

**THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE PREVENTION  
FOCUS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
WORK GROUP STRUCTURE AND  
EMPLOYEE ADAPTIVE  
BEHAVIORS**

The members of the Committee approve the doctoral  
dissertation of:

Official Student Name                      April L. Rowsey

Committee Chair Name                      Dr. Laura Munoz

Committee Member Name                      Dr. Michael Stodnick

Committee Member Name                      Dr. Cara Jacocks

Committee Member Name                      Dr. Mitchell Neubert

Director of Doctoral Programs                      \_\_\_\_\_

Dean of the College of Business                      \_\_\_\_\_

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by

APRIL L. ROWSEY

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June 29, 2021

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to:

- The family & friends to whom I have been a lousy daughter, spouse, parent, sibling, relative, and friend these past few years. Prioritizing studies, work, and persisting through COVID-19 has meant that I had to pull back in other areas that were no less meaningful to me and that I have sorely missed.
- Those who would endeavor to complete this work as part of their own personal and professional journey: may you find the ability to persevere and finish what you starte... :)

**ABSTRACT**  
**THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE PREVENTION**  
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**EMPLOYEE ADAPTIVE**  
**BEHAVIORS**

April L. Rowsey, DBA.

The University of Dallas, 2021

Supervising Professor: *Laura Muñoz, Ph.D.*

With more than three quarters of US-based employees working as a member of at least one team, America's workforce continues to trend towards group and team-based work. This trend has prompted both managerial and scholarly interest in the influence that work group norms and expectations have on employee adaptive behaviors in the workplace. This research explores how work group initiating structure, which includes group behaviors and activities pertaining to completing tasks, adhering to policies and laws, or fulfilling work-role obligations, functions as a primer of employee prevention focus. In addition, the effects of prevention focus are explored for their subsequent influence on the focal work outcomes of functional presenteeism and

prohibitive voice. To what extent does employee situational prevention regulatory focus at work mediate the influence of work group initiating structure on employee adaptive behaviors, specifically functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice behavior? Additionally, how might an employee's work locus of control affect the relationship between situational prevention focus and both functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice behavior?

A survey-supported research design was used to test a model based on regulatory focus theory (RFT) by exploring how employees' prevention focus at work mediates the influence of work group initiating structure on the focal outcomes of functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice. The results show that regulatory focus fully mediates the relationship between initiating structure and presenteeism at moderate to high levels of work locus of control, while initiating structure directly impacts prohibitive voice behavior. Theoretical and practical implications for these findings are discussed, and recommendations for future research are included.

**Keywords:** regulatory focus, work group, work locus of control, presenteeism, prohibitive voice

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today's complex, interconnected, and disruptive business environments offer unprecedented challenges and pressures for firms to operate efficiently and strategically. To ensure the proper functioning and efficient operation of the work environment, managers depend upon the productive attendance of employees; this is especially important as organizations attempt to operate with downsized or lean workforces (Lu et al., 2013) such as the workforce reductions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Additionally, managers are becoming increasingly reliant on employee input as a valuable source of comments and suggestions (Gao et al., 2011) for surfacing, solving, and preventing critical problems and issues that threaten harm to the organization (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Both presenteeism behavior, the continuation of work while one is unwell (Aronsson and Gustafsson, 2005), and employee prohibitive voice behavior, the expression of concern about problems which threaten harm to the organization (Liang et al., 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) represent human behavior that is purposeful, goal-directed, and adaptive (Barrick et al., 2013; Sherman and Dinkmeyer, 2014). Accordingly, it is critical for managers to understand the mechanisms and motivations that make these adaptive behaviors sustainable for both employees and firms.

Theories of motivation contribute to our understanding of the mechanisms that initiate, sustain, and end a behavior (Graham & Weiner, 2012) and thereby assist in the understanding of

how employees adapt to achieve their desired outcomes (Andrews et al., 2014). The literature on prevention focus, a subset of Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT), a theory of self-regulation, offers a promising perspective for predicting employee adaptive work behaviors specifically aimed at preventing losses in the workplace, maintaining safety, and fulfilling duties and responsibilities (Scholer et al., 2019) in the workplace. Though prevention focus was originally regarded as a stable, trait-like construct, (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Higgins, 1997, Higgins et al., 1994), other studies have found support for prevention focus as a situational or state-like construct that can be influenced by situational cues or stimuli (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Friedman & Förster, 2001; Higgins, 2000) in the workplace contributing to employee behaviors (Neubert et al., 2008).

Previous studies in workplace regulatory focus have also examined the influence of leader behavior stimuli (Kark et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2008), and specifically leader initiating structure (Neubert et al., 2008), as a primer for employee prevention focus and subsequent behavioral outcomes. Less is known, however, about the influence of behaviors at the work group level as a primer of prevention focus. The need for research in this area is vital as the trend toward groups and teams in the workplace is increasing with more than three quarters of all employees in America reporting working as a member of at least one team (Gallup 2017; Mathieu et al., 2018). Within this team-based work environment, some of the most information-rich sources of situational workplace stimuli are the norms and expectations reflected in the structuring behaviors of the employee's own proximal work group. These observable team stimuli modeled as initiating structure within the group could serve as an influence through the priming or suppressing of a prevention focus in the minds of its members and thereby contribute to employee adaptive behaviors.

The association between workplace regulatory focus and employee behavior leads to a material point of interest: can a primed regulatory focus explain an employee's choice to engage in presenteeism, specifically functional presenteeism, behavior? Presenteeism, a related counterpart of the more widely researched absenteeism, describes an employee's choice to attend work despite feeling ill and which results in decreased or diminished productivity (Collins et al., 2005; Hummer et al., 2002; Koopman et al., 2002; Turpin et al., 2004; Whitehouse, 2005). Scholarly and practitioner interest in presenteeism has increased exponentially over the past decade and a half since Hemp (2004) first linked American medical scholars' work concerning illness-related productivity loss to the competitive advantage potentially gained through managing the resulting costs (Johns, 2010).

Despite the preponderance of research on the costs and negative consequences of presenteeism, a growing number of studies on presenteeism are finding support for a form of presenteeism that results in positive consequences for both the individual and the organization (Karankia-Murray & Biron, 2020; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Ruhle et al., 2020). Working when unwell allows a presentee to achieve some level of productivity during an illness (Demerouti et al., 2009), experience a sense of accomplishment (Biron and Saksvik, 2009), derive performance-based self-esteem (Löve et al., 2010; Steinke & Badura 2011), reduce the potential for future sickness absence (Johns, 2008), and diminish the burden experienced by colleagues who might normally assume the work responsibilities during an absence (Caverley et al., 2007). Karanika-Murray and Biron (2019) describe this type of carefully managed presenteeism as functional presenteeism or "engaging with work and attending to performance demands during ill-health but without further taxing the presentee's health" (p. 247) and further suggest that this type of sustainable presenteeism may be conceptually driven by an employee's

“preferred regulatory focus of preventing losses or promoting gains in terms of their health and performance” (p. 247).

Prevention focus mindset and prohibitive voice behavior also share a common interest and motivation in preventing loss or avoiding pain (Liang et al., 2012). Employees who elect to express prohibitive voice generally do so as a discretionary, or extra-role, behavior with the intention to address, stop, or prevent past, current, or anticipated problems and concerns that could harm the organization (Chamberlin et al., 2016; Liang, et al., 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Whereas a prevention-focused mindset is attuned to detect potential problems (losses) and threats to the status quo, prohibitive voice is the communication about these potential problems. Additionally, because of the similarities that prevention focus and prohibitive voice share in terms of needs (security), goals (to avoid undesirable states), performance strategy (vigilance), literature has shown that prevention focus contributes to subsequent expressions of prohibitive voice behavior (Lin & Johnson, 2015). Understanding the underpinnings and drivers of employee discretionary involvement through voice behavior has led researchers to examine the individual, motivational, and contextual factors that serve to either promote or inhibit voice (Liang et al. 2012). As noted by Liang et al. (2012), much of this work has focused on each of these factors individually, even though the presence of these antecedents and mechanisms are likely to co-occur within the workplace as predictors of employee voice (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Therefore, it is vitally important to understand the combination of cognitive and social influence found in the workplace that predict these voice behaviors.

Prior literature has also found that the strength of the relationship between employee prevention focus and focal work outcomes is often influenced by individual factors (Gorman et al., 2012; Lanaj et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2016) which suggests that the strength of the effect of



a primed employee prevention focus on the focal work outcomes of presenteeism and prohibitive voice is also likely to be influenced by stable individual difference variables as well. Work locus of control (LOC) is a particular trait with potential to influence these relationships because it captures the extent to which a person believes his or her effort influences work circumstances (Spector, 1988). Prior studies have found that one's locus of control (internal or external) can influence the effects of environmental factors on employee outcomes (Galvin et al., 2018; Ito & Brotheridge, 2007; Sassi et al., 2015; Sprung & Jex, 2012; Stiglbauer, 2016) and that people with an internal LOC tend to engage in more adaptive behaviors than do those with an external LOC (Wallhagen et al., 1994).

### **1.1 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research, then, is to test a model based on RFT by exploring how employees' *prevention* regulatory focus at work mediates the influence of work group initiating structure on the focal outcomes of functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice. By exploring how initiating structure, embedded in work group norms and social factors, functions as a primer of employee prevention focus, this research acknowledges that employee behavior is predicted by multiple influences and factors within the work environment. Therefore, this study endeavors to better understand the influence of group-level structure and cognitive motivation on the expression of both functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice. The present study also incorporates the individual difference trait of work locus of control (LOC) which seeks to explain the strength of the relationship between prevention focus and the focal work outcomes of prohibitive voice and functional presenteeism, and thus responds to the call for scholars to examine more stable personal characteristics (Johns, 2010; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019) for presenteeism.

## **1.2 Significance of Study**

Understanding the underpinnings and drivers of employee functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice through the examination of the relationship between work group level structure and individual cognitions is a particularly salient topic in today's western workplace. With more than three quarters of all employees in America working as a member of at least one team (Gallup, 2017), the types of behaviors and activities modeled within the group serve as a powerful influence as members decode, derive, and internalize meaning (Lawler et al., 1995; Mathieu et al., 2018; Salas, Shuffler, et al., 2015; Salas, Reyes, & McDaniel, 2018),

This research study is also important because the benefits of prohibitive voice expressed by employees, who are often intimately familiar with the processes and the effects of both day-to-day decisions and strategic actions, has been shown to prevent crisis situations (Schwartz & Wald, 2003), enhance organizational safety performance (Li et al., 2017), and improve organizational health and well-being (Carmeli et al., 2017; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017; Paillé et al., 2016). Additionally, this study seeks to contribute to a growing body of literature (e.g. Biron & Saksvik, 2009; Demerouti et al., 2009; Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019; Ruhle, 2020) that provides insight into the drivers of a positive, and more sustainable, form of employee presenteeism behavior. Consequently, managers will have an even greater understanding of the types of mechanisms that influence employees to voice concerns about issues to protect organizational sustainability and well-being as well as elect to engage in sustainable behaviors, such as functional presenteeism, themselves within the workplace.

### ***1.2.1 The Research Gap***

Whereas previous studies have examined the influence of leader behavior stimuli (Neubert, et al., 2008; Neubert, et al., 2013) as a primer for employee prevention focus, the

present study considers the presence and role of work group level initiating structure in affecting employee prevention focus and resultant behavioral outcomes. Given the pervasiveness of team and group-based work environments, some of the most information-rich sources of situational workplace stimuli are the norms and expectations reflected in the behaviors of the employee's own proximal work group. Thus, the study of situational prevention focus in response to work group-based stimuli further contributes to the call to better understand the interplay between collective actions and individual motivation (Wallace et al., 2016).

Research on the antecedents of voice behavior has led researchers to examine the individual, motivational, and contextual factors that serve to either promote or inhibit voice (Liang et al., 2012). As noted by Liang et al. (2012), much of this work has focused on each of these factors, individually, even though the presence of these antecedents and mechanisms are likely to co-occur within the workplace as predictors of employee voice (Van Dyne et al., 2003). In similar fashion, the majority of empirical research on presenteeism has centered around presenteeism, generally, and associations with workplace phenomena more proximal in nature (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019) such as absence policies, workload, and understaffing (Miraglia & Johns, 2016), employee dispositions such as self-efficacy and neuroticism (Lu et al., 2013), and employee motivation such as personal motivation and workplace pressures (Baker-McCleary et al., 2010) with less emphasis on the interaction between multiple influences and drivers.

### ***1.2.2 Academic Contribution***

The present study delivers three important contributions to the social science and management literature. First, it provides further empirical support for the integration of regulatory focus as a means of explaining employee discretionary behavior, specifically, prohibitive voice and functional presenteeism. Second, it explores the contextual salience of

workgroup level contributions to individual prevention focus and both prohibitive voice and functional presenteeism. Finally, this study endeavors to more fully understand the socio-psychological drivers in the workplace that contribute to a more sustainable form of presenteeism, thereby contributing to the emerging stream of literature exploring the positive consequences of presenteeism behavior.

### ***1.2.3 Business Contribution***

The insights derived from this study offer practical implications and can guide managers' understanding of the mechanisms of structure, motivation, and work locus of control that influence employees to notice and voice concerns about perceived threats to organizational well-being. Tim McClure, professional speaker and brand leadership consultant, once noted, "The biggest concern for any organization should be when their most passionate people become quiet." His remark illustrates both the instrumental and the symbolic perspectives about the importance of voice to organizations. An instrumental perspective acknowledges that employee voice contributes relevant suggestions and concerns crucial for the success or protection of organizational well-being in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. From a symbolic perspective, it is a concerning signal to managers when employees opt for silence or exit instead of voice. Therefore, it is in management's instrumental interest to understand the workplace mechanisms which contribute to, or inhibit, the expression of prohibitive voice.

Once called the "invisible drain" (Hemp, 2004) presenteeism, unlike absenteeism, manifests as employees attending to work demands but with diminished productivity often resulting in direct and indirect costs for both presentees and the organization. But Ruhle (2020) notes that problematic outcomes are not automatically assured just because employees choose to attend work when feeling unwell but rather, "from doing so without appropriate management or

adjustments being made to the work tasks, environment, or equipment, to ensure that the effect on the person's health is restorative rather than detrimental" (p. 347). A better understanding of how workplace stimuli influence employees to elect a functional form of presenteeism can inform managers on how they might better manage this complex adaptive behavior.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This research addresses the following research questions – RQ1: To what extent does employee situational prevention regulatory focus at work mediate the influence of work group initiating structure on both functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice behavior? Additionally – RQ2: How might an employee's work locus of control affect the relationship between situational prevention focus and both functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice behavior? In addressing these questions, this research contributes to the understanding of the socio-psychological factors of proximal work groups that predict employee expression of prohibitive voice and functional presenteeism.

