

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB SATISFACTION AND ABSENTEEISM  
IN A SELECTED FIELD SERVICES SECTION WITHIN AN ELECTRICITY  
UTILITY IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Absenteeism - employees not showing up for work when scheduled - can be a major problem for organisations. As pressures increase on the budgets and competitiveness of companies, more attention is being given to reduce workplace absenteeism and its cost. Most research has concluded that absence is a complex variable and that it is influenced by multiple causes, both personal and organisational. Job satisfaction has been noted as one of the factors influencing an employee's motivation to attend. Studies on the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction seem to be inconsistent. Some research has found no correlation between these two variables whereas other studies indicate a weak to moderate relationship between these two variables.

There is limited research on the job satisfaction-absenteeism relationship within South African organisations. The aim of the present study was therefore to determine whether there is a relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism in a selected department within an Electricity Utility in the Western Cape.

One hundred and twenty one (121) respondents completed a biographical questionnaire as well as a Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) to identify their levels of job satisfaction. To ascertain the extent of absenteeism, respondents were asked to report on their number of days absent and their absence frequency within a six month period.

Results indicate that there is a weak, inverse relationship between both the number and frequency of sick leave days and the job satisfaction levels of the sampled employees.

The relationship between biographical variables and absenteeism was also investigated. The results indicate a significant relationship between respondents' biographical characteristics (gender, age, number of dependents, tenure and marital status) and absenteeism. There was no statistically significant correlation between job level of respondents and absenteeism.

The relationship between biographical variables and job satisfaction was also investigated. The study found that the six biographical characteristics significantly explain the variance in job satisfaction. The variance accounted for by these six variables is however, relatively small. Furthermore, the results indicate that job level and tenure are the best predictors of job satisfaction in the selected sample.



### **Key words**

Absenteeism

Consequences of absenteeism

Measures of absence

Model of attendance

Reducing absenteeism

Demographic variables

Job satisfaction

Theories of job satisfaction

Measures of job satisfaction

Causes of job satisfaction

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

To many in the world of work, absenteeism is one of those stubborn problems for which “.....there is no clear culprit and no easy cure” (Rhodes & Steers, 1990, p. 1). Furthermore, as a general phenomenon it does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of sex, race and religion. Bydawell (2000, p. 15) postulates that “employers have the right to expect good attendance from their employees as employment is a contract between two consenting parties.” The author further states that absentee issues will undoubtedly arise within the employment relationship, and should be resolved in a manner which is fair and equitable to both the employer and the employee. Absenteeism can be very costly to organisations and enormous savings can be realised through effective management of non-attendance at work.

Besides the cost implications, absenteeism is influenced by dozens of interrelated factors which make it even more difficult to “quantify, qualify, or rectify” (Tylczak , 1990, p. 9). One of these factors which have been cited by different researchers is an employee’s level of job satisfaction in the workplace. In conjunction with this, George and Jones (2002, p. 93) maintain that “...many researchers have studied the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction in an attempt to discover ways to reduce absenteeism.” Early job satisfaction research has emphasised the underlying assumption that job dissatisfaction represents the primary cause of absenteeism (Steers, Porter & Bigley,

1996). McShane's (1984) review as quoted by Steers et al. (1996) supported the notion that employees who are dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs are more likely to be absent. Studies by McShane (1984) found "job satisfaction to be more highly related to frequency of absences than to number of days lost" (Steers et al., 1996, p. 409).

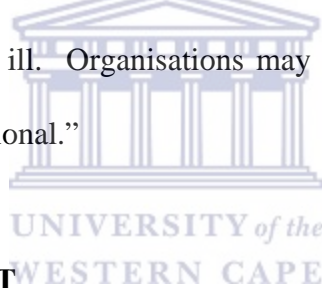
Rhodes and Steers (1990) propose that employee attendance is based on an employee's *motivation* to attend as well as their *ability* to attend. According to George and Jones (2002), job satisfaction is one of the factors affecting an employee's *motivation* to attend. It becomes important to measure the strength of the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction as "....positive attitudes can at times serve to "pull" the individual towards the organisation and the reverse can be expected when attitudes are more negative" (George & Jones, 2002, p. 94).

