _____ Satisfactory profit sharing
- _____ Barely live on income
- _____ Bad
- _____ Income provides luxuries
- _____ Insecure
- _____ Less than I deserve
- _____ Highly paid
- _____ Underpaid

DO NOT CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE
UNTIL YOU HAVE RESPONDED TO ALL
ITEMS ON THIS PAGE.

SECTION II

Please check or fill in your response.

1. What is your year of birth? _____
2. What is your marital status? _____ single
 _____ married
 _____ separated/divorced
3. Is your income the _____ primary source of earnings in your household.
 (Check One) _____ secondary source of earnings in your household.
 _____ dual source of earnings in your household.
 _____ source of student educational earnings.
4. What is the occupational classification of your spouse's work?
 (Check One) _____ Professional
 _____ Technical
 _____ Manager/Administrator
 _____ Sales Worker
 _____ Clerical
 _____ Craft and Kindred
 _____ Operatives
 _____ Transportation(Equipment)
 _____ Non-Farm Laborers
 _____ Service Workers
 _____ Farm Workers
 _____ Houseperson
 _____ No Spouse
 _____ Other
5. What is your current job title? _____
 Department? _____
6. How long have you held your current position?
 (Check One) _____ less than 6 mos.
 _____ 6 mos. to less than 1yr.
 _____ 1yr. to less than 2 yr.
 _____ 2 yr. to less than 3 yr.
 _____ 3 yr. to less than 4 yr.
 _____ 4 yr. to less than 5 yr.
 _____ 5 yr. to less than 10yr.
 _____ 10 years or more.
7. How far do you live from work? _____ less than 5 miles
 (Check One) _____ 5 to 10 miles
 _____ more than 10 miles
8. How long have you been employed by the company?
 (Check One) _____ less than 6 mos.
 _____ 6 mos. to less than 1yr.
 _____ 1 yr. to less than 2 yr.
 _____ 2 yr. to less than 3 yr.
 _____ 3 yr. to less than 4 yr.
 _____ 4 yr. to less than 5 yr.
 _____ 5 yr. to less than 10yr.
 _____ 10 years or more.
9. In 1981 , how many hours did you average in a work week?
 _____ more than 35
 _____ 31 to 35
 _____ 26 to 30
 _____ 21 to 25
 _____ 20 or less

10. In 1981, on the average how many days did you work a week? _____
11. How many dependents (excluding spouse) live in your household? _____
12. What was your total household income for 1981 (before taxes)? _____
 (Check One) _____ under \$7000
 _____ 7000 to \$10,999
 _____ 11,000 to \$14,999
 _____ 15,000 to \$24,999
 _____ 25,000 to \$34,999
 _____ \$35,000 or more
13. What is your level of education? _____ no high school
 (Check One) _____ some high school
 _____ high school graduate
 _____ some college
 _____ college graduate
 _____ college graduate (with some graduate work)
 _____ graduate degree holder
14. How many days were you absent from work during the year 1981, excluding vacation and paid holidays? If you are unsure, please make an estimate. _____ days
15. Is your job sales or nonsales related? _____ sales
 _____ nonsales (i.e. stock, maintenance, or office)
16. How many hours do you work per week in other employment? _____ 0
 (Check One) _____ 1 to 10 hours
 _____ 11 to 20 hours
 _____ 21 to 30 hours
 _____ 31 or more hours
17. What is your associate number? _____

THE ASSOCIATE NUMBER IS NEEDED FOR MY ANALYSIS. YOUR RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS WILL NOT BE IDENTIFIED.

THANK YOU FOR THE TIME YOU HAVE TAKEN TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. BEFORE RETURNING IT, BE SURE ALL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I WILL BE AROUND TO COLLECT YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE FROM YOU LATER OR I WILL ACCEPT IT FROM YOU WHEN LEAVING THROUGH THE ASSOCIATE ENTRANCE AT THE END OF YOUR SHIFT.

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Determinants of Absenteeism in a Retail Department Store

by

Dennis A. Mabes

(ABSTRACT)

The present study investigated absenteeism in a retail department store in an effort to determine which employee and job-related characteristics are related to absenteeism. Theoretical models and empirical research were used to develop a list of potential characteristics that could be related to absenteeism within the retail department store context. Data for this study were obtained from retail department store personnel records and from a questionnaire survey of its employees. Employee and job-related characteristics were matched with information about employee absenteeism to determine if significant relationships or differences between subsamples existed.

Analysis of research findings revealed that several employee characteristics, including age, company and job tenure were positively correlated with absenteeism. Wage rates were found to be negatively correlated with absenteeism. Minority employees (n=8) had significantly lower absence rates than nonminorities and part-time employees absence rates were higher than full-time employees.

In addition, employees' (particularly males) satisfaction with pay, promotional opportunities, supervision, workmates, and work were negatively correlated with frequency of absence. Work unit size showed positive correlation with absence rates and frequencies.

An examination of absenteeism in the retail industry indicates that this industry and other non-manufacturing industries need further research. Such studies will help reduce labor costs, meaning lower prices and higher stockholder profits.