### **1.4 Organization of the Dissertation**

The remaining details of the study are arranged as follows. In Chapter 2, a literature review containing both theoretical and construct definitions is provided, and hypotheses are presented in support of the relationships contained in the conceptual model. Chapter 3 provides the details and specifics of the research methodology, the development of the survey instrument and measures, the approach to data analysis, and the justification for this analysis. Chapter 4 details the data analysis and results of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the implications of these findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter presents the requisite background, the foundational strategy, and the theoretical framework for this research. The first section provides a review of the study's primary theoretical framework: regulatory focus theory (RFT). The second section provides an overview of the salient constructs included in this study. The final sections provide the rationale for the hypothesized relationships and a concluding chapter summary.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT) is a theory of motivation which contributes to our understanding that “people are motivated to minimize discrepancies between actual and desired end states (i.e., seek pleasure) and maximize the discrepancy between actual and undesired end states (i.e., avoid pain)” (Meyer et al., 2004, p. 996). Higgins (1997, 1998) developed our understanding of regulatory focus by naming, and delineating between, two motivational orientations during goal pursuit: promotion focus and prevention focus. Notably, Higgins (1997, 1998) further proposed that promotion focus and prevention focus were empirically distinct, orthogonal factors meaning that both factors are independent of each other rather than related opposites of each other (Gorman et al., 2012).

##### ***2.1.1 Promotion Focus Versus Prevention Focus***

The primary distinctions between promotion focus and prevention focus include types of *needs, goals, drivers, and performance strategies* (Table 1). While both mindsets are goal-

oriented, the type of regulatory focus (promotion or prevention) that people adopt is distinct in not only information processing and motivational orientation (internal drivers) but also in external expression such as performance strategy and affect (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Higgins, 1997). Whereas individuals with a promotion focus value the *needs* of advancement, growth, and accomplishment, individuals with a prevention focus prioritize security, safety, and protection (Fuglestad et al., 2008; Higgins, 1997, 1998). The *goals* of individuals with a promotion focus include seeking pleasure and gains through the *drivers* of hopes and aspirations as they try to improve upon the status quo. The *goals* of individuals with a prevention focus mindset, on the other hand, include the avoidance of pain and losses through the *drivers* of duty and obligation fulfillment as they seek to protect the status quo against something worse. The focus of this study is on employee prevention focused mindset in the workplace.

**Table 2. 1**  
*Distinguishing Characteristics of Prevention Focus and Promotion Focus*

Characteristics	Prevention	Promotion
Types of needs	Attention on security needs	Attention on growth needs
Goals	Avoiding Pain/ losses	Seeking pleasure/ gains
Drivers	Rules & responsibilities (oughts)	Hopes & aspirations (ideals)
Performance strategies	Vigilant, accuracy, risk aversion or mitigation	Eager, speed, risk taking

*Note:* Adapted from Higgins, 1997, 1998.

### **2.1.2 Chronic Versus Situational Regulatory Focus**

It is important to acknowledge that regulatory focus can be an enduring dispositional characteristic influenced by personality (Wallace & Chen, 2006) or early life experiences (Higgins, 1997). In addition to manifesting as dispositional tendencies, promotion and prevention

foci can also manifest as a psychological state primed in response to situational cues (Friedman & Förster, 2001; Higgins, 1997, 1998). For example, research has shown that “ought” framing and transactional leadership can induce a prevention focus, whereas gain framing and transformational leadership can induce a promotion focus (De Cremer et al., 2009; Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Neubert et al., 2008). A study by James et al., (1990) suggests that employees engage in environmental scanning behavior within their organizations to seek out information concerning behavioral expectations and their potential consequences (Neubert et al., 2008). These cues, in turn, have been shown to influence either a promotion-focused or prevention-focused mindset in organizational members. Cues such as safety climate in an organization (Wallace & Chen 2006), leadership style (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007), and leaders’ patterns of behavior (Neubert et al., 2008) have been studied in regard to their impact on employee regulatory focus. Thus, the focus of this study is on the acute regulatory focus rather than an individual’s chronic regulatory focus as a means of understanding how certain workplace environmental and situational stimuli serve to prime or evoke employees’ approach to goal attainment/behavior outcomes.

### ***2.1.3 Prevention Focus in the Workplace***

Prevention focus, as a motivational strategy, does not mean that people avoid, suppress, or inhibit action (Higgins et al., 1994), but rather direct their actions to prevent or avoid mistakes and failure, and fulfill obligations and expectations. The observable behaviors in fulfilling these goals are often described as prudent, precise, careful, and cautious (Higgins, 1997; Lanaj et al., 2012). Individuals with prevention focus show high motivation when tasks are framed in terms of prevention (Shah et al., 1998) and focus on strategies that prevent negative outcomes (Higgins, 1997).



Examples of prevention-focused behavior in the workplace include adherence to policies, procedures, and guidelines (Wallace & Chen, 2006). Employees with prevention focus may also be more attuned to matters of waste, safety, and process inefficiency of resources especially if those matters pose a threat to the safety and security of the status quo (Johnson & Chang, 2008). Prevention focus has been explored as an antecedent for a variety of workplace outcomes such as normative commitment and extra-role compliance (Neubert et al., 2013), in-role performance and deviant behavior (Neubert et al., 2008), and task performance (Lanaj et al., 2012).

#### ***2.1.4 Measurement of Workplace Regulatory Focus***

Scholarly interest in RFT in the context of organizational settings intensified when Wallace and Chen (2006) developed the first workplace-specific measure of both promotion and prevention regulatory focus named Regulatory Focus at Work Scale (RWS). This was a significant contribution to organizational literature because, according to the compatibility principle (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), attitude-behavior relationships are more salient when the attitudes and behaviors are matched in a specific context. In like manner, Neubert et al. (2008) further refined the measurement of regulatory focus at work through the development of the Work Regulatory Focus (WRF) instrument and, in doing so, also extended the understanding of work regulatory focus by testing its mediation in the relationship between leadership styles and employee behavior outcomes. In their 2015 multi-level review of regulatory focus, Johnson et al. noted that, despite the prevalence of the Regulatory Focus at Work Scale (Wallace & Chen, 2006), the lesser utilized Work Regulatory Focus at Work Scale (Neubert et al., 2008) appears to be a more robust measure because it captures both the ideal/ought self-guides as well as the end state reference points. Compared to the more general Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ), the

WRF yields a significant incremental validity in the workplace (Johnson et al., 2015). All measures of regulatory focus and work regulatory focus are self-report.

## **2.2 Work Group Initiating Structure**

The growing scholarly interest in shared leadership and the influence of team stimuli on group performance and effectiveness has been intensified by the prevalence of self-managed teams and flatter organizational structures (Wang et al., 2014). With more than three quarters of all employees in America reporting working as a member of at least one team (Gallup, 2017; Mathieu et al., 2018), the role of team stimuli (such as norms and activities) modeled within the group could serve as powerful influences on each of the members. Specific types of stimuli, often observable within groups, are the instrumental activities of highly directive and task-oriented forms of behavior and House et al. (1971) described instrumental activities as forms of initiating structure because they are necessary for the mobilization and allocation of resources required to enable the functions of growing organizations.

Initiating structure is expressed in the workplace through behaviors and activities pertaining to completing tasks, adhering to policies and laws, or fulfilling work-role obligations. Such structuring activities are crucial for the initiating and maintenance of processes; as such, norms are oriented toward defining performance, goal and role expectations and constraints (Fleishman, 1998). Given that initiating structure is focused on directing organizational members' behavior into meeting and conforming to expectations (Halpin, 1957), more recent studies have examined the favorable influence of leader-induced initiating structure as a predictor of not only group-organization performance (Judge et al., 2004) and enhanced team effectiveness (Hiller et al., 2006) but also technical quality, schedule performance, cost performance, improved time-lagged profitability, and enhanced speed-to-market (Keller, 2006).

In their meta-analysis of 63 empirical studies with 131 effect sizes relating leadership in teams to team performance, Burke et al. (2006) found approximately 12% of the variance in team performance outcomes associated with task-focused leadership (uncorrected effect size of .343 with a 95% CI of .288 to .396) compared with only 10% of variance explained by leaders who engaged in more developmentally focused behaviors (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Leader behavior emphasizing initiating structure has also been a primer for employee prevention focus (Neubert et al., 2008), but less is known about the influence of initiating structure at the work group level as a primer of regulatory focus among employees.

### ***2.2.1 Measurement of Workgroup Initiating Structure***

To date, there is not a generally accepted and validated measurement of initiating structure at the work group level. Measures aimed at capturing structuring behavior in the workplace typically use an employee's supervisor or leader behavior as the referent and describe the behavior as transactional. Given that these measures capture an employee's perception of observable or perceived transactional behavior of defining roles and tasks and ensuring that performance standards are met (Antonakis & House, 2014), the measures tend to target cognitions about team goals, rewards, and the connection between rewards and team effort (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Accordingly, the most widely accepted validated measure of structure behavior in the workplace is Stogdill's (1963) 10-item Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ XII). For the purposes of this study, the scale will be reduced to include only the five items pertaining to initiating structure and the referent changed from leader to work group to measure work group initiating structure.

## **2.3 Functional Presenteeism**

### ***2.3.1 Conceptualization of Presenteeism***

Present-day conceptualizations of presenteeism generally coalesce around, “being at work when you should be at home either because you are ill or because you are working such long hours that you are no longer effective” (Cooper, 1996, p. 15). Since its initial conceptualization, research into presenteeism has begun to migrate in two very divergent paths (Johns, 2010): one that focuses on the motivations influencing the attendance aspect (e.g., Baker-McCleary et al., 2010; Johansen, 2018; Johansen et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016; Krane et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2013; Navarro et al., 2018), and the other that focuses on the quantifiable loss of productivity and personal performance (e.g., Burton et al., 2014; Collins et al., 2005; Goetzel et al., 2009; Zhou et al., 2016) leading present day researchers to lament the lack of clarity in the conceptualization of presenteeism (Lohaus & Haberman, 2019; Ruhle et al., 2020). Widely accepted commonalities in literature highlight that presenteeism is generally considered a global phenomenon (Cooper & Lu, 2016; Hirsch et al., 2017; Karanika-Murray & Cooper, 2019), that is the result of a complex, adaptive choice (Biron et al., 2006; Halbesleben et al., 2014), and that results in negative consequence to health (e.g., Bergström et al., 2009; Hansen & Andersen, 2009; Lu et al., 2013; Skagen & Collins, 2016; Taloyan et al., 2012) and/or reductions in productive performance (e.g., Koopman et al., 2002; Lerner et al., 2001; Lofland et al., 2004; Mattke et al., 2007; Ospina et al., 2015; Shikier et al., 2004). From an organizational standpoint, productivity loss has been the most widely studied outcome of presenteeism behavior (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). Table 2.2 below includes reported negative effects of presenteeism behavior on individuals.

One of the central components of presenteeism is the state of sickness, illness, or the state of being unwell. Because the state of health or illness is a key consideration for individuals making the choice between presenteeism and absenteeism, most researchers avoid exhaustive lists specifying the medical condition(s) but, instead, describe or position health status by distinguishing health conditions as acute conditions (e.g., common cold), period conditions (e.g., migraine headaches), or chronic illness (e.g., diabetes) (Ruhle et al., 2020). Ruhle et al. (2020) also broadly advocate for using the more inclusive term “ill health” which can also include mental or emotional conditions which may influence individuals toward either presenteeism or absenteeism. Literature does not address or acknowledge working through severe or traumatic medical conditions or during medical emergencies as a form of presenteeism behavior because presenteeism is a choice behavior, meaning that work is possible, and the individual may choose to attend work (or not) (Aronsson et al., 2011; Gerich, 2015; Johns, 2011).

### ***2.3.2 Conceptualization of Functional Presenteeism in the Workplace***

Nascent contributions in presenteeism research assert that most of the literature disproportionately emphasizes the problematic outcomes of presenteeism to the exclusion of the positive benefits (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019; Ruhle & Süß, 2019) and that negative outcomes are not automatically assured because of attending work while unwell (Ruhle et al., 2020). Presenteeism that results in contributions to work without detriment or impairment of health status is considered a sustainable form of presenteeism (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019). This emerging stream of literature does not dispute the decreased levels of productivity that arise due to working during periods of ill health, but rather embraces the positive consequences that can arise when continuing work in some capacity versus opting for absenteeism.

### **2.3.2.1 Positive Consequences of Functional Presenteeism**

Functional presenteeism allows presentees to accomplish work tasks, and thus meet some of the job performance demands, within the scope of reduced or limited physical or mental resources (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019) which allows them to contribute, albeit to a lesser extent, to their personal goals. Working, despite illness, can be a source of fulfillment and contribute to an individual's sense identity, responsibility, and self-worth (Arbesman & Logsdon, 2011) and presentees may receive acknowledgement and support from work colleagues (Biron & Saksvik, 2010; Caverley et al., 2007). In this sense, work can be a positive source of physical and mental health (Waddell & Burton, 2006).

### **2.3.2.2 Work-related Factors Contributing to Functional Presenteeism**

Hansen & Anderson (2008) classified the factors that influence presenteeism into the three categories of: work-related factors, personal circumstances, and attitudes. Work-related factors include work resources (Joyce et al., 2010), flexible working arrangements (Rousculp et al., 2010), and psycho-social work environment factors (Gosselin et al., 2013; Miraglia & Johns, 2016). Miraglia and John's (2016) meta-analysis of 109 samples including 176,000 participants highlights a number of interesting antecedents and correlates of presenteeism behavior as reported in Table 2.3, below.

Several recent studies (e.g., Urtasun & Nuñez, 2018; Whysall et al., 2018) have noted the crucial role that work environments play in supporting the kind of presenteeism that results in work that is beneficial for the sense of health and wellbeing of the individual. In addition to the health benefits for the presentee, Zhou et al. (2016) found that work environments that provide clear goals and expectations to employees who choose to work during illness allows presentees to “focus their resources on core-tasks and priorities, in turn reducing the productivity loss

associated with presenteeism” (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019. p. 254). Burke et al. (2006) note that directive behaviors including the “initiation and organization of work group activity, assignment of tasks, specification of the way work is to be conducted, emphasis on goal attainment, and the establishment of clear channels of communication” (Burke et al., 2006. p. 292) serve as a crucial resource support for facilitating group performance and productivity among work group members.