An employees' *ability* to attend is influenced on the other hand by factors such as family responsibilities, transportation problems, accidents and the like. Once all these variables are identified, managers may begin to understand why employees sometimes choose not to come to work when they are fully capable of attending. By the same token, it is "equally important for managers to understand those circumstances in which people, for whatever reason (illness or otherwise), are genuinely unable to come to work" (Rhodes & Steers, 1990, p. 13).

Furthermore, the question most people would ask is "what is an acceptable absenteeism rate?" In terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 (1997), an employee is entitled to 30 working days sick leave in a three-year period. Bydowell (2000) states that

if all the employees within a company collectively take their full entitlement, the company's absenteeism rate will run at approximately 4 %, which is generally believed to be acceptable. Some companies allow employees to exceed their 30 days, but in these instances it would be regarded as unpaid leave. Usually organisations do not take these additional days into account when calculating their absenteeism rate and it results in an inaccurate assessment of the situation. Bydawell (2000, p. 15) purports that "in reality, many companies run at absenteeism rates as high as 12 % without even realising it."

Absenteeism seems to be a behaviour that organisations can never eliminate, but they can rather control and manage it. George and Jones (2002, p. 94) note that "organisations should not have absence policies that are so restrictive that they literally force workers to come to work even if they are ill. Organisations may want to recognise that a certain level of absence is indeed functional."



## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Buitendach and De Witte (2005, p. 27) highlight the fact that "South African companies are being exposed more than ever to the effects of the world economy, technological advancement and tough international competition." Tremendous pressure is being placed on companies to reduce costs either through downsizing, outsourcing or restructuring. For many employees, these changes can cause feelings of insecurity regarding the nature of their jobs as well as their future. According to Quin (1998) as cited by Buitendach and De Witte (2005, p. 27), "employees with perceptions of low job security are more likely to engage in withdrawal behaviour and report lower

organisational commitment.” Lower organisational commitment often leads to employee turnover as well as absenteeism levels within organisations.

Even though more and more businesses are beginning to rely on remote or mobile ways of working and absenteeism might not seem to be a factor, a large number of organisations still need their employees present in the workplace for it to function profitably (“Who’s missing”, 2004). It is therefore important for managers to focus on employee absence as it can become extremely costly to organisations.

Not having people at work increases the workload of fellow employees, reduces productivity and increases the cost of contract labour. Rhodes and Steers (1990) point out that there are various factors which influence absence behaviour, ranging from an “absence culture” in organisations, employees’ job satisfaction levels as well as the personal circumstances of employees. Rather than trying to investigate all these multiple variables, this study focuses on job satisfaction as a possible variable influencing absenteeism. Presently there is contradictory research around the influence of job satisfaction on absenteeism. Generally, it is expected that low satisfaction levels would be related to high rates of absence and vice versa. Cooper and Locke (2000, p. 175) note that there is only a weak correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism. According to Argyle (1972) as quoted by Rhodes and Steers (1990, p. 34) however, “...when work is satisfying, people will show up to enjoy it ”, therefore indicating a stronger relationship between these two variables. Anderson (2004) agrees that dissatisfied employees would use their sick leave to “withdraw” from the workplace. In essence, if a correlation does exist between these two variables, managers would be able

to devise focused strategies around the various aspects of job satisfaction in an effort to reduce the absenteeism levels of employees.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

The aim of this research is to determine whether there is a relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism amongst Field Service employees in an Electricity Utility in the Western Cape. Based on the results, possible strategies would be recommended to address this phenomenon.

The Field Services department is one of the nucleus departments within this organisation. They are also the biggest department within the organisation (constituting about 50 % of the total number of employees). In essence, the Field Service department is responsible for maintaining the electricity networks and managing the quality of supply within the Western Cape. Essentially, they ensure that customers have optimal electricity supply at all times. Hence, it is in the interest of both the community and the organisation to have these employees at work for most of their working time.

There has been a culture of high sickness absence in this organisation over the past 4-5 years, in some departments more than others. One of the reasons cited was the existence of very lenient sick leave days (45 days per annum) afforded to employees within their Conditions of Service. The Field Services department has contributed to these high levels of sickness absence in the organisation as they constitute 50 % of the total workforce. Even though the direct cost of sick leave has not formally been calculated, it



remains an issue of concern to management. The present study will focus on a selected section of the Field services department within the organisation which has the highest incidence of sick leave.

