INVESTIGATION TO IDENTIFY THE INHIBITORS AND FACILITATORS OF EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM IN A MINING ENVIRONMENT

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work enclosed in the dissertation is my own original work, except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for fulfilment of a degree.

Dianne Elizabeth Magda Williamson

Date: October 2015
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Honour and glory are due to the almighty God. I am grateful for the strength, courage and the ability he gave me to persevere to the end.
ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to identify the facilitators and inhibitors of excessive absenteeism in a mining environment.

Absenteeism can be one of the most important human resource issues in any organisation. Absenteeism can be really difficult, but with good understanding of what causes absenteeism and how to reduce it, organisations can limit the negative side effects of employee attendance issues.

Absenteeism is not only a behaviour caused by an individual’s characteristics, but also system behaviour of organisations, and it harmfully affects performance in organisations. It is a multifaceted problem that needs investigation.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction

Absenteeism is a very important challenge in most organisations. Absenteeism is defined as the non-attendance of an employee when scheduled to work. Research on absenteeism is important due to the potentially disruptive effect it has on operations within the organisation, as well as the related costs involved, according to Van Dyk (2004:548). Many South African organisations are experiencing high absenteeism rates, which the organisation cannot afford. Sometimes due to poor management the monitoring of absenteeism is neglected and can have serious implications if not properly managed.

Robbins (2005:27) stated that, for instance, illness, fatigue or excess stress can significantly decrease an employee's productivity. In jobs in which an employee needs to be alert – surgeons and airline pilots are obvious examples – it may well be better for the organisation if the employee does not report to work rather than show up and perform poorly. Further, Robbins et al. (2010:21) stated that absenteeism presents a huge cost and disruption to employers. A recent survey revealed the average cost of absence to United Kingdom employers was nearby €800 per employee per year. The Confederation for British Industry (CBI) believes that absenteeism levels are the main reason why United Kingdom productivity lags behind the United States and some parts of Europe. Are all absences bad? Probably not. Although most absences have a negative impact on the organisation, we can conceive of situations in which the organisation may benefit by an employee voluntarily choosing not to come to work.

Absenteeism, turnover and job satisfaction are also reactions to an individual's perceptions. Dissatisfaction with working conditions and the
belief that an organisation lacks promotion opportunities are judgements based on attempts to create meaning out of the job. Managers must spend time on an interpretation of the employee's conclusion that a job is good or bad for understanding how individuals interpret reality. When there is a significant difference between what someone sees and what exists, they must try to eliminate the distortions (Robbins et al., 2010:129). Managers should, however, bear in mind that the employee may be exposed in the work situation to quite a variety of factors that may lead to high absenteeism and low productivity. The reasons for absenteeism may be personal problems, such as family problems, divorce, alcoholism and stress. Productivity loss due to absenteeism is a serious and growing challenge, as well as time lost due to accidents and other unscheduled occurrences, according to Van Wyk (2004:15).

This impact on production and loss of productivity has a ripple effect on the economy as a whole, both directly and indirectly. It adds to the cost and reduces the quality of service. It places an additional burden on employers and workers especially at critically important times. Absence control can often be an important step in the process of reducing business costs. Because of competitive pressures, companies can no longer afford to carry unnecessary absence like that which they may have tolerated in the past. Therefore, many companies are focusing on the issue of eliminating, or at least reducing, unnecessary levels of absence, according to Coughlan (2004).

Teamwork and performance pay appear to promote shirking in the form of absenteeism. Of course, it is possible that teams can generate "spare effort" so as to be able to cover absence of team-mates and continue the production process without undue disruption. Then shirking and absenteeism can co-exist with higher productivity. But the adverse effect of teamwork on absenteeism is only apparent when production units receive performance-related pay. Our result of increased absenteeism from performance pay and
teamwork stands in stark contrast to the findings of Heywood and Jirjahn (2004) who observed that, across a sample of German manufacturing firms, those firms which used teamwork had lower absence rates. One reason why a combination of performance pay and teamwork leads to increased absenteeism is that, with teamwork, production units can cover for absent colleagues. For example, workers can take turns to take an unauthorised day of absence each month knowing that colleagues will conceal this from the company, according to Van der Walt (2010). Mining is a dangerous environment whereby absenteeism is the leading indicator among other human resource issues. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 stipulates that an employee is entitled to certain types of authorised leave during the currency of the employment relationship. Examples would include annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, and family responsibility leave.

Trust is important in organisations (as it is in any relationship), but it is even more important when employees face ambiguity or uncertainty, or when employees feel vulnerable (Barbera et al., 2009:48). Judge et al. (2005:347) revealed that people are unlikely to look up to or follow someone whom they perceive as dishonest or who is likely to take advantage of them. Trust consistently ranks as the top of most people’s list of characteristics they admire in their supervisors.

Where an employee is absent without leave / absent without notifying his supervisor or employer, a disciplinary hearing is held on his return according to the policies and disciplinary code. According to Venter (2008: 344) usually a satisfactory medical doctor’s certificate is required for absence of longer than two days. Should the doctor’s certificate not be satisfactory, or should the employee fail to produce a certificate at all, he may be disciplined for being away from work without the necessary leave. Even quite modest rates of absence can be costly for an organisation. Despite these costs, many organisations maintain surprisingly poor absence records, which mean that obtaining good evidence about absence is often
difficult. Another difficulty is that, even when organisations keep good
records, establishing the types and causes of absence events is problematic.
According to these reasons it seems that, managers realise that to control
absenteeism is a huge problem that they have to consider.

For the purpose of this study the focus is on Sishen Mine in the Northern
Cape that is experiencing problems with absenteeism. This is also the
leading indicator in the Human Resource Department at the Mining
Department. There is a need to determine what inhibits and facilitates
excessive absenteeism in order to promote attendance in the organisation.
This can assist in improving productivity and employee wellness in general.

1.2 Nature of the Problem

Excessive absenteeism is normally a symptom of other organisational
problems. Robbins identified absenteeism, turnover, citizenship, deviance,
productivity and job satisfaction as outcomes of organisational behaviour.
These outcomes are affected by organisational behaviour at individual, group
and organisational levels. Excessive absenteeism in the mine is evident from
the following statistics.

The study will be conducted at Sishen Mine in the Northern Cape with the
most evidence of absenteeism at the Mining Department. Sishen Mine has a
work force of 5050 permanent employees. No more than one shift of 353
employees will be taken and only truck operators will be participating in the
study. According to the statistics of absenteeism generated by Human
Resource Management, the statistics are as follow.

From January up to March 2012 a total number of 1202 absences were
experienced among the work force and from April to June 2012 about 1334
were experienced. When evaluating the reasons behind such an enormous
number of absenteeism cases, the reasons provided were due to sick leave, day leave and absence without permission. Sick leave for January till March was 803, day leave was 327 and absent without permission was 72. From April up to June 2012 sick leave was 992, day leave was 302 and absent without permission was 40. When evaluating these figures it is evident that sick leave is the highest contributing factor to absenteeism, and in many sections within the organisation certain employees seem to be absenting themselves on a regular basis.

These high rates cost the company a lot of money and management would like to minimise or reduce the absenteeism rate and return to improved productivity. In the case of an employer, if the workplace culture isn’t open and honest, it won’t create employee satisfaction, and he/she will experience turnover and a lack of productivity that will cost money, ideas and time. On the other hand, if the work environment is ethical, productive and positive, people will stay – and stay committed. They’ll drive the company forward. (Convey & Merrill- 2006:252).

These statistics show that it is impossible for any company to operate smoothly and to achieve the company’s goals and objectives. In addition to that, if there are not enough employees at work it increases the workload of fellow employees, reduces productivity and increases the cost of contract labour or overtime work. Knowledge in this regard will enable better policies regarding sick leave to manage sick leave and absence from work. One of the employee’s principal obligations to a contract of employment is to render services to the employer, from the agreed date, and for the duration of the contract (R Venter, 2008:267). In terms of this obligation, the employee must be available at the place of work during the times specified in the contract. Any unauthorised absence (meaning that no medical certificate or acceptable reason can be provided) from work during the specified working hours, if continuously depending on the circumstances of the absence, will constitute either absenteeism or desertion.
It seems like absenteeism is a behaviour that management never can eliminate, but they can control and manage it. Management strive to come up with initiatives, for example, give various incentives for the employees like extra vouchers for employees working on public holidays and certificates to employees who never take sick leave. However, despite all these efforts the organisation is still battling to reduce absence amongst the employees.

1.3 Research objective

The objective of this dissertation is to identify the facilitators and inhibitors of excessive absenteeism in an organisation.

1.4 Limitations

The small sample consists of 20 employees within a section of the Mining Department at Sishen Mine in the Northern Cape. The researcher will target this section because this is the production area in the mine that has a high rate of absenteeism. Most of the employees are male employees and truck operators who are working shifts. The findings will only be applicable to this specific area in the organisation, but could be relevant to the rest of the mine, because some of the other departments also work shifts. The researcher will make use of the questionnaire method with the intention of addressing the research objectives.

1.5 Overview of dissertation

This dissertation has been structured in five chapters. Chapter one provides an introductory discussion of the research problem. Sometimes it is expected that low satisfaction levels would be related to high rates of absenteeism and vice versa.
Chapter two provides a literature review on the nature of organisational behaviour and excessive employee absenteeism. This chapter will give an in-depth discussion of absenteeism with the focus on what causes employees to be more absent and what will cause employees to be less absent.

Chapter three will deal with the research methodology. This covers aspects of the research design, the sampling method, the manner in which data were gathered, the procedure for data collection, and the measuring instruments used for the study.

Chapter four provides discussions and findings of the results, analysing the data of the questionnaires.
Chapter five contains specific conclusions and recommendations that were deducted from the literature review and research findings that may be of value in future research.
2.1 Definition of absenteeism

Robbins (2011) defines absenteeism as the failure to report to work, which means a huge cost and disruption to employers. He further mentions that it is difficult for an organisation to operate smoothly and attain its objectives if employees fail to report to their jobs. The workflow is disrupted and important decisions may be delayed. High levels of absenteeism beyond normal have a direct impact on any organisation’s effectiveness and efficiency.

