

# FACTORS CAUSING WORKPLACE ABSENTEEISM IN A SELECTED POWER STATION OF ESKOM

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Magister in Business Administration* at the Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University

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November 2017

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## DECLARATION

I, **Onalenna Kegakilwe**, student number **26904926**, declare that this study titled, **Factors causing workplace absenteeism in a selected power station of Eskom**, is my own work and has never been submitted for any degree at any other university. All sources in this study have been indicated and acknowledged by means of direct and indirect references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Onalenna', written over a horizontal line. To the right of the signature, there is a faint, purple stamp that is partially legible and appears to contain the letters 'M/W' and 'B/B'.

Signed

NOVEMBER 2017

Date

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to God Almighty, Who gave me the grace and strength to finish this study. I also dedicate it to my husband who gave me support during my study time.

## AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge, with appreciation, the following people:

- Professor Yvonne du Plessis, my supervisor, for her guidance, support and patience during our interaction in developing this work. You are my real mentor and I appreciate your time and effort made in this study.
- My husband for encouraging me and always understanding when I was unable to make it home on time.
- Mr Sabelo Chizwina, the NWU librarian, for all the help he gave me to get all the articles.
- Ms Lilian Nwosu who also guided and encouraged me on this study.
- The language editor, Helen Thomas in Faculty of education. Thank you for the support and input you have made in this study.
- Above all, I thank God Almighty for keeping me in good health and for sustaining me so I could complete this work.

# **FACTORS CAUSING WORKPLACE ABSENTEEISM IN A SELECTED POWER STATION OF ESKOM**

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the factors that cause workplace absenteeism in a selected power station in ESKOM. Workplace absenteeism has been a common problem encountered by many organisations and in a selected power station in Eskom, absenteeism in the operating, maintenance and safety departments is causing production problems. The key theory that underpinned this study was the process theory on absenteeism, based on Steers and Rhodes' model of employee's attendance behaviour in an organisation.

A mixed-method research approach employing the sequential explanatory design was used. In this design, information obtained from the quantitative data was built on by the qualitative data. This allowed for triangulation and comparing of respondents' and participants' responses in order to make sense of the study. The sample for the quantitative part of the study was based on census, including the total population of 150 employees in three departments (operating, maintenance and SHEQ departments), which are the operational hub in the power station. The participants who were purposively selected for the qualitative part of the study was a sample of six managers, two in each of the selected departments.

Data collection was done by a self-administered hard-copy structured questionnaire for the quantitative part, and semi-structured face-to face interviews for the qualitative part. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 24, while the qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.

The main findings of this study revealed that a vast number of factors cause workplace absenteeism, including: stress, medical illness, pregnancy, pressure from work, work overload and workplace pollution. The study recommends that more studies should be conducted in relevant industries other than ESKOM in order to investigate other factors that are causing workplace absenteeism, and a managerial strategy in relation to Steers

and Rhodes' theory on absenteeism should be devised and implemented to control absenteeism in the workplace.

### **Managerial implications**

Management of ESKOM is aware of absenteeism but has to take action on abuse of absenteeism to change the behaviour of employees that absenteeism is not a right for employees and an attempt on it by employees should comply with the policies.

### **Limitations**

The findings cannot be generalised across ESKOM as only one power station was used as a case.

**Key words:** Workplace absenteeism, Factors causing absenteeism, Managerial Implications

## Contents

DECLARATION .....	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ABBREVIATIONS OF WORDS IN THE STUDY .....	xi
CHAPTER 1.....	1
ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY .....	1
1.1.    INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.2.    BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY .....	2
1.3.    STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	3
1.3.1.    Main Research question: .....	4
1.4.    MAIN RESEARCH OBJECTIVE.....	4
1.5 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFIT OF THE PROPOSED STUDY.....	5
1.5.1. Delimitations (Scope).....	5
1.5.2. Definition of concepts.....	6
1.6. DESCRIPTION OF OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS .....	6
1.6.1. Population/sampling.....	8
1.6.2. Data collection .....	8
1.6.3.    Data analysis .....	9
1.6.4.    Research ethics .....	9
1.7.    CONCLUSION AND NEXT CHAPTERS.....	10



CHAPTER TWO .....	11
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	11
2.1. INTRODUCTION .....	11
2.2. OVERVIEW OF ABSENTEEISM .....	11
2.2.1. Voluntary absenteeism.....	12
2.2.2. Involuntary absenteeism .....	13
2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	14
2.3.1. Process Model theory of absenteeism .....	14
2.4. FACTORS CAUSING WORKPLACE ABSENTEEISM.....	16
2.4.1 Heavy alcohol consumption .....	17
2.4.2. High prevalence of major depression and disorder .....	18
2.4.3. Workplace bullying.....	19
2.4.4. Stress.....	19
2.4.5. Sickness .....	20
2.4.6. Other factors .....	21
2.5. EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM on PRODUCTION .....	22
2.6. MANAGERIAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS ABSENTEEISM.....	23
2.7. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.....	28
CHAPTER 3.....	29
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS .....	29
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	29
3.2 RESEARCH AIM.....	29

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN .....	29
3.3.1 Study Population and site selection.....	32
3.3.2. Sampling and participant selection.....	33
3.3.3. Quantitative data collection .....	33
3.3.3.1. Variables.....	33
3.3.3.2. Measuring instrument.....	34
3.3.3.3. Pilot study .....	34
3.3.3.4. Data collection process- administering the questionnaire.....	35
3.3.3.5. Qualitative data collection .....	35
3.3.4 Data analysis techniques .....	35
3.3.5. Validity and reliability .....	37
3.3.6. Trustworthiness.....	37
3.3.7. Researcher's role.....	38
3.3.7. Ethical consideration.....	38
3.4. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER.....	38
CHAPTER 4.....	39
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS.....	39
4.1. INTRODUCTION .....	39
4.2. QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS .....	39
4.2.1. Summary of responses .....	39
4.3. QUANTITATIVE DATA FINDINGS .....	41
4.3.1. AN OVERVIEW ON ESKOM EMPLOYEES AND GENDER RATIO.....	41

4.3.1.1. The departments of the employees in Eskom.....	42
4.3.1.2. Gender of employees.....	42
4.3.2. THE LEVEL OF ABSENTEEISM IN THE POWER STATION, Eskom.....	43
4.3.3 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ABSENTEEISM IN THE WORKPLACE .....	46
4.3.4. THE EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM IN WORKPLACE.....	49
4.3.5. MANAGERIAL ACTIONS USED TO CONTROL ABSENTEEISM IN Eskom .....	51
4.4.           QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS .....	55
4.4.1. Data analysis .....	55
4.5. THE LEVEL OF ABSENTEEISM IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENT .....	56
4.6. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ABSENTEEISM IN WORK PLACE .....	58
4.6.1. Sickness .....	58
4.6.2. Workplace pollution.....	59
4.6.3. Work overload.....	60
4.7. EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM IN THE DEPARTMENTS.....	61
4.7.1. Day-to-day running of the business.....	61
4.7.2. Affect the morale of other employees.....	63
4.7.3. Reduce income of the business .....	63
4.8. MANAGEMENT ACTIONS IN COMBATING ABSENTEEISM.....	63
4.8.1. Implementation of strict absenteeism policy.....	64
4.8.2. Reimbursement of staff.....	65
4.8.3. Reducing overtime period .....	66
4.8.4. Employing more employees.....	67

4.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER.....	67
CHAPTER 5.....	69
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	69
5.1. INTRODUCTION .....	69
5.2. REACHING OBJECTIVES- KEY FINDINGS.....	69
5.2.1. Medical illness (sickness).....	70
5.2.2. Stress.....	70
5.2.3. Pregnancy.....	70
5.2.4. Workplace pollution.....	70
5.2.5. Excessive Workload on workers .....	71
5.3. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES .....	71
5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY- MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS .....	71
5.5. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES.....	73
5.6. CONCLUDING THE STUDY.....	73
REFERENCES .....	75
ANNEXURE A .....	82
ANNEXURE B .....	87
ANNEXURE C .....	89



## ABBREVIATIONS OF WORDS IN THE STUDY

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
CDS	Consistent Data Set
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
LM	Line Manager
LMM	Line Manger Maintenance
LMO	Line Manager Operating
LMS	Line Manager SHEQ
MO	Manager Operating
MS	Manager SHEQ
MW	Mega Watts
SA	South Africa
SAP	System Application Program
SHEQ	Safety, Health, Environment and Quality
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
UK	United Kingdom

## CHAPTER 1

### ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The rate of absenteeism in workplaces is increasing. This could be the result of numerous factors such as environmental issues, development opportunities within the organisation, job insecurity, absence culture, management style, poor quality supervision, lack of discipline, paid sick leave, nature of the work, overtime, Human Resource policies and workplace relations (Chandrasekhar, 2011).

Absenteeism causes a loss of productivity due to employees not being available at work to perform their duties as expected. According to Dean (2007), absenteeism has both tangible and intangible effects on production. The tangible effect is associated with the amount of money it costs the organisation when one is absent. The intangible effect is when people's lives are affected due to them being absent. There are various types of absenteeism and it is defined from different angles. Absenteeism in the workplace is defined as the intentional or habitual absence from work (Gosseliin 2013), or non-attendance when an employee is scheduled to work (Laksonen 2010). Chandrasekhar (2011:45) argues that absenteeism can be classified as innocent absenteeism and delinquent absenteeism.

Innocent absenteeism means an employee cannot be blamed for being absent. In a labour context, this means that an employer cannot use disciplinary measures to deal with this type of absenteeism. On the other hand, delinquent absenteeism refers to employees who are absent for reasons that are within their control e.g. an employee who is on sick leave even though he is not sick and there is proof that the employee is not sick. In the labour context, this means that the employee is blameworthy and that disciplinary action can be taken against such an employee (Chandrasekhar 2011).

Bankert (2015) stresses the importance of not only identifying absenteeism as one of the major contributing factors to loss of productivity but that organisations must come up with ways to quantify these losses. The organisation must be in a position to measure absenteeism and should then be able to send awareness messages where absenteeism is

abused. With this, the employer needs to understand the type and level of absenteeism in order to come up with appropriate measures. Chandrasekhar (2011) also emphasises the importance of coming up with new programmes that address the new way of life. Macdonald *et al* (2008) caution that attention should not only be given to factors affecting the absentee but also the impact counselling has on the rate of absenteeism.

## **1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the factors that cause absenteeism in a selected power station of ESKOM and to identify remedial actions that can be taken by management to lower the rate of absenteeism in the workplace.

ESKOM is the national company that generates electricity in South Africa. It consists of four business units, which are generation, transmission, distribution and enterprise. The study will focus on one selected power station, in the generation business unit. The research will examine the factors which cause absenteeism, and management and control of absenteeism will be scrutinised to better understand the problem.

It must be noted that absenteeism abuse may be the result of an underlying problem that needs attention. Production loss in a power station can also be caused by operating system problems, such as unforeseen 'trips' caused by machine failure and also when a power station is unable to produce MW (Mega Watts) puts more pressure on another station to produce more to close the electricity supply gap (Hendricks, Singhal, Kleindorfer & Saad 2006). Absenteeism affects the running of the operating systems and processes because there will be a shortage of staff and there is a great chance that the people available are not skilled in running the machines. A coal-fired power station is a 24-hour operation that needs to be continuously run by specific process controllers and maintenance personnel to keep the equipment up and running to the desired performance level. If these employees are absent and not properly managed it will affect production. This requires planned periodic checks by personnel assigned to these posts. Normally these checks outline the number of people required to execute a particular task and if there is one person short, or even none available, the task cannot be executed effectively or even at all (Mthiyane, 2016).

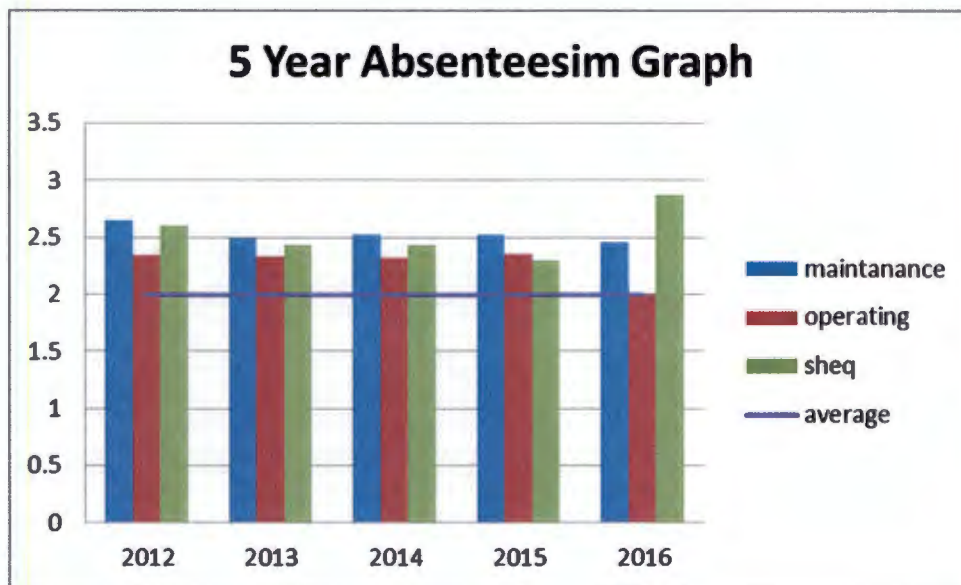
Blumenfeld and Inman (2009) emphasise the point that absenteeism in any form affects the final product and/or or service to be delivered by the organisation and the consistency thereof. Skilled staff is not readily available to replace an absent employee at short notice. Finding replacements at the last minute is not just costly, but could be a futile exercise, with devastating consequences, such as power outages and safety issues (Jensen & McIntosh 2006).

### 1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM



The problem is that since 2012 one particular ESKOM power station has been plagued by absenteeism, where the average absenteeism rate is more than 2% a month in the core business areas such as maintenance, operating and safety (SHEQ) departments. Figure 1, an annual report for absenteeism at this power station, indicates the problem.

**Fig. 1 Absenteeism Rate for Five Years as average per month**



The three departments: maintenance, operating and safety (SHEQ) are the heart of the station and the jobs related to these departments require physical strength and endurance to execute the tasks. These departments also have a high rate emergency overtime and emergency planned overtime due to the plant being over 30 years old. This means the plant requires intensive maintenance and monitoring. For the past three years, ESKOM has had a financial crisis, which meant that employing new employees to fill vacancies due to retirement, resignations and deceased employees was halted in the organisation. This

led to a shortage of staff. Even after the organisation was permitted to hire in 2014, absenteeism was still a problem.

In light of the discussion above the aim of this study is to investigate and determine the factors that give rise to absenteeism and how it possibly affects productivity of a particular ESKOM power station. It is necessary to manage absenteeism abuse, as the loss of production will end up affecting the station's performance and the whole nation at large. The country is depending on ESKOM to generate enough electricity to prevent load shedding in the country. This is also affecting our neighbouring countries such as Botswana that ESKOM sells electricity to.

The following research questions have been conceptualised from the research problem:

### **1.3.1. Main Research question:**

What are the factors that cause absenteeism in a particular ESKOM power station and what actions do management take to combat absenteeism?

#### **Sub-Questions**

- What is understood by the concept absenteeism in the workplace?
- What are the levels of absenteeism in the various departments at a particular ESKOM power station?
- What factors as suggested in the literature cause absenteeism?
- What factors cause absenteeism at a particular ESKOM power station?
- What remedial actions are suggested in the literature to address absenteeism?
- What are the remedial actions proposed by management?