### ***2.3.3 Measurement of Functional Presenteeism***

Operationalization of presenteeism in general has been the subject of great consternation for the major contributors in this field. One of the bigger challenges presenteeism scholars have had to address is the health aspect of presenteeism. Sickness is a non-dichotomous state and that it can be experienced differently by individuals resulting in different choices about attendance behavior (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019; Ruhle & Süß, 2019; Ruhle et al., 2020). This issue suggests that nearly all of the subjective self-report instruments such as the Work Productivity and Activity Impairment (WPAI) questionnaire, the Worker Productivity Index (WPI), the World Health Organization Health and Work Performance Questionnaire (HPQ), the Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS), and the Work Limitations Questionnaire (WLQ) are limited in their ability to predict future acts of presenteeism. These measures, which ask respondents to recall past instances of when they worked while unwell (“*How many times during the last 12 months have you gone to work even though it would have been reasonable to take sick leave?*”) and report on their motivations and/or the consequences of their choice, have been widely criticized as being subject to bias through respondents’ faulty recollection or impression management (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019) or confounding between the act of presenteeism and its assumed consequences (Lu et al., 2013).

Being functionally present assumes that employees have attendance choice and autonomy; recent calls in presenteeism literature emphasize this cognitive choice aspect underlying presenteeism behavior (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Ruhle et al., 2020; Ruhle & Süß, 2019). Accordingly, scholars in presenteeism are pushing for the expansion and adoption of measures that capture factors that contribute to better understanding of approach and avoidance motivations of presenteeism behavior (Lu et al., 2013; Ruhle & Süß, 2019). Measures that capture individual appraisal of work-related factors (such as work performance demands and resources), and even work-related attitudes, in light of health status and the careful management of energy depletion (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019) could constitute potentially much more robust predictors of presenteeism behavior.

Currently, there are only two validated measures that capture individual cognitive appraisal of work-related factors contributing to presenteeism behavior. Ferreira et al. (2015) introduced the Presenteeism Climate Questionnaire (PCQ), a self-report assessment measuring individual perceptions and beliefs about the three reflective measures of extra-time valuation, supervision distrust, and co-worker competitiveness. The instrument showed acceptable internal consistency with reliability estimates for each of the three factors ranging from .81 to .88 (Ferreira et al., 2015). Lu et al. (2013) developed a self-report measure that asks individuals to recall the motivations, categorized as either approach or avoidance, that they have pushed themselves to attend work when unwell. The instrument was validated in a two-wave study where it showed acceptable internal reliability of avoidance and approach motives with .77 and .80 at T1 and .70 and .86 at T2 (Lu et al., 2013).



### 2.3.3.1 Measurement of Functional Presenteeism for the Present Study

The focus and scope of this paper will use a combination of current measures at a single point in time to better understand how work-related factors, combined with individual differences, might influence the motivation and cognitive choice to engage in functional presenteeism behavior. As such, certain factors, like mandatory or strict attendance policies will not be used in the measurements because such work-related factors are both compulsory in nature and largely inhibit employee autonomy of choice in attendance behavior. Similarly, work-related factors such as understaffing and job insecurity/layoffs greatly inhibit the possibility or occurrence of presenteeism that is functional or sustainable in nature.

**Table 2. 2**  
*Individual negative outcomes of presenteeism*

Reported negative outcomes	Empirical Study
Declines in (subjective) physical health	Gustafsson & Marklund, 2011; Taloyan et al., 2012
Declines in (subjective) mental health	Gustafsson & Marklund, 2011; Lu et al., 2013
Emotional Exhaustion	Demerouti et al., 2009
Depersonalization	Demerouti et al., 2009; Lu et al., 2013
Increased risk for depression among initially nondepressed participants	Conway et al., 2014
Individual productivity loss	Collins et al., 2005; Iverson et al., 2010; Warren et al., 2011
Reduced ability to work	Gustafsson & Marklund, 2011
Wage losses	Wada et al., 2013
Lower job satisfaction	Ybema et al., 2010
Higher addiction to work	Karanika-Murray et al., 2015

*Note:* Lohaus & Habermann (2019)

**Table 2. 3**  
*Classification of antecedents and correlates of workplace presenteeism*

Antecedents/correlates	Classification	$\rho =$
Strict absence policies	Work-related antecedent	0.39
Emotional exhaustion	Correlate	0.36
Experienced stress	Correlate	0.35
Absenteeism	Correlate	0.35
Productivity loss	Correlate	0.28
Workload/job demands	Work-related antecedent	0.28
Understaffing	Work-related antecedent	0.25
Depression	Correlate	0.22
Affective commitment	Personal circumstance antecedent	0.20
Number of patients or clients	Work-related antecedent	0.20
Time pressure	Work-related antecedent	0.16
Overtime	Correlate	0.15
Work engagement	Work-related antecedent	0.13
Physical demands	Work-related antecedent	0.13
Job satisfaction	Work-related antecedent	0.12
Work hours	Work-related antecedent	0.11
Health	Personal circumstance antecedent & Correlate	-0.39
Optimism	Attitude antecedent	-0.22
Organizational support	Work-related antecedent	-0.17

*Note:* meta-analytic study by Miraglia & Johns (2016)

## 2.4 Employee Prohibitive Voice

The origins of voice research are rooted Hirschman's (1970) seminal work positing that *voice* and *exit* were the primary choice alternatives for stakeholders within declining organizations. Asserting that all firms experience states of decline, Hirschman (1970) argued that, to survive, firms must rely upon the mechanisms of voice and/or exit to inform managerial

efforts to revive the enterprise. Exit, examples of which include employee turnover, customer or vendor/supplier departure, forces firm adaptation through rational and economic forces (Maynes, 2013). On the other hand, when stakeholders choose to express dissatisfaction with organizational functioning, instead of exiting, they are exercising voice behavior (Hirschman, 1970).

#### ***2.4.1 Promotive Voice Versus Prohibitive Voice***

Van Dyne and LePine (1998) further refined the construct of voice in terms of intention and expression and defined it as a “behavior that emphasizes the expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize” (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998, p. 109), and developed the first reliable measure this form of voice. Liang et al. (2012) were the first to test a two-factor model of voice and found that voice behavior is either *promotively* or *prohibitively* focused. Promotive voice expressions focus on the realization of ideals and possibilities, and emphasize improving organizational functioning, whereas prohibitive voice expressions focus on concerns about problematic work practices or behaviors, and often carry highly interpersonal risks (Liang et al., 2012). See Table 2.4 for a comparison between promotive and prohibitive voice. The focus of this study is on the expression of prohibitive voice only.

#### ***2.4.2 Prohibitive Voice in the Workplace***

Prohibitive voice has been shown to play a valuable role in the overall well-being of an organization (Chamberlin et al., 2016; Detert & Burris, 2007; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014) because it is problem-focused (Morrison, 2011) and goal-driven with the aim of preventing negative outcomes. Employees who elect to express prohibitive voice generally do so as a discretionary, or extra-role, behavior (Xiong, et al., 2019) with the intention or motivation to

address, stop, or prevent past, current, or anticipated problems and concerns that could harm the organization (Chamberlin et al., 2016). In addition to providing insights about employee motivation about expressing voice, literature has also contributed to our understanding of employee prohibitive voice as an antecedent for a variety of workplace outcomes (Chamberlin et al., 2016) such as generating awareness of specific dissatisfying aspects of work (Farrell, 1983) or calling attention to problematic practices misaligned with the organization's values (Miceli & Near, 1985).

Most antecedents of prohibitive voice are similar to those that predict promotive voice (Morrison, 2014). Individual differences such as conscientiousness or personal initiative, for example, are common antecedents for both forms of voice (Chamberlin et al., 2016) as are the perceptions of autonomy, authority, or control over one's work (Lam & Mayer, 2014). Factors that uniquely affect and predict the different types of voice behavior include felt obligation, psychological safety (Liang et al., 2012), leader behavior and group climate (Wei et al., 2015). Because prohibitive voice raises concerns, it is considered riskier behavior than promotive voice, situational factors that emphasize safety and security are stronger contextual predictors of this type of voice behavior (Chamberlin et al., 2016).

#### ***2.4.3 Measurement of Prohibitive Voice***

The earliest measures of employee voice focused exclusively on the presence, antecedents, and outcomes of voice behavior in general; what conditions cause employees to speak up, and how does speaking up impact focal outcomes? These measures were predominately self-report with a few supervisor- and work colleague report. Liang et al. (2012) advanced our understanding of voice by not only proposing the two-factor model distinguishing between promotive and prohibitive voice content, but also introducing a set of self-report

measures designed to capture the unique content and motivations of each. Morrison (2014) was the first to note that the unique framing and content captured by the different types of voice influenced outcomes differently. And Chamberlin's (2017) meta-analysis further revealed and reinforced that the unique voice content, and supporting operationalization, produced much different findings than general voice content; generalized voice producing null results and promotive/prohibitive voice each producing significant results in predicting job performance. The only direct measure of prohibitive voice to date in organizational science literature is the validated scale developed and tested by Liang et al. (2012).

**Table 2. 4**  
*A Comparison of Promotive and Prohibitive Voice*

Characteristics	Promotive Voice	Prohibitive Voice
<i>Commonalities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is not specified in formal job descriptions (save for particular jobs such as auditing) and thus is “extra-role.”</li> <li>• Is helpful to the functioning of an employee’s work unit or organization and thus is “constructive.”</li> <li>• Is motivated by a desire to help the work unit or organization and thus reflects the employee’s sense of responsibility and constructive attitude toward the organization.</li> </ul>	
<i>Distinctions</i>		
1. Behavioral content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expresses new ideas or solutions for how to improve the status quo.</li> <li>• Future-oriented; points to possibilities of how to do things better in the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expresses concern about existing or impending factors (i.e., incidents, practices, or behaviors) that are harmful to the organization.</li> <li>• Past or future-oriented; points out harmful factors that have negatively affected the status quo or could have a harmful effect in the future.</li> </ul>
2. Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Points out ways that the organization can be better.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Points out factors that are harmful to the organization.</li> </ul>
3. Implications for others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggests improvements that may bring forth changes that inconvenience others in the short run, but the improvements can potentially eventually benefit the entire community.</li> <li>• The good intention behind suggested improvements is easily recognized and interpreted as positive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calls attention to the harmful factors and consequently implicates the failure of those responsible.</li> <li>• The good intention behind pointing out harmful factors may not be recognized or interpreted as positive because of the potential negative emotion and defensiveness invoked in the process.</li> </ul>

*Note:* Liang, Farh, & Liang, 2012

## **2.5 Work Locus of Control (LOC)**

With its origins in social learning theory (Rotter, 1954, 1966), LOC is the relatively stable individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which individuals believe that outcomes in their lives are a causal result of their behavior and actions (Rotter, 1966). Because of its association with social learning theory, LOC attributes the differences and variance across individuals to experiences growing up. People who attribute the success (or failure) of their desired outcomes to their own actions and behavior are said to have an internal LOC (Allen et al., 2005; Rotter, 1966). Conversely, people who attribute the success (or failure) of their desired outcomes more to causes outside of themselves (e.g., chance, luck, happenstance, fate, actions of others, task complexity influence of environmental or circumstantial factors) are said to have an external LOC (Galvin et al., 2018; Rotter, 1966, 1990). LOC contributes to our understanding of the variation in people's motivation, behavior, and ability to achieve desired outcomes (Turnipseed, 2018) and helps to explain LOC as a predictor for a variety of studied proximal outcomes including psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, self-esteem, intrinsic task motivation, problem-focused coping strategies, and expectations for success (Galvin et al., 2018).

### ***2.5.1 Locus of Control in the Workplace***

Spector (1988) formally brought LOC into organizational science after having observed its use in successfully predicting organizational outcomes. In his 1988 study, Spector introduced and validated the Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS) specific to the work domain and found support that work LOC positively predicts job satisfaction, work stress, perceived autonomy and control, and job tenure. Since the introduction of the domain specific construct, organizational scholars have found support for work LOC's predictive ability for the organizational outcomes

of work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, affective commitment, and job involvement; Johnson et al., 2015; Organ & Greene, 1974; Reitz & Jewell, 1979; Q. Wang et al., 2010), and behavioral outcomes (e.g., job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, helping, sportsmanship, and civic virtue; Johnson et al., 2015; Judge & Bono, 2001; Keller, 2012; Ng et al., 2006; Q. Wang et al., 2010; Turnipseed & Bacon, 2009).

### ***2.5.2 Measurement of Work Locus of Control***

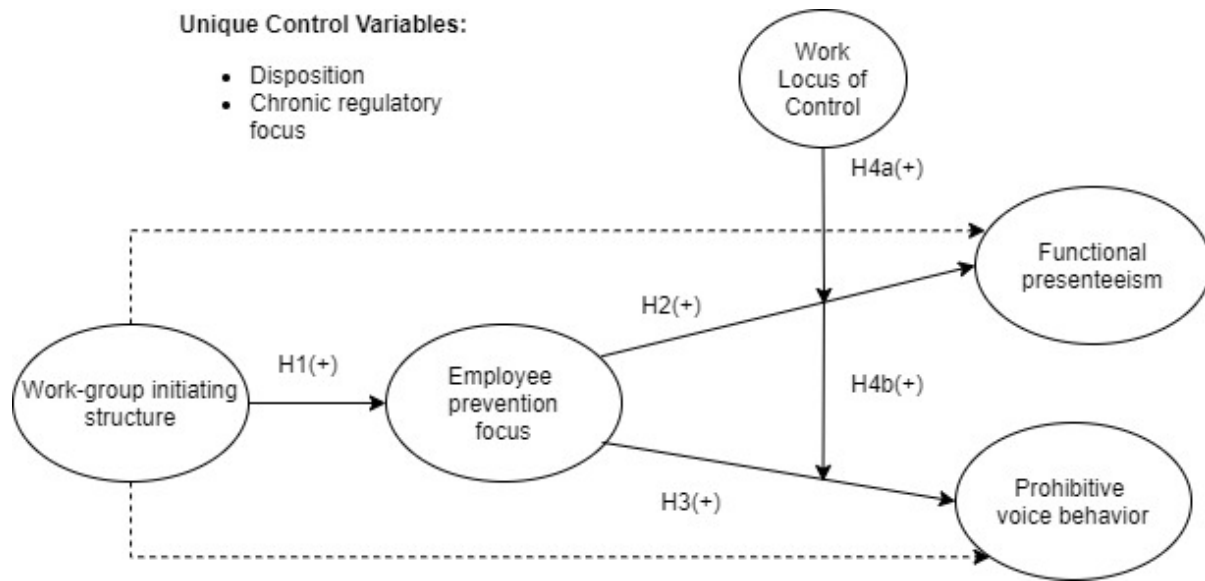
Organizational scholars tend to embrace the construct specificity hypothesis (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1997) which posits that domain-specific measures often more accurately predict outcomes in specific contexts (e.g., Furnham, 2010; Ozer, 2008). For the purposes of organizational research, the more domain-specific work LOC scale is more well suited than general measures of LOC in capturing and predicting employees' sense of control over their work-related outcomes (Galvin et al., 2018; Q. Wang et al., 2010; Spector, 1988). Management researchers' preference for more parsimonious measures (Galvin et al., 2018) means that organizational research largely uses the Spector (1988) 16-item measures of work LOC (Ng et al., 2006). All measures of both LOC and work LOC are self-report.