Absent does not only mean not being at work. Absent also means arriving late or poor timekeeping; as long as the employee is not at work it still means being absent. Leaving early again still means absent because the employee is not at work before the end of the business day. When extending tea or lunch breaks, the employee is not at the workstation and therefore he or she is absent. When attending to private business during working hours, the employee is at work, but is not attending to his/her duties in terms of the employment contract, and is therefore absent. Other employees go to the extent of pretending being sick, thus making unnecessary visits to the clinic or taking time off to “visit the doctor” which they never do, because they do not need a medical certificate for less than two days of absence (Claassen, 2010).

Cascio (2003) defines absenteeism as “any failure of an employee to report for or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of the reason”. He points out that the term “as scheduled carries significance in that it automatically excludes holidays (annual leave), court cases, and maternity leave”. This definition also eliminates the problem of determining whether an absence is excusable or not, for example, in the case of verified illnesses.

According to the Webster’s Dictionary, “Absenteeism is the practice or habit of being an absentee and an absentee is one who habitually stays away”.
According to J Juius “Absenteeism is the failure of the workers to report on the job when they are scheduled to work”.

Babaita (2008) refers to employees who are absent without authorisation for reasons which are within their control, for instance, when an employee feigns sickness and it can be proven that she/he was not sick, in which case she/he is guilty of culpable absenteeism. To be culpable is to be blameworthy. From a labour relations perspective this means that progressive discipline can be applied. This type of non-attendance is addressed through progressive discipline. The four key types of culpable absenteeism are lateness/leaving early; failure to notify; absence without leave, and abuse of leave).

Disselkamp (2009:104) stated that absenteeism comes in three “strains“:

- Planned (scheduled) absences: vacation, PTO, leaves (military, jury duty, personal, and so forth);
- Unplanned and unscheduled absence: sickness, disability, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), worker’s compensation, and leaves such as unpaid, bereavement, and so forth; and
- Partial shift absences: Late arrival, early departure, long breaks, personal appointments, and so forth. Productivity suffers because of absenteeism. Unexpected calls-offs, late arrivals, and illnesses all disrupt the planned activities and waste the time of managers and supervisors who have to process them and adjust staffing. Absenteeism of any type increases costs and impedes productivity, and employees who work excessive overtime to cover for absent workers or who work in jobs for which they are not properly skilled, are more likely to have accidents and succumb to poor health.

An employee, who misses work, even part of a day, is costly for an employer. The company repeatedly must pay for those unproductive hours – for example, by providing sick pay to an employee who calls in sick. In addition, the other employees may be less productive when they have to cover for someone who is absent or tardy. Effective action against tardiness and
absenteeism targets the cause of this problem behaviour. Employees who are truly sick should take time off. The company provides sick days for good reason: to allow employees to rest and recover and to prevent them from infecting the rest of the labour force. The trouble arises with absence that is unexcused or recurs with suspicious regularity. Adding up, missing work is often a sign of a deeper problem, such as a family crisis, anger about something at work, or plans to leave the organisation, according to Certo (2008:316).

2.2 Absenteeism as an organisational behaviour

Organisational Behaviour is a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structure have on behaviour within organisations, for the purpose of applying such facts toward improving an organisation's effectiveness (Robbins, 2005). There are three levels of breakdown in organisational, behaviour. As we move from the individual level, through the group level, to the organisation systems level, we add systematically to our understanding of behaviour in organisations. The three basic levels are like building blocks; each level is constructed on the previous level.

2.2.1 DEPENDENT VARIABLES

2.2.1.1 Productivity:

An organisation is productive if it achieves its goals and do so by transferring inputs to outputs at the lowest possible cost, since productivity implies a concern for both effectiveness and efficiency. Organisations in service industries also need to include "attention to customer needs and requests" in assessing their effectiveness. Why? Because in these types of businesses, there is a clear chain of cause-and-effect running from employee attitudes and behaviour to customer attitudes and behaviour to an organisation's revenues and profits (Robbins, 2011).
2.2.1.2 Absenteeism:

Absenteeism is defined as the failure to report to work. Absenteeism has become a huge cost and disruption to employers. Although most absences have a negative impact on the organisation, we can conceive of situations in which the organisation may benefit by an employee’s voluntarily choosing not to come to work. For instance, poor health, fatigue, or overload stress can significantly reduce an employee’s productivity. In jobs in which an employee needs to be attentive – surgeons and airline pilots are obvious examples – it may well be better for the organisation if the employee does not report to work rather than show up and perform poorly.

2.2.1.3 Turnover:

The monitoring of absenteeism and labour turnover is a human resources function which is often neglected, and which also has employment relations implications if not appropriately managed, for example, Nel et al. (2006:156) states 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 keep an eye on finding reasons for high turnover and absenteeism.

Holbeche (2009:41) stated that in the UK at the time of writing there was the highest level of employment on record. Registered vacancies were escalating and there was an increase in the amount of employers reporting skill shortages, despite predicted downturns in the economy for the short term. Retention will be the key to avoiding talent shortages. Turnover is highest amongst young workers and over 25% of 20-24 year-olds were working for a different employer a year before.

Turnover is the voluntary permanent withdrawal from an organisation. A high turnover rate results in increased recruiting, selection, and training costs. In addition, a high rate of turnover can disrupt the efficient running of an organisation when knowledgeable and experienced personnel leave and replacements must be found and prepared to assume positions of
responsibility. Turnover often involves the loss of people the organisation doesn’t want to lose. For instance, one study covering 900 employees who had resigned their jobs found that 92 percent earned performance ratings of “satisfactory” or better from their superiors. So when turnover is excessive, or when it involves valuable performers, it can be a disruptive factor, hindering the organisation’s effectiveness (Robbins, 2010).

2.2.1.4 Organisational citizenship:

According to Truss, Mankin and Kelliher (2012: 226), organisational citizenship behaviour refers to extra-role activities, such as helping others or going beyond the call of duty, that employees may perform in relation to their work. It would be reasonable to assume that an engaged employee would be more likely to perform organisational citizenship behaviour than would a disengaged employee.

Robbins (2011) states that organisational citizenship behaviour is discretionary behaviour, that is not part of an employee’s formal job requirements, but that nevertheless promotes the effective functioning of the organisation. Victorious organisations need employees who will do more than their usual job duties – who will provide performance that is beyond expectations. Nowadays, in the dynamic workplace where tasks are increasingly done in teams and where flexibility is critical, organisations need employees who will engage in “good citizenship” behaviours such as helping others on their team, volunteering for extra work, avoiding pointless conflicts, respecting the spirit as well as the letter of policy and regulations, and gracefully tolerating the occasional work-related impositions and nuisances.

Nevertheless, as Lee and Allen (2002) showed, distinct forms of organisational citizenship behaviour do not relate to the same measures of job satisfaction. In particular, these researchers distinguished two clusters of organisational citizenship behaviours: organisational citizenship behaviours directed at individuals and organisational citizenship behaviour directed at organisations. When both forms of work fulfilment were included in the same
analysis, only affective job satisfaction, as represented by effects that are elicited by the job, was positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviours directed at individuals. In contrast, only cognitive job satisfaction, gauged by a measuring of judgments about work, was positively associated with organisational citizenship behaviour directed at organisations.

2.2.1.5 Job satisfaction:

Job satisfaction is defined as a collection of feelings that an individual holds toward his or her job. The belief that satisfied employees are more productive than dissatisfied employees has been an essential view among managers for years. Although much evidence questions that assumed causal relationship, it can be argued that highly developed societies should be concerned not only with the quantity of life – that is, concerns such as higher productivity and material acquisitions – but also with its quality.

Satisfaction is not negatively related to absenteeism and turnover, but, they agree, organisations have a responsibility to provide employees with jobs that are challenging and intrinsically rewarding. Therefore, although job satisfaction represents an attitude rather than a behaviour, organisational behaviour researches typically consider it an important dependent variable. In the organisation when there is no satisfaction there is a cause for absenteeism. Swanepoel, Erasmus, van Wyk and Schenk (2003:26) refer to one of the causes for absenteeism as boredom. An example is that in 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.

2.2.2 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

What are the determinants of productivity, absenteeism, turnover, and organisational citizen behaviour and job satisfaction? Our answer to that question brings us to the independent variables. An independent variable is
the presumed cause of some change in the dependent variable. Consistent with our belief that organisational behaviour can best be understood when viewed essentially as a set of increasingly complex building blocks, the base, or first level, of our model lies in understanding individual behaviour.

2.2.2.1 Individual-level variables

It has been assumed that "managers, unlike parents, must work with used, not new, human beings – human beings whom others have gotten to first. When individuals enter an organization, they are a bit like used cars. Each is different. Some are low-mileage"– They have been treated carefully and have had only limited exposure to the realities of the elements. This metaphor indicates that people enter organisations with certain intact characteristics that will influence their behaviour at work. The more obvious of these are personal biographical characteristics such as age and gender; personality characteristics; an inherent emotional framework; values and attitudes; and basic ability levels. These characteristics are essentially in place when an individual enters the workforce, and, for the most part, there is little management can do to alter them. Yet they have a very real impact on employee behaviour.

2.2.2.2 Group-level variables

The behaviour of people in groups is more than the sum total of all the individuals acting in their own way. The complexity of our model is increased when we acknowledge that people's behaviour when they are in groups is different from their behaviour when they are alone. Therefore, the next step in the development of an understanding of organisational behaviour is the study of group behaviour. This group are influenced by the patterns of behaviour they are expected to exhibit, what the group consider to be acceptable standards of behaviour, and the degree to which group members are attracted to each other (Robbins, 2003).
2.2.2.3 Organisation systems level variable

Organisational behaviour reaches its highest level of sophistication when we add formal structure to our previous knowledge of individual and group behaviour. Just as groups are more than the sum of their individual members, so are organisations more than the sum of their member groups. The design of the formal organisation; the organisational internal culture; and the organisation's human resource policies and practices (that is, selection processes, training and development programs, performance evaluation methods) all have an impact on the dependent variables.

2.3 Types of absenteeism

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997 makes provision for the following leave types according to Chapter 6 – Labour Law

Leave can be annual (yearly) leave, sick leave, maternity leave, family responsibility leave, or unpaid leave.