The following objectives have been conceptualised from the research problem:

### **1.4. MAIN RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The central objective of the study is to identify and describe the factors causing absenteeism at a particular ESKOM power station and investigate managerial actions as well as strategies that would be used to combat absenteeism.

## **Sub-Objectives**

### **The sub-objectives of the study are to:**

- Clarify the understanding of the concept of absenteeism in the workplace
- Identify the factors that cause absenteeism in ESKOM power station
- Examine the levels of absenteeism in the various departments at a particular ESKOM power station
- Identify the managerial actions that can be taken to combat absenteeism in ESKOM power station

## **1.5 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFIT OF THE STUDY**

The key to improving the profit margin of an organisation lies in keeping operating costs as low as possible and production output as high as possible. To be in line with business objectives, it is of paramount importance to correctly identify and address the underlying reasons contributing to a high level of absenteeism. Undertaking this study will help the power station to curb factors that lead to absenteeism, which cause a decline in production which will avert the risk of a shortage of power to the grid.

### **1.5.1. Delimitations (Scope)**

Core to this paper are the factors which produce absenteeism at a power station by examining the cause of such culture and its impact at the workplace. These factors will be thoroughly delineated. This study will not elaborate on how absenteeism affects production. The study will only be conducted on the three departments within ESKOM which have shown a rate of absenteeism higher than 2% per annum on a monthly average. The departments in question are Maintenance; Operations; and Safety, Health, Environment and Quality (SHEQ) departments. The study will not consider the External Auditors' verification report; it will therefore only be limited to the 2012-2016 management reports.

### 1.5.2. Definition of concepts

- Maintenance:** Retaining in an operational condition, which can be done by following some simple rules (Hoyle, 2007).
- Production:** The method used to turn raw materials into goods or services (Johnson, 2011)
- Units:** A power plant, which consists of different parts, namely the boiler, turbine and generator

### 1.6. DESCRIPTION OF OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A research design is a set of logical steps taken by the researcher to answer the research question (Brink 2006:92). Blanche et al. (2006:34) define a research design as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research, such as indicated for this research in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Research approach and methods proposed per research question**

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Research Approach</b>	<b>Method of data collection</b>	<b>Method of data analysis</b>
What is understood by the concept absenteeism in the workplace?	Qualitative	Literature review	Content-Inductive through themes and categories
What are the levels of absenteeism in the various departments at a particular ESKOM power station?	Quantitative	Desk top data from company	Descriptive – means, averages,

		files	deduction
What factors as suggested in the literature cause absenteeism?	Qualitative	Literature review	Content-Inductive through themes and categories
What factors cause absenteeism at a particular ESKOM power station?	Quantitative	Survey	Descriptive statistics
What remedial actions are suggested in the literature to address absenteeism?	Qualitative	Literature review	Content-Inductive through themes and categories
What are the remedial actions proposed by management?	Qualitative	Interviews/ Narratives	Content analysis through themes and categories

The study will use a mixed method approach, which, according to Bryman and Bell (2015) integrates both quantitative and qualitative research within a single project. Schindler (2006) highlights that quantitative research makes attempts to make a precise measurement of a phenomenon. This means that quantitative data is expected to be objective and empirical, whereas qualitative is more about understanding underlying reasons to a problem.

The qualitative research will be done after the quantitative survey and will attempt to get deeper insight into the problem and causes of absenteeism from a managerial perspective.

### **1.6.1. Population/sampling**

Population is a group of people who can give you the data needed to answer the research questions. They can be living in a specific area, employees of an organisation, a community or a group of people with special issues (Kumar, 2011). The target population of the study refers to all the employees in maintenance, operating and SHEQ services departments at the particular power station. The main reason these three departments were selected is that higher than average absenteeism rates have been noted over the past five years. The population comprises 150 employees and all will be used for the quantitative data collection. Thus a census-sampling method will be used, which will include all employees in the respective operational hubs for the quantitative survey, while a purposive sampling strategy will be applied to select the managers in the 3 departments. There are 20 line managers and 3 managers in the selected departments. Hence, for the purpose of this study, it is planned that the 3 managers and 3 of the line managers (one from each department) will be interviewed for the qualitative part of the study. However it is noted that saturation of data indicates the sample size (Creswell, 2014).

### **1.6.2. Data collection**

In the present study data will be collected sequentially starting with the quantitative survey and continuing with the qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Data collection in quantitative studies is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion, that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes (Punch, 2006). In this study a structured questionnaire will be used to collect data quantitatively.

Semi-structured interviews will be used for the qualitative data collection from the managerial sample group. Leedy and Ormrod (2014) indicate that it is imperative that the interviewees remain anonymous during the interview.

### 1.6.3. Data analysis

Data will be analysed in line with the specific research questions. For this study, a descriptive analysis will be used to obtain a picture of officials' opinion regarding absenteeism. Descriptive statistics will be obtained from the quantitative data to enable the researcher to describe the quantitative data collected from empirical evidence (Burns & Grove, 2011). The data will be analysed using the latest Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 24). The data analysed will be presented in tables and graphical formats.

For the qualitative data analysis, the interviewees' responses will be audio recorded by the researcher. The researcher will then use content analysis as a basis for analysing the qualitative data, where 'the frequencies and sequencing of particular words, phrases, concepts in order to identify keywords or themes will be used' (Welman et al., 2007:221). Through the use of content analysis, the responses of the participants will be presented in themes and categories. The themes will be aligned with the research questions posed for the study while the categories represent the responses made by participants in respect of the themes. The researcher will clearly define the phenomenon to be analysed and will also categorise data in terms of phrases and concepts containing similar meaning.

### 1.6.4. Research ethics

Ethics are important in this study because the participants need to be protected from harm. Cooper and Schindler (2011) define ethics as the norms and standards of behaviour that guide choices about behaviour and relationships in a community. In this study, ethics therefore relate to the rightness or the wrongness of certain actions taken by the researcher towards employees at the particular ESKOM power station. Cooper and Schindler (2011) divide ethics into normative ethics, descriptive ethics and meta-ethics. This study will focus on descriptive ethics, which will focus on the rights of the participants, especially informed consent and right of privacy.

The employees of the particular ESKOM power station will participate voluntarily in the study. They will participate after receiving all the information pertaining to the risks or harm that could emanate from their participation. The information gathered from the particular ESKOM power station will be kept confidential. An ethical approval of the study from the North-West University research ethics committee will also guide this research.

## **1.7. CONCLUSION AND NEXT CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1 Overview of the study**

The focus of this chapter was to introduce and provide a background to the study. It further stated the research problem, research questions and objectives of the study, justification and scope of the study, importance of the study, assumptions and delimitation of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

The focus of the chapter will be on reviewing literature related to the study and also to discuss theoretical foundations important to the study. The study will focus on the concept of absenteeism in detail, in line with the research questions.

### **Chapter 3: Research design and methods**

The focus of the chapter will be to outline and discuss the methods to be used for the study. The chapter will also focus on the research paradigm, design, methods of data collection, study population, sample size and sampling procedure, and method of data analysis, and ethical considerations. .

### **Chapter 4: Analysis of data and discussion of findings**

The chapter will focus on data analysis and discussion based on primary and secondary data, presentation and discussion of the main findings.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

The focus of the chapter will be on presenting key recommendations of the study and draw final conclusions from the study based on key findings.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the literature review in relation to workplace absenteeism will be presented to assist in answering the research questions. Creswell (2013: 116) refers to a literature review as a written summary of articles, books, and other documents that describes the past and current state of knowledge about a topic, organizes literature into topics, and documents needed for a proposed study. McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 75), affirm that the review “illuminates the related literature to enable a reader to gain further insights from the study”.

In reviewing the literature an overview of absenteeism will first be presented. The relevant theory that will be used in the study will be discussed; factors that cause absenteeism, the impact of absenteeism in the workplace and the management strategies that should be employed in dealing with absenteeism in workplace are also reviewed.

#### **2.2. OVERVIEW OF ABSENTEEISM**

Absenteeism has been recognized as a problem in organisations by many researchers (Dalton & Mesch, 2009; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009). Avey et al., (2006:22) define absenteeism as “failure to report for or stay at work as scheduled”. According to Robins (2006, absenteeism is probably one of the biggest problems that a manager has to handle on an ongoing basis as it impacts on service delivery, staff morale, and could lead to financial losses. If the cause has been identified and solutions implemented, and an employee continues to be absent from his/her workstation then the only solution would be normal disciplinary procedures. In order to explore the different meanings of absenteeism a definition is needed.

According to the American Heritage dictionary (2010) absenteeism has been defined as the habitual failure for one to appear in most cases for regular duties bestowed to them or the rate of occurrence of frequent absence from work. Locke et al., (2007:56) also

define absenteeism as "the lack of physical presence at a given location and time when there is a social expectation for the employee to be there". According to Locke et al., (2007:56) absenteeism is managed in a variety of ways in organisations, although it can be argued that the effects that absenteeism has on any given organisation are similar. Defining absenteeism should be easy; an employee is either present or not present at work.

For the purpose of this study, absenteeism can be broadly defined as an employee being absent from his/her workplace. There are two types of absenteeism; voluntary and involuntary absenteeism.

### **2.2.1. Voluntary absenteeism**

Voluntary absenteeism is defined as "a reasonably avoidable absence from the workplace for reasons such as vacation or an unnecessary personal reason such as simply wanting to take the day off to relax" (Avey et al., 2006:43). This type of absenteeism is under the employee's control and can be short-term or casual (Hackett & Guion, 2005). This could include, for example taking extended tea/lunch breaks, doing shopping during work time, absenting oneself without leave. In these examples the employee intends returning to work hence there is need for management to tackle absenteeism so that the employees can accept their obligations to render a service (Heads, 2005). Larson et al., (2013) indicate that voluntary absenteeism may be controlled through the use of incentives and enforcement of policy, and is thus easier to manage than involuntary absenteeism.

It should be noted that employees might miss a day of work now and then. But it is a problem when an employee misses too many days of work. Not showing up for work can cause serious problems when other employees have to cover for the missing worker and in most cases the work is not done. According to Johns (2007), people who are dissatisfied with their jobs are absent more frequently. He goes on to say that the type of dissatisfaction that most often leads employees to miss work is dissatisfaction with the work itself.

Managers in the organisation are worried about voluntary absenteeism. Mostly the employee does not have a good reason of being absent from the work place. Avey et al.,

(2006) indicate that most employees do not come to work on “pay day” hence organisations have struggled to deal with the situation. According to Avey, employees should be given a remuneration in order to deal with such voluntary absenteeism.

### **2.2.2. Involuntary absenteeism**

In the case of involuntary absenteeism, it is genuine leave taken by employees under normal circumstances, which is unavoidable; for example in cases when the employee is sick, suffers a bereavement or is injured.

Involuntary absenteeism has also been referred to as ‘white absenteeism’ (Sanders & Nauta, 2004). This type of absenteeism is viewed by the employer as a genuine and legitimate absence and, as such, managers should not be concerned about this unless some kind of counselling or assistance could help the employee regain his or her health.

According to South African statute law, namely the Basic Conditions of Employment Act [5], an employer is required to pay an employee if he/she is too ill to work provided a medical practitioner’s certificate of not being fit to work is produced. However an employer is entitled to check on the validity of all medical certificates; for example, the doctor who signed the certificate could be contacted to verify the authenticity of the certificate. However this does not mean that the employer has a right to be informed of the employee’s actual illness without the consent of the employee (Israelstam, 2004). Robins (2006) argues that going this route is a waste of time as the doctor is obliged to uphold patient confidentiality. To him, another option is for an employer to place burden of proof on the shoulders of the employee by withholding payment until there is receipt of absolute proof of validity or authenticity of the medical certificate. Persons employed by the state are entitled to 36 working days normal sick leave with full pay in a three year sick leave cycle (Department of Public Service Administration DPSA, 2006). This means that when an employee uses all entitled sick leave then an application may be submitted for incapacity leave.

Therefore to identify the factors causing workplace absenteeism, it is important to demonstrate with literature that voluntary constructs of absenteeism are distinct and differentially related to subsets of organisational, personal and attitudinal variables and

affect the organisation's output (Birioukov, 2016). As such this study focuses more on the factors that causes *voluntary absenteeism* in the workplace.

## **2.3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

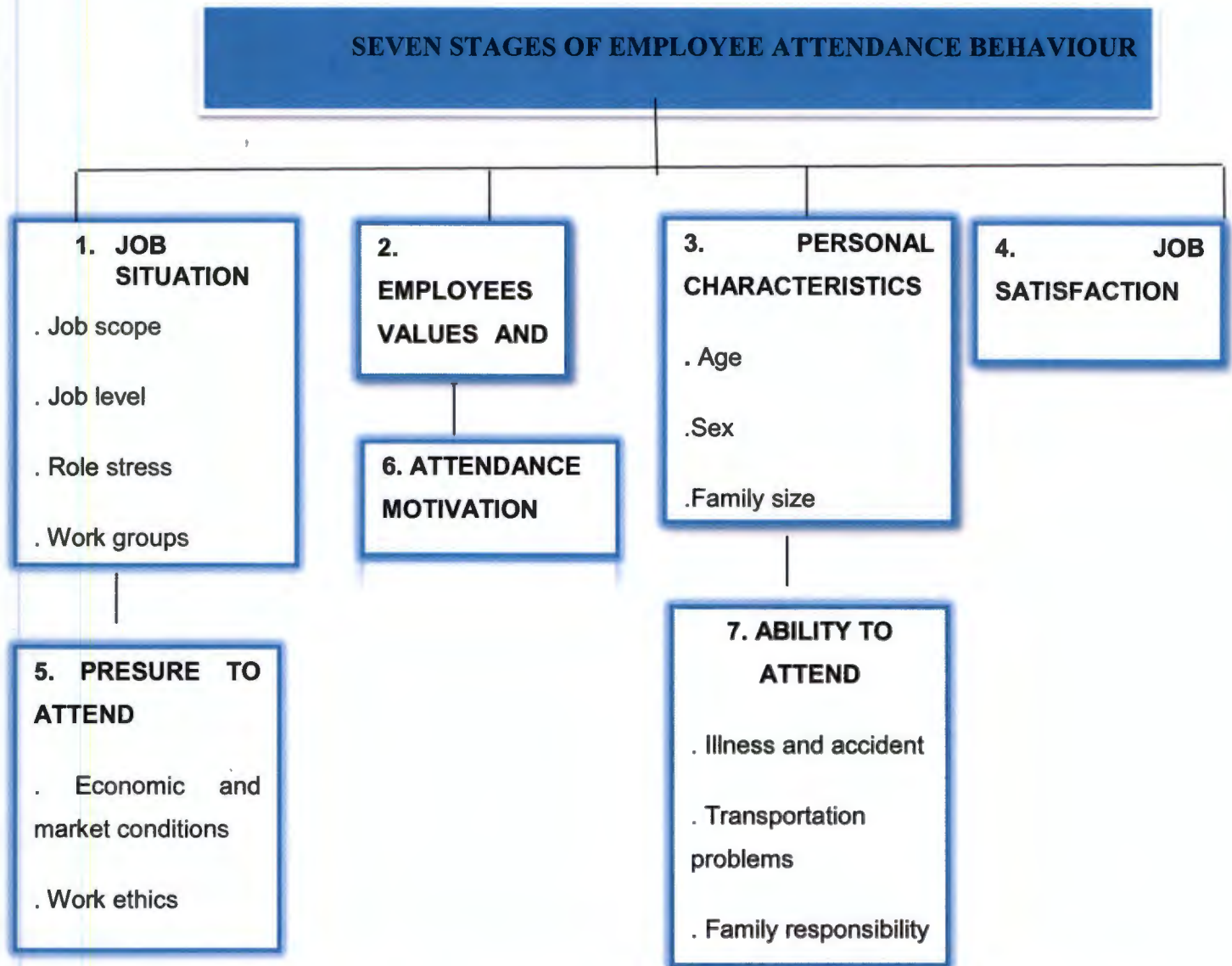
A theoretical framework provides the theories that explain, predict, and create an understanding of the phenomena being studied and, in many cases, challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions (Swanson Richard, 2013:22). Theoretical framework does not only describe the structure that holds or supports a theory of a research study, but also introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. Although there has been a huge amount of varied research carried out on the topic of absenteeism, as will be presented later in this chapter, there have been few theories directly associated with it. A theoretical model directly associated with absenteeism in the workplace is that of Steers and Rhodes (1990) - 'Process Model theory of absenteeism' - that was used in this study.