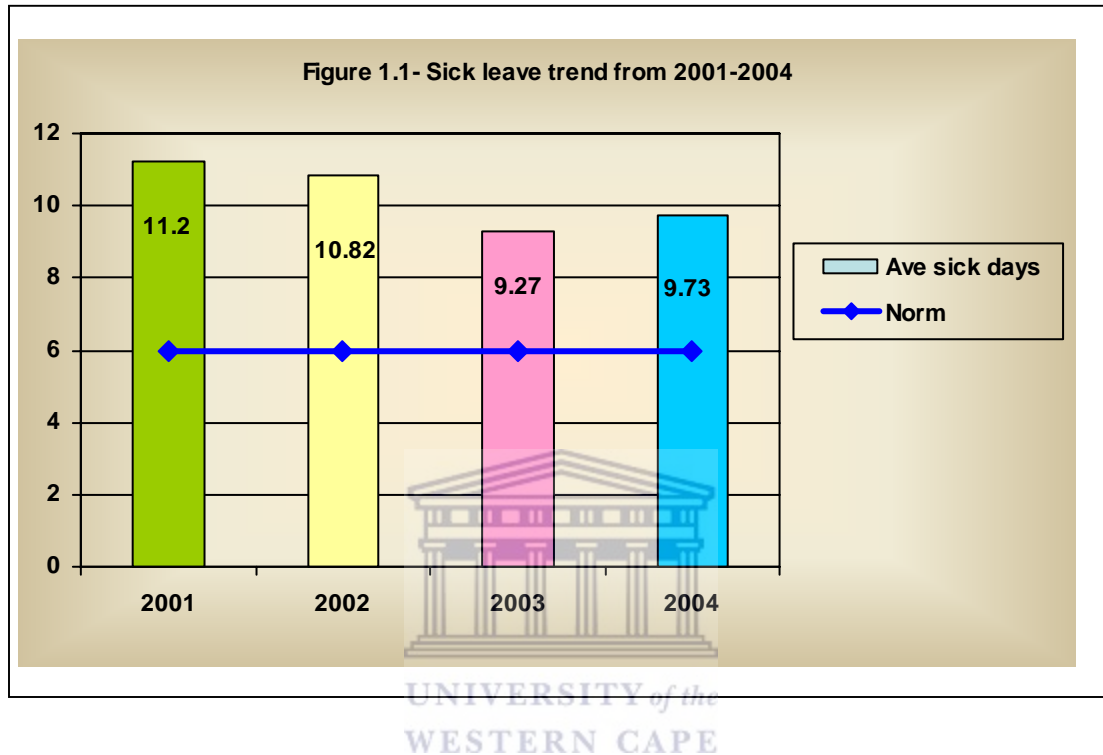


Figure 1.1. depicts the trend of sick leave in the selected section of the Field Services department since 2001-2004. The accepted norm in the business is six (6) sick leave days per person per annum. From the above, it is evident that sick leave use in this department is way above the accepted norm.

Numerous efforts have been made to identify and address the “key” factors that are associated with absenteeism amongst these employees. One of the factors that have been identified is the stress experienced by many of these employees as they are expected to

work in areas where the crime rate is high. Sick leave is then utilised to manage this problem.

In an effort to reduce the effect of sickness absence, the organisation has embarked on various initiatives, including the use of incentives for people with no sick leave and introducing sick leave as a key performance indicator. Despite the strategies employed to reduce absenteeism, the organisation is still battling to improve the culture of sickness absence amongst its employees, especially in the selected Field Service department, hence the focus of this study.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The present study will focus on addressing the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the dimensions of job satisfaction?
2. Is there is a statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism?
3. Are there differences in absenteeism levels based on biographical variables such as age, years of service and job level?
4. Are there differences in job satisfaction levels based on biographical variables such as age, years of service and job level?
5. Are there differences in absenteeism levels between the various Technical Service Units?

6. Are there differences in job satisfaction levels between the various Technical Service Units?

## 1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- H 1. There are significant relationships between the dimensions of job satisfaction amongst Field Services employees.
- H 2. There is a relationship between job satisfaction and number of days absent amongst Field Services employees.
- H 3. There is a relationship between job satisfaction and number of times absent amongst Field Services employees.
- H 4. There is a relationship between biographical variables and absenteeism amongst Field Services employees.
- H 5. There are differences in job satisfaction between Technical Services Units.
- H 6. There are differences in absenteeism between Technical Services Units.