## **2.6 Hypotheses Development**

The conceptual model, as shown in Figure 2.1, illustrates the proposed relationships with the construct of employee prevention focus mediating the influence of work group initiating structure on the focal outcomes of functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice, while the strength of the relationship between prevention focus and the focal outcomes of functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice is moderated by work LOC.



**Figure 2. 1**  
**Research model: Hypotheses for testing the proposed relationships.**



### ***2.6.1 Work Group Initiating Structure and Employee Prevention Focus***

Halpin (1957) described structuring behavior as the influence and pressure on organizational members to focus on meeting and adhering to expectations. Thus, when a work group prioritizes and emphasizes task completion, policy adherence, or obligation fulfillment, the climate is more oriented toward defining performance, goal and role expectations (Fleishman, 1973, 1998) as well as directing and structuring group members' tasks (Bass, 1990). Prior studies (e.g., Delegach et al., 2017; Kark et al., 2018; Neubert et al., 2008) have found support for leader structuring behavior as a primer for situational prevention focus. Consequently, initiating structure (or a directive, process-focused climate) at the work group level could contribute to evoking work group members' prevention focus. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H1: Work group initiating structure is positively related to employees' situational prevention focus.***

### ***2.6.2 Prevention Focus and Functional Presenteeism***

The choice to be functionally present can be motivated by either an approach or avoidance motivation, or both (Lu et al., 2013). Prevention focus, primed by stimuli in the workplace (e.g., Delegach et al., 2017; Kark et al., 2018; Neubert et al., 2008) and grounded in the motivation to avoid or prevent losses or pain (Liang et al., 2012), could explain how individuals elect presenteeism instead of absenteeism in order to mitigate the negative consequences associated with absence (Ruhle & Süß, 2019). Accordingly, because of the similarities that prevention focus and functional presenteeism share in terms of needs (security), goals (to avoid undesired states), performance strategy (vigilance), the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H2: Employees' situational prevention focus is positively related to subsequent intended functional presenteeism.***

### ***2.6.3 Prevention Focus and Prohibitive Voice Behavior***

Both prevention focus mindset and prohibitive voice behavior share a common interest and motivation in preventing loss or avoiding pain (Liang et al., 2012). Whereas a prevention-focused mindset, which can be primed by stimuli in the workplace (e.g., Delegach et al., 2017; Kark et al., 2018; Neubert et al., 2008), is attuned to detect potential problems (losses) and threats to the status quo, communicating about these potential problems and threats involves the expression of prohibitive voice (Chamberlin et al., 2017). In summary, because of the similarities that prevention focus and prohibitive voice share in terms of needs (security), goals (to avoid undesired states), and performance strategy (vigilance), the literature has shown that prevention focus facilitates subsequent expressions of prohibitive voice behavior (Lin & Johnson, 2015). As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

***H3: Employees' situational prevention focus is positively related to subsequent intended prohibitive voice behavior.***

#### ***2.6.4 Moderating Effect of Work Locus of Control (LOC)***

As an individual difference variable, work LOC contributes to our understanding of how different employees, working in objectively similar or identical work environments, perceive, relate, and respond differently (Wang et al., 2010). Although work LOC has never been tested in the relationship between an antecedent and the resultant outcome of presenteeism behavior, several studies have found support for its interactive contribution between work-related factors and withdrawal behaviors (e.g., absenteeism; Hanisch & Hulin, 1991; Spector, 1982). In those instances, the relation between work-related factors and absenteeism was more strongly positive for those with an external work LOC compared to those with an internal work LOC. This suggests that those who hold the belief that their work outcomes are strongly impacted by their work efforts would opt for presenteeism in lieu of absenteeism.

Holding the personal belief that personal effort determines work outcomes (an internal work LOC) has been found to contribute to instances of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). For instance, Turnipseed (2018) found that high internal LOC contributes to the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and a specific discretionary and unrewarded OCB that benefits peers and coworkers. This finding is particularly useful when considering the moderating role of LOC in the relationship between employee prevention focus and prohibitive voice, an extra-role behavior. Because individuals with high internal LOC are more likely to exert more effort and engage in behavior beyond core job requirements (Turnipseed, 2018;

Withey & Cooper, 1989), it is likely that LOC would also strengthen the relationship between prevention focus and prohibitive voice. As such, the following hypotheses proposed:

***H4a: Work Locus of control strengthens the relationship between employees' prevention focus and functional presenteeism.***

***H4b: Work Locus of control strengthens the relationship between employees' prevention focus and prohibitive voice.***

## **2.7 Summary**

The hypotheses designed from the review of the current research and literature in this chapter meet the goals and objectives of the current study. These hypotheses will be tested via an experimental study. The study design, procedure, participants, and measures are detailed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHOD, SAMPLE, AND MEASURES**

This chapter describes the design and method of the study and includes the following sections: the purpose of the study, a description of the study design, population, and the sample along with sample representativeness, the measurement instrumentation for the survey, the survey design, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures (data cleaning, data screening, statistical assumptions, construct measurement reliability and validity, and hypotheses testing). The chapter concludes with a summary.

#### **3.1 Purpose of the Study**

This study empirically tests a model based on Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT) by exploring how employees' prevention regulatory focus at work mediates the influence of work group initiating structure on the employee behavior outcomes of functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice, with additional interest in understanding the moderating effect of work locus of control. The population of interest included full-time and part-time U.S.-based employees over the age of 18. The results of this study highlight new ways of thinking about priming antecedents of employee behavioral outcomes. To understand these presumed relationships, an experimental design was used to demonstrate the priming effect that work group behaviors have on people's situational regulatory focus. Testing for the predictive effect of work group initiating structure through prevention focus, with work locus of control identification moderating, required conducting a pair of moderated mediation regression analyses.

Prior to commencing this work, and because the study involved human participants, the foundational ethical principles identified by the Belmont and Nuremburg Principles were carefully considered. The ability for the researcher to follow these guidelines is evidenced by completion of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) course which is required to commence work with human subjects and an approval letter from the University of Dallas Institutional Review Board (Appendix A – IRB Approval Letter).

### **3.2 Study Design**

The study was conducted as an experimental design to examine the relationship between work group structure and situational prevention focus. As such, a scenario manipulation experiment presented an example of work group initiating structure to manipulate participants' sense of prevention focus. The data for this study were collected via survey research method; the online survey platform Qualtrics® was utilized to collect anonymous data from respondents.

The data were collected at a single point in time, cleaned, assessed for statistical assumptions, and analyzed. The data analysis included confirmatory factor analysis and corrected item to total correlation (CITC) to assess for measurement reliability and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) correlations to assess validity. Moderated mediation regression analyses were used to test for direct effects and interactions. Demographic data were analyzed to assess sample representativeness of the population.

#### ***3.2.1 Population and Sample***

The population of interest included full-time and part-time U.S.-based employees over the age of 18, working as a member of at least one work group or team for at least 1 year. By limiting the geographic interest of this study to the U.S., this study better ensures that survey respondents are situated within a homogenous national culture and hold a set of similar societal

beliefs and norms (Oh et al., 2014). Additionally, to meet the criteria for eligibility, participants were required to have been a member of at least one work group for at least one year. The tenure requirement is important because the length of time ensures that the participants have had experience in a team and the requisite ability to observe, discern, and internalize the structure and norms within a work group(s) to answer items related to interactions and experiences occurring in a workplace (Iarossi, 2006). Because most sampling processes do not allow for all individuals of the population to have a chance to be included in the sample (Fowler, 2014), a sample frame is constructed to specify the individuals of the target population who have a chance to be included in the sample (Fowler, 2014). For this study, the opportunity to participate in this study required respondents to have access to the Internet. Participants were recruited via convenience sampling; the researcher shared survey links via social network platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn) and via email to personal contacts.

In accordance with the guidance provided by Bollen (1989) and Boomsma (1982), who recommended a  $N:p$  ratio of 5:1, with sample sizes greater than 200 preferable for a confirmatory factor analysis, a minimum sample size of 300 was targeted for this study which is comprised of six first order factors and 49 indicators. This sample frame resulted in 640 employed U.S.-based respondents between the ages of 18 and 70.

#### **3.2.1.1 Sample Representativeness**

The sample demographics based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, and company size were compared to available full-time workforce data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Table 3.1 provides the labor force statistics of full-time workers from the 2020 BLS population survey (BLS, 2020b). Sample representativeness was assessed based on Pearson's chi-square tests by comparing the demographic percentages of the collected sample in chapter 4 to the population

percentages obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the United States Census Bureau. Statistical significance was determined at  $p \leq .05$  and practical significance was determined at a Cramer's  $V \geq .10$  (Huck, 2012). Results are reported in chapter 4.

**Table 3. 1**  
*Employed Population Demographics: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020*

Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Male	69,461	56.4
Female	53,727	43.6
Age		
18-24	9,667	7.8
25-54	85,023	69
55+	28,231	22.9
Race/Ethnicity		
African American or Black	15,106	12.3
Asian	8,109	6.6
Caucasian or White (other than Hispanic)	95,791	77.7
Hispanic	21,689	17.6
Other	n/a	n/a

*Note.* Population Demographics are provided in thousands (n(gender, age, race)=123,188

### **3.2.2 Study Design**

This survey-supported study utilized a scenario/vignette to manipulate participants' situational regulatory focus. The goal of this design was to examine the priming effect of work group initiating structure on work regulatory focus, which is a situational type of regulatory focus. The scenario used in this study was a modified version of the scenario used in Kark et al.'s (2018) study of leader behavior as a primer for situational regulatory focus. The scenario for this study is located in Appendix B – Study Scenario.

### **3.2.3 Survey Design**

Since the data for this study were collected exclusively from a single source, procedural precautions to minimize common method biases were implemented. To decrease the likelihood



of social desirability in the responses, detailed assurances were provided to respondents about the protections that ensure respondent anonymity. To decrease evaluation apprehension, participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers. Finally, to decrease priming effects caused by item embeddedness for the question context, the scales for the two dependent variables were randomly ordered within the survey. All survey questions were intentionally sequenced to control for common method bias (Table 3.2).

Procedural techniques to mitigate the effects of potential bias were implemented whereby participants were assured of anonymity as their personal information was never provided to the researcher. Also, predictor and criterion measures were physically separated within the questionnaire to allow for some temporal separation (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Additionally, the question prompts explained that responses are neither right nor wrong to reduce social desirability and to obtain more accurate responses (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Finally, items within each scale were randomly ordered for each survey respondent to counterbalance question order and decrease potential priming effects (Eichhorn, 2014).

**Table 3. 2**  
*Survey Instruments Order*

<b>Order Number</b>	<b>Instrument</b>
1	Informed Consent & Screening
2	Bot check & CFA items
3	Control variable: chronic regulatory focus
4	Moderator: work locus of control
5	Scenario (Red Phone)
6	Independent variable: initiating structure
7	IMC 1
8	Mediator: prevention focus
9	Dependent variable
10	IMC2
11	Dependent variable
12	Demographic items

*Note.* IMC = instructional manipulation check.

The cross-sectional survey design, in which data is collected at a single point in time (McMillan, 2000), was administered using the online survey platform Qualtrics®. Respondents accessed surveys via unique hyperlinks published on Facebook, LinkedIn, or distributed via email. Repeated survey completions were restricted with the Qualtrics® survey option “prevent ballot box stuffing” which limits Internet Protocol (IP) addresses to one response (Goodman et al., 2013).

To prevent cases of missing data, the researcher elected options within Qualtrics® that required respondents to choose (i.e. forced response) (Wolf et al., 2013) and to select only one answer choice. In addition to the implementation of a forced-response feature, the University of Dallas’ banner was placed at the top of the survey screen to indicate official sponsorship (Fan & Yan, 2010) with the intention of preventing non-response. The occurrence of drop-offs was addressed by implementation of a progress bar (Villar et al., 2013) and messages at the top of the page at the mid-point and next-to-final page of the survey. Survey completion time was around 12-minutes, which lessens the potential for survey fatigue (Dillman, 2007). No back button was enabled; participants were not permitted to change their answers from their original selection which helped to mitigate the common method bias of consistency motif (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

### **3.2.3.1 Informed Consent and Screening**

The informed consent form informed participants of the purpose of the study, their rights, assurance of the respondents’ privacy, as well as the requirements of the anonymous survey. It is here, in the informed consent portion of the survey, that participants first encounter assurances that there are no right or wrong answers to reduce the potential for evaluation apprehension (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Participants must select *agree* on the informed consent form, which records the participants’ consent in participating in the study, to proceed with the survey.

The first three screening questions ensured that the participants were living and working in the United States and met the criteria of being both employed and over the age of 18. Respondents who did not pass these screening questions received an end of survey message that informed them that they did not meet the study criteria to take the survey. The fourth screening question asked participants to indicate how many work groups or teams they are a part of on a routine or ongoing basis within their workplace. Because the focus of this study is on those who are familiar with working in groups, respondents who selected 0 received an end of survey message that informed them that they did not meet the study criteria to take the survey.

#### **3.2.3.2 Bot Check and CFA Items**

Participants were asked to select their age from a sliding scale which functioned as a bot check to eliminate the possibility of bots completing the survey. Upon the successful completion of the bot check, participants responded to items for use in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) marker technique testing for common method variance. These components of the survey further contributed to the quality of the data collected.

#### **3.2.3.3 Control Variable: Chronic Regulatory Focus**

As participants began the survey, they were first presented with the instrument measuring the control variable of chronic regulatory focus. Because of the experimental nature of this study, where the regulatory focus was manipulated by exposure to a scenario designed to prime or elicit a prevention focus, it was important to first capture the participants' more stable regulatory focus characteristic. Participants were encouraged to attend carefully to each statement and were reminded that there are no right or wrong answers to reduce the potential for evaluation apprehension (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

#### **3.2.3.4 Moderating Variable**

Participants next encountered the instrument assessing the moderating variable, work locus of control. Work locus of control is the individual difference variable in this study. Because of the experimental nature of this study, where participant regulatory focus was manipulated by exposure to a scenario designed to prime or elicit a prevention focus, it was important to first capture the participants' more stable work locus of control characteristic.