### **2.3.1. Process Model theory of absenteeism**

This model states that the capability of employees or workers to attend work is primarily dictated by how motivated they are, as well as their ability to attend and perform their duties in the workplace. According to them, employees must have the ability and motivation to carry out work (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). According to Steers and Rhodes, employees who are fully satisfied with their jobs have a strong loyalty to the organisation and are proud of it, hence they will desire to actively engage in activities to better the organization, and this is done by being present at work. Brooke (2006), in his view, indicates that attendance motivation and ability to work is the key determinant for a successful organisation. As such, both attendance and motivation interact with each other and produce the outcome of the activities done in the workplace.

To buttress the model, Figure 2.1 below presents the seven aspects of employee's attendance behaviours that have been identified by Rhodes and Steers (1990). To them these aspects should be evaluated by organisations. The seven aspects of employee

attendance behaviour can also be integrated with various factors that cause workplace absenteeism as in the case of this study and which will be elaborated later in this chapter.



**Figure 2.1. Rhodes and Steers model of employee absenteeism behaviour (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Smulders, 2008).**

The purpose of this model is to enable the researcher to integrate this model when discussing the findings from this study in Chapter 4.

The seven aspects of employees attendance behaviour, indicated in Figure 2.1, or factors that can cause an employee to come to work if they are positive or be absent if negative are:

- **Job situation** (see box 1 in figure 2.1). Elements included under job satisfaction as a cause of attendance are job scope, job level, role stress, work group, leadership style and co-worker relations;
- **Employees' values and expectations** (see box 2). Not all companies have the same expectations of a job incumbent, and individual values and expectations will determine how satisfied an individual is with the job situation. These values and expectations have been shaped by;
- **Personal characteristics** and backgrounds of the employees (see box 3) and will change as they mature and develop.
- During the selection of new employees, the organisation should try and match individual and organisational expectations to measure the **job satisfaction** (see box 4).
- Two major "**pressures to attend**" have been recognised as enhancing attendance motivation (box 5). These are economic and market conditions, and personal work ethic.
- Even if a person wants to go to work and has a high **attendance motivation** (see box 6), there are instances where attendance is not possible.
- Hence, the individual may not always have the **ability of attendance** (see box 7). There are three unavoidable limitations on attendance: (1) illness and accidents; (2) family responsibility; and (3) transportation problems.

This model provides many aspects that can influence the attendance of employees at the workplace in relation to voluntary absenteeism. Hence this model would enable the researcher to search further and unravel what possibly causes the problem of voluntary absenteeism in the workplace.

## 2.4. FACTORS CAUSING WORKPLACE ABSENTEEISM

There are many factors that can cause absenteeism in the workplace as identified in the literature. These factors include;

### 2.4.1 Heavy alcohol consumption

According to Bacharach et al., (2010) the controversy about the link between alcohol consumption and absenteeism has been kept boiling. Bacharach et al., are strongly of the opinion that excessive alcohol consumption contributes to workers' absenteeism, stating that alcohol consumption predisposes one to numerous illnesses which result in employees voluntarily staying at home due to incapacity.

Heavy drinking in personal leisure time can have a long-term effect on employees' work performance, including absenteeism, inefficiency, poor decision-making and damaged customer relations. Specific productivity problems include procrastination, inconsistent performance, neglect of detail, poorer quality of work, less quantity of work and more frequent mistakes (Midford et al, 2009). Modell and Mountz (2000) indicate that there is evidence to show that impairment of skills begins with any significant amount of alcohol in the body. For example, in a study of airline pilots who had to perform routine tasks in a simulator under three alcohol test conditions, it was found that:

- Before the ingestion of any alcohol, 10% of them could not perform all the operations correctly;
- After reaching a blood alcohol concentration of 100mg/dl, 89% could not perform all the operations correctly;
- And 14 hours later, after all the alcohol had left their systems, 68% still could not perform all the operations correctly.

A raised blood alcohol level jeopardises both efficiency and safety by increasing the likelihood of mistakes, errors of judgement, and accident proneness. Hence employees would rather prefer to be absent from work than to produce works with errors.

McFarlin and Fals-Stewart (2002), cited in Bacharach et al., (2010), are also of the opinion that alcohol consumption has a strong relationship with workplace absenteeism, stating that alcohol consumption predisposes one to injury which keeps him away from work. Moskowitz and Fiorentino, (2000) cited in Bacharach et al., (2010), also agree about alcohol's effect on an employee and further add that alcohol consumption has both immediate and longer effects on someone's mental functioning like cognitive, visual and

auditory responses, time management, coordination, and hence it exposes people to risk of injury. Therefore it can be affirmed from the literature that heavy alcohol consumption leads to employees' absenteeism from the workplace.

#### **2.4.2. High prevalence of major depression and disorder**

According to De Graaf et al., (2012) workplace absenteeism in the United States is attributed to a high prevalence of major depression and disorder which constitutes an annual loss of an estimated \$27.2 and \$65.5 due to absenteeism with an estimated salary loss of 37 and 14 billion dollars. Furthermore, they state that physical disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as reported by World Mental Health Survey (WMHS) constitute a high number of workplace absences which also has an effect in South Africa.

In another study conducted by Gisbert et al., (2009), they state that gastro-oesophageal reflux disease, which they define as a condition whereby there is back flow of gastric contents into the oesophagus leading to symptoms like heartburn (chest pain) and ulcer-like pain has led to employees' disorder, and employees with such an illness might not be able to attend work regularly. Prater and Smith (2011) went on to state that depression causes workplace absenteeism. They reported that the United States loses roughly \$83 billion annually as a result of depression, and roughly two-thirds of this \$83 billion comes from low productivity and workplace absenteeism. This is in agreement with the work of Graaf et al., (2012:1) who state that depression contributes to workplace absenteeism in South Africa. This is because a majority of employees are facing depression which has resulted from family lives, relationships, sickness and workload. Their ideas are also in congruence with that of Rhodes and Steers' (1990) theory on absenteeism as presented in Figure 2.1.

Mental health problems affect the way one thinks, feels and behaves. They range from the minor (low mood) to the severe (bipolar disorder, schizophrenia or psychosis) and can appear suddenly or gradually over time. Most work absences involving mental health problems are due to stress, anxiety and depression. Hence, there is a correlation between mental disorder and depression as a cause of workplace absenteeism.

### 2.4.3. Workplace bullying

According to Hauge et al., (2010), and Nielsen and Einarsen (2012), cited in Magee et al., (2017), workplace bullying is associated with absenteeism. Einarsen et al., (2009) in Magee et al., (2017) are of the opinion that workplace bullying is one of the major challenges facing employers. They report that from 2008, an estimated 14.6% employee's experienced diverse workplace bullying, either ones directed towards employees' work task, or threats and gossip directed toward destroying their images. Other scholars, Bartlett (2011), Einarsen et al., (2009) stated that workplace bullying could be either direct or indirect; by direct they mean intimidation, humiliation, and criticism, while indirect comprises undermining attitude and gossiping. Magee et al (2017), and Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) go further to say that workplace bullying seriously affects an employee's productivity, career, makes him/her feel insecure, and produces a lack of job satisfaction (as indicated in the model of Rhodes & Steers , 1990) and affects the totality of life, including those bullying the person and eye witnesses.

Workplace bullying is sometimes known as the 'silent epidemic' and many workplaces don't have any structures in place to deal with it. This is partly because it is not always easy to define bullying and prove that it is actually taking place. Interestingly, whilst there are laws against harassment in the workplace (i.e. unwanted conduct related to a 'protected characteristic', such as weight, disability, age, etc.), there is no law against bullying because it is not related to protected characteristics. Workplace bullying might include insulting, intimidating or demeaning behaviour, or an abuse of power. Employers are responsible for preventing bullying and harassment and they are liable for any harassment suffered by their employees. Organisations need to have their own policies in place to prevent bullying in the workplace (Fit for work, 2015).

### 2.4.4. Stress

In a study conducted by Bermingham (2013), it was found that stress is an issue that many organisations are faced with on a daily basis. However, despite more and more people suffering from stress and the increased awareness of the issue, organisations are still unsure of how to deal with it. According to CIPD (2012), one of the most common reasons cited for long-term absences is stress and it is seen more often in non-manual workers.

Stress is the psychological, physiological and behavioural response by individuals when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet those demands, which, over a period of time, leads to ill-health.

Stress can be best described as a negative feeling associated with a range of physical symptoms including but not restricted to an increased heart rate and a dry mouth. However, stress can affect each individual differently and some will experience more symptoms than others. Carr et al., (2011) define occupational stress as 'the perceived difference between professional demands and a person's ability to carry out those demands'. Although stress is mainly associated with negativity, Stevenson and Harper (2006) found that stress can have both positive and negative effects on individuals in the workplace.

How stress affects an employee depends on the extent of the stressor.

- Positive effects: A person suffering from limited or an 'acceptable' level of stress can have improved performance.
- Negative effects: This can decrease an employee's performance. According to Fairbrother and Warn (2003) the negative effects of stress can also affect an employee's efficiency, initiative and cause a lack of concern for others in the organisation.

#### **2.4.5. Sickness**

In another study conducted by Bergstrom et al., (2009), they stated that sickness presenteeism is when a worker persists in going to work despite being ill or having a generally poor health state. The worker keeps managing himself maybe as a result of pressure from the employer, high attendance requirement, fear of losing his job, financial problems, too much commitment to work then, when the person is critically low with the sickness, it will lead to sickness absenteeism from work. Prater and Smith (2011) in their work reported that employees' sickness has led to a great loss in a company's production; even though it is one of the involuntary absenteeisms which employers do not need to be worried about, yet it faced the company with a great loss in production if many hands are not provided.

Vlasveld et al., (2013) pointed out sickness as one of the factors causing workplace absenteeism which they attributed to experiencing unfairness at work, low decision-making, being unmarried, experiencing psychosomatic complaints, having low job control and family problems as the cause of the sickness. In addition to these factors, they went further to point out personality characteristics as a contributing factor to workplace absenteeism.

#### 2.4.6. Other factors

To buttress the issues related to factors causing work place absenteeism other factors were identified in the literature as causes of work place absenteeism;

- In a study conducted by Halpern et al (2001) and reviewed in 2017, he stated that cigarette smoking is one of the major contributors to workplace absenteeism as the smoker keeps battling with the adverse health effects of smoking;
- Nanjundeswarawam (2016) in his work stated that the existing relationship between the employer and the employee, income from another work, working environment, job security and salary all contribute to workplace absenteeism.
- A study conducted by Siukola et al (2011) reported that aging and physically demanding jobs are among the causes of absenteeism. They explained that aging in most cases predisposes the individual to periodic sickness which keeps the individual away from work.
- Bolton and Hughes (2001) found that family responsibilities, personal problems, lack of commitment, workplace stress, poor working environment, substance abuse and sickness are the most common cause of workplace absenteeism.
- Drakopoulos and Grimani (2013) summed these up by indicating that there are many factors that can cause workplace absenteeism such as lack of job satisfaction, poor working conditions, poor salary and distance of work place from home.

According to Gangai (2014) employees' absenteeism is a serious challenge in any organisation, which is caused as a result of employee's lack of commitment to the job. Munro (2007) states that workplace absenteeism is a serious challenge facing many

organisations; he is of the opinion that poor leaders, work stress, and lack of job satisfaction all contribute to workplace absenteeism.

Affirming this, the factors affecting work place absenteeism also have an impact on the process model. This means that the capability of employees or workers to attend work, as well as their ability to attend and perform their duties in workplace, would be affected by the factors causing work place absenteeism.

## **2.5. EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM on PRODUCTION**

A company or firm that is moving forward and productive requires total commitment from and availability of the employees. The absenteeism of employees from the workplace poses detrimental effects on the production of the organisation. For instance, in the United States, it is estimated that employee absenteeism cost employers roughly \$225.8 billion or \$1,685 annually according to Stewart, Ricci, Chee, Hahn and Morganstein (2003), in Bacharach, Bamberge, Biron (2010). Hence, the following can be viewed as the causes of workplace absenteeism.

Nanjundeswarawamy (2016) indicate that workplace absenteeism is one of the major challenges facing manufacturing companies in India. Absenteeism leads to inadequate utilization of production resources, low productivity and loss of company reputation. Cucchiella et al., (2014) indicate that absenteeism from the workplace, which is voluntarily absent from work by an employee, reduces productivity and greatly affects the organisation's finance and in other areas. They also went ahead to say that absenteeism has negative effects on the other workers, the entire organisation and the society at large.

In addition, Gangai (2014) also explained that employee absenteeism not only reduces productivity directly but indirectly affects productivity by means of extorting that which the manager of the organization should be investing in the production. He will rather be spending the money on his sick employee (sick pay) and the cost of a temporary worker. Cucchiella et al., (2014) are also in agreement with Gangai (2014), who states that absenteeism costs an organisation in terms of paying sick leave and employing temporary staff.. IBEC (2011) affirms that workplace absenteeism costs employers a huge amount of money annually. They report that in Ireland, an estimated 1.5 billion or 818 per employee

is being lost by an organisation on the employees. Edward (2010) reports that workplace absenteeism has both direct and indirect effects in organisations; the direct effects include direct cost of payment of salary over time while the indirect effects include low productivity, staggering administrative function and decrease in quality service delivery.

Also Bankert et al., (2015) are of the opinion that workplace absenteeism has a serious negative effect on the side of the employer as it hinders the organisation from making an expected amount of output and monetary income by depriving the organisation of the manpower who are supposed to do the jobs. They add that workplace absenteeism relating to an abnormal state of health and emotional instability is the worst and a serious concern as it increases the prevalence of chronic diseases in the society.

By studying the organisational effects related to absenteeism, Cucchiella (2014) found that absenteeism can really bear on many companies' dynamics:

- It forces managers to oversize the workforce.
- It penalizes the planning of the working activities, especially in relation with the necessity of rotations and availability.
- It stops the company's processes in the case of employees who have critical competences and knowledge.
- It has a big economic effect.

It is evident that absenteeism can have a bad effect on many company's dynamics but we cannot forget that, otherwise, the excessive presence causes the phenomenon of "*presenteeism*", which is the presence at work when the employee is ill, with the risk that he makes mistakes or he infects his colleagues.

## **2.6. MANAGERIAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS ABSENTEEISM**

According to Magee et al., (2017) managers should develop, constantly review and enforce absenteeism policies, consistently monitor absenteeism data and properly oversee the work feedback and sanctions, and employees that go for longer should seek leave. Chandrasekar (2011) in his work states that for an employee to give his total commitment and the manager to address absenteeism, the manager must learn how to make his employees happy by improving the working environment. He said that a conducive

working environment motivates the employees to come to work and put in their best. He also said that a manager should be a good listener, train his employees to the standard he wants, he should adopt a good style of leadership that will accommodate everyone, maintain a good interpersonal relationship with his employees, spend more time in overseeing the work, give adequate authority to his employees, encourage team work among his employees, increase accountability, encourage division of labour, gain his employees' confidence, treat them as professionals, pay them good salaries with bonuses, treat them fairly, improve individual stress-coping skills, manage conflict to avoid bullying, generally improve work incentives and generally encourage presenteeism thereby addressing absenteeism.