2.3.1 Annual leave

- Every employee is entitled to 21 consecutive days paid leave per year. This is the equivalent of three weeks time off and for the employee who works “a five day week,” this leave amounts to fifteen working days. An employee, who normally works six days every week, is entitled to 18 working days leave which is also 21 consecutive days of leave.
- The employee is entitled to take 21 days all in one go, but can choose to use the annual leave to take occasional days off work. The employer then deducts these days of occasional leave that an employee took during the year from the annual leave.
- Annual leave must be taken within 6 months of the end of an annual leave cycle (a year’s work).
• If the employee is off work on any other kind of leave, these days do not count as part of annual leave. Another way of saying this is that annual leave cannot be taken at the same time as sick leave, family responsibility leave or maternity leave.

• If the leave period covers a public holiday, then the public holiday does not count as part of the employee's leave. (Paid public holidays are: 1 January: New Year's Day; 21 March: Human Rights Day; Good Friday; Family Day; 27 April: Freedom Day; 1 May: Employees' day; 16 June: Youth Day; 9 August: National Women's Day; 24 September: Heritage Day; 16 December: Day of Reconciliation; 25 December: Christmas Day; 26 December: Day of Goodwill.)

• Annual leave cannot be taken during the notice period.

• Leave pay is not a bonus on top of normal pay. It simply means that an employee gets a holiday every year, and gets normal pay for those days. If an employee doesn't take leave, or all the leave, the employer will not pay out leave pay instead of leave.

• If an employee leaves a job without having taken all the leave that is due to him/her, the employee must be paid for the days of leave that he/she have not taken. This is called pro rata leave pay.

2.3.2 Sick Leave

• A permanent employee is entitled to paid sick leave of 30 days over any three year cycle (26 days if the employee works a six day week). During the first six months that an employee works for an employer, she or he gets one day paid sick leave for every 26 days worked. Once all these paid sick leave days are used up, the employer does not have to pay the employee when he or she is off sick. An employee who works more than 24 hours during any month earns one day leave for every 26 days worked.

• Seasonal or temporary employees are entitled to one day sick leave for very 26 days worked over the first six month cycle.
• Employees who are sick for more than two days may be required to produce a doctor’s certificate. If an employee lives on the premises and it is difficult for them to get to a doctor (for example, in rural areas), the employee does not have to produce a certificate unless the employer gives the employee reasonable assistance to get the certificate.

• Sick leave pay is not a bonus on top of normal pay. It simply means that if an employee is genuinely sick and has to take time off work, the employer must pay the employee up to a certain number of days. For example, if a waitress in a restaurant only took three days sick leave this year, the employer does not owe her money for the remaining sick leave days at the end of the year.

2.3.3 Maternity leave

• Women employees are entitled to four months unpaid maternity leave. During this time, the employee may draw maternity benefits from the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

• This period of maternity leave is unpaid and the employee can, if she wishes, go on maternity leave four weeks before the expected date of birth, and stay off work for another three weeks after the child is born.

• If the mother wants to come back to work earlier than six weeks after her child has been born a doctor must give a certificate saying that this is safe for the mother to do.

• An employer may agree to let an employee take extra days of annual leave, or the employee may be sick for longer than the paid sick leave. Then the employer does not have to pay the employee for these days.

2.3.4 Family responsibility leave

• Every employee with more than four months service with an employer, and who works on more than four days a week, is entitled to three days paid family responsibility leave per year. This can be taken if a
direct family member dies, (this includes a wife or husband or a life partner, the employee's parent, child, adopted child, grandchild or brother or sister) or when the employee's child is born or if the child is ill. A total of three days is allocated for this kind of leave and not three days for each event.

2.3.5 Absent without leave

If an employee takes leave without getting permission from the employer and is not sick, the employer does not have to pay the employee for the time taken off. If the employee takes off many days in a row (normally more than four consecutive days) without permission, and without communicating with the employer, the employer may presume that the employee has deserted (left without giving notice) his or her employment. The employer may employ someone else to do the job. In this case the employer may dismiss the employee and will not be required to give the employee notice. However, if the worker returns, a fair dismissal procedure must be followed.

Notice

- During the first six months of employment, employees will be entitled to at least one week's notice of the termination of their service.
- After the first six months, but during the first year of employment, employees will be entitled to a two week's notice.
- If they have worked for more than one year, employees are entitled to a four week's notice.
- If an employment contract has a longer period of notice than the BCEA, the longer notice must be given and it must be the same for both the employee and the employer.
- Notice works both ways! If an employee resigns without giving the employer the correct amount of notice, for example one week, the employer can claim one week's pay from the employee.
- Notice must be in writing.
• Neither the employer nor the employee can give notice while the employee is on annual leave.

2.3.6 Unpaid leave

An employer may agree to let an employee take extra days of annual leave, or the employee may be sick for longer than the paid sick leave period. Then the employer does not have to pay the employee for these days.

2.3.7 Presenteeism

Presenteeism is defined as the productivity that is lost when employees come to work but, as a result of illness or other medical conditions are not totally productive. Employees who work when ill are more prone to injury and, if contagious, increase the risk of passing on an illness to other employees. It is understandable that presenteeism is a recurrent problem which urgently needs to be addressed if we are to reduce further negative effects to businesses and the economy. By investing in the health of staff, employers can reduce presenteeism rates, thereby improving productivity and, in the long run, generating a positive impact on business bottom line. Main causes of presenteeism are

• unhealthy lifestyles – A person’s health status can influence the occurrence of a health condition that can cause presenteeism. A healthy diet, regular exercise, not smoking and a moderate alcohol intake can decrease the probability of a chronic health condition;
• workers with illnesses going to work – Sick workers suffer from lower productivity and can spread infection to colleagues. A contagion spread by a single ill worker can impose health costs on a company, which can be several times higher than the direct cost of absenteeism of the specific worker;
• allergies and asthma – Workers suffering from allergies or asthma can be seriously impaired in their workplace performance by these diseases; and
- poor work-life balance and high levels of job-related stress – Job dissatisfaction and stress in the job can cause serious mental problems for individuals and result in higher probabilities of mental health conditions, like burnout syndrome or depression.

Illness has a direct effect on both the quality and quantity of work undertaken by employees. For example, staff may work more slowly than usual, make more mistakes or need to repeat tasks. This lower productivity translates to higher costs for employers, according to Medibank (2011:5).

According to Jones (2009), presenteeism refers to attending work while ill. Presenteeism has become a subject of interest. Although some definitional confusion will be addressed in what follows, the most recent scholarly conception of presenteeism involves showing up at work when one is ill. Excitement concerning the subject has been fuelled by claims that working while ill causes much more aggregate productivity loss than absenteeism (e.g., Collins et al., 2005) and by the idea that managing presenteeism effectively could be a distinct source of competitive advantage (Hemp, 2004).

From an organisational viewpoint, Hemp (2004) opines that the relative invisibility of presenteeism compared to absence makes its management an important source of competitive advantage, especially given an estimated $150 billion cost in the US alone. The vehicle for this is said to be state-of-the-art pharmaceutical treatment that attenuates productivity loss when attending while ill: ‘Emerging evidence suggests that relatively small investments in screening, treatment, and education can reap substantial productivity gains’ (Hemp, 2004:50).

Indeed, Burton, Morris and Wertheimer (2003) review evidence that pharmaceuticals can stem productivity loss accompanying presenteeism. Presenteeism has the potential to serve as a mechanism for theoretical advantages. For one thing, it has the ability to contribute to the literature on absenteeism by addressing the gray area that exists between no productivity
(i.e., absenteeism) and full work engagement. In part, this could occur by filling the serious gaps in our understanding of how absence episodes start and how decisions to return to work are affected.

From a health viewpoint, the interest in presenteeism provides a medium for searching the loosely joined but important connections among having a medical condition, defining oneself as ill, and engaging in work behaviours related with assuming a sick role (Johnson, 2008).

Work-Life balance and presenteeism

Presenteeism is a recently applied description used to explain circumstances where employees are attending work while ill (physically or mentally) and so unable to function properly (Hemp, 2004:49), although others offer a broader definition that incorporates the idea that it is not necessarily linked to overwork. Presenteeism is acknowledged as being disadvantageous to both individuals and employers (Hemp, 2004) and yet it is encouraged in organisations, because it is the only means by which employees can demonstrate what they believe to be the commitment expected by employers. However, there may be reward mechanisms designed to cut down on malingering (BBC 224) (Author removed for review purposes 1999, Author removed for review purposes 2006a), according to Ashman and Gibson (2010), Volume 1, Number 3.

Absenteeism and presenteeism can be influenced by a number of factors, including the nature of the health problem itself, the objective and perceived characteristics of work, organisational policies and procedures, and wider cultural and socio-economic context. Peoples' beliefs, attitudes, and social norms as well as more objective contextual factors are important in understanding presenteeism, absenteeism, and return to work behaviour. Knowing a person's beliefs about their illness is important in its management, because these beliefs drive coping strategies and actions, ability to cope, recovery and treatment choices and compliance. In the context of work, both
employees' and managers' beliefs about sickness nonattendance and presence and return to work are vital in understanding absenteeism and presenteeism behaviour, according to Wynne-Jones et al. (2010:31).

Masin and Griffin noted, for example, that “absenteeism is likely to be subject to social influence, dictating how much absence is acceptable, and on what occasions absence is justified” (2003:668). Given these social-contextual factors, consensus surrounding absence norms, and perhaps more importantly absence behaviour, should emerge among employees within a unit because they work in an environment where the social and physical work context is generally constant. In other words, social influences should restrict within-group variance and promote larger between-group variance (Rentsch & Steel, 2003).

2.4 Facilitators of excessive absenteeism

Excessive absenteeism is defined as a rate of absenteeism that exceeds a level socially constructed by management as “reasonable”, with data derived from the formal organisation itself or its broader environment serving as a basis for managers’ inferences as for what is considered “reasonable”, according to Bamberg and Biron (2006:180). Absenteeism can be a costly problem for any business, but the impact on small businesses can be especially severe. Employers can control excessive absenteeism by creating an atmosphere where good attendance is valued. A formal attendance policy can help ensure that attendance problems are dealt with fairly.