#### **3.2.3.5 The Scenario**

The scenario used in this study was a modified version of the scenario used in Kark et al.'s (2018) study of leader behavior as a primer for situational regulatory focus. A few minor changes were incorporated to improve the grammar and clarity of the written scenario. The scenario for this study is located in Appendix B –Study Scenario.

#### **3.2.3.6 Independent Variable**

The scale for the independent variable, work group initiating structure ascertained the participant's ability to recognize the group described in the scenario as having an initiating structure. Additionally, placing the instrument measuring the independent variable immediately following the scenario contributes to the priming effect on the mediating variable (e.g., Kark et al., 2017). Participants were encouraged to think about the work group described in the scenario when answering these questions.

An instructional manipulation check was placed between the independent variable and the mediating variable questions to confirm the engagement of the respondents (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). Oppenheimer et al. (2009) suggest using the instructional manipulation check early in a survey to “convert satisficing participants into diligent participants” and thus prevent the need to remove data of respondents with failed instructional manipulation checks.

### **3.2.3.7 Mediator**

The instrument assessing the mediating variable, prevention focus, was introduced next. These questions ask participants to place themselves, as employees, in the scenario when answering. Participants were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers.

### **3.2.3.8 Dependent Variables**

The scales for the dependent variables followed the measures for the mediating variable. These items were randomly ordered within the survey. These questions ask participants to place themselves, as employees, in the scenario when answering. Participants were reminded that there were no right or wrong answer to reduce the potential for evaluation apprehension (Podsakoff et al., 2003). A second instructional manipulation check was placed between the two dependent variables to ensure the continued engagement of the respondents (Oppenheimer et al., 2009).

### **3.2.3.9 Demographics**

The final questions of the survey asked for demographic information on gender, race/ethnicity, company size of current organization, tenure with company, number of years work experience, and educational attainment.

## **3.2.4 Measurement Instruments**

The measures to test the study's theoretical model consist of six previously validated scales and a modified version of a previously validated scale. A modified version of Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ XII) from Stogdill (1963) was used to measure work group initiating structure. Neubert's et al. (2008) validated scale was used to measure workplace prevention focus. Intent for functional presenteeism was measured by items from Liu and Lu's (2020) validated scale. Prohibitive voice behavior was measured by a validated scale from Liang et al. (2012). Work locus of control, the individual difference variable, was measured

using the validated scale from Spector (1988). The control variable of chronic regulatory focus (Lockwood et al., 2002) was also measured using a validated scale. Additional questions included screening questions, bot checks, instructional manipulation checks, demographics, and additional items for use in a confirmatory factor analysis technique testing for common method variance. The full scales as presented to respondents can be viewed in Appendix C – Qualtrics Survey.

#### **3.2.4.1 Initiating Structure**

Work group initiating structure was measured using a modified version of Stogdill's (1963) Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ XII), a five-item scale (reliability = .95) that was originally developed to measure leadership initiating structure. This instrument was modified by changing the referent to work group to measure work group initiating structure. Not unlike organizational identification research where changing the scale's referent from organization to another specific target that the researcher intends to measure (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), this study changed the referent from supervisor to work group for measurement purposes. A sample question for work group initiating structure is, "This work group encourages the use of uniform policies." Participants self-reported their perception of work group's initiating structure described in the study's scenario based on a 5- point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *strongly disagree* and 5 indicating *strongly agree* using the workgroup as the referent (Chan, 1998). Consistent with Kark et al. (2018), the questionnaire was transformed by adding the following phrase as a prompt for the question set: "*Please think of the work group described in the Red Phone scenario when answering the following questions...*".

### 3.2.4.2 Situation Prevention Focus

Eight items from the validated Work Regulatory Focus Scale (Neubert et al., 2008) were used to measure individual situation prevention-focused mindset. From the original 18-items in the Work Regulatory Focus Scale, prevention focus (reliability = .92) consists of 9-items anchored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *strongly disagree* and 5 indicating *strongly agree*; the sum of these nine items represent a participant's prevention focus. While Neubert and colleagues (2008) did retain Higgins's (1997) original definition of regulatory focus, the researchers further expanded the construct into context of the workplace and delineated three subscales for each regulatory focus style: gains, achievement, and ideals (promotion) and security, oughts, and losses (prevention). Each subscale is further comprised of three items. A sample of the prevention focus subscale of *oughts* asks respondents to indicate how much they agree with statements such as "At work, I strive to live up to the responsibilities and duties given to me by others," (Neubert et al., 2008, p.1224). Coefficient alpha reliabilities from subsequent studies using the scale include: .82 (Andrews et al., 2014) and .83 (Akhtar & Lee, 2014). Consistent with Kark et al. (2018), the questionnaire was transformed by adding the following phrase as a prompt for the question set: "*As an employee in the described work group...*".

### 3.2.4.3 Functional Presenteeism

Two items were modified from Liu & Lu's (2020) measure of presenteeism (reliability = .978). Participants were asked to answer these items in response to the associated prompt: "As an employee in the described work group..." (e.g., "Although feeling mildly unwell, you would still force yourself to go to work."). These self-report items are anchored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *not at all* and 5 indicating *very much so*. Consistent with Kark et al.

(2018), the questionnaire was transformed by adding the following phrase as a prompt for the question set: “*As an employee in the described work group...*”.

#### **3.2.4.4 Prohibitive Voice**

Five items from Liang et al. (2012) were used to measure prohibitive voice (e.g., “I advise other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance.”). The original scale was validated as an *other-report* measure (reliability = .88) but Lin & Johnson (2015) later validated the scale as a *self-report* measure which is how the scale was used in this study. These self-report items are anchored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *never* and 5 indicating *almost always*. Coefficient alpha reliabilities from subsequent studies using the scale include .84 (Lin & Johnson, 2015) and .88 (Wei et al., 2015). Consistent with Kark et al. (2018), the questionnaire was transformed by adding the following phrase as a prompt for the question set: “*As a group member in the described work group...*”.

#### **3.2.4.5 Work Locus of Control**

For parsimony, work LOC was measured using a shortened version of Spector’s (1988) original 16-item Work Locus of Control Scale. The scale used in this study consists of 8 items assessing employee beliefs about their control at work in general. Half the items reflect an external LOC and half reflect an internal LOC. An example of an external LOC item is, “Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck.” An example of an internal LOC item is, “People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded.” These self-report items are anchored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *disagree very much* and 5 indicating *agree very much*. High scores represent external LOC and low scores represent internal LOC.



### 3.2.4.6 Control Variables and Demographic Information

Participants' chronic (state) regulatory focus was assessed using Lockwood et al.'s (2002) self-report scale. Nine items (reliability = .77) were used in the original study but, for the purposes of this study, seven items from the original scale assessed a prevention focus. A sample prevention focus item is "I am anxious that I will fall short of my responsibilities and obligations." These self-report items are anchored on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *not at all true of me* and 6 indicating *very true of me*. Coefficient alpha reliabilities from subsequent studies using the scale include .73 (Walker et al., 2012) and .76 (Kark et al., 2018). Additional questions such as tenure with company (1-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-7 years, and more than 7 years), and educational attainment (high school or equivalent, some college, Bachelors degree, and postgraduate) were added as control variables based on employee voice literature (Liang et al., 2012). Length of time with current team (in months) was also collected.

The collected demographical data of the sample included personal demographic and work characteristic to assess the sample's representativeness of the population based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, and company size. The sample demographics were compared to available full-time workforce data as well as employment data by firm size from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The breakdown for gender (i.e., male or female), age (i.e., 18-24, 25-54, and 55+), race/ethnicity (i.e., African American or Black, American Indian/Other Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Caucasian or White (other than Hispanic), Hispanic, and other), and company size (1-499 employees and 500 or more employees) are based on the categories from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020).

### **3.2.5 Data Collection**

The online survey platform Qualtrics® was utilized to collect data in a web-based survey. One of the advantages of web-based survey is that participants' responses will automatically be stored in a database and can be easily transformed into numeric data in Excel or SPSS formats.

### **3.2.6 Data Analysis**

After data collection, the data analysis process commenced and consisted of several ordered steps. The first step involved cleaning the data collected followed by testing the statistical assumptions and determining construct validity. The next step addressed common method variance due to the single wave design of this study followed by the statistical analysis of the study's hypotheses. Each of the steps are sequentially addressed in the sections that follow.

#### **3.2.6.1 Data Cleaning**

The collected data were retrieved from Qualtrics® as comma separated values (.csv) file for analysis using the software package IBM® SPSS® AMOS 27.0 on a password protected computer. The first step of the data cleaning process involved the removal of incomplete surveys. Responses that did not pass the screening questions were removed in order to limit data to only those cases that meet sample requirements. Responses that proceeded past the informed consent but did not meet the requirements of the screening questions, however, were removed as well. Furthermore, all responses that failed both instructional manipulation checks were eliminated based on the assumption that respondents who do not pass are not fully engaged (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). The removal of straight-lined responses (which also signifies the respondent is not fully engaged with the survey) was conducted prior to the reverse coding process, because reverse coding results in some valid straight-lined responses (Cole et al., 2012). Reverse coding

was then conducted as prescribed by the scale to allow for the interpretation of the relationship between the variables.

### **3.2.6.2 Statistical Assumptions**

Prior to statistical analysis of the quantitative survey results, the screening of the data was conducted on the univariate and multivariate levels (Kline, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Since underlying assumptions of regression analysis are multivariate normality, homogeneity of variances and linearity, data screening at a primary stage in the analysis is crucial. If the data fail to satisfy these assumptions, the statistical results will not be a precise reflection of reality.

Another potential threat to the fidelity of multivariate analyses is the concern about multicollinearity in the data because multivariate tests are sensitive to high correlations among predictor variables, and these may result in the poor model fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Outlying cases were examined for possible exclusion from the analysis. Data screening also included the descriptive statistics for all the variables, information about multicollinearity and homoscedasticity, normality assessed through critical ratio analysis, and multivariate outliers via the squared Mahalanobis distance  $D^2$  (Huck, 2012; Kline, 2016).

In the event the data were to violate the assumption of multivariate normality, bootstrapping with 5,000 case sampling at 95% C.L. would be necessary (Kline, 2016). And, if non-bootstrapped results did not differ substantially compared to bootstrapped estimates, then non-bootstrapped results would be reported (Kline, 2016).

### **3.2.6.3 Measurement Model**

Prior to the testing of hypotheses, the factor loadings of all items were evaluated to assess model fit. An indication of convergent validity will be that the factor loadings of all items should be above the minimum threshold of .5, with most even exceeding the more stringent threshold of

.7 but less than .95 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2018; Kline, 2016). In addition, each manifest variable should correlate most highly with its corresponding factor, as indicated by the structure coefficients (Graham et al., 2003). Furthermore, the composite reliability (CR) scores should be above the recommended .6 threshold demonstrating reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Moreover, all average value extracted (AVE) values should meet the recommended .5 threshold required to demonstrate convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Finally, all correlations between the factors should be lower than the square root of the AVE for individual factors indicating evidence of discriminant validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

#### **3.2.6.4 Hypotheses Testing**

For hypotheses testing, the SPSS® 27 supplemental program called PROCESS version 3.5 (Hayes, 2018) was used to conduct a pair of moderated mediation analyses using Model 14. Model 14 in Hayes (2018) PROCESS v.3.5 was used to test the moderated mediation relationship proposed (H1, H2, and 4a) and functional presenteeism was entered as the dependent variable, with initiating structure as the independent variable, prevention focus as the mediator, work locus of control as the moderator, and tenure, group size, and chronic regulatory focus as covariates. Model 14 in Hayes (2018) PROCESS v.3.5 was used to test the moderated mediation relationship proposed (H1, H3, and 4b) and prohibitive voice was entered as the dependent variable, with initiating structure as the independent variable, prevention focus as the mediator, work locus of control as the moderator, and tenure, educational attainment, and chronic regulatory focus as covariates.

Direct and indirect effects are indicated by significant point estimates and the 95% bootstrapping confidence intervals (CI) not including zero. If the range of Lower Control Limit (LCL) and Upper Control Limit (UCL) for indirect effect contains a value of zero, it signifies no

mediation; but if the range of LCL and UCL for indirect effect contains no zero values, it signifies mediation role. The indirect effect was assessed at the 90th percentile.

To verify the moderating effect, the number of bootstrap samples will be set to 5,000 and the confidence interval set to 95% to probe for interaction. PROCESS is appropriate for this study because as a bootstrapping technique, it generates higher power and fewer Type I errors than other moderation and mediation approaches, such as the method used in Baron and Kenny (1986) and the Sobel test (Hayes, 2018).

In the event of a small sample size, the Preacher and Hayes' (2004, 2008) bootstrapping estimation approach for testing indirect effects using 95% confidence intervals and 2000-case bootstrapping at 95% C.L. will be used. Bootstrapping has been shown to be more powerful when detecting indirect effects especially when analyzing relatively small samples (Zhao et al., 2010).

### **3.3 Summary**

This chapter described the method, sample, and measures for this study. The chapter addressed the purpose of the study, a description of the study design, population and the sample along with sample representativeness, the measurement instrumentation, survey design, data collection procedures, and the data analysis procedures (data cleaning, data screening, statistical assumptions, construct reliability, construct validity, and hypotheses testing). With the design and methodology addressed, the following chapter details the analysis and results of the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the results after testing the theoretical model, as presented in Chapter 2. In doing so, the results support the two research questions of this dissertation: RQ1: To what extent does employee situational prevention regulatory focus at work mediate the influence of work group initiating structure on both functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice behavior? And – RQ2: How might an employee’s work locus of control affect the relationship between situational prevention focus and both functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice behavior? The analysis in this chapter reveals clear support for two hypotheses proposed in this research. The sections outlining the results include information regarding data collection, sample representativeness, statistical assumptions, regression analyses, and a discussion of the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary.

#### **4.1 Data Collection and Cleaning**

Data collection occurred during the between March and April 2021. Respondents in this study were full- or part-time employees both living and working in the United States. The respondents gained access to the Qualtrics® survey link through one of four methods – a personal invitation via email or text by the researcher, a direct message through LinkedIn, a passive link posted on LinkedIn, or a passive link posted on Facebook which resulted in 640 respondents. The number of respondents by distribution channel is shown in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4. 1**  
*Distribution Source of Respondents*

Distribution Channel Source	n	% of total
Personal Invite (email or text)	74	11.4
LinkedIn Direct Message	196	30.2
Passive LinkedIn Request	131	20
Passive Facebook Request	247	38

*Note.* Total number of responses = 640

The deletion of incomplete surveys containing significant amounts of missing data and those that did not meet all eligibility requirements (detailed in chapter 3) resulted in a final sample size of 336. The final step in the data cleaning process involved the reverse coding of the negatively worded items in this study's moderator Work Locus of Control so that all scale items reflected an increase in internal WLOC as the scores increased.