Prater and Smith (2011) suggest that managers should build trust and team collaboration among employees in order to address absenteeism. Munro (2007) indicates that managers should be taking records of absenteeism in their organisation, and that one or more day's absence by the employee should be deducted from his or sick leave as that will make the workers more serious with their work. He also said that managers should usually announce to the workers about the recording of all absenteeism the duration of the absence, treat their employees fairly so as to keep them motivated and carefully define the duty of every employee. The Chartered Institute of Professional Development, CIPD (2012) reported that minor sicknesses are the most common cause of workplace absenteeism.

In support of this, Munro (2007) suggests that managers can reduce the rate of absenteeism in workplace by performing a meticulous record in which are recorded:

- all types of absenteeism of each employee each year;
- the duration of each person's absenteeism and
- reasons for absenteeism

Managers should also follow-up each case of absenteeism by;

- paying visits to sick employees, when necessary, such as those who have excessive sick leave records;
- write letters recording absenteeism which are handed to the relevant employees and proof of receipt is obtained and
- Conduct interviews with returning employees.

The Department of Public Service and Administration (2006), in its brochure on sick leave, incapacity leave and ill health, spells out the responsibility of the employee and employer respectively. The period of time not present at a workstation will be recorded by the employer and when a full day is completed this will be deducted from sick leave provisions. As such, absenteeism for one or more days has to be recorded by managers as sick leave, which is deducted from the employee's sick leave balance. This is a straightforward process. The issue of how to handle absenteeism if an employee reports for duty and works for a short period during a shift before going off sick should be clearly spelt out in a policy. Each employee should be treated the same, because co-workers may believe that some are favoured, thus their sick leave records are not factual (Munro, 2007).

According to Gangai (2014), managers should be sensitive to those things that lead to workplace absenteeism and carefully address them; he says that managers should carry out punishments where necessary in order to discourage absenteeism. Rousseau & Aube (2013) say that managers should carefully identify the causes of their workers' absenteeism and they go further to deduce that employees' absenteeism can be managed through well-structured and a collective autonomy. Munro (2007) emphasizes that employees should be disciplined for poor timekeeping as this constitutes being absent from duty/allocated work stations which impacts on an organisation's running costs and work ethics. Poor timekeeping to him includes:

- Arriving late for duty on a regular basis,
- Leaving work early,
- Taking extended tea, lunch breaks, or toilet breaks while leaving the customers unattended,
- Attending to private business during working hours; this could include sending and/or reading personal emails, surfing the internet for non-work related matters, or any other activity that is of a private business nature.

Furthermore, Bosch and Brake (2005) investigated involuntary absenteeism from an employers' perspective and identified four steps within the decision process of a firm whether or not to take measures for reducing involuntary absence:

- A first step is signalling of risk, where the management of a firm should realise for how many employees the work can be stressful, both physically and psychologically. When management is not aware of this, it is likely that no measures would be undertaken by the management to reduce involuntary absenteeism.
- Next, a firm has to recognise that it can exert influence on the level of involuntary absence;
- When a firm recognises the connection between working conditions and involuntary absenteeism, it can move ahead and decide to plan and implement measures to improve these working conditions (which would be discussed later). A distinction can be made between absenteeism support and precautionary measures.
- The final step comprises the evaluation of the measures that have been carried out: at this stage, the management should evaluate whether the involuntary absenteeism has diminished and if adaptations of the measures are necessary

In addition, Narayan and Mooij (2010) state that in order for managers to sustainably address absenteeism, there should be regular supervision of the workers by laying down codes of ethics, participation of the people in the bottom, introduction of better incentives through performance-based pay and putting in place other mechanisms that will encourage the employees to come to work.

Mayfield and Milton (2009) are of the opinion that for managers to be motivational, they should maintain a good communication with their employees and always respect them. Bhatti & Qureshi (2007) affirm that for managers to properly address workplace absenteeism, they should encourage job satisfaction, participative management, team empowerment and strategic planning. By so doing, the employee will diligently carry out his duty and have pleasure in coming to work. Schreuder et al., (2013) are of the opinion that managers should play a huge role in assisting the employee who has been absent for a long time as a result of sickness and positively assist him in integrating properly to his post. Schreuder et al., (2013) further mention the importance of Contingency Theories, saying that the best approach in managing workers at any point is for the manager to adopt different situations more effective in dealing with workplace absenteeism.

Macdonald et al., (2000) in their managerial actions to address workplace absenteeism, state that managers should develop an Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) which is a programme where the employees with various personal problems, like alcoholism that causes those absences, may receive the necessary counselling. The counselling is basically to enhance the personal life of the employee and in turn benefit the organization. Roman (2009) reviewed data from three different large manufacturing plants on the basis of impact of incentives and found out that workplace incentives enhance productivity and quality of production and reduce absenteeism. Bankert et al (2015) suggests that managers should put in place accurate measures to quantify and reduce workplace absenteeism in order to increase productivity. Therefore it is affirmed from the literature that managers of organisations can deploy a variety of ways to deal with workplace absenteeism.

Finally, in order to deal with employee's sickness which in most cases results in involuntary absenteeism, Schultz et al., (2009) suggest an integrated approach that would be used by managers. This approach includes;

- A health risk appraisal offered on a regular basis to measure employee health;
- Analysis of the impact of health on work performance and all other pertinent outcome measures such as absenteeism, injuries and healthcare costs;
- Revision of policies and benefits in order to support work/life balance should be made;
- Development of employee loyalty, which often leads to improved productivity;
- Targeted lifestyle and disease management programmes to mitigate risk factors and health conditions;
- Evaluation of the work environment and ergonomics;
- Ensuring that employee assistance programme providers are equipped to recognize and treat problems that impact on-the-job productivity;
- Enlisting the help of a pharmacy benefit plan to help manage and improve access to appropriate medication;
- Evaluating coverage for mental health benefits to ensure that employees have adequate resources to deal with these types of problems;
- Developing a work environment that discourages working while ill;

- Integrating current programmes such as disability management, disease management, behavioural health management, absence management, wellness and preventive services to help all employees remain productive.

According to Schultz et al., (2009) when employers implement the above measures, they are certain that the level of absenteeism in the workplace would be reduced.

## **2.7. SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

There are many contributing factors that cause absenteeism which is one of the most costly people issues in any organisation. In this chapter the literature has been reviewed and brought forward multiple factors leading to, especially, voluntary employees' absenteeism, which should be managed by the organisations.

In the next chapter, the research design and methods for this study will be presented.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher explains the research design and methods used in this study on workplace absenteeism.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH AIM

The sole objective of this research is to investigate and determine the factors causing workplace absenteeism and how it possibly affects productivity of a particular ESKOM power station. The focus of this chapter was to provide answers to the research questions and meet the objectives stated in Chapter 1.

#### 3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

According to Crittenden, (2006:1-13); Richard and Morse, (2007), there are three commonly used research approaches which are; qualitative approach, quantitative approach and mixed method approach (which is a combination of both). Crittenden (2006) goes on to state that the quantitative research approach has its philosophical assumption rooted in positivist theory which is mainly focused on “scientific research reality” and so it makes use of statistical data, whereas the qualitative research approach has its philosophical assumption rooted in interpretive paradigms; it is a non-experimental research and uses non-numeric data.

This researcher adopted a mixed-method research approach and a sequential explanatory research design, build from quantitative research followed by qualitative research, as indicated in Table 3.1., which was deemed fit for achieving the research objectives.

**Table 3.1. Difference between qualitative and quantitative research, adapted from Creswell, (2014:45).**

Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed method
<b>Primary aim is to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of a phenomenon under study</b>	Focuses more on classifying, counting and generating statistical model	Build from either qualitative or quantitative to give the final research finding.
<b>Instruments of data collection include; interview, focused group, narrative, and observation.</b>	Instruments of data collection include; questionnaire, measurements	Instruments of data collection could be from both data collection method
<b>Has emergent methods</b>	Pre-determined method	Both emergent and predetermined method.
<b>Uses text analysis</b>	Uses statistical analysis	Uses statistical and text analysis

In this study, the researcher will begin with a quantitative research approach, collecting data using a questionnaire and further building from the quantitative findings with a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews in order to answer research questions for a better and comprehensive understanding of the study. Schindler (2006) highlights that quantitative research attempts to make a precise measurement of a phenomenon. This means that quantitative data are objective and empirical while qualitative is more about understanding reasons for a problem.

Quantitative research strategy is specific, well structured, tested for validity and reliability and explicitly defined and recognised. It has more clarity and distinction between design

and method of data collection and provides for it to be replicated for verification and reassurance which cannot be easily done using qualitative research strategy (Kumar, 2011). The qualitative research done after quantitative survey will give in-depth insight and understanding of workplace absenteeism and its causes. According to Greene, Carawelli and Graham in Gary (2014:196), triangulation, development, complementarity, expansion and initiation are among the benefits of choosing mixed method. In this study, triangulation seeks to collaborate and correspond various methods as applied to the study, which helps in checking the study method validity thereby reducing enquiry biases.

Strengths and weakness of the mixed method research approach, as indicated in Table 3.2., was extracted from Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:14-26).

Table 3.2: Strength and weaknesses of mixed method research



Strengths		Weaknesses
1	It allows diverse data gathering instruments.	The integration of finding gives rise to broad interpretation
2	It encourages strong evidence for research summary through integration of results.	Very difficult to analyse
3	It leads to broad answers to different research questions.	It is time consuming
4	Allows for in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.	The researcher is mandated to comprehend the methods involved.

In this study, the researcher employed explanatory sequential mixed method design which has two phases, where the researcher first collects quantitative data, does the analysis and then uses the findings to build the succeeding qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014:224). The researcher purposefully selected this design because an in-depth explanation of the quantitative findings using qualitative data enhances a better understanding of the



research phenomenon and provides better answers to the research questions, especially an understanding of the factors causing workplace absenteeism in the selected power station in ESKOM. Furthermore, this research design enables the use of a pluralistic approach whereby one of the research method covers up the shortcomings of the other, operating sequentially in order to achieve triangulation (Gray, 2014:197). The chosen research design will also enable the researcher in gathering sufficient and relevant data that best answer the postulated research questions. According to Punch (2014:114), research design can come through diverse patterns due to different research approaches.

### **3.3.1 Study Population and site selection**

Population is a group of people who can give you the data needed to answer the research questions; they can be living in a specific area, employees of an organisation, a community or a group of people with special issues (Kumar, 2011). Gray (2009) is of the opinion that population of a study is the fraction or portion of universe focused on by a researcher and mostly used in a quantitative study. The population of the study comprised all the employees in the maintenance, operating and SHEQ service departments at a particular power station of ESKOM. These three departments were chosen because they have experienced high rates of absenteeism over the past five years and are the main production units in the plant. The population of employees in maintenance, operating and SHEQ service departments at the power station is 150 employees, which will be used for the quantitative part of the study.

A site is described as a group of individuals in a setting who possess specific characteristics and from which the participants are drawn to determine the parameters (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007:112). Maree (2007:34) points out that a research site must be suitable and feasible in a qualitative study. As indicated in the population of the study, three departments were chosen for this study. Each department is headed by a manager and a few line managers. In the maintenance department, a total number of 7 line manager and a manager are heading and managing the department. In operating, there are 8 line managers and a manager, and for SHEQ, there are 5 line managers and a

manager. Hence a total number of 20 line managers and 3 managers are the total population of possible participants in the three selected departments in the power station.

### 3.3.2. Sampling and participant selection

Robinson (2014:25-41) states that sampling involves selecting research respondents from a population who will answer the research questions. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:1-4), a sample of a population is the region of the universe under study. According to Angell and Townsend (2011), researchers using mixed method approach are free to use a non-probability or probability sampling technique. Participant selection refers to selection of participants who can best inform the research question and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014:4).

For the **quantitative part** of this study, the researcher made use of a census sampling strategy, including the total population of 150 employees from the three departments as the respondents for the study.

From the 20 line managers and 3 managers identified, the participants that were selected for this study in order to inform the **qualitative part** were the 3 managers from the departments and 3 line managers (1 from each department). Hence, a total number of 6 participants were purposively selected for the study. The selection of these participants is based on the researcher's understanding from workplace data that absenteeism has plagued the particular ESKOM power station in the past five years. The researcher purposefully selected the managerial participants based on their experience, availability and accessibility in order to participate in the interviews. For qualitative research the number of participants are reflected by data saturation and the actual sample size should not be stated before conducting the study (Creswell, 2014).

### 3.3.3. Quantitative data collection

#### 3.3.3.1. Variables

According to Relmer and Van Ryzin, (2011:31) variables are mostly employed in examining research variations involving two different components and have the tendency of taking different features at the same time. Higson-Smith and Kagee, (2006) considered

research entities that differ from one another within a sample population as the variables. According to Greenfield (2012:156), the dependent variable are the (response) variables while the independent variables are the (control) variables. Creswell (2014:84) also says that variables are those features of a research group or persons that can be measured which differ among the group being studied. In this study, the dependent variable is absenteeism while the independent variables are causal factors.

### **3.3.3.2. Measuring instrument**

The researcher adopted a structured closed-ended questionnaire as the instrument of quantitative data collection. This questionnaire was compiled based on the selected research questions that are to be answered for this study. The questionnaire used for the study was structured by enabling collection of accurate facts and employee's opinion concerning the factors identified from literature causing workplace absenteeism. The questionnaire was based on a survey response scale design. In this type of design, responses from respondents can be as simple as a choice between "yes" or "no" or as complex as choosing an answer among the listed response options drafted by the researcher.

The questionnaire (see annexure A) used was divided in 2 sections. The first section dealt with the biographical and demographical information of the respondents. Here, the respondents are expected to indicate the department in which they work, working experience and highest qualification. The second section of the questionnaire dealt with questions relating to workplace absenteeism in general. The questions are guided by the research questions posed for the study.

### **3.3.3.3. Pilot study**

Prior to data collection, the researcher carried out a pilot study. According to Creswell (2014:161), a pilot study is conducted for the purpose of testing the research instrument used for data collection on different respondents involved in the study for the sole aim of satisfying the reliability of the instrument. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique in selecting respondents for the pilot study. The researcher administered 15 copies of the questionnaire to respondents in the power station from the population of the study who could complete the questionnaire. The pilot study was purposely conducted for obtaining responses and ascertaining the clarity and ease of use of the instrument.

#### 3.3.3.4. Data collection process- administering the questionnaire

After the pilot study had been conducted and the questionnaire was found to have content validity in attaining the research objectives for the study, the researcher moved to the process of administering the questionnaire (See Annexure A) as hard copies to the respondents. The questionnaire was self-administered. All the 150 employees in the three departments were given the questionnaires to complete.

#### 3.3.3.5. Qualitative data collection

An interview schedule (see Annexure) was developed for collecting data during semi-structured interviews. Permission was obtained from all the heads of the departments as the researcher carried out interviews with the managers and line managers selected for the study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), an interview is made up of open ended questions which allows respondents to express themselves and give their individual views and meaning to a phenomenon. Barbour (2008:114) also affirms that an interview enables the researcher to obtain relevant, valuable and analytically rich data. Respondent interview was viewed as the best approach because it enables the researcher to have a closer interaction with the respondent for in-depth understanding of factors causing workplace absenteeism and, as such, building on the quantitative findings. Participants were interviewed during lunch time in order to avoid misusing the company's resources. This enabled the researcher to also read the interviewee's reactions when answering and get more clarity on the underlying issue.