In order to identify the causes and degree of absenteeism, proper records should be kept in each department for different causes of absenteeism such as age, sex, days of the week and classes of jobs by each division. Usually the following reasons are attributable for absenteeism at work:

- Nature of the work
- Poor working conditions
• Absence of regular leave arrangements
• Accidents
• Poor control
• Irregular transport facilities
• Lack of interest
• Being in debt
• Alcoholism and gambling habits
• Low level of wages
• Miscellaneous causes (Nov 10, 2009)

2.4.1 Personal factors

2.4.1.1 Personal attitude: The attitude one carries to work says a lot about the person. Employees with strong ethics will respect their work and appreciate the contribution they make to their companies. Such employees will not engage themselves in taking unscheduled leave. On the other hand, employees with very low or no work ethics are undisciplined and have a lot of integrity and behavioural issues. Since they feel no obligation towards the company, absenteeism comes easily to them.

2.4.1.2 Age

The younger employees are often impatient. They feel like spending time with their associates and having fun, rather than being tied down with work responsibility. This lack of ownership often leads them to take unauthorised time off. With age, people gain experience and maturity, which make them focused and responsible. Their approach is professional and they rather stick to their chairs to get the work done. If ever they are found absent, then it could be due to sickness.

2.4.1.3 Seniority

Employees, who have been with the company for a lengthy period, are well-adjusted with the working culture and the job. As a result, they find no
reason to be absent without permission. On the other hand, new hires are more prone to taking ad hoc breaks to unwind themselves.

2.4.1.4 Gender

Women generally do a balancing act by shuffling their time between home and work. Family being their foremost priority, they don’t think twice before taking a day off.

2.4.2. Workplace factors

2.4.2.1 Stress

The pressure at work sometimes takes a toll on the employees. This results in increased levels of stress. The employees then resort to excuses that can help them stay away from work.

2.4.2.2 Work routine

Undertaking the same job over a period of time can get monotonous. The employees find the job functions boring. They prefer to do something interesting rather than come to work.

2.4.2.3 Job satisfaction

If employees do not find their job challenging, dissatisfaction creeps in. That leads to more absenteeism.

2.5 Inhibitors of excessive absenteeism

2.5.1 Organisational commitment

Behavioural drivers of organisational commitment include citizenship and eliminating previously mentioned negative elements such as employee turnover and absenteeism. These elements can be understood through the behaviour of employees such as feelings of organisational insecurity and being overworked.
because of increasing demands from the employer (Knudson et al., 2003; Rubin & Brody, 2005). It has been demonstrated that increased amounts of organisational insecurity will decrease employee organisational commitment. In particular, when employers are actively eliminating jobs or having trouble hiring, employees will have lower commitment to that organisation (Rubin & Brody, 2005).

2.5.2 Citizenship qualities

(Eaton 2003) defined citizenship qualities as how those employees positively view the company and are actively supportive of their company. Measuring organisational commitment is ultimately a more permanent and meaningful measurement compared with more transient measurements such as employee satisfaction. Organisational commitment really is indicative of the employee’s feeling of attachment to the workplace organisation as tested in a recent study on determinants of organisational commitment (Rubin & Brody, 2005). If the employees feel they are attached to the organisation, they are not feeling disenfranchised or isolated and are more likely to want to stay with that company for a long time. These emotional feelings of attachment that ultimately result in long tenured employees are components of organisational commitment and are manifestations of this commitment as stated in recent studies (Rubin & Brody, 2005).

2.5.3 Technology

There are a number of employees who meet increasing demands of the workplace by using technology to adjust how often they can connect to the workplace. Technology offers an ability to do work in a more flexible way. This is factual because employees who wish to take work home with them and complete tasks after spending evening hours with the family can connect to the workplace virtually and do so. Along with this ability to be more flexible are unintended consequences of that case of connection. It’s not a good thing if the employee becomes endlessly tied to the office, and work and home become indistinguishable. If this happens and the technology “advantage”
controls the employee’s life too much, the result could be diminished employee commitment to the organisation, although statistical proof was not found in a recent study, (Rubin & Brody, 2005).

Absenteeism cannot be eliminated altogether. Measures should be taken to minimise the rate of absenteeism. Measures are as follows:

- **Proper hiring:** It is necessary that people with the right skills and experience are selected. Every employee should as far as possible be assigned work according to capabilities, aptitude and interest.
- **Good working condition:** Proper sanitation, drinking water, canteen, first aid, rest pauses and mechanisation can help to reduce absenteeism by making work environment pleasant.
- **Housing and transport facilities:** Provision of housing accommodation, preferably near the factory and bus facility will ensure regular attendance of workers.
- **Safety programmes:** Adequate safety measures help minimise industrial accidents and reduce fear of injury among employees. As a result attendance becomes improved.
- **Incentives:** Special bonus, cash prizes and preference in promotion to regular employees encourage workers to be regular in their attendance.
- **Effective supervision:** Supervisors can considerably reduce absenteeism by earning the confidence and commitment of workers.
- **Disciplinary action:** Suitable action should be taken against chronic absentees. Punitive action may be in the form of publishing their names in company house magazines, fines, withholding pay increment, denial of promotion, suspension, dismissal, etc.
- **Regular leave provision:** A provision should be made wherein every worker can avail a few days of leave during a year. Holidays with pay will enable a worker to attend to his private affairs.
- **Employee counselling:** Guidance and counselling help employees to eliminate bad habits like drinking and gambling. Habitual absentees can be persuaded to become regular by impressing upon them the loss arising to them due to
absenteeism. Education and training can be used to develop a sense of responsibility.

- Proper records: Detailed absenteeism records and update thereof should be maintained. Absenteeism above the predetermined level should be carefully analysed age-wise, sex-wise, month-wise and on other bases.

2.6 Research findings on excessive employee absenteeism

Wynne-Jones et al. (2010:31) stated that issues like the above-mentioned require careful consideration of the rights and responsibilities of both employees and employers, where strategies for improving communication, trust and creating an environment conducive to successful return to work need to be investigated. Branham (2005:8) gives leader initiatives of best practices that inspire trust and confidence:

- Inspire confidence in a clear vision, a workable plan and the competence to achieve it – One of the first requirements of trust is competence. People will only follow leaders they deem to be capable. Employees want to know that the organisation will be successful, and that they can be assured of their place in it, going forward. You must be able to inspire that confidence, and make decisions and directives that reinforce that confidence.

- Back up words with actions – Do what you say you are going to do – there is no easier way to cut off employee cynicism and disengagement. For example, don’t expound on how “people are our most important asset” shortly before you slash the training budget. Don’t talk incessantly about quality, then push your people to do their work in less time than it takes to do it right. That is the stuff of Dilbert cartoons; it’s not the way great companies inspire and retain employees.

- Place your trust and confidence in your workforce – Take the opportunity to engage and inspire your people by enacting policies that show you trust them. If you have an authoritarian, micromanaging style, get rid of it.
When you give that kind of power away, you increase the collective power of the organisation to innovate and meet new challenges, thus enhancing your own power in the long run.

2.7 Summary

There are numerous factors that can influence an employee to be absent from work, such as chronic disease issues, management style, personal factors, work routine, job satisfaction, seniority. Employees will at all times have a reason to take unscheduled leave. These factors must be dealt with and effectively be managed and eliminated if possible, so that the disruption in the organisation is at lowest. Some absences are beyond the supervisor’s control, but can be managed at acceptable levels and proactively. Employees must be treated fairly and the supervisor must be constant.

Disselkamp (2009:108) is of the view that best practices for absence management include tracking and identifying patterns and root causes of absenteeism. Using this information, smart organisations learn to manage, forecast, and plan for absenteeism. They use the system to enforce compliance and tracking, and this reduces their risks as well as the negative impact of excessive absenteeism on cost and productivity. Technology allows them to react in real time to staffing issues and to take corrective action to change behaviour.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to investigate employee perceptions regarding sick leave in a mining organisation. To achieve this objective, the researcher firstly conducted a literature survey on the nature of sick leave, and then developed a custom questionnaire to measure and analyse employee perceptions of sick leave. This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology that was used in this study.

2 The Questionnaire survey research design

The researcher adopted a questionnaire survey design, and applied quantitative methods to analyse data that consisted of numbers and observations (Badimo, 2007:54). Weiers (2008:105) states that questionnaires are a commonly used research data collection instrument. They are either filled out personally by the respondent or administered and filled out by the interviewer.

A questionnaire survey design was selected as research method and quantitative methods were applied to analyse data. Rattray and Jones (2007:2) are of the opinion that researchers can use questionnaires to measure knowledge, attitudes, emotion, cognition, intention or behaviour. This approach captures self-reported observations of individuals and is commonly used to measure various types of perceptions. The items or questions in a questionnaire require the respondent to respond to a series of questions or statements in a questionnaire. Responses are then converted into numerical form and statistically analysed. The main benefits of such a method of data collection are that questionnaires are usually relatively quick to complete, are relatively economical and are usually easy to analyse.
Temane (2009:38), however, identified the following advantages of using questionnaire survey designs in research, which outweighs the disadvantages that were discussed before.

i. It is a widely used data collection method for research into real life situations;
ii. It can extract the practical concerns of people in a situation and further the goals of social research simultaneously;
iii. It can be used by practitioners who wish to improve an understanding of their practice;
iv. It increases validity and reliability since results can be confirmed by means of different data sources;
v. It creates new lines of thinking by facilitating the emergence of fresh perspectives and contradictions; and
vi. Information collected through questionnaires is mostly already structured and thus easy to analyse.

3. Questionnaire development

Gilbert, N (2009: 191) said that, in both interview schedules and questionnaires, there are two forms of question that can be asked: closed questions and open questions. The type of study will determine whether open or closed questions are best. But it is worth bearing in mind that

- Closed questions should be used where alternative replies are known, are limited in number, and are clear cut. Closed questions are developed in advance, complete with a number of possible answers that could be given. Closed questions have advantages because they can be pre-coded and the responses can easily be put on a computer, saving time and money.

- Open-ended questions are used where the issue is complex, where relevant dimensions are not known, and where a process is being explored. Their advantage is that they allow respondents to answer on their own terms, enabling the researcher to discover unexpected things about the way people
see a subject. Open questions are those that allow individuals to respond in any way they wish, according to Gilbert, N (2009:193).