## 4.2 Sample Representativeness

The collected demographical data of the sample assessed the sample's representativeness of the population based on gender, age, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity. The sample demographics were compared to available full-time workforce data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Table 4.2 provides the labor force statistics of full-time workers from the 2020 BLS population survey (BLS, 2020b) as well as the results of the Pearson's chi-square tests used to compare the study's demographics to the BLS population demographics. Notable differences exist between the BLS demographic profile and the study's sample. Also noteworthy was the educational attainment which trended strongly toward post-graduate degree (64%) as compared to BLS data (15%).

**Table 4. 2***Representativeness comparison for the collected sample and Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020*

Characteristic	BLS %	Sample %	$\chi^2$	df	P-value
Gender			35.37	1	>.05
Male	56.4	39.88			
Female	43.6	59.23			
Age			1,893	2	<.05
18-24	7.8	1.79			
25-54	69	83.92			
55+	22.9	14.28			
Educational Attainment			616	3	>.05
High School	23.6	0.89			
Some College (no Degree)	7	6.85			
Bachelor's Degree	23.9	28.27			
Post-Graduate Degree	15	64			
Race/Ethnicity			5,434	4	<.05
African American or Black	12.3	9.00			
Asian	6.6	5.65			
Caucasian or White (not Hispanic)	77.7	82.74			
Hispanic	17.6	5.36			
Other	n/a	3.57			

*Note.* BLS = Bureau of Labor Statistics. Sample % = collected sample (n =336). *df*= degrees of freedom.

### 4.3 Statistical Assumptions and Common Method Bias

Prior to hypotheses testing, the screening of the data was conducted on the univariate and multivariate levels (Kline, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Data screening included the bivariate correlations analysis of the sample means, standard deviations, and correlations for all the variables which is found in Table 4.3, below, as well as an assessment the presence of multivariate outliers via the squared Mahalanobis distance  $D^2$  (Field, 2018; Huck, 2012; Kline, 2016). All Mahalanobis distance  $D^2$  values were less than 25, indicating that multivariate outliers were not a threat to the study (Field, 2018). Further descriptive statistics examined the minimum, maximum, statistical mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis statistics of both the



construct indicators, found in Table 4.4, and the higher order constructs, found in Table 4.5 below.

Common method bias occurs when the variance in responses is attributable to the measurement scale rather than the actual preferences of the respondents (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Multivariate analysis literature indicates acceptable thresholds range from full collinearity (VIF is ideally < 3.3) to less conservative estimates (VIF < 5.0) to the most relaxed VIF < 10.0 (Hair et al., 2017; Kock, 2015, 2017; Kock & Lynn, 2012). All variance inflation factors (VIF) in this study were below 3, as reported in table 4.5 below, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue in this dataset and indicating there was no evidence of common method bias or multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2017; Kock, 2015).

**Table 4. 3**  
*Sample Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SitPrev	NegV	InitiS	WLOC	Present
SitPrev	4.16	.557	1.00				
NegV	3.51	.631	.067	1.00			
InitiS	4.15	.557	.278**	.225**	1.00		
WLOC	3.70	.575	-.001	.094*	.187**	1.00	
Present	3.62	.948	.157**	.151**	.077	.053	1.00

*Note.* *N* = 336. *M* = Mean. *SD* = Standard Deviation. SitPrv = Situational Prevention Focus. NegV = Negative Voice. InitiS = Initiating Structure. WLOC = Work Locus of Control. Present = Presenteeism. \*Correlation is significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\* < .01

**Table 4. 4**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Construct Indicators (n = 336)*

Construct	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	S	K	CITC
InitiS							
IV_1	1	5	4.30	.70	-1.42	4.24	.637
IV_2	1	5	4.33	.66	-1.05	2.51	.507
IV_3	1	5	3.91	.82	-.58	.174	.567
IV_4	1	5	4.15	.79	-.99	1.16	.663
IV_5	2	5	4.08	.71	-.41	-.04	.593
SitPrv							

SitPrv_1	1	5	4.36	.66	-1.18	2.92	.535
SitPrv_2	2	5	4.52	.56	-.74	.12	.566
SitPrv_3	2	5	4.39	.76	-1.24	1.25	.416
SitPrv_4	1	5	4.38	.71	-1.29	2.66	.442
SitPrv_5	2	5	4.09	.78	-.59	-.05	.603
SitPrv_6	1	5	3.92	.98	-.75	-.01	.648
SitPrv_7	1	5	3.88	1.05	-.79	-.19	.589
SitPrv_8	1	5	3.76	1.08	-.67	-.37	.523
NegV							
NV_1	1	5	3.86	.84	-1.20	2.07	.066
NV_2	1	5	3.87	.95	-.97	.64	.489
NV_3	1	5	3.11	1.02	-.16	-.78	.558
NV_4	1	5	3.15	.97	-.27	-.83	.671
NV_5	1	5	3.55	.90	-.58	-.10	.510
WLOC							
MOD_1	1	5	3.65	.97	-.67	.15	.357
MOD_2	1	5	3.68	.91	-.54	-.08	.441
MOD_3R	1	5	3.48	.99	-.62	-.16	.456
MOD_4R	1	5	3.62	.93	-.73	.39	.495
MOD_5	1	5	3.67	.86	-.79	.44	.516
MOD_6R	1	5	3.67	.84	-.67	.30	.528
MOD_7	1	5	3.96	.91	-.95	.85	.523
MOD_8R	1	5	3.88	1.01	-.93	.55	.464
Present							
Pres_1	1	5	3.61	1.05	-.48	-.13	.712
Pres_2	1	5	3.52	1.15	-.44	-.60	.779
Pres_3	1	5	3.56	1.11	-.31	-.68	.702
Pres_4	1	5	3.80	1.08	-.66	-.30	.826

*Note.* n = sample size. *M* = Mean. *SD* = Standard Deviation. *S* = Skewness. *K* = Kurtosis. CITC = Corrected Item-Total Correlation. InitiS = Initiating Structure. SitPrv = Situational Prevention Focus. NegV = Prohibitive Voice. WLOC = Work Locus of Control. Present = Presenteeism.

**Table 4. 5**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Higher Order Constructs (n = 336)*

	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>K</i>	VIF <3
InitiS	2	5	4.15	.557	-.356	.512	1.15
SitPrv	2	5	4.16	.557	-.342	.047	1.10
NegV	2	5	3.51	.631	-.470	.131	1.06
WLOC	2	5	3.70	.575	-.655	.620	1.04
Present	1	5	3.62	.948	-.340	-.491	1.03

*Note.* n = sample size. *M* = Mean. *SD* = Standard Deviation. *S* = Skewness. *K* = Kurtosis. InitiS = Initiating Structure. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor. SitPrv = Situational Prevention Focus. NegV = Negative Voice. WLOC = Work Locus of Control. Present = Presenteeism.

#### 4.4 Construct Reliability and Validity

Even though this study used preexisting scales, reliability was tested on each of the 5 scales with strong results for Initiating Structure ( $\alpha = .806$ ), Situational Prevention Focus ( $\alpha = .812$ ), and Presenteeism ( $\alpha = .888$ ). Acceptable reliability was assessed for Work Locus of Control ( $\alpha = .771$ ), and Prohibitive Voice ( $\alpha = .697$ ). Additionally, except for Prohibitive Voice (NV\_1;  $\alpha$  if deleted = .779), none of the items' removal would improve the overall reliability of the scales (as noted by the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  if deleted). The modest gain by dropping NV\_1 did not merit its deletion from the scale. A common second step in assessing reliability is to calculate and item's corrected item to total correlation (CITC) value. Each item within a construct should be highly correlated with the construct itself. Kerlinger (1978) recommends 0.40 as the minimum threshold. Again, with the exception of Prohibitive Voice (NV\_1; CITC = .066), none of the items' removal would improve the overall reliability of the scales. Because this item is part of a psychometrically established scale, this item was not deleted.

Convergent validity, which reflects the extent to which the measures capture the same construct, was assessed by performing a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) on the subscale data. Scale items measuring Initiating Structure ( $\alpha = .806$ ), Prohibitive Voice ( $\alpha = .697$ ), and Presenteeism ( $\alpha = .888$ ) each had a single eigenvalue  $> 1$ , explaining more than 45% of the variance, confirming that the subscales each measured their respective single, global constructs. Based on these PCA results, the scale reliability estimates, and previous theoretical development and empirical results, these scales are deemed acceptable as a measure of their respective constructs. Scale items measuring Situational Prevention Focus ( $\alpha = .812$ ) and Work Locus of Control ( $\alpha = .771$ ), however, both presented a second factor that accounted for at least 19% of the variance explained in the scale. Although these findings were not as clean as expected, based on

the scale reliability estimates, and previous theoretical development and empirical results where the subscales were combined (Akhtar & Lee, 2014; Andrews et al., 2014; Neubert et al., 2008; Spector, 1988; Turnipseed, 2018), these PCA findings did not warrant a reconstruction of either scale, thus all items were retained as a measure of their respective constructs.

Discriminant validity, which reflects the extent to which construct measures are not inadvertently measuring theoretically unrelated constructs in the study's model, was assessed by Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) correlations ratio statistic (Henseler et al., 2015; Voorhees et al., 2016). HTMT defines the ratio of the between-trait to the within-trait correlations by calculating the mean of all the correlations of the indicators that measure more than one construct (Hair et al., 2016). The HTMT ratio should be lower than .9 (Henseler et al., 2015) or .85 (Kline, 2011) to establish discriminant validity for the construct measures. The HTMT ratios for this study's construct ranged from 0.062 to 0.395, well below recommended upper limit of .9 (Henseler et al., 2015) or .85 (Kline, 2011).

#### **4.5 Hypotheses Testing**

For hypotheses testing, the SPSS®27 supplemental program PROCESS version 3.5 (Hayes, 2018) was used. Direct and indirect effects are indicated by significant point estimates and the 95% bootstrapping confidence intervals (CI) not including zero. If the range of Lower Control Limit (LCL) and Upper Control Limit (UCL) for indirect effect contains a value of zero, it signifies no moderated mediation; but if the range of LCL and UCL for indirect effect contains no zero values, it signifies moderated mediation role. To verify the moderating effect, the number of bootstrap samples was set to 5,000 and the confidence interval set to 95% to probe for interaction. PROCESS is appropriate for this study because as a bootstrapping technique, it generates higher power and fewer Type I errors than other moderation and mediation

approaches, such as the method used in Baron and Kenny (1986) and the Sobel test (Hayes, 2018). All interactions among the higher-order model are represented in Figure 4.1 below and summarized in Table 4.10 below.

#### ***4.5.1 Mediating Role of Prevention Focus between Initiating Structure and Presenteeism***

To assess the role of prevention focus as a mediator in the relationship between initiating structure and subsequent presenteeism, as well as the interactive effects of work locus of control, Model 14 in Hayes (2018) PROCESS v.3.5 was used to test the proposed moderated mediation relationships (H1, H2, and H4a). Presenteeism was entered as the dependent variable, initiating structure as the independent variable, situational prevention focus as the mediator, work locus of control as the moderator, and tenure and educational attainment as covariates. The results in Table 4.6 below show 2 confidence intervals that do not contain zero, indicating a full mediation model was supported at moderate to high levels of work locus of control. This suggests that respondents' perception of work group initiating structure did prime or evoke a sense of situational prevention focus and that this sense of prevention focus also mediated the relationship between work group initiating structure and presenteeism when their sense of internal work locus of control was moderate to high. **Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported.**

**Table 4. 6**

*Indirect Effects of Initiating Structure, Situational Prevention Focus, and Presentism*

WLOC	Effect	BootSE	<i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>Boot ULCI</i>
3.13	.049	.042	-.035	.131
3.70	.067	.032	.010	.134
4.27	.085	.043	.007	.178

*Note.* WLOC = Work Locus of Control.

The PROCESS output was examined for interactive effects for work locus of control in the relationship between situational prevention focus and presenteeism. The interactions, presented in Table 4.7 below, show that the confidence intervals associated with Int\_1, the

study's moderator, contain zero. Consequently, the overall moderated mediation model is not supported and **hypothesis 4a is not supported**.

**Table 4. 7**

*Direct Effects of Initiating Structure, Situational Prevention Focus, and Presentism*

	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	T	<i>P-value</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	4.058	2.654	1.529	.127	-1.162	9.28
InitiS	.052	.098	.532	.595	-.141	.245
SitPrv	-.174	.632	-.275	.784	-1.416	1.07
WLOC	-.403	.713	-.566	.572	-1.806	.100
Int_1	.112	.168	.667	.505	-.219	.443
EmpTen	.031	.044	.704	.482	-.056	.117
Edu	-.070	.079	-.879	.380	-.225	.086

*Note.* InitiS = Initiating Structure. SitPrv = Situational Prevention Focus. WLOC = Work Locus of Control. Int\_1 = Interactive Effects of Work Locus of Control. EmpTen = Tenure with Current Employer. Edu = Educational Attainment.

#### **4.5.2 Mediating Role of Prevention Focus between Initiating Structure and Prohibitive Voice**

To assess the role of prevention focus as a mediator in the relationship between initiating structure and subsequent prohibitive voice, as well as the interactive effects of work locus of control, Model 14 in Hayes (2018) PROCESS v.3.5 was used to test the proposed moderated mediation relationships (H1, H3, and H4b). Prohibitive voice was entered as the dependent variable, initiating structure as the independent variable, situational prevention focus as the mediator, work locus of control as the moderator, and tenure and educational attainment as covariates. The results in Table 4.8 below show confidence intervals that contain zero at all levels of work locus of control; consequently, no mediation model was supported at any level of work locus of control. This suggests that, while respondents' perception of work group initiating structure did prime or evoke a sense of situational prevention focus, this sense of prevention

focus did not mediate the relationship between work group initiating structure and prohibitive voice. **Thus, hypothesis 3 is not supported.**

The output from PROCESS did reveal a positive and significant direct relationship, however, between work group initiating structure and prohibitive voice. This finding suggests that respondents were capable of discerning structuring cues from the work group and that this stimulus was enough to directly influence intention to prohibitive voice. Although this relationship was not part of this study's formal hypotheses and research question, this finding will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

**Table 4. 8**

*Indirect Effects of Initiating Structure, Situational Prevention Focus, and Prohibitive Voice*

WLOC	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	Boot ULCI
3.125	.009	.024	-.037	.060
3.700	.001	.017	-.032	.036
4.275	-.006	.024	-.054	.042

*Note.* WLOC = Work Locus of Control.