#### 3.3.4 Data analysis techniques

For the **quantitative** data analysis, pure descriptive research is structured in a way as to draw a clear and existing picture of the status of affairs as they materialise. It may be used to draw a finding or develop theories on the existing practice. Descriptive statistics enable a researcher to give a synopsis and describe quantitative data collected from empirical evidence (Burns and Grove, 2011). The researcher captured and augmented data management. The data were analysed using the latest Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 24). The analysed data were presented in bar charts, frequencies and percentage format. This enabled the researcher to have a clearer view on which

responses from the respondents had a higher weight. The responses were then discussed in relation to the literature.

According to White (2002:82), **qualitative** data are analysed through selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesizing and interpreting collected data in order to provide answers to research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:364) also affirm that analysis of qualitative data is a distinct inductive pattern of organizing data into themes and categories and identifying relationships within categories. For this study, data were analysed using content analysis which helps to identify the relevant themes and categories in the following manner:

**Step 1: breaking down of data collected from the respondents.**

Following data collection, the recorded information was transcribed by the researcher into readable and understandable manner.

**Step 2: examining and comparing of the transcribed data.**

At this point, transcribed data were read carefully read by the researcher and related data were identified. According to Creswell (2014:246) researchers should carefully read data, making meaning from the participant responses and removing the chunks. Creswell, in de Vos et al., (2005:337) is of the opinion that the researcher should endeavour to read the collected data multiple times, immersing himself in the detail and trying to making sense of the participants' views in order to pick out the interrelated data thereby reducing overlap. The researcher examined critically data obtained from document analysis using content analysis while unnecessary data were discarded.

**Step 3: identify the themes and category which emerged from the participants' responses.**

At this point, the researcher identified related categories and themes from the respondent interview response and document analysis examined, and arranged them in scale of preference as guided by the research question, in order to understand the themes that comes first based on their importance to the research. Furthermore, in order to enable triangulation of the research finding, the data from interview and document analysis were clustered and presented together in relevant themes.

**Step 4: summarising and presenting respondents' responses.**

At this final stage, the respondents' responses were summarised and presented to the study reflecting the authentic experience of the respondents which enables an in-depth understanding of factors causing workplace absenteeism in selected power station in ESKOM.

### **3.3.5. Validity and reliability**

According to Susanne (2012:1), strategies for maintaining quantitative research trustworthiness comprises internal and external validity and reliability and they are quite different from that of qualitative research, which are credibility, confirmability, consistency and dependability. External validity of the research was done through careful selection of the purposive and convenience non-probability sampling technique and the consideration of factors such as time, place and subject, which can affect external validity. The researcher was able to manage these factors through first contact with the power station employees before going for the data collection.

According to Susanne, (2012:2), researchers should endeavour to check research reliability in order to ascertain the correctness of the research instrument. Reliability is used in checking the consistency of a research measuring instrument. The researcher ensured reliability of this study through the use of a pilot study which was conducted on respondents who were not involved in the study.

### **3.3.6. Trustworthiness**

According to Bryman (2012:717), trustworthiness is a distinct process of testing the authenticity of a research. Lekganyane (2011:41) states that qualitative researchers make use of terms like trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, consistency, triangulation or dependability in judging the authenticity of their work, which closely match the terms like validity and reliability used by quantitative researchers. Another researcher, Bush (2012:5), specifically wrote about triangulation which he suggested it should be used in checking qualitative research trustworthiness. For this work, the researcher ensured trustworthiness through proper taking of field notes, careful analysis of the research finding and triangulation which was done through comparing the results from the interviews and questionnaires.

### **3.3.7. Researcher's role**

The researcher played the role of the interviewer, sticking to the stipulated research questions without being judgemental. The researcher also ensured that all the necessary ethical issues were carefully followed during data collection and analysis ensuring quality data collection (Creswell, 2104).

### **3.3.8. Ethical consideration**

To the researcher, ethical consideration is very important as it guides the researcher in order not to step on respondent's right. According to McMillian and Schumacher, (2006:16) every researcher is ethically bound to protect the mental and physical interests of his or her respondents throughout the study to avoid harm. O'Leary (2010:41) is of the opinion that ethics is a moral value that guides one in a distinct profession. The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the Faculty Ethics Committee of the North West University which permitted her to embark on the research.

The researcher took the letter of permission from the University Ethical Committee to the selected power station in ESKOM where the study was conducted. The research purpose and benefit were clearly explained to the respondents and they were also told that participation is not compulsory and that everyone has the right to withdraw from the study for any reason.

## **3.4. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

In this Chapter, the research design and methods were outlined. It gave descriptions of the research approach, research paradigm, the data collection instrument that was used for the study, the method of analysing the data and the ethical considerations observed by the researcher.

The next Chapter will analyse, present and discuss the findings from the research.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the analysis, results and findings of the research will be presented. This chapter will first present a descriptive summary of the data collected. Thereafter, the results and findings of the research will be presented and discussed in two parts (quantitative and qualitative). This was done in an attempt to enable the researcher to answer the research questions of the study.

#### **4.2. QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

As indicated in Chapter 3, a pure descriptive analysis was used to analysis quantitative data.

##### **4.2.1. Summary of responses**

The general outcome from SPSS was summarised in Table 4.1. These summaries show the general results obtained from the questionnaires. Hereafter, the analysed data were simplified and presented in tables and graphical formats. This enabled the researcher to have a clearer view about the responses. The responses were then discussed in relation to the literature.

**Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics**

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Gender	150	.000	.198	-2.027	.394
The number of years you have been employed in ESKOM	150	.725	.198	.199	.394
Indication of age group	150	-.500	.198	-.662	.394
The department you work in	150	-.198	.198	-1.457	.394
Ever been absent from work in the past 12 months	150	3.307	.198	9.054	.394
If yes, indicate for how many days	150	-.259	.198	-1.568	.394
The most common reasons for absenteeism as found in the literature, which of these caused you to be absent from work in the past 12 months?	150	1.699	.198	1.120	.394
Ever been forced to come to work even when you are sick?	150	-5.936	.198	33.679	.394
Is absenteeism an issue in your department?	150	2.464	.198	4.127	.394
The rating of your current workload in terms of stressfulness	150	-.760	.198	.195	.394
How much do you think it costs the organisation for one person to be absent for one day?	150	1.227	.198	1.507	.394

The effects of absenteeism in an organisation	150	.683	.198	-.753	.394
Are there any managerial actions used to control absenteeism in your department?	150	-4.742	.198	20.767	.394
Comments in respect of ways in which your department can reduce employee absenteeism	150	-.211	.198	2.015	.394
Valid N (list wise)	150				

Table 4.1 was used to show the number and percentage of respondents' responses in relation to the questionnaire distributed. From the above summary and descriptions it is evident that the 150 questionnaires were completed and all were unspoiled. The columns of Skewness and Kurtosis statistics work together, they depict one another. These columns shows the level of answers selected by the respondents based on each question asked in the questionnaire. The positive figure in the table shows higher responses by the respondents while the negative figure shows lower response made regarding the questions posed to the respondents.

### 4.3. QUANTITATIVE DATA FINDINGS

Findings from the quantitative data help to evaluate the overview on the level of absenteeism in the selected power station, the level of absenteeism, factors affecting absenteeism in the work place, effect of absenteeism in workplace and the managerial actions used in the departments to control absenteeism in work place.

#### 4.3.1. An overview on ESKOM employees and gender ratio

The number of years for which employees have been employed, gender of employees, age and number of employees working in each department have been reviewed and are presented in Table 4.3.

#### 4.3.1.1. The departments of the employees in ESKOM

Table 4.2. The department and numbers of staff members

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Maintenance	42	28.0	28.0	28.0
	Operating	50	33.3	33.3	61.3
	SHEQ	58	38.7	38.7	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

From the Table 4.2 above, it can be said that in the maintenance department, 42 employees were used for the study, in operating, 50 employees, while in SHEQ department, 58 employees were used for the study. Hence a total number of 150 employees were used to obtain the quantitative data as indicated in Chapter 3.

#### 4.3.1.2. Gender of employees

Table 4.3. Staff gender ratio

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	75	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	75	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

The staff gender ratio in the three department in ESKOM is proportionate. It is evident that 75 employees are male while 75 are female. According to the Business Case of Gender Equality (2015), workplace gender equality is achieved when people are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunity regardless of gender.

### 4.3.2. The level of absenteeism in the POWER STATION, ESKOM

In order to investigate the level of absenteeism, the researcher asked the respondents the following questions

- Do you feel that absenteeism is an issue in the department?
- Have you been voluntarily absent from work in the past 12 months?
- If yes, how many days have you been absent?

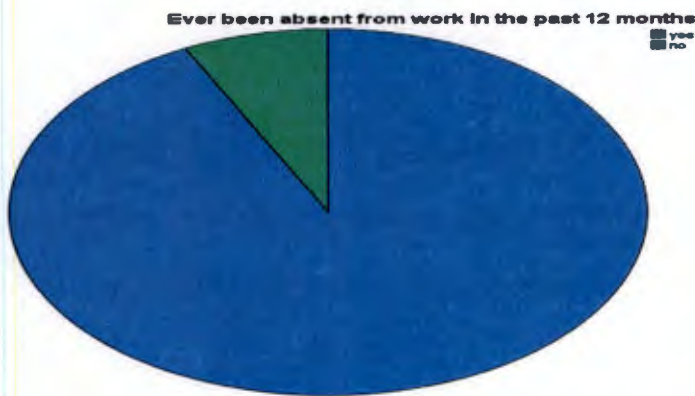
Respondents' responses are presented and discussed below.

**Table 4.4 Staff response on “is absenteeism an issue in your department?”**

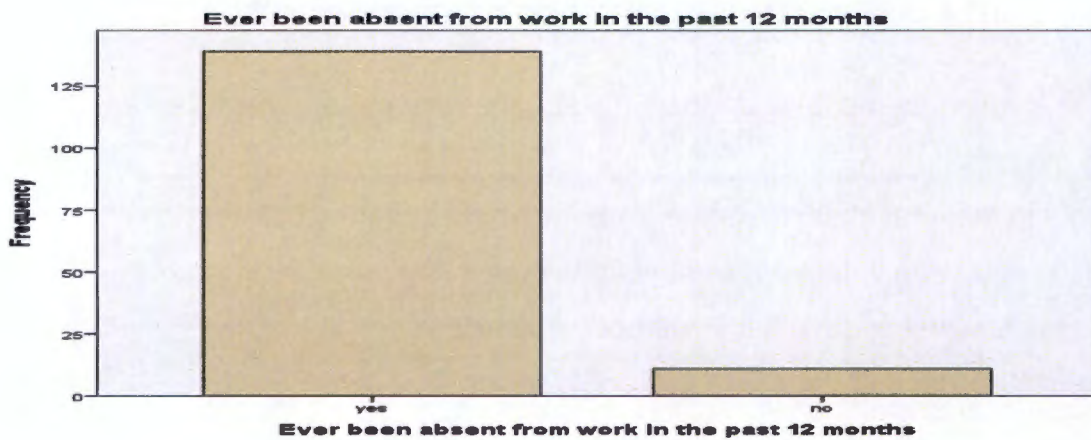
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	133	88.7	88.7	88.7
	No	17	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

Absenteeism is viewed as an issue in the Departments as 88.7% indicated that they were voluntarily absent.

**Figure 4.1. Response on absenteeism in the past 12 months**



**Figure 4.2. Response on occurrence of absenteeism in the past 12 months**

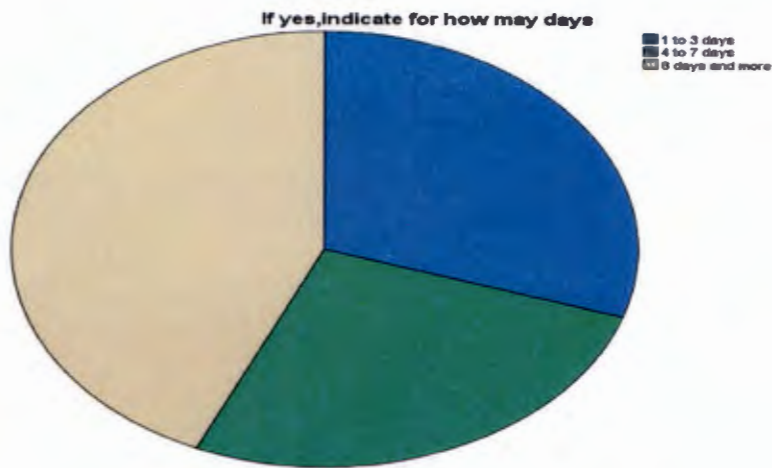


From the figures above it is clear that the power station is faced with a high occurrence of voluntary absenteeism in the workplace. The figures show that 125 respondents out of 150 indicated that the power station is facing a high rate of absenteeism, while 25 indicated that absenteeism is not a regular feature in the power station. Therefore there are a majority of respondents who indicated the latter and, as such, the root causes of absenteeism need to be addressed in this study.

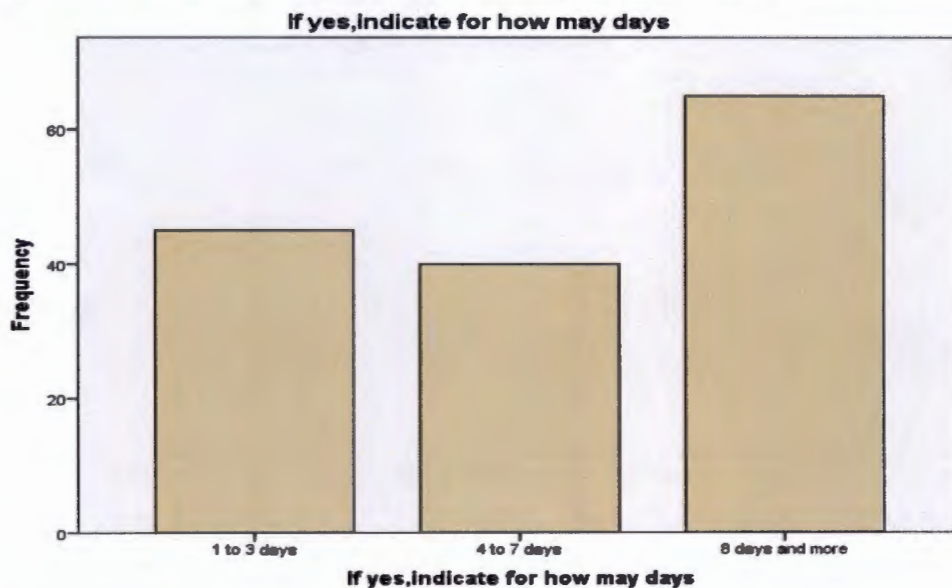
**Table 4.5. Number of days staff members are absent from work within 12 months**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 to 3 days	45	30.0	30.0	30.0
4 to 7 days	40	26.7	26.7	56.7
8 days and more	65	43.3	43.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	100.0	

**Figure 4.3. Number of days staff members are absent from work**



**Figure 4.4. Number of days staff members are absent from work**



In table 4.5, figure 4.3 and figure 4.4, responses on the number of absences for the past 12 months was presented. From the above response, it is evident that from the 150 respondents, 139 respondents in the three departments indicated that they have been absent at least once in the past 12 months while 11 have not been absent during the past 12 months. It is also important for managers to identify which absences were as a result of leave (voluntary) or as a result of other factors which are involuntary in nature.