Open questions can be most usefully employed by skilled interviewers, who can allow interviewees to develop answers much more fully than they would if they were completing questionnaires. Gilbert, N (2009:193) stated that in questionnaires, it is relatively simple for respondents to tick pre-coded categories, whereas unrestricted answers require more thought. A further disadvantage of using open questions is that they produce responses that may be ambiguous, wide-ranging and difficult to categorise.

Leedy and Omrod (2010:202-204) proposed the following guidelines for developing questionnaires:

i. Define the purpose of the research clearly, and determine exactly which information must be gathered through the questionnaire and why it should be gathered.

ii. Set guidelines for writing and justification of items.

iii. Determine the format and content of the questionnaire. Questionnaires should be as brief as possible and solicit only information essential to the research project. Every item should be tested by two criteria.

iv. Consider what the researcher intends to do with the information.

v. Consider the importance of each item for purposes of solving the research problem.

vi. Use clear, simple, unambiguous language to construct a draft questionnaire.

vii. Write items that communicate exactly what is expected. Avoid terms that the respondents may not understand, such as obscure words or technical jargon and words that do not have precise meanings, such as several and usually.

viii. Keep the respondent's task simple and provide clear instructions.

ix. Analyse each question in the draft questionnaire individually to determine whether it is unambiguous and whether it measures what it is supposed to measure.

x. Conduct a prior test, and revise the questionnaire based on feedback received.
xi. Test and review the questionnaire validity and reliability and test it statistically where necessary.

xii. The final questionnaire must be logical and easily comprehensible so that vagueness will not impair the outcome.

xiii. The researcher must make sure that sufficient control measures exist when the final questionnaires are distributed.

4. Steps in the development of the current questionnaire

The following steps were followed in the development of the customised questionnaire that was used in this study.

i. Interviews with supervisors, HR and employees. The following questions were asked. There is a high level of sick leave in this department/organisation. What do you think are the causes? How can they be reduced?

ii. Analysis of interview data.

iii. Identification of items to be included in the questionnaire.

iv. Selection and formulation of twenty statements.

v. A response scale was developed – Likert.

vi. The twenty selected questions were structured into a questionnaire, and biographical details that were required for purposes of statistical analysis were included in the questionnaire.

vii. Fifteen randomly selected individuals were asked to complete the questionnaire and to provide feedback on the clarity and lay-out of the questionnaire.

viii. The researcher and study leader considered the feedback and agreed on the final format of the questionnaire.

ix. The final questionnaire was distributed to employees in the research group.
5. Validity and reliability of the current questionnaire

Punch (2009:246) defines validity as the extent to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure – an indicator is valid to the extent that it empirically represents the concept it purports to measure. Validity is a technical term with specific meanings – here we are focusing on measurement validity. In addition to that, Perri and Bellamy, (2012: 259) define the following:

- **External validity** is a standard of correspondence with facts.
- **Internal validity** measures the extent to which the inference supported by the research is well-designed to eliminate bias and is free from the effects of confounding variables.

According to Babbie (2001:250), there is always a possibility of error in the construction of a questionnaire, irrespective of how careful the researcher was in constructing it. Pre-testing a questionnaire therefore ensures the protection of a questionnaire against errors and vagueness, which may impact on the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

The current questionnaire was face-validated after conducting a trial run with fifteen non-related respondents. Respondents provided feedback after completing the questionnaire and the researcher adapted the questionnaire in consultation with the study leader. The adapted final questionnaire was then distributed to respondents in the sample group.

Reliability refers to the steadiness of the measurement, and this means that the variable that is measured will produce the exact measurements if measured under the same conditions each time (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2008:162). Reliability is a central concept in measurement. It basically means consistency.

There are two main aspects to this consistency – consistency over time (or stability) and internal consistency. Reliability enables us to estimate error, and reliability and error are related reciprocally – the larger the reliability, the smaller the error. Measures that have high reliability produce observed scores that are close to true scores, according to Punch, K.F (2009:244-245).
Reliability is a measure of the extent to which our measures return consistent results, according to Perri and Bellamy (2012:259). The reliability of the present questionnaire was not determined due to the limited scope and nature of the study.

5.1 The research group

The research group consisted of employees from the company’s production area of Sishen Mine who are working twelve hour shifts in the Mining Department. All participants volunteered to partake in the present study. The allotment of African and Afrikaans-speaking employees was proportionate to that of the organisation. Most of the participants were in the range of twenty to thirty nine. All the participants responded to all the questions.

6. Sampling procedure

Sampling is quantitative research and usually means “people sampling”. The key concepts therefore are the population (the total target group, who ideally would be the subject of the research, and about whom one is trying to say something) and the sample (the actual group who are included in the study, and from whom the data are collected, according to Punch, KF (2009:251).

Research shows that when a researcher delivers the questionnaires, picks them up or does both, the completion and response rate is higher than when left to respondents to mail them back (Babbie, 2001:253). The questionnaires were distributed during training shifts and working hours. After participants finished the questionnaires, all questionnaires were kept by the researcher.
7. Data capturing and analysis

Data were captured and analysed by using the SPSS v18 statistical analysis programme that was available at the NWU Mafikeng campus. Data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Results were structured in tables and diagrams, and are comprehensively discussed in Chapter Four.

8. Descriptive statistics

Gilbert, N (2009:506) defines descriptive statistics as those used to describe or summarise the characteristics of a sample. Descriptive statistics provide statistical summaries. The purpose of these statistics is to provide an overall, coherent and straight-forward picture of a large amount of data (Struwig & Stead, 2004:158).

Cooper and Schindler (2008:491) pointed out that descriptive studies sketch the current state of a phenomenon. They attempt to describe or define a subject often by creating a profile of a group of problems, people or events, through the collection of data and the tabulation of the frequencies on research variables or their interaction. These studies reveal who, what, when, where, or how much. They concern a univariate question or hypothesis in which the researcher asks about or states something about the size, form, distribution, or existence of a variable. They are distinct from reporting studies by providing interpretation of the information found.

8.1 Histograms

According to Graham, A (2008:191) the term "histogram" is normally reserved for depicting continuous data. Discrete data such as these would normally be displayed using a bar chart (where gaps deliberately left between adjacent bars emphasise the discrete nature of the data.)
8.2 The arithmetic mean

The mean is simply the arithmetic average of a group of numbers. If you want the mean of scores in a Sociology test, add together all scores and then divide the result by the number of scores. The mean is by far the most commonly used measure of central tendency and in most situations provides a good summary of where the midpoint of the data is, according to Tredoux & Durrheim (2002:41-45). According to Swift, L and Piff, K (2012:276), the mean of a set of values is their total divided by the number of items.

8.3 The standard deviation

The standard deviation is a measure of dispersion and can be thought of as a measure of how much, on average, people differ from the sample mean, according to Gilbert, N (2009:168). According to Graham, A (2008: 25), the best-known and least-loved measure of spread at higher levels of statistical work, is the standard deviation. An alternative name for the standard deviation is the "root mean squared" (RMS) deviation. In other words, it is the (square) root of the mean of the squared deviations.

8.4 Inferential statistics

8.4.1 The Mann Whitney U-test

According to Tredoux, C and Durrheim, K (2009: 391), the most common distribution-free test for differences between unrelated samples is the Mann-Whitney U-test. This test is also known as the Wilcoxon rank sum test. This test is used for research designs similar to those for which the independent samples t-test is used. This means that it can be used whenever you have two groups of scores that are independent of each other (e.g. different samples of people).

The Mann-Whitney U-test can be regarded as the nonparametric equivalent to the independent samples t-test. It is used when data are not paired but we have two
independent samples (which may be of different sizes) and we would like to test whether they come from populations with the same median. In this test all values in the two samples are put into a single list and ranked in order of magnitude. We then add the ranks from sample 1, and add the ranks from sample 2, and a test statistic is calculated from these. The test is also known as the Wilcoxon rank sum test according to Swift, L and Piff, S (2010:576).

8.4.2 Hypothesis

Tredoux, C and Durrheim, K (2009:139) state that hypothesis testing is a logical and empirical procedure whereby hypotheses are formally set up and then subjected to empirical testing. The null hypothesis is a statement that there is no difference between groups or conditions. The alternative hypothesis is a statement that there are differences between groups or conditions. The alternative hypothesis can take two forms depending on the nature of the research question: It can either be directional or non-directional.

According to Punch, KF (2009:358), hypothesis can be defined as a predicted answer to a research question; in theory verification research the hypothesis follows from the theory by deduction.

9. Ethical issues

According to Zikmund (2003:229) the code of ethics covered issues such as the researcher’s obligation to protect the public from misrepresentation and to avoid practices that may harm, humiliate, or mislead survey respondents.

Many ethical issues apply especially to survey research, such as:

- Respondents’ right to privacy;
- the use of deception;
- respondents’ right to be informed about the purpose of the research;
- the need for confidentiality;
• the need for honesty in collecting data; and
• the need for objectivity in reporting data.

10. Summary

The researcher did only a small sample of a target group in the organisation. Therefore the results are not valid to the entire organisation, but can be useful for further research in other departments in the organisation.
CHAPTER FOUR
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study was to identify the facilitators and inhibitors of excessive absenteeism in the organisation.

The following section contains a discussion of related research findings, and hypotheses that were tested.

4.2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

Biographical characteristics

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<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Languages Spoken</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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</table>

**FIRST LANGUAGE**

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<td>1.67</td>
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<td>Tshivenda</td>
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**QUALIFICATION**

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<td>1.67</td>
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<td>Grade 12/Matric</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43.33</td>
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<td>Higher than Grade 12/Matric</td>
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**RELATIONSHIP STATUS**

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<thead>
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<th>Languages Spoken</th>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>Category</td>
<td>Count</td>
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<td>Wife's</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term relationship</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>3.33</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Widow/er</td>
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<td>1.67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26.67</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Job Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wife's</th>
<th>Combined</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operator</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58.33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Practitioner</td>
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<td>3.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervision Responsibility</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wife's</th>
<th>Combined</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Union Membership</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wife's</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very active member</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary member</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wife's</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 2 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 10 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 25 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.33</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 40 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>
4.3 QUESTIONS RELATED TO FACILITATORS OF ABSENTEEISM

4.3.1. Supervisors and employees communicate poorly about sick leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Statistical Results: Question 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

45% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. The question wanted to determine if supervisors and employees communicate poorly about sick leave. Table 1 indicates that 5 (8%) strongly disagreed, 17 (26%) disagreed and 14 (22%) were uncertain. Further, 20 (31%) agreed and 9 (14%) strongly agreed. It gives an indication that 45% agreed or strongly agreed with it. It means that most of the employees accept as true that there is good communication regarding sick leave.
Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

Length of service correlated significantly with general responses to Q1 (\( \alpha = 0.01 \)). The positive correlation coefficient of 0.31 indicates that respondents with longer service agreed more strongly with this statement. No other significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \). The reason is that they have been working for years at the company and think they are familiar with the policies.