The PROCESS output was further examined for interactive effects for work locus of control in the relationship between situational prevention focus and prohibitive voice. The interactions, presented in Table 4.9 below, show that the confidence intervals associated with Int\_1, the study's moderator, contain zero. Consequently, the overall moderated mediation model is not supported and **hypothesis 4b is not supported.**

**Table 4. 9**

*Direct Effects of Initiating Structure, Situational Prevention Focus, and Prohibitive Voice*

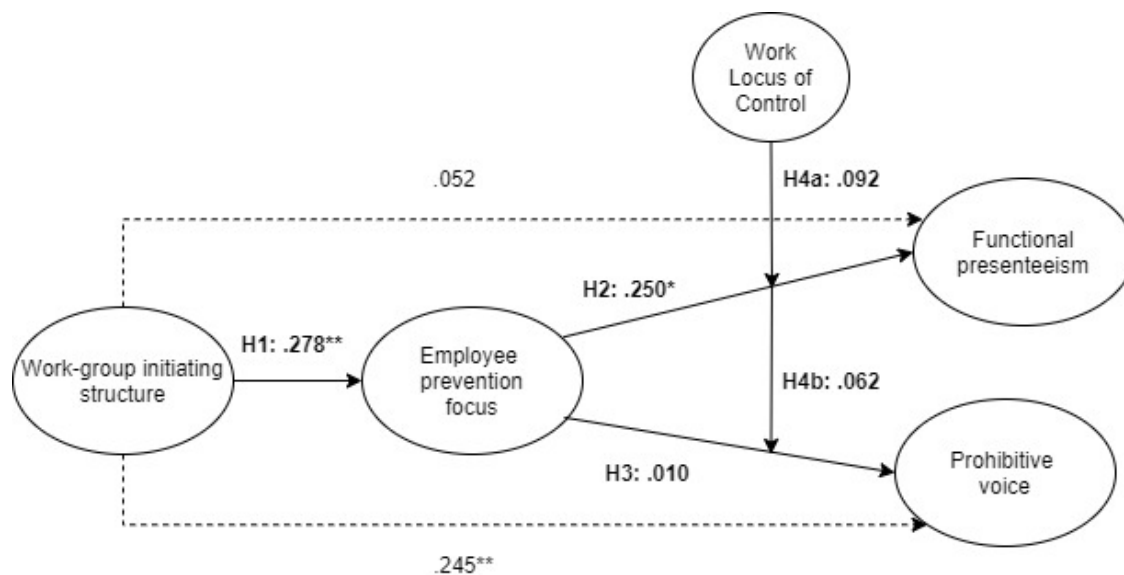
	$\beta$	SE	T	P-value	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	1.517	1.730	.878	.381	-1.885	4.920
InitiS	.245	.064	3.834	.0002	.119	.371
SitPrv	.180	.412	.437	.662	-.630	.990
WLOC	.240	.465	.517	.606	-.674	1.154

Int_1	-.048	.110	-.434	.665	-.263	.168
EmpTen	.069	.029	2.395	.017	.012	.125
Edu	-.033	.052	-.642	.5225	-.134	.068

*Note.* InitiS = Initiating Structure. SitPrv = Situational Prevention Focus. WLOC = Work Locus of Control. Int\_1 = Interactive Effects of Work Locus of Control. EmpTen = Tenure with Current Employer. Edu = Educational Attainment. NegV = Prohibitive Voice.

**Figure 4. 1**

*Higher-order model with correlations (\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ )*



**Table 4. 10**

*Summary Results of Predicted Hypotheses*

Hypothesis	Identification	Supported
Hypothesis 1	Positive & Significant (PROCESS Model 14)	Yes
Hypothesis 2	Positive & Significant (PROCESS Model 14)	Yes
Hypothesis 3	Positive but Nonsignificant (PROCESS Model 14)	No
Hypothesis 4a	Positive but Nonsignificant (PROCESS Model 14)	No
Hypothesis 4b	Positive but Nonsignificant (PROCESS Model 14)	No



## **4.6 Summary**

This chapter described the data collection and the data analysis procedures (data cleaning, data screening, statistical assumptions, construct reliability, construct validity, and hypotheses testing). Overall, this study's dataset supports the hypotheses that employees' perceptions of work group initiating structure positively contributes to a sense of situational prevention focus and, ultimately, subsequent intention towards presenteeism. The following chapter further discusses these findings and the contributions of these results to both literature and practice.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter addresses the findings of this study. Section 5.1 outlines both the implications from the study results contained in Chapter 4, and the theoretical and applied contributions. Section 5.2 addresses the limitations of the study and the efforts taken to mitigate these limitations. Section 5.3 details avenues for future exploration and research. The chapter concludes with a summary (section 5.4).

#### **5.1 Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this research was to test a model based on RFT by exploring how employees' prevention regulatory focus at work mediates the influence of work group initiating structure on the focal outcomes of functional presenteeism and prohibitive voice, with additional interest in understanding the moderating effect of work locus of control. Consistent with prior literature, the results reveal that respondents in this study were capable of discerning structuring activities and norms within a work group and that this observation was strong enough to evoke a prevention focused mindset within them. This result further affirms prior empirical findings that individuals draw cues from the norms, priorities, and behaviors in their surroundings (Antonakis & House, 2014; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Neubert et al., 2008) and respond, cognitively, accordingly. More intriguing still, while this security-focused mindset significantly contributed to respondents' intention to presenteeism, it did not contribute in a meaningful way to respondents' intention to exercise discretionary prohibitive voice behavior in the work group setting. The implications from these findings suggest that the respondents who were cognitively

attuned to fulfilling obligations and expectations in order to avoid losses or failures at work intended to show up for work despite feeling physical symptoms of minor illness. On the other hand, those same respondents did not intend to speak up or voice concerns about problems or challenges to job performance. In essence, the respondents in this study, who were cognitively primed to attend to security needs, indicated that they would fulfill the requirements of the job (presenteeism) but would not engage in extra role behaviors (prohibitive voice). The results of the study did reveal that, although there was no support for a prevention focused mindset influencing the intention to voice concerns, there was a positive and significant direct relationship between initiating structure and prohibitive voice. The respondents in this study indicated that the presence of structure cues in the scenario's work group positively influenced their intention to speak up about matters that threatened efficiency, job performance, and the work group itself.

One of the more surprising findings to emerge from this study was the lack of support for the study's moderator, work locus of control, in the relationships between prevention focus and presenteeism or prohibitive voice. This study predicted that a person's internal work locus of control, or the degree to which they personally felt responsible for – or in control of – their successes and failures in the workplace, would strengthen the relationships between their mindset of fulfilling workplace obligations and their intention to show up for work despite minor illness or their intention to speak up honestly about problems or concerns in the workplace. A helpful perspective for understanding this finding comes from personality research literature. Previous studies have explored the impact of situations and work autonomy (Judge et al., 2002; Ng et al., 2008) as strong moderators in the relationships between individual personality traits and both job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1993) as well as organizational citizenship behaviors

(Muldoon et al., 2017). These findings help us understand that when the level of work autonomy is high, the influence of personality traits on work outcomes is stronger. Conversely, then, when the level of work autonomy is low, the influence of personality traits on work outcomes is diminished. In the context of this study, participants were asked to read the Red Phone scenario and answer questions from the perspective of working in a call center work group. Because call centers are known to have predominantly low levels of job autonomy, this context may well have diminished the interactive effects of the individual difference variable, work locus of control on the relationships between prevention focus and the focal work outcomes of both presenteeism and prohibitive voice.

### ***5.1.1 Academic Contributions***

The present study delivers two important contributions to the social science and management literature. First, the results of this study validate the role of work group initiating structure, which manifests in work groups as the emphasis on and prioritization of established policies and procedures, as a primer for individual situational prevention focus which influences people to focus on fulfilling obligations, duties, and responsibilities in order to prevent negative outcomes in the workplace and to them personally. Prior studies have shown support for *leader* behavior or *leader* initiating structure as a predictor of situational prevention focus of subordinates, but, in accordance with this author's knowledge, this is the first study to validate that result based on *group* behavior and *group* norms.

Additionally, this study answers the call for using measures of presenteeism that advance our understanding of the cognitive appraisal and choice aspect of presenteeism. Unlike previous literature that asks respondents to recall a time when they were ill and recall the reasons for attending work when unwell (Ferreira et al., 2015; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Lu et al., 2013),

this study found support that a primed prevention focus functions as an important predictor in intention to presenteeism behavior. This suggests that individuals' appraisal of work group stimuli may contribute to their sense of pre-deciding whether they will show up to, or be absent from, work prior to an actual illness event.

### ***5.1.2 Business Contributions***

The insights derived from this study also offer practical and managerial implications. Managers should interpret these findings as further confirmation that employees engage in environmental scanning behavior within their organizations to seek out information concerning behavioral expectations and their potential consequences (James et al., 1990; Neubert et al., 2008) and that the norms and priorities of a work group serve as influences in the minds of its members. The data suggest that prioritization and emphasis on formal policies and procedures within a work group can be strong enough to prime or evoke and mindset attuned to safety and security. Organizational understanding of these mechanisms can help managers to monitor the strength of those cues within the work groups they manage.

## **5.2 Study Limitations**

Several limitations of this study should be noted due to their potential effects on the inferences, outcomes, and generalizability of results.

### ***5.2.1 Data Collection and Sample Representativeness***

First, even though this study endeavored to reflect the demographics of the current United States workforce, participants were recruited via convenience sampling rather than through random sampling. Consequently, the sample may not be representative of the larger population. Demographically, the reported gender and educational attainment for the participants in this study tended toward female (59%) and respondents holding advanced degrees (64%). These

percentages are higher than the reported U.S. working population (BLS, 2020a) of 43.6% female, and 15% holding advanced degrees. Because participants were required to live and work in the United States, the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the United States.

### ***5.2.2 Common Method and Social Desirability Bias***

This study utilized self-report data, measuring independent, mediator, moderator, and dependent variables from the same source. This single-source method, or common method variance (CMV), is usually subject to some degree of variance attributable to the measurement method rather than the constructs the measures represent. Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were all less than 2; well below the most conservative threshold of  $< 3.3$  (Hair et al., 2017; Kock, 2015, 2017; Kock & Lynn, 2012) indicating no concerning evidence of common method bias. Still, future studies may benefit from exploring voice and presenteeism within a single organization which allows supervisor report and peer report measures of these key variables.

Self-report measures also often contribute to responses biased by social desirability. Social desirability describes respondents' choice to respond in a way that conforms to what they believe to be more socially acceptable (Constantine & Ponterott, 2006) as opposed to their true beliefs, thoughts, or feelings. Social desirability exists at varying degrees for all research strategies where obtrusiveness is present. This study collected data via anonymous survey and both the recruitment statement and the individual question prompts reminded participants that responses are neither right nor wrong to reduce social desirability and to obtain more accurate responses (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

### ***5.2.3 Manipulation Scenario Study Design***

Another potential limitation of the study is the use of a manipulation scenario. Experimental manipulation methodologies are limited in their ability to capture the full dynamics

of interpersonal, team, or organizational dynamics experienced in field settings and, as such, always suffer, to varying degrees, problems with limited external validity (Dallimore et al., 2007). Consequently, scenarios may not evoke a sense of reality or elicit a response comparable with first-hand or real-world experiences. Future studies may ask respondents to think of, or describe, aspects of their actual work groups and organizational settings.

Additionally, because the scenarios in this study were written, certain words or phrases may have been interpreted differently, or misinterpreted, across individuals, contributing to unintended variance or confounds. Furthermore, it is possible participants may have been influenced by recollections of their membership in current or past teams when responding to questions about voice behavior and presenteeism. To help mitigate this confound, the question prompts included the directive to “Please think of the work group described in the **Red Phone scenario** when answering the following questions.”

Further, the scenario used in this study described working in a call center. While it is certainly possible that respondents in this study may have current or prior experience working in a call center, more than 67% of respondents in this survey reported having 16 or more years of work experience which may indicate difficulty relating to call center operations and norms. The types of workplace issues that are salient to the demographic profile of this study’s respondents may not be sufficiently reflected in the context of a call center. Also noteworthy is the contextual constraint, of low job autonomy, that accompanies the call center setting in this scenario which may have contributed to the lack of support for this study’s individual difference variable, work locus of control.

Finally, the researcher cannot discount the potential limitation associated with collecting data a full year into the COVID-19 pandemic. School closures, unanticipated work-from-home

arrangements, increased work pressures due to furloughs and layoffs, and a pervasiveness of concerns about health and well-being may have short and long-term implications about the kinds of issues at work employees care about or the degree of extra-role effort they are willing or able to expend.

### **5.3 Future Research**

There are several avenues for future research to extend the work contained in this study. The literature on initiating structure predominantly contextualizes it within a physical workplace. Given that most organizations globally have been forced to work remotely and virtually for an extended period of time due to COVID-19, and many employers have signaled continued support for flex or hybrid work arrangements into the future, initiating structure in work groups may well be perceived differently remotely and virtually. In what ways will initiating structure be discernable to employees who are part of remote and virtual work groups? Of further material interest; will those non-physical cues be strong enough to also prime or evoke a sense of prevention focused mindset?

Additionally, while this study answers the call for that advance our understanding of the cognitive appraisal and choice aspect of presenteeism (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Ruhle et al., 2020; Ruhle & Süß, 2019), it does not reveal why respondents, operating under the mindset of fulfilling work expectations and requirements, indicate they would still attend work despite feeling mildly ill. Possible motivations could include obligation to the work group (to avoid letting other group members down), to the organization (to prevent harm to the customers or organizational well-being), or perhaps more self-interested motivations (to avoid falling behind at work that results from absenteeism). Further research is needed to more fully understand the motivational drivers of the cognitive choice aspect. Qualitative studies



involving focus groups or semi-structured interviews could contribute to a new level of understanding about how employees pre-

Furthermore, not unlike many constructs in social science literature (including initiating structure in this study), presenteeism is a construct that has only ever been examined in the context of actual, physical, work attendance. This also implies that this attendance occurs within the bounds of a regularly scheduled work shift. With the advancements in technological support, coupled with flexible work schedules, many professional jobs can be accomplished or achieved independent from actual, physical attendance during a period of mild illness. Future studies may find it necessary to revisit and address what is conceptually unique about presenteeism in these types of modern work environments.