From the overview given, there is an indication that the departments are experiencing high rates of absenteeism. Hence, the next section will present and discuss the quantitative data collected from the respondents in respect of the following:

- Factors that contribute to absenteeism in the workplace
- The effect of absenteeism in the work place
- Management actions in reducing absenteeism

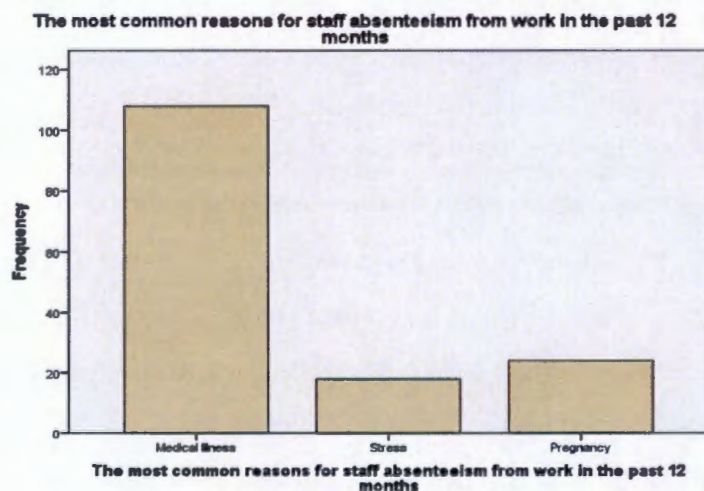
### 4.3.3 Factors that contribute to absenteeism in the workplace

In answering this research question, the quantitative data obtained from the employees also revealed that the most common factors that contribute to employee's absenteeism are medical illness, stress and pregnancy. Table 4.6 and Figure 4.5 and 4.6 present the participants' findings.

**Table 4.6. The most common reasons for staff absenteeism from work in the past 12 months**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Medical Illness	108	72.0	72.0	72.0
	Stress	18	12.0	12.0	84.0
	Pregnancy	24	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

**Figure 4.5. The most common reasons for staff absenteeism from work within 12 months**



Results revealed that 108 respondents were absent from work due to minor illness. Vlasveld et al., (2013) also point out sickness as one of the factors causing workplace absenteeism which they attributed to experiencing unfairness at work, low decision-making, being unmarried, experiencing psychosomatic complaints, having low job control and family problem as the cause of the sickness. According to South African statute law, namely the Basic Conditions of Employment Act [5], an employer is required to pay an employee if he/she is too ill to work provided a medical practitioner's certificate of not being fit to work is produced. However an employer is entitled to check on the validity of all medical certificates; for example, the doctor who signed the certificate could be contacted to verify authenticity of the certificate. However this does not mean that the employer has a right to be informed of the nature of the employee's illness without the consent of the employee (Israelstam, 2004).

In addition to minor illness being a cause of employees' absenteeism, the seventh stage of Steers and Rhodes' model explaining employee attendance behaviour (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Smulders, 2008) also indicates that individual may not always have the ability to attend due to some certain unavoidable limitations on attendance: (1) illness and accidents; (2) family responsibility; and (3) transportation problems. Prater and Smith (2011) reported that employee's sickness has led to great loss in a company's production even though it is one of the involuntary absenteeism factors, which employers do not need to be worried about, yet it poses the company a great loss in production if many hands are not provided.

Internationally, most illness is not caused by work, but in 2007/08, an estimated 2.1 million people in the United Kingdom (UK) were suffering from an illness caused, or made worse, by their work (fit for work, 2015). In the study conducted by Hansen and Andersen (2008) individual health status was assessed by asking respondents whether they had suffered from one or more listed (or other) diseases during the year prior to baseline. This information was recoded into a variable indicating some disease vs. no disease. It was found that a high number of respondents are absent from work due to sickness, some of which are serious while others were not serious illnesses.

In addition to the findings made in this study, it was also revealed that 18 respondents were absent from work due to stress while 24 were absent due to pregnancy. Stress can be defined as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them. Work-related stress arises where work demands exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope (Health Touching Lives, 2012). Even though the percentage of respondents that laid emphasis on stress being the cause of absenteeism, Bermingham (2013) found that stress is an issue that many organisations are faced with on a daily basis and many organisations are still unsure of how to deal with it. In addition, the first stage of Steers and Rhodes' model explaining employee attendance behaviour as presented in Chapter 2 (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Smulders, 2008) also indicates that employees have job satisfaction when they are satisfied with the job scope, job level, role stress, work group, leadership style and co-worker relations.

According to Health Touching Lives (2012) there are various steps an organisation can use in order to reduce stress in workplace. These include;

- Identifying risk factors within the workplace, particularly those involving most employees. Seek feedback from employees and their representatives.
- Involve employees and their representatives at an early stage in developing risk reduction measures, and planning workplace change. Aim for flexibility. Consider aspects of job demands, work role and relationships
- Encourage early reporting of stress by encouraging managers to have an open and understanding attitude, to be aware of signs of stress and groups at risk.
- Establish contact with the employee at an early stage, to ensure that they have access to appropriate advice and support from their GP and, where available, Occupational Health Service and other specialists or counsellors.
- Investigate all reports of work-related stress and try to identify the source(s), and review risk assessment and risk management strategies as appropriate.
- Work with the employee to reduce the risk by making adjustments to the work role or place of work, or providing additional training or resources. Healthy Working Lives provides free one-day and online courses to support.

Furthermore, pregnancy as a cause of absenteeism is viewed by the employer as a genuine and legitimate absence. As such, managers should not be concerned about this

unless some kind of counselling or assistance could help the employee regain her health. Therefore from the findings and literature, it is evident from the study that the most common factors that can cause employees' absenteeism in workplace are minor illness, stress and pregnancy. Hence, employers need to find various ways that can be used to reduce these factors. This is because absenteeism leads to loss in production which might lead to an organisation shutting down.

The next section will present and discuss the findings made in respect of the effect of absenteeism in workplace.

#### 4.3.4 The effect of absenteeism in the workplace

In Chapter 2, various literature was reviewed on the effect of absenteeism in workplace. It was found that absenteeism can stop an organisation's progress, reduce income and can also affect an employee's salary (Edward, 2010; Cucchiella, 2014; and Cucchiella et al., 2014). In addition to this, the findings of this study also revealed that absenteeism can cost an organisation one day's salary payment to employees, or a day's salary and additional costs. Table 4.7, Figure 4.7 and 4.8 illustrate the findings.

**Table 4.7. Cost to the organisation in respect of employee's absenteeism**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A day's salary payment	19	12.7	12.7	12.7
	A day's salary and additional costs	108	72.0	72.0	84.7
	Nothing	6	4.0	4.0	88.7
	I don't know	17	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

From the results, 108 respondents indicated that absenteeism can cause an organisation a day's salary and an additional cost. 19 also indicated a day's salary while the rest do not have any idea of the effect of absenteeism to the organisation.

In the United States, it is estimated that employee absenteeism costs employers roughly \$225.8 billion or \$1,685 annually according to Stewart et al. (2003), in Bacharach et al (2010). Cucchiella et al., (2014) also state that absenteeism costs an organisation in terms of paying sick leave and paying to employ temporary staff. The cost of absenteeism is huge in most organisations as it is with government departments. This is one of the contributory factors in the failure of organisations and government departments to meet performance targets. Due to the awareness of the adverse effect of absenteeism on organizational performance, it has become imperative for management of organizations, employees, investors, government and other stakeholders to be concerned in reducing the negative effects in order to enhance overall performance of organizations. In the same vein, it has become imperative to carry out this study with a view of reducing the adverse effects of absenteeism on organizational performance, particularly in ESKOM in South Africa

Bordia and Iarmer (2007) state that high turnover and absenteeism rates often show poor management and/or conflict within the relationship with labour. It is the responsibility of the human resources department and the line managers to monitor and establish reasons for high absenteeism. Scheduled time-off for employee vacations is an inevitable cost of doing business. Gaudine and Saks (2001) conducted a study in Canada which sought to test the influence of employee absenteeism on the organisation. It was found that it cost the organisation one month's salary of the employee and this is a great deal. Robbins (2009) links absenteeism to satisfaction and deduces a negative correlation. Swanepoel, Erasmus, van Wyk and Schenk (2003) refer to one of the causes for absenteeism as boredom. An example is an organisation with a great deal of specialisation where employees perform only a few specified tasks for which they are specifically trained; some may become very bored with the monotonous work. Such dissatisfaction may lead to low productivity and withdrawal from work.

Even though a few respondents do not know the effect of absenteeism on the organisation, findings and literature affirms that absenteeism costs organisation worldwide. As such there needs to be an effective strategy that should be put in place by the organisation in order to deal with absenteeism. The next section will investigate the

managerial actions that are taken by the organisation to deal with absenteeism in workplace.

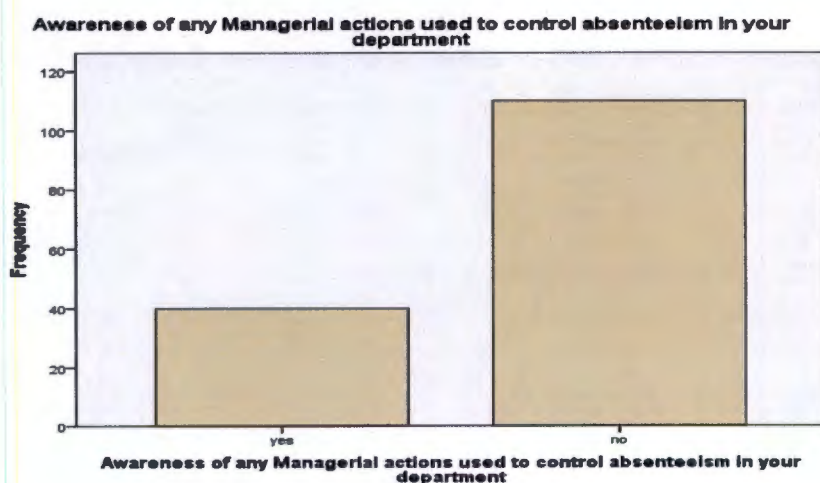
#### 4.3.5. Managerial actions used to control absenteeism in ESKOM

In answering this research question, the researcher first asked the respondents whether they are aware of any management strategies that are used by the management in the organisation to reduce absenteeism. Findings below show respondents responses.

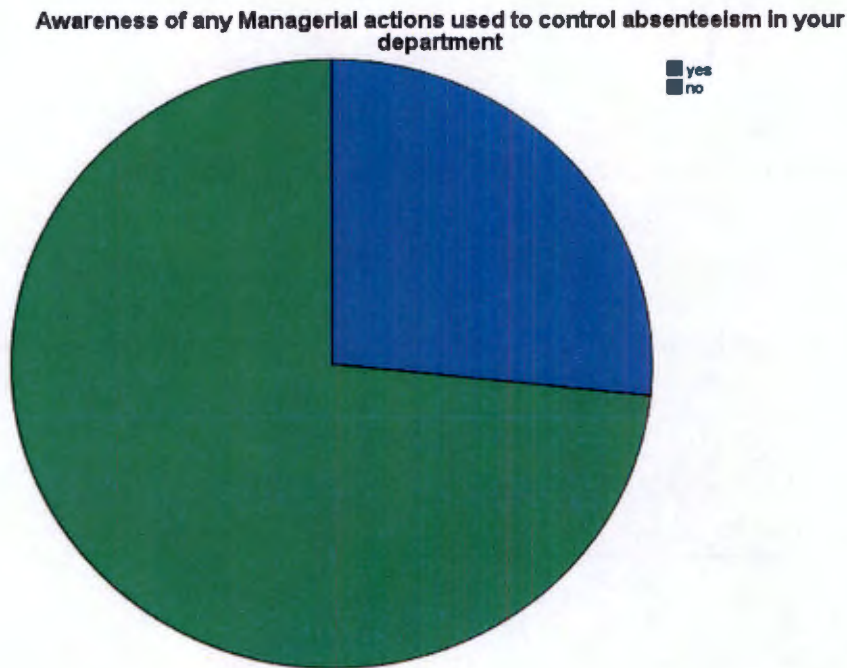
**Table 4.8. Awareness of any Managerial actions used to control absenteeism in your department**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	40	26.7	26.7	26.7
	no	110	73.3	73.3	100.0
	Total	150	100.0	100.0	

**Figure 4.9. Awareness of any Managerial actions used to control absenteeism in your department**



**Figure 4.10. Awareness of any Managerial actions used to control absenteeism in your department**

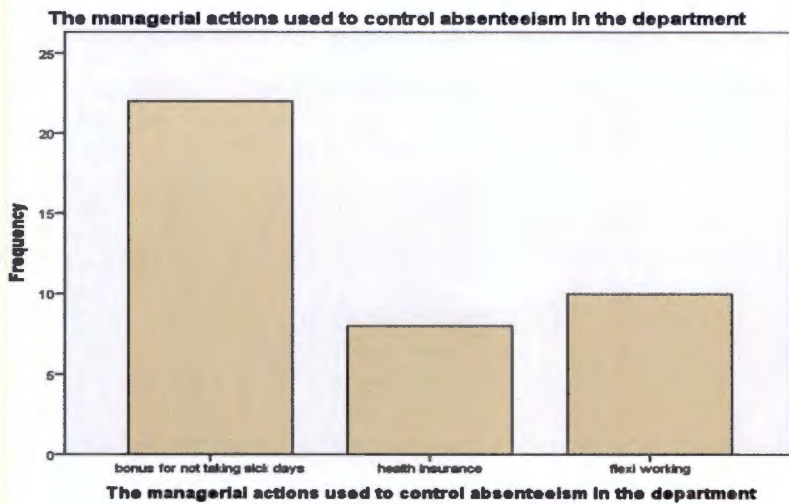


From the findings presented, it is evident that 110 respondents are not aware of any management strategies that are used by the organisation to reduce absenteeism in the workplace, while 40 respondents are aware of these strategies. As such, Table 4.9 and Figure 4.10 and 18 present these strategies that were mentioned by the respondents who are aware of the management strategies used to reduce absenteeism in workplace.

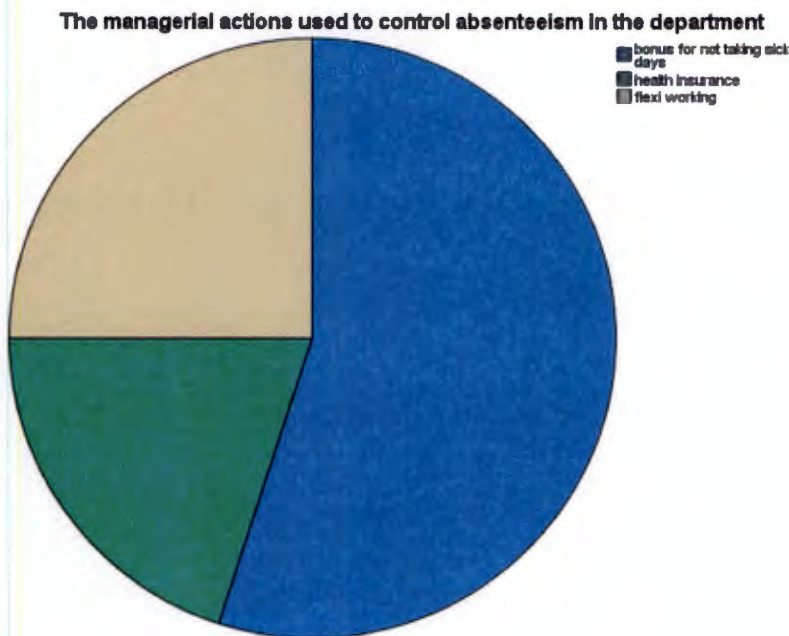
**Table 4.9. The managerial actions used to control absenteeism in the department**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bonus for not taking sick days	22	55.0	55.0	55.0
	Health insurance	8	20.0	20.0	75.0
	Flexible working	10	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

**Figure 4.11. The managerial actions used to control absenteeism in the department**



**Figure 4.12. The managerial actions used to control absenteeism in the department**



Findings from the study revealed that management are taking action to reduce absenteeism by giving a bonus to employees for not taking sick leave, providing health insurance for employees and granting of flexible working to employees who are not absent from work.