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

There was a significant difference (\( \alpha = 0.01 \)) between the responses of supervisors (\( \bar{x} = 2.17 \)) and non-supervisors (\( \bar{x} = 1.16 \)). Supervisors agreed more strongly with the statement. No other significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \). Supervisors will agree because it is their duty to communicate about sick leave.

4.3.2. Employee salaries are too low

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Statistical Results: Question 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD - 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U - 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A - 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

71% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. The question wanted to determine if the salaries are too low. Table 2 indicates that 10 (15%) disagreed, while 9 (14%) were uncertain. From the remaining respondents 16 (25%) agreed and 30 (46%) strongly agreed. It indicates that most of the respondents agreed that the salaries are too low. It also indicates that employees with longer service agreed more strongly with this statement. Most of them complain that the salaries are too low.

Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

Length of service correlated significantly with general responses to Q2 (α = 0.01). The positive correlation coefficient of 0.31 indicates that respondents with longer service agreed more strongly with this statement. No other significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01. The researcher is of the opinion that most of the respondents with longer service cannot easily be promoted due to lower education levels.

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p≤0.01)

No significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01.
4.3.3. Employees suffer from high stress levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Statistical Results: Question 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD - 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U - 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

70% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. The question wanted to determine if respondents suffer from high stress levels. Table 3 indicates that 5 (8%) disagreed while 15 (23%) were uncertain. The remaining 27 (42%) agreed and 18 (28%) strongly agreed. It indicates that most of the respondents agreed that they suffer from high stress levels. Due to the fact that this is a production area, the respondents are forced to deliver good production.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).
Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p≤0.01)

There was a significant difference (α = 0.00) between the responses of employees with qualifications lower than matric (¯x = 3.54) and employees with matriculation or higher qualifications (¯x = 2.89). Lower qualified employees agreed more strongly with the statement. No other significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01. It is natural for people with lower qualifications to be afraid of new technology and therefore they don't want changes.

4.3.4. Lost Friday nights are part of the shift system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Statistical Results: Question 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD - 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U - 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)
70% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. The question wanted to determine if the lost Friday nights are part of the shift system. Table 4 indicates that 3 (5%) strongly disagreed, 8 (12%) disagreed, while 15 (23%) were uncertain. From the remaining they indicated that 21 (32%) agreed and 18 (28%) strongly agreed. This indicates that most agreed that the lost Friday nights are part of the shift system. The researcher is of the opinion that because Friday is part of the weekend, employees want strongly to socialise with their families and friends.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

**4.3.5. Twelve hour shifts are too long**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Statistical Results: Question 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD - 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U - 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

49% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. The question wanted to determine if the twelve hour shifts are too long. Table 5 indicates that 11 (17%) strongly disagreed, 19 (27%) disagreed and 3 (5%) were uncertain. From the remaining 17 (26%) agreed and 15 (23%) strongly agreed. Only 49% agreed that the twelve hour shifts are too long. Most of the respondents agree that the twelve hour shift is not a problem.

Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

No significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p≤0.01)

No significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01.

4.3.6. Employees do not feel recognised for the jobs they do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>2.54</th>
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</thead>
</table>
**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

45% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. The question wanted to determine if employees do not feel recognised for the jobs they do. Table 6 indicates that 3 (5%) strongly disagreed, 16 (25%) disagreed and 10 (15%) were uncertain. The remaining 15 (23%) agreed and 21 (32%) strongly agreed. It indicates that more than 50% agreed that employees do not feel recognised for the jobs they do. It means that they want to be rewarded for a job they did well.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

No significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.
Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p≤0.01)

No significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01.

4.3.7. Human resource policies about sick leave are poorly implemented

Table 7: Statistical Results: Question 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD - 0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - 1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U - 2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A - 3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>SA - 4</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

30% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This question wanted to determine if human resource policies about sick leave are poorly implemented. In table 7 it is indicated that 5 (8%) strongly disagreed and 21 (32%) disagreed while 19 (29%) were uncertain. From the remaining respondents 10 (15%) strongly agreed and 10 (15%) agreed that policies
about sick leave are poorly communicated. Most of the respondents agree that human resource policies about sick leave is poorly implemented.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

No significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

There was a significant difference (α = 0.01) between the responses of supervisors (\(\bar{x} = 2.24\)) and non-supervisors (\(\bar{x} = 0.60\)). Employees without supervisory duties agreed more strongly with the statement. No other significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01. Supervisors will disagree for the fact that this is their duty to implement the policies and they resent it if their work is put in a bad light.

### 4.3.8. Supervisors have poor management skills

**Table 8: Statistical Results: Question 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SD – 0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D – 1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U – 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A – 3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agreement:

44% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This question wants to determine if supervisors do have poor management skills. Table 8 indicates that 4 (6%) strongly disagreed, 24 (37%) disagreed and 9 (14%) were uncertain. The remaining 14 respondents (22%) agreed and 14 (22%) strongly agreed. This indicates that 44% agreed that supervisors have poor management skills. Some supervisors are younger than the others and they can either be more polite or more arrogant. That may give the older people the impression that they have poor management skills.

Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, $p \leq 0.01$)

No significant correlations were found at $p \leq 0.01$.

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, $p \leq 0.01$)

There was a significant difference ($\alpha = 0.01$) between the responses of union members ($\bar{x} = 2.50$) and non-union members ($\bar{x} = 1.27$). Union members agreed more strongly with the statement. The union members know that they have the power to put grievances against supervisors that have poor management skills.

There was a significant difference ($\alpha = 0.01$) between the responses of Setswana-speaking employees ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) and other employees ($\bar{x} = 1.62$).
Setswana-speaking employees agreed more strongly with the statement. Most of the employees are Setswana-speaking.

There was a significant difference ($\alpha = 0.01$) between the responses of operators ($\overline{x} = 2.31$) and other employees ($\overline{x} = 0.86$). Operators agreed more strongly with the statement. The target group was mostly operators.

There was a significant difference ($\alpha = 0.01$) between the responses of supervisors ($\overline{x} = 2.36$) and non-supervisors ($\overline{x} = 1.00$). Employees without supervisory duties agreed more strongly with the statement. Most employees don't want to be punished if they are doing wrong, and therefore employees without supervisory duties agree more that supervisors have poor management skills.

No other significant differences were found at $p \leq 0.01$.

### 4.3.9. Many employees are just lazy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: Statistical Results: Question 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Deviation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD – 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D – 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U – 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>A – 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA – 4</td>
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<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

38% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This question wanted to determine if many employees are just lazy. Table 9 indicated that 16 (25%) strongly disagreed and 15 (23%) disagreed while 9 (14%) were uncertain. From the remaining respondents 15 (23%) agreed and 10 (15%) strongly agreed. This indicates that most of the respondents disagreed that employees are just lazy. Most respondents reply that they are not lazy.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

No significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p≤0.01)

There was a significant difference (α = 0.01) between the responses of African employees (x̄ = 1.38) and employees from other race groups (x̄ = 2.94). Non-African employees agreed more strongly with the statement. It can be seen that other race groups are known for their hard work and in the past employees were not so aware and familiar with policies.

There was a significant difference (α = 0.01) between the responses of Setswana-speaking employees (x̄ = 1.26) and other employees (x̄ = 2.65). Setswana-speaking employees agreed more strongly with the statement.
There was a significant difference ($\alpha = 0.01$) between the responses of operators ($\bar{x} = 1.62$) and other employees ($\bar{x} = 3.43$). Operators agreed more strongly with the statement.

There was a significant difference ($\alpha = 0.01$) between the responses of supervisors ($\bar{x} = 1.60$) and non-supervisors ($\bar{x} = 3.00$). Supervisors agreed more strongly with the statement. The fact is that the supervisor has to evaluate the employee and can then see if this employee is a hard worker or not.

No other significant differences were found at $p \leq 0.01$.

4.3.10. There are no rewards for achieving low levels of sick leave or absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA - 4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

45% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This question wanted to determine if there are no or zero awards for achieving low levels of sick leave for absenteeism. Table 10 indicates that 4 (6%) strongly disagreed, 7 (11%) disagreed and 9 (14%) were uncertain. The remaining 69% of respondents indicated that there are no rewards for achieving low levels of sick leave or absenteeism. It is evident that rewards for achieving low levels of sick leave or absenteeism may decrease absenteeism.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

No significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

There was a significant difference (α = 0.01) between the responses of married employees (\( \bar{x} = 3.06 \)) and other employees (\( \bar{x} = 2.35 \)). Married employees agreed more strongly with the statement. No other significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01. Because married people want to provide for their families more then unmarried employees, they are more committed to their work.

### 4.4 QUESTIONS RELATED TO INHIBITORS OF ABSENTEEISM
4.4.1. Supervisors and employees communicate well about sick leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
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<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
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**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

80% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to know whether absenteeism will be reduced if supervisors and employees communicated better about sick leave. Table 11 indicates that 2 (3%) strongly disagreed, 5 (8%) disagreed and 6 (9%) were uncertain. The rest of the respondents 80% agreed on the statement that absenteeism will reduce if there is better communication about sick leave between supervision and employees. If workers do indeed communicate about sick leave, it indicates that there is a communication gap between workers and management.
**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

There was a significant difference (\( \alpha = 0.01 \)) between the responses of union members (mean = 2.96) and non-union members (mean = 2.70). Union members agreed more strongly with the statement. No other significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

### 4.4.2. Employees are paid higher salaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12: Statistical Results: Question 12</th>
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<td>A - 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA - 4</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

60% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine if absenteeism will be reduced if employees are paid higher salaries. Table 12 indicates that 12 (18%) strongly disagreed, 8 (12%) disagreed and 6 (9%) were uncertain. The remaining respondents 15 (23%) agreed and 24 (37%) strongly agreed. That gives an indication that 60% agreed with the statement that employees must be paid higher salaries. Most of the employees indicated they would like to have a higher salary.

Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \approx 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \approx 0.01 \).

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

4.4.3. Employees receive free medicine from the employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13: Statistical Results: Question 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Option</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SD - 0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

38% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine if absenteeism can be reduced if employees received free medicine from the employer. Table 13 indicates that 14 (22%) strongly disagreed, 15 (23%) disagreed while 11 (17%) were uncertain. From the remaining respondents, 15 (23%) agreed and 10 (15%) strongly agreed. It indicates that 38% agreed or strongly agreed that that absenteeism can be reduced if employees received free medicine from the employer. It indicates that workers want free medical treatment from the employer.

Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

Age correlated significantly with general responses to Q13 (α = 0.01). The positive correlation coefficient of 0.30 indicates that older respondents agreed more strongly with this statement. Due to the fact that older people are using chronic medicines that they will strongly agree with it.

Length of service correlated significantly with general responses to Q13 (α = 0.01). The positive correlation coefficient of 0.33 indicates that respondents
with longer service agreed more strongly with this statement. Employees with longer service are mostly older and need more medication.

Qualification level correlated significantly with general responses to Q13 (α = 0.01). The negative correlation coefficient of -0.35 indicates that respondents with higher qualification levels agreed less strongly than employees with lower qualifications on this statement. There are younger employees with qualification than older ones and they usually don't need to use regular medicine like older people.

No other significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

There was a significant difference (α = 0.00) between the responses of employees with qualifications lower than matric (Mx = 3.08) and employees with matric or higher qualifications (Mx = 1.58). Lower qualified employees agreed more strongly with the statement.

There was a significant difference (α = 0.01) between the responses of employees with less than ten years service (Mx = 1.49) and employees with ten or more years of service (Mx = 2.64). Employees with longer service agreed more strongly with the statement. Employees with longer service feel entitled to more assistance.
No other significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01.
4.4.4. Lost Friday nights are removed from the shift system

Table 14: Statistical Results: Question 14

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
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</table>

Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

56 % of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to know if absenteeism can be reduced if the lost Friday night were removed from the shift system. Table 14 indicates that 10 (15%) disagreed, 10 (15%) strongly disagreed and 9 (14%) were uncertain. The remaining respondents 9 (14%) agree and 16 (25%) strongly agree. This indicates that 56% agree or strongly agree. It is evident that most of the employees don't want to work on a lost Friday and want to spend it rather with families and friends.
Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

There was a significant difference (\( \alpha = 0.01 \)) between the responses of union members (\( \bar{x} = 2.20 \)) and non-union members (\( \bar{x} = 2.44 \)). Union members with supervisory duties agreed more strongly with the statement. No other significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \). Supervisors also don't want to work on a lost Friday for the above reason, coupled to the fact that most of the employees will take off and not coming to work, which increase their problems.

4.4.5. Twelve hour shifts are shortened

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 15: Statistical Results: Question 15</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
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</table>
Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

44% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine if absenteeism can be reduced if twelve hour shifts were shortened. Table 15 indicates that 12 (18%) strongly disagreed, 15 (23%) disagreed and 9 (14%) were uncertain. The remaining 17 respondents (26%) agreed and 12 (18%) strongly agreed. It indicates that 44% agree or strongly agree that twelve hour shifts must be shortened. Most of the respondents disagree because they want the twelve hour shift.

Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, $p \leq 0.01$)

No significant correlations were found at $p \leq 0.01$.

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, $p \leq 0.01$)

No significant differences were found at $p \leq 0.01$.

4.4.6. Supervisors ensure that employees who abuse sick leave are disciplined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16: Statistical Results: Question 16</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>SA - 4</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>

**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

65 % of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine if absenteeism can be reduced if supervisors ensure that employees who abuse sick leave are disciplined. According to table 16, 4 (6%) strongly disagreed, 11 (17%) disagreed, while 8 (12%) were uncertain. The remaining respondents indicated that 29 (45%) agreed and 13 (20%) strongly agreed. This indicates that 65% agreed or strongly agreed that supervisors must ensure that employees who abuse sick leave are being disciplined. Most respondents indicate that they want supervisors to ensure that employees who abuse sick leave must be disciplined. It will also improve the team spirit and morale.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

No significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.
Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

4.4.7. Human resource policies about sick leave are properly communicated and implemented

Table 17: Statistical Results: Question 17

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Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

71% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine if absenteeism can be reduced if human resource policies about sick leave were properly communicated and
implemented. Table 17 indicates that that 2 (3%) strongly disagreed, 6 (9%) disagreed while 4 (6%) were uncertain. The 34 remaining respondents (52%) agreed and 19 (29%) strongly agreed. It indicates that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that human resource policies about sick leave must be properly communicated and implemented. The respondents expect from their supervisors to communicate properly about sick leave.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, p ≤ 0.01)

No significant correlations were found at p ≤ 0.01.

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, p≤0.01)

No significant differences were found at p ≤ 0.01.

**4.4.8. More attention is given to the job satisfaction levels of employees**

<table>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

79 % of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine whether absenteeism can be reduced if more attention is given to the job satisfaction levels of employees. Table 18 indicates that 4 (6%) strongly disagreed, 4 (6%) disagreed while 6 (9%) were uncertain. The remaining respondents indicated that 33 (51%) agreed and 18 (28%) strongly agreed. It indicated that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that attention must be given to job satisfaction levels of employees. Respondent’s want to take ownership of their job tasks and want to be recognised for a job well done.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).
4.4.9. Supervisors are good role models by being good attendance examples

Table 19: Statistical Results: Question 19

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**Agreement:** (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)

79% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine if absenteeism would be reduced if supervisors were good role models by being good attendance examples. Table 19 indicates that 4 (6%) strongly disagreed, 4 (6%) disagreed while 6 (9%) were uncertain. The remaining 33 (51%) agreed and 18 (28%) strongly agreed. This indicates that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Respondents agree that the supervisors are role models when it comes to attendance.
Correlations: (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

Differences between groups: (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

4.4.10. Employees are rewarded for achieving zero, or very low levels of sick leave

<table>
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<th>Table 20: Statistical Results: Question 20</th>
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Agreement: (More than two thirds agreement (> 66%) deemed as significant)
64% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. This statement wanted to determine if absenteeism would be reduced if employees were rewarded for achieving zero or very low levels of sick leave. Table 20 indicates that 7 (11%) strongly disagreed, 6 (9%) disagreed, while 10 (15%) were uncertain. The remaining respondents indicated that 25 (38%) agreed and 17 (26%) strongly agreed. This indicates that most respondents agreed that rewarding zero or low levels of sick leave will reduce absenteeism. Respondents want to be recognised for achieving low levels of absenteeism or zero levels of absenteeism. They feel proud if they know they have made a difference in their work.

**Correlations:** (Pearson test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant correlations were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

**Differences between groups:** (Mann-Whitney U Test, Two-tailed, \( p \leq 0.01 \))

No significant differences were found at \( p \leq 0.01 \).

4.7 **SUMMARY**

The findings show that most of the employees agreed that sick leave levels are high because of low salaries, high stress levels, lost Friday nights, no rewarding for zero or low levels for sick leave, and employees feeling they are not recognised for the jobs they do. This contributes to the facilitators of absenteeism in the organisation. It was also found that supervisors agreed
more strongly with the statement that supervisors and employees communicate poorly about sick leave. The positive correlation indicates that respondents with longer service agreed more strongly with the statement.

It was also find that respondents with larger salaries agreed more strongly that salaries are too low. Respondents with qualifications lower than matric agreed more strongly that they suffer from high stress levels. More than 55% also agreed that they were not feeling recognised for the jobs they do.

The respondents also indicated as an inhibitor that could reduce absenteeism that supervisors must ensure that employees who abuse sick leave are disciplined. The respondents also strongly indicated that human resource policies about sick leave must be properly communicated and implemented. They indicated further that more attention must be given to the job satisfaction levels of employees, and supervisors must be good role models by being good attendance examples. Employees should also be rewarded for achieving zero or low levels of sick leave.
5.1 Introduction

This dissertation has been structured in five chapters. Chapter one provides an introductory discussion of the research problem: Is the expectation verified that low satisfaction levels and stress would be related to high rates of absenteeism and vice versa?

Chapter two provides a literature review on the nature of organisational behaviour and excessive employee absenteeism. This chapter discusses absenteeism in depth with the focus on what causes employees to be more absent and what causes employees to be less absent.

Chapter three is dealing with the research methodology. This covered aspects of the research design, the sampling method, the manner in which data were gathered, the procedure for data collection, and the measuring instruments used for the study.

Chapter four provides discussions and findings of the results, analysing the data of the questionnaires.

Chapter five contains specific conclusions and recommendations that were deducted from the literature review and research findings that may be of value in future research. The objective of the study was to identify the facilitators and inhibitors of excessive absenteeism in a mining environment.

5.2 Conclusions drawn from the research

Human resources cannot be dealt with in the same way as other production factors or resources because much more complex and intangible issues (such as feelings, attitudes, perceptions and human needs) are involved. Organisational success is not only influenced by the extent to which human resource strategies and practices are
closely linked with, and make important contributions to, the organisation's strategic objectives and plans (Swanepoel et al. 2003:63). The study was conducted with an objective to identify the facilitators and inhibitors of excessive absenteeism in Sishen Mine.

Based on the data collection among employees and supervisors it is evident that the facilitators and inhibitors of excessive absenteeism in Sishen Mine are as follows:

- High stress levels
- Shift work
- Rewards
- Low salaries
- Job enrichment

5.2.1 High stress levels

Stress in the workplace is a serious issue. It negatively affects employee well-being or health, which causes a decrease in productivity and profits. Improving the well-being of the employee translates into less absenteeism, increased productivity and decreased health insurance claims.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is based on two important assumptions:

1. People always want more, and their needs depend on what they already have. A need that has already been satisfied is not a motivation – only unsatisfied needs can influence behaviour.
2. People's needs are arranged in order of importance. When one need has been partially satisfied, the next one will come forward to be satisfied.