Finally, it is possible that longitudinal studies examining these mechanisms and relationships could yield interesting results. An individual's self-reported intention to attend work despite work offers little insight as to how long that individual might persist in working while unwell. It is also possible that time with team is a necessary requisite to develop the kind of trust or psychological safety necessary to express prohibitive voice behavior.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The findings in this study highlight new ways of thinking about the impact of workgroup structure has on regulatory focus as well as important employee behavioral outcomes in the workplace. In addressing these questions, this research contributes to the understanding of the socio-psychological factors of proximal work groups that predict employee expression of prohibitive voice and functional presenteeism. The implications derived from these findings will become even more important as the workforce trends more towards group and team-based work models.

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## APPENDIX A

### IRB Approval



IRB00007703

FWA 00016247

IORG0006409

February 24, 2021

April Rowsey  
Satish & Yasmin Gupta College of Business  
University of Dallas  
Irving, TX 75062

RE: IRB approval of proposal # 2021009

Dear April Rowsey:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal for prior approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Your proposal was reviewed under the procedure for expedited review, as it poses minimal risk for participants using surveys with adults. You indicate that steps will be taken to procure informed consent and protect participants' identities. The reviewer(s) recommended approval of your request to complete the research described in your proposal under the conditions stated above.

As you complete your research, please keep in mind that substantive changes to the research method, participant population or project end date will require IRB review, and that any participant injuries or complaints must be reported to the IRB at the time they occur. The IRB policies require that you provide an annual report of the progress of this research project, or a report upon completion, whichever occurs first.

On behalf of the members of the IRB, I wish you success in this project.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gilbert Garza".

Gilbert Garza, Ph.D.  
IRB Chair

## APPENDIX B

### Study Scenario

Imagine you have been working for three years in a call center at a cell phone company “The Red Phone.” You meet a new worker, David, who has just joined your work team. Since you are a veteran employee, you are asked to give him professional guidance and help him get started.

David asks you to tell him about the team and this is what you tell him: “Most of the members in our department have been here for at least 2.5 years. We meet together, as a department, and check in briefly each morning to plan the day and address any known issues. We also on meet on an ongoing regular basis to review our goals and tasks and define who is responsible for achieving these goals. Our group has a vast array of written policies and procedures to guide our work. We are encouraged to consult those rules and regulations in order to meet the expectations of quality and performance. Everyone is on the same page as far as what is expected/what success looks like for our department. Because of the frequent reviews and the performance standards, it is easy to spot when we are missing our objectives as a department. Recently, we had a problem of customers complaining about the long hold times before we could answer. To deal with this problem, the team held an emergency meeting to collectively revisit the standards, protocols, and share tips and tools to improve operations; we’re continuing to monitor and track this issue.”

*Scenario adapted from:*

Kark, R., Van Dijk, D., & Vashdi, D. R. (2018). Motivated or demotivated to be creative: the role of self-regulatory focus in transformational and transactional leadership processes. *Applied Psychology*, 67(1), 186-224. doi: 10.1111/apps.12122

## APPENDIX C

### Qualtrics Survey

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

University of Dallas

**TITLE OF PROJECT:** Workplace Study

**Estimated time to complete:** 12 minutes

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. In accordance with the policies of the University of Dallas, you are asked to read this information carefully.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about employee experiences in organizations. Your participation is completely voluntary, and if you begin participation and choose to not complete it, you are free to not continue without any adverse consequences.

If you agree to be in this study, are asked to do the following things:

- Confirm that you are at least 18 years of age.
- Confirm that you voluntarily agree to complete an online multiple choice survey.
- Be willing to take approximately 12 minutes to read a scenario and answer all questions honestly as there are no right or wrong answers.
- Select the button that best corresponds to your response choice after reading each question or statement.
- Scroll down the page to answer all the questions if needed and select NEXT to continue after each page.
- Complete the survey in one sitting.

There are no known risks to this study, other than becoming a little tired of answering the questions. If this happens, you are free to take a break and return to the survey to finish it, or, you can discontinue participation without any problems. Potential benefits to this study are: contributing to the research and understanding of employee experiences within their organization.

Because you will not be providing any clues to your identity, you can be assured that all your provided responses to the questions are anonymous. If you need to ask questions about this study, you can contact the principal researcher, April Rowsey at [arowsey@udallas.edu](mailto:arowsey@udallas.edu), or, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chair of the University of Dallas IRB, Dr. Gilbert Garza at (972) 721-5366 or [garza@udallas.edu](mailto:garza@udallas.edu).


I have read and understood what has been explained to me. If I choose to participate in this study, I will click "Yes" in the box below and proceed to the survey. If I choose to not participate, I will click "No" in the box.

- ☐ Yes, I choose to participate in this study
- ☐ No, I will not participate in this study

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

What is your current employment status?

- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Other

0%  100%


# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

What is your age?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Your age, in years



0%  100%

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Are you currently living AND working in the United States (USA)?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes


0%  100%

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

In your workplace, how many groups or teams are you a part of on a routine or ongoing basis?

*A work group or work team, for this study, means a group of people with whom you work on a consistent long-term basis, and not for a special, or a short-term, project.*

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1-2
- ☐ 3 or more

0%  100%

next →

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Thinking of your MAIN or PRIMARY work group or work team; how long have you been a part of your MAIN or PRIMARY work group or work team?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 - 2 years
- ☐ 3 - 5 years
- ☐ 6 years or more

0%  100%

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

The following statements are about your general attitude. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree with each statement. Please be honest as there are no right or wrong answers. Often, the best approach is to select the first response that comes to your mind.

	Not at all true of me					Very true of me
I am anxious that I will fall short of my responsibilities and obligations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often imagine myself experiencing bad things that I fear might happen to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often worry that I will fail to accomplish my goals in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I "ought" to be—to fulfill my duties, responsibilities, and obligations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am more oriented toward preventing losses than I am toward achieving gains.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I frequently imagine  
how I will achieve my  
hopes and aspirations.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

I often think about the  
person I would ideally  
like to be in the future.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

I typically focus on the  
success I hope to  
achieve in the future.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

I often think about  
how I will achieve  
success in life.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

I see myself as  
someone who is  
primarily striving to  
reach my “ideal self”—  
to fulfill my hopes,  
wishes, and  
aspirations.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

In general, I am  
focused on achieving  
positive outcomes in  
my life.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

I often imagine myself  
experiencing good  
things that I hope will  
happen to me.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

Overall, I am more  
oriented toward  
achieving success than  
preventing failure.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

0%  100%

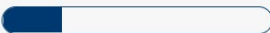
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# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Please select an answer that reflects your sentiment. There are no right or wrong answers. Often the best approach is to select the first response that comes to your mind.

In general, I feel:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Guilty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hostile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afraid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0%  100%

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

The following questions concern your beliefs about jobs in general. They do not refer only to your present job. Please answer the following questions using the answer scale below:

	Disagree very much		Neither agree nor disagree		Very much agree
On most jobs, people can pretty much accomplish whatever they set out to accomplish.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you know what you want out of a job, you can find a job that gives it to you.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promotions are usually a matter of good fortune.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promotions are given to employees who perform well on the job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It takes a lot of luck to be an outstanding employee on most jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The main difference between people who make a lot of money and people who make a little money is luck.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

0%

100%

next →

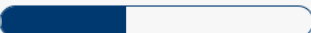
# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Please read the following scenario. You will answer the remaining questions in this survey based on the workplace described in this scenario.

---

Imagine you have been working for three years in a call center at a cell phone company “The Red Phone.” You meet a new worker, David, who has just joined your work team. Since you are a veteran employee, you are asked to give him professional guidance and help him get started.

David asks you to tell him about the team and this is what you tell him: “Most of the members in our department have been here for at least 2.5 years. We meet together, as a department, check in briefly each morning to plan the day and address any known issues and also on an ongoing regular basis to review our goals and tasks, and define who is responsible for achieving these goals. Our group has a vast array of written policies and procedures to guide our work. We are encouraged to consult those rules and regulations in order to meet the expectations of quality and performance. Everyone is on the same page as far as what is expected/what success looks like for our department. Because of the frequent reviews and the performance standards, it is easy to spot when we are missing our objectives as a department. Recently, we had a problem of customers complaining about the long hold times before we could answer. To deal with this problem, the team held an emergency meeting to collectively revisit the standards, protocols, and share tips and tools to improve operations; we’re continuing to monitor and track this issue.”

0%  100%

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

For convenience and reference purposes, the scenario is reprinted below.

Imagine you have been working for three years in a call center at a cell phone company “The Red Phone.” You meet a new worker, David, who has just joined your work team. Since you are a veteran employee, you are asked to give him professional guidance and help him get started.

David asks you to tell him about the team and this is what you tell him: “Most of the members in our department have been here for at least 2.5 years. We meet together, as a department, to check in briefly each morning and plan the day and to address any known issues. We also meet on an ongoing regular basis to review our goals and tasks, and define who is responsible for achieving these goals. Our group has a vast array of written policies and procedures to guide our work. We are encouraged to consult those rules and regulations in order to meet the expectations of quality and performance. Everyone is on the same page as far as what is expected/what success looks like for our department. Because of the frequent reviews and the performance standards, it is easy to spot when we are missing our objectives as a department. Recently, we had a problem of customers complaining about the long hold times before we could answer. To deal with this problem, the team held an emergency meeting to collectively revisit the standards, protocols, and share tips and tools to improve operations; we’re continuing to monitor and track this issue.”

Please think of the work group described in the **Red Phone scenario** when answering the following questions:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
In this work group, group members know what is expected of them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This work group encourages the use of uniform policies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

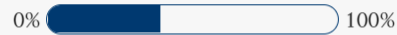
This work group has attitudes that are clear to the group.

☐☐☐☐☐

This work group maintains definite standards of performance.

☐☐☐☐☐

In this work group, group members follow standard rules and regulations.

☐☐☐☐☐

next →

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Please think of the work group described in the **Red Phone scenario** when answering the following questions.

For convenience and reference purposes, the scenario is reprinted below.

Imagine you have been working for three years in a call center at a cell phone company “The Red Phone.” You meet a new worker, David, who has just joined your work team. Since you are a veteran employee, you are asked to give him professional guidance and help him get started.

David asks you to tell him about the team and this is what you tell him: “Most of the members in our department have been here for at least 2.5 years. We meet together, as a department, to check in briefly each morning and plan the day and to address any known issues. We also meet on an ongoing regular basis to review our goals and tasks, and define who is responsible for achieving these goals. Our group has a vast array of written policies and procedures to guide our work. We are encouraged to consult those rules and regulations in order to meet the expectations of quality and performance. Everyone is on the same page as far as what is expected/what success looks like for our department. Because of the frequent reviews and the performance standards, it is easy to spot when we are missing our objectives as a department. Recently, we had a problem of customers complaining about the long hold times before we could answer. To deal with this problem, the team held an emergency meeting to collectively revisit the standards, protocols, and share tips and tools to improve operations; we're continuing to monitor and track this issue.”

---

As a group member in the described work group...

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I would concentrate on completing my work tasks correctly to increase my job security.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I would focus my attention on completing my assigned responsibilities.

☐☐☐☐☐

Fulfilling my work duties would be very important to me.

☐☐☐☐☐

I would strive to live up to the responsibilities and duties given to me by others.

☐☐☐☐☐

I would focus on accomplishing tasks that will support my need for security.

☐☐☐☐☐

I would do everything I could to avoid loss at work.

☐☐☐☐☐

I would focus my attention on avoiding failure at work.

☐☐☐☐☐

I would be very careful to avoid exposing myself to potential losses at work.

☐☐☐☐☐

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

You are 1/2 way through with this survey!

This is to test your attention. Please select bacon to proceed.

Authenticity

☐

Emotional Intelligence

☐

Mindfulness

☐

Bacon

☐

0%  100%

next →

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Only 2 pages left in this survey!

Please think of the work group described in the **Red Phone scenario** when answering the following questions.

For convenience and reference purposes, the scenario is reprinted below.

Imagine you have been working for three years in a call center at a cell phone company "The Red Phone." You meet a new worker, David, who has just joined your work team. Since you are a veteran employee, you are asked to give him professional guidance and help him get started.

David asks you to tell him about the team and this is what you tell him: "Most of the members in our department have been here for at least 2.5 years. We meet together, as a department, to check in briefly each morning and plan the day and to address any known issues. We also meet on an ongoing regular basis to review our goals and tasks, and define who is responsible for achieving these goals.

Our group has a vast array of written policies and procedures to guide our work. We are encouraged to consult those rules and regulations in order to meet the expectations of quality and performance. Everyone is on the same page as far as what is expected/what success looks like for our department. Because of the frequent reviews and the performance standards, it is easy to spot when we are missing our objectives as a department. Recently, we had a problem of customers complaining about the long hold times before we could answer. To deal with this problem, the team held an emergency meeting to collectively revisit the standards, protocols, and share tips and tools to improve operations; we're continuing to monitor and track this issue."

As a group member in this particular work group, I would -

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Advise other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speak up honestly with problems that might cause serious loss to the work unit, even when/though dissenting opinions exist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dare to voice out opinions on things that might affect efficiency in the work unit, even if that would embarrass others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dare to point out problems when they appear in the unit, even if that would hamper relationships with other colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Proactively report coordination problems in the workplace to the management.

☐☐☐☐☐

0%  100%

next →

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

As a group member in the described work group...

Not at all

Perhaps

Very much  
so

Although feeling mildly unwell, you would still force yourself to go to work.

☐☐☐☐☐

If you had physical symptoms (headache or backache), you would still force yourself to go to work.

☐☐☐☐☐

As a group member in this particular work group...

Not at all  
strongly

Moderately

Very  
strongly

How strongly would  
you feel about coming  
to work despite minor  
illness (headache or  
backache)?



As a group member in this particular work group...

Not at all  
likely

Moderately  
likely

Very likely

How likely is it that  
you would come to  
work despite minor  
illness (headache or  
backache)?



0%  100%

next →

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

**This is the last Page of the Survey!**

Please answer the following general questions about yourself. Remember, none of this information is tied to your identity and all answers are confidential and anonymous.

---

What's your highest level of education?

- ☐ High school or equivalent
  - ☐ Some college
  - ☐ Bachelors degree
  - ☐ Post graduate
- 

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Other/ Prefer not to say
- 

Which best describes your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ African American or Black
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Caucasian or White (other than Hispanic)
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Other

How long have you been employed by your organization?

- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-4 years
- ☐ 5-7 years
- ☐ more than 7 years

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How many years of work experience do you have?

- ☐ 0-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ More than 20 years

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How would you describe your role in your workplace?

- ☐ Individual contributor
- ☐ Manager
- ☐ Director level or higher

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How many employees are employed by your employer?

- ☐ 1-499 Employees
- ☐ 500 or more employees



next →

# UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Thank you for participating; your responses have been recorded.

Should you have questions or additional thoughts, you may contact me at: [ARowsey@UDallas.edu](mailto:ARowsey@UDallas.edu) (April Rowsey)

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