As presented in Chapter 2, Chandrasekar (2011) stated that for an employee to give his total commitment and for the manager to address absenteeism, the manager must learn how to make his employees happy by improving the working environment. He said that a conducive working environment motivates the employee to come to work and put in their best. Schultz et al., (2009) suggest an integrated approach that would be used by managers. This approach includes; a health risk appraisal offered on a regular basis to measure employee health, and an analysis of the impact of health on work performance and all other pertinent outcome measures such as absenteeism, injuries and healthcare costs.

In addition, Lotich (2017) in his 4 tips to reduce absenteeism indicates that it is important that managers reward employees who are present at work by giving employees a bonus for having no unplanned absences in a 12 month period. And, when attendance is incorporated into the annual performance appraisal process, employees can also see rewards by way of merit. He also indicated that another tactic is to provide adequate paid time-off so employees have the option of planning for absences by using a pre-determined bank of hours.

Findings also show that management utilises flexible hour schedules that allow workers to alter workday start and finish times. The total working time required of employees on flexi-time schedules is the same as that required under traditional work schedules. Flexible working simply refers to any working schedule that is outside of a normal working pattern. This means that the working hours, instead of being repetitive and fixed, can involve changes and variations. It can mean the employee has variables such as when they are required to work or even their place of work. These strategies are meant to encourage employees to be present at work in order to ensure good productivity for the organisation

This study employed the explanatory sequential method as indicated in Chapter 3. This method helps the researcher to build the quantitative data with the help of the qualitative data collected. As such, in order to have an in-depth understanding of the study under review, the next section will present the findings collected from the qualitative data.

#### 4.4. QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

An interview was conducted with the managers and line managers in the three departments selected for the study. Table 4.10 below presents the pseudonyms used by the researcher to identify the participants:

**Table 4.10. Pseudonyms of Participants**

	PARTICIPANTS	PSEUDONYMS
1.	Manager Operating	MO
2.	Manager Maintenance	MM
3.	Manager SHEQ	MS
4.	Line Manager Operating	LMO
5.	Line Manager Maintenance	LMM
6.	Line Manager SHEQ	LMS

##### 4.4.1. Data analysis

For the **qualitative** data analysis, the participants' responses were recorded, then the recorded responses were transcribed by the researcher. Junk sentences and responses in the transcript which were not relevant for the purpose of the research were discarded. Content analysis was then used to analysis the relevant data. Through the use of content analysis, the responses of the participants were grouped in themes and categories. The themes stipulated the research questions posed for the study while the categories represented the responses made by participants in respect of the themes. The researcher clearly defined the phenomenon to be analysed and categorised data in terms of phrases and concepts containing similar meaning.

In order to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the participant response, proper taking of field notes, careful analysis of the research, and triangulation was done by comparing the results from interview and questionnaires.

**Table 4.11. Themes and categories from qualitative study**

	THEMES	CATEGORIES
1.	The level of absenteeism in various department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ High rate of absenteeism on Mondays and Fridays</li> </ul>
2.	Factors that contribute to absenteeism in work place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sickness</li> <li>➤ 'Aggressive' working environment (Pollution)</li> <li>➤ Workload placed on workers</li> </ul>
3.	Effect of absenteeism in the departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Negative impact on day-to-day running of the business</li> <li>➤ Affect morale of others</li> <li>➤ Reduce income of the business</li> </ul>
4.	Management actions in combating absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Implement strict policies</li> <li>➤ Reimburse staff</li> <li>➤ Reduce overtime period</li> <li>➤ Employ more people</li> </ul>

#### **4.5. THE LEVEL OF ABSENTEEISM IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENT**

In order for the researcher to find out from the participants the level of absenteeism in the work place, she decided to first ask the participants the meaning of absenteeism. According to MS:

*Absenteeism is the absence of an employee or a {bunch}(GROUP) of employees from their work, during when they are expected to be present, for numerous either acceptable or unacceptable reasons.*

LMS and LMO also indicated that:

*Absenteeism is when an individual decides not to come to work while he/she is expected to. It is also a habit of an individual to refrain from coming to work without a good reason, failure to give good reason is deemed as absenteeism.*

The views of the managers are in line with definitions of other authors in the literature study, which defines absenteeism as the habitual failure for one to appear in most cases for regular duties bestowed to them or the rate of occurrence of frequent absence from work (Vlasveld et al., 2013; Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Smulders, 2008).

In addition, all the participants interviewed indicated that the level of absenteeism in the workplace is high, most especially on Mondays. This was evident in the MM statement who said:

*I think some of the employees tend to overdo things during the weekend and as a result fail to wake up on time on Mondays to go to work. The employees who drank too much alcohol on weekends often do not go to work on Mondays.*

LMO also affirms that employees are mostly absent on Mondays and Fridays. Sometimes the employee takes sick leave to extend a public holiday. The effect of absenteeism causes fatigue in most employees due, maybe, to covering for other people that are not at work due to annual leave or the position being vacant therefore one person will be burdened with too much work. Again most employees prefer sick leave as opposed to annual leave mainly because they don't have to give an explanation and get approval. He also indicated that "most of the pregnant women are not regularly absent. They only observe their leave given to them".

Bacharach et al., (2010) affirm that the link between alcohol consumption and absenteeism has been kept boiling and they are strongly of the opinion that heavy alcohol consumption contributes to workers' absenteeism at their work place stating that alcohol consumption predisposes to numerous illnesses which keeps them away from work. Therefore from the response of the participants, there is an indication that the three departments most probably experience high level of absenteeism on Mondays and Fridays due to alcoholism. This higher absenteeism in the departments is also evident in the quantitative results.

## 4.6. FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ABSENTEEISM IN THE WORK PLACE

Findings from the qualitative data revealed that there are various factors that contribute to absenteeism in the work place. These factors specifically highlighted are; sickness, work place pollution and work overload of employees.

### 4.6.1. Sickness

Sickness as a health issue was also indicated in the literature as one of the prominent factors that affect voluntary absenteeism in workplace. This was evident from the participant's response.

According to MS:

*Mostly it points out to sickness to be the major causes of absenteeism in the whole department. Some employees would also indicate that they have personal challenges at home which they wouldn't feel comfortable to disclose. Or it would be absence due to a troubled immediate family member, be it a spouse or kid, to which the superior would approve and demand that proof thereof is produced by the employee upon returning to work.*

LMM also indicated thus:

*Sometimes employees are absent to work due to their spouse or child is sick. Some of them pretend to be sick in order for the Doctor to grant them bed rest. This is experienced mainly after maybe the unit was run up and they were required to stay at work for long consecutive hours.*

The participant's responses are in agreement with the quantitative data presented, where 108 respondents indicated sickness has been the major cause of absenteeism in the three department. Vlasveld et al., (2013) point out that sickness is one of the factors causing workplace absenteeism which they attribute to experiencing unfairness at work, low decision-making, being unmarried, experiencing psychosomatic complaints. In Rhodes & Steers (1990); Smulders (2008), explaining employees' behaviours in the workplace, they indicate that an employee's ability to attend to work can be influenced by sickness.

Therefore there is an indication that sickness can be seen as the major cause of absenteeism in workplace.

#### **4.6.2. Workplace pollution**

Apart from sickness being the major cause of absenteeism in the workplace, participants also indicated that workplace pollution can also lead to absenteeism. This was evident in LMM who indicated that one area where high absenteeism is experienced is where employees complain about being exposed to dust coming from coal, being exposed to the dust for long hours. They end up suffering from chest problems and then do not come to work.

According to LMO:

*Employees working directly in the plant i.e. those below T10 grading are more than those at T10 and above, so it would seem as though they are the ones most likely to be absent on frequent basis because they are normally exposed into dire or rather aggressive conditions of the plant as opposed to their counterparts or the abovementioned. So they get extremely tired in their original shifts, while they are still expected to come cover long outstanding vacancies on other shifts in the form overtime during their Normal-Day-Offs (NDOs) and so, they would now and again find excuses for not being able to report on duty just so they can extend their rest periods.*

LMM also stated that:

*Some areas in the department are dusty and very hot which becomes difficult for the guys to be exposed to such for a long time. There are safety measures in place to try and minimize the effect. Sometimes it does not help because if jobs are planned for a specific date they have to be done on that day. Failure to do so the department will be deemed as not complying. The other issue is some of the jobs require strength and the reality is there are ladies in the department that cannot keep up.*

In addition, MM highlighted that most employees do not like their working environment due to biased mind they have on their fellow colleagues. As such, they do not want to appear to work for fear of been bullied or insulted by another. Einarsen (2012) affirms that workplace bullying is associated with absenteeism and workplace bullying is one of the major challenges facing employers. Employers are therefore responsible for preventing bullying and harassment and they are liable for any harassment suffered by their employees. Organisations need to have their own policies in place to prevent bullying in the workplace (Fit for work, 2015).

#### **4.6.3. Work overload**

According to LMO, there are sporadic events or occasions which would require the employees to be totally swamped and engaged in tiring activities, sometimes from the time they report on duty until they punch out or go home, and that would normally happen during when a unit is returned to service with a rough run-up. But other than that, it would be daily activities whose nature of demands would also differ from one day to another.

MO indicated that he does not think his employees have a heavy daily workload because people work according to the shifts, that means there are people who work morning hours and others afternoon hours to release those who came in the morning so as to share the work and the responsibilities, so the work is shared amongst workers to reduce work load. Apart from other departments who are short of employees, hence, they are being overworked.

In addition to what MO has said, MS indicted that in the Boiler plant you are exposed to at least 300 degrees Celsius of heat which can make the job there unbearable. Whereas with the auxiliary plant the same cannot be said as it is exposed to the atmosphere. According to her,

*There are difference in types of responsibilities and nature of work areas. The plant is enormous and composite with different sub-systems or plants. Each plant is designed uniquely different to another based on functionality. This variance of design will obviously dictate how each plant is operated and how frequently it is*

*tampered with or have activities carried out on it. As such there need to be adequate number of employees to reduce the workload placed on the employees.*

Stevenson and Harper (2006) found that stress can have both positive and negative effects on individuals in the workplace. It should be noted that stress can affect each individual differently and some will experience more symptoms than others. As such, a heavy workload placed on employees can result in stress and sickness, which will in turn result in absenteeism at workplace.

#### **4.7. EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM IN THE DEPARTMENTS**



Findings from the study also revealed that absenteeism can affect the departments in the day-to-day running of the business, affect the morale of other employees and also reduce income of the business.

##### **4.7.1. Day-to-day running of the business**

According to Smith (2011) absenteeism has led to a great loss in a company's production and it presents the company with a great loss in production if many hands are not provided. To buttress this point, LMM indicated that:

*Every employee gets to be allocated to a certain or specific area of work i.e task allocation, the arrangement or planning which gets grossly disturbed or distorted if one fails to report on duty. It affects the plan and smooth running of mundane activities in the sense that work timelines are not reached in time and in that his/her burden has to be now shared by those present which when it's perpetual might end up triggering resentments to the superior by those carrying the load. It would be perpetual in the case where the superior has tried to find a substitute but in vain and now they will have to continue sharing the load until the absentee is back, which could last for the whole shift cycle.*

MO also stated that absenteeism in the workplace reduces production because a lot of work is left undone and people unattended when someone responsible for a particular authority is absent from work. Things stand still because of absenteeism and that costs the company money and reputation

Again LMM stated thus:

*Absenteeism affects production. We are working with live plant which requires continuous monitoring and also that needs to run well without defects to produce the expected Megawatts. If there is an employee short already that means another person needs to cover two areas which is frustrating and also tiring. It becomes a problem again if those two areas are having serious problems on that day. The situation gets so worse that even managers have to intervene, wear overalls and join in the plant. The national control (from Megawatt Head Office) doesn't want to understand that there are people absent. If the target it is 300MW for example 300MW is what is expected. Failure to do so there are consequences for the station. The community does not want load shedding therefore everyone needs to just come in and push the work.*

To buttress this point, MM stated thus:

*Absenteeism affects day-to-day running of the business because someone will be missing from her/ his post and things come to a standstill in her/his absence. For example, someone like a receptionist is the face of the company and in her absence there is no one to welcome the clients and take them to their different areas where they can be helped. Moreover, arriving to a receptionist desk which is empty is confusing for clients and some might leave without getting the help they came for, as a result it costs the company money and dampens the image of the company.*

The response from the participants has helped to shed more light on the quantitative data presented and discussed in relation to the effect of workplace absenteeism. It was shown in the responses that for the majority of employees, absenteeism affects the day-to-day running of the business. Managers and line managers that were interviewed have also elaborated on this effect. As presented in Chapter 2, various literature has also affirmed this effect (Nanjundeswarawamy, 2016; Cucchiella et al., 2014; Gangai 2014). Therefore, there is a need for organisations to be aware of this effect and implement better ways of dealing with the effects of absenteeism on productions.

#### **4.7.2. Affect the morale of other employees**

LMS indicated that most serious employees who are regularly present at work place are being influenced by absenteeism in workplace. She indicated that most of them take a sick leave or intentionally absent themselves from work in order to behave like the others. As such there is a need for a strict policy in relation to absenteeism because it affects other employees in the departments.

#### **4.7.3. Reduce income of the business**

According to MM:

*Absenteeism reduces our income. When workers are absent, there is no production and as such the department loses income.*

LMM also indicated that the purpose of many organisations is to make profit. If the employees are absent from the workplace, there is an indication that the profit might not be realized. Gangai (2014) is also of the opinion that absenteeism can cost an organisation in respect of paying the employees and also generating income. IBEC (2011) report that workplace absenteeism costs employers a huge amount of money annually. They reported that in Ireland, an estimated 1.5 billion or 818 Euro per employee is being lost by an organisation on the employees. From the findings and literature, it is evident that absenteeism has a great effect on the organisation and, as such, the factors that were identified as the causes of absenteeism in work place needs to be re-visited by organisations and resolved.

#### **4.8. MANAGEMENT ACTIONS IN COMBATING ABSENTEEISM**

Finding from the qualitative study also reveal that health insurance and flexible working hours have been seen by management as ways of reducing absenteeism. The qualitative findings also revealed that management of these departments have also employed various ways to combat absenteeism in the workplace. These ways include: the implementation of

strict absenteeism policies, reimbursement of staff, reducing overtime period and employing more people.

#### **4.8.1. Implementation of strict absenteeism policy**

MO indicated that employees who are absent from work without reporting their absence to their managers are subjected to a disciplinary hearing and might be given a verbal or written warning.

LMO also affirms this, saying;

*There are strict policies for employees who do not report to work. It's ESKOM's protocols to be followed when one is frequently away from work for either successively similar or different reasons. E.g. If the employee is frequently failing to report on duty alluding to being sick, the manager must discuss the concern with him or her and advise that if it continues again for the duration discretionarily determined by the manager or any superiors for that matter, to whom the employee directly reports to, he (the superior) would refer the employee to ESKOM appointed doctor to confirm his/her condition upon which when proven false, litigious steps would be taken or when true, employee medical incapacity procedure would have to be followed as advised by the ESKOM doctor. The latter would end up incapacitating the employee, thereby declaring him/her unfit to perform that particular task, which will then be followed by redeployment into an environment deemed suitable.*

Also, LMS indicated;

*There are strict policies of which one is: for instance during induction all employees are given all information there is to know about absenteeism and leave. For instance if you know you will not be able to report for duty, phone your direct supervisor. Whether you are sick, your dog is sick but do report that you won't be on site. Failure to do so you will be regarded as absent without leave.*

In addition, LMM also indicated that if a certain employee has a trend of not reporting due to being sick then the matter can be taken up with ESKOM doctor to check if the person is

sick. If they are found to be faking the sickness then necessary steps will be taken against the employee and this can lead to the employee losing his job or being suspended without pay for a certain period of time. Magee et al., (2017) indicate that managers should develop, constantly review and enforce absenteeism policies that would help to reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Munro (2007) affirms that managers should also follow-up each case of absenteeism by paying visits to sick employees, when necessary, such as those who have excessive sick leave records; and ensuring that employees are really on sick leave as claimed. Narayan and Mooij (2010) state that in order for managers to sustainably address absenteeism, there should be regular supervision of the workers by laying down codes of ethics that would guide the employees on how to behave. Therefore, there is an indication from the findings that an implementation of a strict policy on the employees as well as policies relating to work place pollution can reduce the rate of absenteeism in the organisation.