The five levels in Maslow's hierarchy of needs model are:

- Psychological needs: In organisations, these needs represent the most basic level in the hierarchy and comprise such needs as salary or wages and basic working conditions
- Security needs: Once a person's basic psychological needs have been satisfied, his or her security needs come into play.
- Social needs: These are the needs for love, friendship, acceptance, and understanding by other people and groups of people. In organisations people join different groups to satisfy their social needs.
- Esteem needs: This higher-order need is the need for self-respect and recognition by others. The need for success, recognition, and appreciation of achievement are examples of esteem needs.
- Self-actualisation needs: This is the full development of an individual's potential. The need for self-actualisation is the most difficult to satisfy in an organisational context, according to Smit et al. (2004:347-348).

5.2.2 Shift Work

Swanepoel et al. (2003:600) indicate that employers must provide information on the impact of working time on the health, safety and family responsibilities of employees. The regulation of working time is closely connected to the protection and promotion of the health and safety of employees and, in some cases, members of the public.

Employers who engage employees to perform regular night work must ensure that these employees are informed of the health and safety hazards associated with the work that they are required to perform. More than fifty percent of the respondents in the study agreed that the lost Friday night must be removed from the system. Overtime should be avoided, especially in occupations involving special hazards or heavy physical or mental strain. It could be due to the lost Friday night that absenteeism levels are high.

5.2.3 Rewards

According to the equity theory, Smith and de J Cronje (2004:354) indicate that an individual must be able to perceive a relationship between (1) the reward he or she
receives, and (2) his or her performance. A worker’s comparison of his or her own situation with another comparable worker’s situation leads to one of three conclusions by the worker: he or she is under-rewarded, over-rewarded, or equitably rewarded.

Rewards such as pay and benefits which people gain from an employment relationship are highly important to individuals, since they can meet many needs. The utilisation of rewards can therefore be a very important and powerful tool for shaping and determining work behaviour aimed at attaining the strategic objectives of an organisation, according to Swanepoel et al. (2003:487). Sixty four percent of the respondents indicated that absenteeism can be reduced if their rewards are better.

5.2.4 Low salaries

Herzberg classifies salary as a hygiene factor, which will not motivate people. According to his theory, people work to earn salaries, it is part of the job context – they will be extremely dissatisfied if they do not receive salaries. However, if a monetary reward is linked to performance, such as a merit bonus or a promotion, it provides recognition for the employee’s performance and can thus be classified as a motivation factor, according to Smit and de J Cronje (2004:351). In the study seventy one percent indicated that salaries are too low.

Covey and Merrill (2006:252) stated that if the workplace culture isn’t open and honest, it won’t create employee satisfaction, and the employer will experience turnover and a lack of productivity that will cost money, ideas and time. On the other hand, if the work environment is ethical, productive and positive, people will stay – and stay committed. They will drive the company forward.
5.2.5 Job enrichment

The concept of job enrichment originated as a result of the shortcomings of job enlargement. Job enrichment is an important motivation technique because greater scope for personal achievement and recognition is built into the job, and this leads to greater job satisfaction. In the study the respondents indicated that they are not recognised for the job they do.

5.2.6 Mann-Whitney U Test

There was a significant difference between the response of supervisors and non-supervisors. Supervisors agreed more strongly with the statement that supervisors and employees communicate poorly about sick leave. No significant differences were found on the statement that twelve hour shifts are too long.

There was a significant difference between the responses of union members and non-union members regarding supervisors that have poor management skills. There are significant differences between responses of Setswana-speaking employees and other employees. Setswana-speaking employees agreed more strongly with the statement. There was a significant difference between the responses of operators and other employees. Operators agreed more strongly with the statement as did employees without supervisory duties.

There was a significant difference between the responses of African employees and employees from other race groups. Non-African employees agreed more strongly with the statement that many employees are just lazy. There was a significant difference between the responses of other African employees and Setswana-speaking employees. The latter agreed more strongly with the statement. There was a significant difference between the responses of operators and other employees. Operators agreed more strongly with the statement that many employees are just lazy.

There was a significant difference between the responses of married employees and other employees on the statement that there are no rewards for achieving low levels
of sick leave or absenteeism. Married employees agreed more strongly with the statement.

There was a significant difference between the responses of employees with qualifications lower than matric and employees with matric or higher qualifications. Lower-qualified employees agreed more strongly with the statement that employees must be paid higher salaries. On this statement there was also a significant difference between the responses of employees with less than ten years service and employees with ten or more years of service. Employees with longer service agreed more strongly with the statement.

5.3. CONCLUSION

In this study the research findings indicate that people have different needs and are therefore motivated by different things: what acts as a motivation for one person may be totally ineffectual for another or what is an effective motivation for a person at one time may not be effective on another occasion, Swanepoel et al. (2003:327).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recognise individual differences in employees and focus on individuals.
- Position people in jobs which suit their personality.
- Provide employees with immediate feedback on how they are performing.
- Individualise rewards in recognition of the fact that employees have different needs and are therefore motivated by different types of rewards.
- Utilise supervisory lines.
- The design of shift rosters must be sensitive to the impact of these rosters on employees and their families. This information can be obtained during negotiations and consultations by circulating individual questionnaires to
employees. The information that will be required will depend on whether an employer is re-evaluating or designing a shift system.
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ANNEXURE A

ABSENTEEISM – QUESTIONS

SUPERVISOR/EMPLOYEE/HR

There is a high level of sick leave in this department / organisation.

a) What do you think is the causes?

b) How can it be reduced?
ANNEXURE B
ABSENTEEISM OPINION ORIGINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The completion of this questionnaire is voluntarily.

All information that you provide will be treated as strictly confidential.

This questionnaire will assist management to understand the causes of high sick leave levels, and how this problem should be addressed. Please complete the following questionnaire honestly, since your input and opinions will be highly valuable in this regard.

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

The following list contains ten questions about your personal characteristics. Please read the selection options that are listed with each item, and write the number of the option that applies to you in the open space to the right of each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>(Write number of years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>(Male - 1, Female - 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>(African - 1, Coloured - 2, Indian/Asian - 3, European - 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>First language</td>
<td>(IsiZulu-1, IsiXhosa-2, Afrikaans-3, Sepedi-4, English-5, Setswana-6, Sesotho-7, Xitsonga-7, Siswati-8, Tshivenda-9, IsiNdebele-10, Other-11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Highest formal qualification</td>
<td>(Lower than Grade 10 - 1, Grade 10 - 2, Grade 11 - 3, Grade 12/Matric - 4, Higher than Grade 12/Matric - 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What is your relationship status?</td>
<td>(Married - 4, Long-term relationship - 3, Divorced - 2, Widow/er - 1, Single - 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>What is your job category?</td>
<td>(Operator - 1, Supervisor - 2, HR Practitioner - 3, Other - 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>How many employees report to you?</td>
<td>(Write number)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Are you a member of a trade union?</td>
<td>(Yes-Very active member - 2, Yes-ordinary member - 1, No - 0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How long have you been employed by the mine?</td>
<td>(Number of years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEXURE C

SECTION B: ABSENTEEISM OPINIONS

The following list contains twenty statements about employee sick leave. Read each statement carefully and decide to which extent if you agree or disagree. Use the following scale to select your responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>DISAGREE</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN</td>
<td>AGREE</td>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EMPLOYEE SICK LEAVE LEVELS ARE HIGH BECAUSE ...........

- 4.3.1. Supervisors and employees communicate poorly about sick leave
- 4.3.2. Employee salaries are too low
- 4.3.3. Employees suffer from high stress levels
- 4.3.4. Lost Friday nights are part of the shift system
- 4.3.5. Twelve hour shifts are too long
- 4.3.6. Employees do not feel recognised for the jobs they do
- 4.3.7. Human resource policies about sick leave are poorly implemented
- 4.3.8. Supervisors have poor management skills
- 4.3.9. Many employees are just lazy
- 4.3.10. There are no rewards for achieving low levels of sick leave or absenteeism

EMPLOYEE SICK LEAVE LEVELS CAN BE REDUCED IF ...........

- 4.3.11. Supervisors and employees communicate better about sick leave
- 4.3.12. Employees are paid higher salaries
- 4.3.13. Employees receive free medicine from the employer
- 4.3.14. Lost Friday nights are removed from the shift system
- 4.3.15. Twelve hour shifts are shortened
- 4.3.16. Supervisors ensure that employees who abuse sick leave are disciplined
- 4.3.17. Human resource policies about sick leave are properly communicated and implemented
- 4.3.18. More attention is given to the job satisfaction levels of employees
- 4.3.19. Supervisors are good role models by being good attendance examples
- 4.3.20. Employees are rewarded for achieving zero, or very low levels of sick leave
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

I hereby request permission to conduct my research study in your department. I am currently a second year MBA student at Graduate School of Business and Government Leadership, North West University at Mahikeng Campus.

My research topic is to identify inhibitors and facilitators of excessive absenteeism in the mining environment. Absenteeism is a huge problem in our organisation. Productivity due to absenteeism is a serious and growing challenge. I hope to accomplish what inhibits and facilitates absenteeism in the organisation.

Hope that my request will receive urgent attention.

Yours truly,

Mrs. Dianne Williamson
CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO ACT AS A SUBJECT IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I ................................ (Full names of the Subject) authorize Dianne Williamson an Occupational Health Practitioner within Sishen Mine to perform the study on me. This study is designed to explore the cause and implication of absenteeism that currently prevail within the organisation.

I understand that, if I am a subject, I will be asked questions to answer; it will not take longer than 5-10 minutes. This procedure has been explained to me by ................................ (Researcher’s full names).

I have been inform that my identity will not be discussed without my consent.

..........................................

(Subject’s signature) ...................................

(Date)

..........................................

(Signature of witness) ...................................

(Place)
ANNEXURE F

AFFIRMATION

I hereby affirm that I have edited the dissertation of Dianne Williamson

INVESTIGATION TO IDENTIFY THE INHIBITORS AND FACILITATORS OF EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM IN A MINING ENVIRONMENT

which she submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Business Administration at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus.

Matilda Juliana Kruger

Date: 16 October 2012

M J Kruger

Accredited member of SATI for translation in Afrikaans - English and English - Afrikaans.

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