#### **4.8.2. Reimbursement of staff**

Findings from the study also view that managers can reduce the rate of absenteeism by reimbursing employees who are regular at work. This was confirmed by MO who stated:

*The employees are appraised twice a year, in June and in December, for their effort and work carried out. This is done to ensure that all the goals that are planned in the beginning of the year are still in the right direction, which is every employee is checked so as to see that he/she still does her/his duties effectively and also to motivate employees. During the appraisals we also take into consideration the regularity of the employees so as to encourage other employees to be present at work.*

In addition, LMO stated that;

*It is important to show signs of sincere appreciation of employee's inputs as this has proved to satiate and soothe their hearts and motivates them to bring even more out of themselves. This is by addressing them in person and tell them how important they are and how valuable their work is, and also buying them gift either from the cost Centre or from own pocket. The other one would be to send their names to communication office to be displayed in the organization's communication*

*mediums and by so doing, they feel appreciated. Lastly, it would be via annual nominations and awarding in the company's yearly ceremony.*

According to Thomson (2005), an employee performance appraisal is a process often combining both written and oral elements whereby management evaluates and provides feedback on employee job performance, including steps to improve or redirect activities as needed. This can be done through pay increases or promotion. Appraisals are important to help staff members improve their performance and as an avenue by which they can be rewarded or recognized for a job well done. Narayan and Mooij (2010) maintain that for managers to sustainably address absenteeism, there should be the introduction of better incentives through performance-based pay and putting in place other mechanisms that will encourage the employees to come to work. Antonioni (2006) states that appraising employees can help to:

- improve the company's productivity
- make informed personnel decisions regarding promotion, job changes, and termination
- identify what is required to perform a job (goals and responsibilities of the job)

As such, employees need to be praised for their effort in the workplace to keep them motivated and encouraged to do more and not just stay away from work.

#### **4.8.3. Reducing overtime period**

Findings from the study revealed that overtime period is being implemented in the organisation. As such, managers should try and reduce the overtime period for employees so as to avoid absenteeism. According to LMO;

*We are trying to curb the number of overtime hours worked by an employee per month as rigidly practicable as possible. This will ensure them enough rest periods and their availability in their respective shifts. We are also proposing other methods to the organized labour, which we would exploit as interim measures until recruitment gates are re-opened.*

Even though other managers that were interviewed did not say much about reducing the overtime spent on employees. This study deduced that organisations working on shifts should try to reduce overtime because it affects the ability of the employee to come to work due to the excess time spent at the workplace.

#### **4.8.4. Employing more employees**

Findings from line managers indicated absenteeism at workplace can be reduced by employing more employees.

According to LMM;

*ESKOM really needs to sort out their monetary issues. This will allow us to hire more employees or come up with precautionary measures to make the plant more conducive for the employees. These new employees can be on a standby in case there are no employees available to work at a particular time.*

MM also indicated that the organisation should employ more employees so that the current staff can alternate with the new ones. Therefore there is need for the organisation to allocate money for employment of new employees or employment of part-time employees that would be available when employees are on sick leave or intentionally did not come to work. This system will enable the organisation to continue operations and regain the income which it is supposed to generate for the business.

#### **4.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This Chapter presented the findings from the qualitative and quantitative data collected. It was found that there are various factors that affect workplace absenteeism and these include sickness, workplace pollution, workload, stress and pregnancy. It was also found that employers can employ a number of ways to reduce absenteeism and these include; implementation of strict policies, reimbursement of employees, reducing overtime period, employment of more employees that can fill in the gap of others when the need arises, provision of a health insurance policy and maintaining flexible working hours. Findings from the qualitative data collected helped the researcher to shed more light on the quantitative finding.

In the next Chapter, the conclusions and recommendations on the factors causing workplace absenteeism will be made.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe factors that cause workplace absenteeism in an ESKOM power station and identify the managerial actions to deal with absenteeism. This chapter summarises the findings and shows how the findings led to the achievement of the research objectives. It also provides recommendations on how to deal with absenteeism at the workplace and the managerial implications relating to absenteeism.

#### 5.2. REACHING OBJECTIVES- KEY FINDINGS

From the qualitative and quantitative results and findings discussed in Chapter 4, it was revealed that various factors influence voluntary workplace absenteeism. Figure 5.1 below shows the common factors which contribute to absenteeism in the power station studied.



**Figure 5.1. Factors influencing absenteeism in the power station**

### **5.2.1. Medical illness (sickness)**

It was found from the study that sickness is one of the major factors causing workplace absenteeism which can influence an employee's ability to attend work. It was found from the participants and respondents that sickness is used as a major excuse for being absent from work. The various steps that an organisation can use to address this factor was also identified in chapter 4.

### **5.2.2. Stress**

Findings from the study and literature also revealed stress as a factor that causes workplace absenteeism, and organisations are seemingly struggling in dealing with this factor. It was found that work-related stress arises where work demands exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope. Even though a small percentage of respondents laid emphasis as stress being the cause of absenteeism, literature affirms that stress is an issue that many organisations are faced with on a daily basis and many organisations are still unsure of how to deal with it (Bermingham, 2013; health touching lives, 2012).

### **5.2.3. Pregnancy**

Pregnancy also contributed to workplace absenteeism; however this was viewed by the managers as a genuine and legitimate absence. As such, managers should not be concerned about this and should provide counselling or assistance that could help the employee regain her health.

### **5.2.4. Workplace pollution**

It was also revealed in this study that a workplace that is polluted with an unsafe working environment will also discourage employees from coming to work. Some areas in the department are dusty, very hot and air-polluted, which becomes difficult for employees to work in ESKOM. It was also found that the safety regulations and measures that are put in place to control workplace pollution are not working and sometimes it does not help because if jobs are planned for a specific date they have to be done on that day. If there is

a failure to do so the department will be deemed as not complying. Hence employees are expected to work in a polluted environment which can also make them sick.

#### **5.2.5. Excessive Workload on workers**

Employees are experiencing excessive workloads, which could be a result of the absenteeism of others and this in turn makes them stressed and absent from work. It was found from the study that stress can affect the ability of employees to function accurately. This can be as a result of the excessive workload placed on the employees.

### **5.3. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

The research also paved the way for other findings in order to achieve the research objectives in the study. These include:

- The effects of absenteeism in an organisation: It was found that absenteeism in an organisation affects the productivity of the organisation. It can also cost an organisation a month's salary payment to employees and also affect the day-to-day running of the business.
- Managerial actions that can be taken to reduce absenteeism: It was also found that various managerial actions can be taken to reduce absenteeism such as: giving a bonus for no sick leave taken, better health insurance, providing flexible working hours, reducing overtime period and employment of more employees in the organisation.

### **5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY- MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the findings and discussions made in respect of factors causing workplace absenteeism, there is therefore the need for organisations to do the following about each factor that cause workplace absenteeism:

#### **Medical illness:**

- Provide an adequate health programmes for the employees. This programme should be organised by experts in health sciences. They should educate the

employees on health, fitness and avoidance of common sickness. This should be carried out in order to reduce the level of sickness among employees and also encourage regularity to work.

- Implement an awareness programme for employees and managers about the different types of leave which they are entitled to, and the procedures to be followed regarding authorised leave and unplanned circumstances which warrant absence from work. This should include workshops concerning labour relations issues and the Public Service Act (Engelbrecht, 2000:2). This would enable employees to be aware of the rules and regulations that surrounds the working environment.

### **Stress:**

- Managers should make employees aware of the selected strategies that are used by the organisation to reduce absenteeism and stress in the organisation. Provide refresher courses that would help the employees learn how to relieve stress. During this period the employees should be guided on how to cope with stress, to share their stress problems and strategies to deal with them.
- Outline the policy related to dealing with stress, workplace pollution and pregnancy leave. This policy should be made available to the employees before employment.

### **Pregnancy:**

Managers on the other hand should:

- Employ reserve workers that should be available in case of an emergency or leave taken by employees. This would enable the organisation to be productive and to avoid any loss of income.
- Provide adequate guidance and follow-up on staff that have gone on maternity leave.

### **Work overload:**

Managers should reduce the level of workload in an organisation to an acceptable level. This would ensure that employees are not stressed and overworked because these are

some of the factors found in this study that causes absenteeism in organisations such as ESKOM.

- Develop a motivation strategy, such as giving attendance bonuses to employees who report to work regularly and employees who perform a high workload, in order to encourage habitual absentees to come to work (Time 2003:42).
- Strategies such as production of more power plant machinery for supply of electricity should be employed by the organisation. In cases where there is no finance to cater for this productivity, the organisation should employ various sources of funding. These include debt or equity finance and would enable the organisation to have the necessary resources that would increase the productivity of the organisation.

## **5.5. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

In the interest of effective management of absenteeism, it is recommended that further research is done to determine why:

- Employees are following the example of colleagues who engage in absenteeism behaviour
- Employees lack the motivation to go to work
- Employees are suffering from stress-related illnesses
- Employees are attending the funerals of relatives and friends at the expense of their work
- Employees are engaged in abuse of alcohol and drugs during weekends which in turns effect their jobs

## **5.6. CONCLUDING THE STUDY**

In this dissertation, the factors causing workplace absenteeism in an ESKOM power station were identified and described. It was determined that the factors found are consistent in the three departments used for the study. The study have limitations in that

the findings cannot be generalised over the whole of ESKOM as it was only done in one power station.

Chapter one dealt with the introduction of the dissertation, the problem statement, the objectives of the dissertation and the steps required for the study.

Chapter two examined the theoretical foundations of the related research published in this area of interest. It provided an overview of the factors affecting workplace absenteeism, the effects, and managerial actions that can be taken to reduce these factors. It was found that there are many, such as stress, workload and medical illness, which cause absenteeism in organisations.

Chapter three explored the mixed method research for the study. It gave descriptions on the research approach, research paradigm, the data collection instrument that was used for the study, the method of analysing the data and the ethical considerations observed by the researcher.

Chapter four presented the results and findings of the research. In alignment with the literature, the study also revealed that there are various factors that affect workplace absenteeism, and these include sickness, aggressive working environment, workload, stress and pregnancy. It was also found that employers can employ a number of ways to reduce absenteeism, and these include; implementation of strict policies, reimbursement to employees, reducing overtime period, employment of more employees that can fill the gap of others when the need arises, provision of health insurance policy and maintaining flexible working hours. Findings from the qualitative data collected helped the researcher to shed more light on the quantitative findings.

Chapter five combined all insights from the previous chapters into a conclusion of the results with recommendations for future research. This dissertation presented an account of the major factors affecting workplace absenteeism in an ESKOM Power Station. Finally, the researcher made a number of recommendations.

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## ANNEXURE A

### FACTORS CAUSING WORKPLACE ABSEENTESIM IN A SELECTED POWER STATION OF ESKOM

#### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYEES

Please complete all the sections

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. How many years have you been employed in ESKOM?  
Less than 6 years   
6-15 year   
15-25 years   
26 years and longer
2. Gender :Male   
Female
3. Please indicate your age in bracket  
18-25   
26-35   
36-45   
46-55   
56+
4. What department do you work in?  
Maintenance   
Operating   
SHEQ
5. Have you been absent out of own choice from work in the past 12 months?

Yes

No

6. If yes how, how many days have you been absent?

1-3

4-7

8+

## SECTION B: WORKPLACE ABSENTEEISM, CAUSES AND EFFECT

1. The following are some of the most common reasons for absenteeism as found in the literatures. Please indicate which of these has caused you to be absent from work in the past 12 months.

Minor illness

Stress

Mental health

Drug related illness

Pregnancy

Other specify

2. Have you ever been forced to come to work even when you were sick?

Yes

No

If yes, why?

3. Do you feel that absenteeism is an issue in your department?

Yes

No

4. How would you rate your current workload?

Average

Above average

Slightly stressful

Highly stressful

5. How much do you think it costs your organisation for you to be absent for one day?

One day salary payment

One day salary payment + additional cost

Nothing

I don't know

6. Which of the following do you think is an effect of absenteeism in an organisation?

Reduce productivity

Stress on other workers

Financial Cost

Other specify

7. Are you aware of any managerial action that is used to control absenteeism in your department?

Yes

No

If yes, expand

8. Do you have any comment to make in respect of ways in which your department can reduce employee absenteeism?

Yes

No

If yes, comment.

## INTERVIEW GUIDE - MANAGERS/ LINE MANAGERS

Greet and explain process

Obtain consent

1. Please define absenteeism in the workplace as you view it
2. Are your employees absent from work on a regular basis? If yes, explain the causes of their absenteeism.
3. In what way(s) does employee absenteeism affect the department?
4. Are there any policies in the department that regulate employee's absenteeism? If yes, explain an example of such policies.
5. Explain the level of workload placed on an employee in a day.
6. Do you think employees are satisfied with the nature of their work? Explain with any examples.
7. In what way do you appraise your employees and when does such appraisal arise?
8. What are the managerial actions that are currently used to reduce workplace absenteeism in your department?
9. In your opinion, how can workplace absenteeism be reduced?

Thank the participant



## ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom,  
South Africa, 2520

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**Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory  
Committee**

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Email: [Ethics@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Ethics@nwu.ac.za)

### ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by the **Human Resource Research Ethics Committee (HRREC)** on **16/05/2017**, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby **approves** your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

**Project title:** Factors causing workplace absenteeism in a selected power station of Eskom.

**Project Leader/Supervisor:** Prof Y Du Plessis

**Student:** OP Kegakilwe

**Ethics**

number:

N	W	U	-	0	0	4	7	1	-	1	7	-	A	9
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Institution

Project Number

Year

Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

**Application Type:** Master's

**Commencement date:** 10/05/2017

**Expiry date:** 10/05/2020

**Risk:**

**N/A**

#### Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- x Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HRREC (if applicable).
- x Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HRREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

#### General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- x The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via HRREC:
  - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
  - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- x The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the HRREC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- x The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via HRREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- x In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and HRREC retains the right to:
  - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
  - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
    - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
    - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the HRREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
    - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
    - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- x HRREC can be contacted for further information via [Estie.Emtoch@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Estie.Emtoch@nwu.ac.za) or 018 289 2873.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or HRREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

**Prof LA** Digitally signed by  
Prof LA Du Plessis  
*Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)*

**CONSENT LETTER**

**APPENDIX D**

1719 Ramosadi Village

Mafikeng

2745

07 September 2017

**To:** Power station Manager

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT A SURVEY**

I am writing to seek permission to submit questionnaires to all employees in operations, maintenance and SHREQ departments for the purpose of data and information gathering. I will also conduct interviews with the managers and selected line managers in these departments. I am a registered student and currently busy with research for an MBA at the North-West University. The title of the research is "Factors causing workplace absenteeism in a selected power station of ESKOM". The study is undertaken towards the fulfilment of the requirements for the MBA.

Enclosed please find a copy of the questionnaire and Interview guide for your perusal. Your consideration will be appreciated. All information will be treated as confidential and no reference will be made to a specific service or authority.

Yours sincerely  
OP Kegakilwe