- H 7. The biographical variables will significantly explain the variance in job satisfaction amongst Field Services employees.

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The sample consists of employees within a section of the Field Services department within an Electricity utility in the Western Cape. Due to the nature of the sample, the results may not be representative of the rest of the organisation. The selected section also consists of about 98 % male employees. Field Service employees do mostly physical work and this organisation traditionally appointed males in these positions, hence the male predominance. Most of these employees are in the age group 40-50 years and have more than 20 years service with the organisation. It is possible that these factors could contaminate the research findings as this is a reasonably homogenous group. The findings and conclusions will therefore only be applicable to this specific Field Services section within the organisation. However, some of the strategies could be relevant to the rest of the organisation.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

### **1.7.1 Absenteeism**

In terms of the discussion, the three terms “absence, absenteeism and sickness absence” will be used as synonymous in meaning, implying that workers who were scheduled for work and expected to attend, did not do so.

Cascio (2003, p. 45) defines absenteeism as “any failure of an employee to report for or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of the reason.” Milkovich and Boudreau (1994) define absenteeism from an organisation’s perspective as “the frequency and/or duration of work time lost when employees do not come to work.” Absenteeism therefore implies “an unplanned, disruptive incident; but more specifically, it can be seen as non-attendance when an employee is scheduled for work ” (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988, p. 3).

### **1.7.2 Job satisfaction**

Spector (1997, p. 2) defines job satisfaction simply as “the degree to which people like their jobs and the different aspects of their jobs.” Job satisfaction is also defined as a response towards various facets of one’s job, that is a person can be relatively satisfied with one aspect of his or her job and dissatisfied with other aspects (French, 1998; George & Jones, 2002; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001). Robbins (1998) defines job satisfaction as a general attitude towards one’s job; the difference between the amount workers receive and the amount they believe they should receive.

## **1.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

In summary, this chapter highlighted the fact that absenteeism is pervasive throughout most organisations and can place huge financial burdens on organisations. A central concern in organisations is probably that some employees believe that it is their “right” to

take sick leave whether they are sick or not. These short, unscheduled absences impact on work schedules, increase workloads of other employees and can also have a detrimental effect on productivity.

Furthermore, this chapter emphasised that absenteeism is influenced by a number of interrelated factors ranging from family responsibilities to satisfaction on the job. There is an underlying assumption that low job satisfaction leads to high absenteeism rates and vice versa, however, research in this area is contradictory. While there is no single, “one-size-fits” all cure for this phenomenon, it is evident that managers are constantly seeking ways to reduce the rate of absenteeism within organisations today.

The main purpose of the present study was also presented in this chapter, i.e. to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction. The chapter also defined the hypotheses of the present study as well as the key variables. An overview of each chapter is provided below.

## **1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The next chapter provides a comprehensive literature review relating to the concepts of absenteeism and job satisfaction as well as the relationship between these two variables. Thereafter an in-depth discussion on absenteeism is provided, with the focus on the various factors influencing absenteeism as well as the consequences for the organisation and the individual. Possible strategies to manage this problem are also presented. The concept of job satisfaction is then discussed with specific reference to the factors

influencing job satisfaction levels, theories around job satisfaction and the possible consequences of job satisfaction.

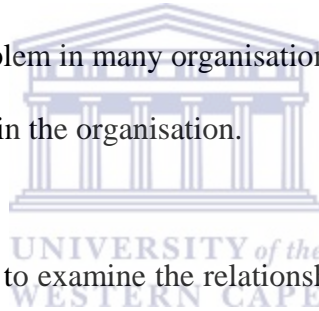
Chapters three and four provide an in-depth discussion on the empirical study. Chapter three outlines the research methodology employed in the investigation of the research problem. The aspects that are covered include the research design, the sampling methods, the manner in which data was gathered, the procedure for data collection, the measuring instruments and the statistical techniques utilised to test the research hypotheses for the present study. Attention is given to the measuring instruments used for the study with specific reference to the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The statistical techniques that are discussed include the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression. Chapter four provides a discussion on the actual results of the empirical study and the testing of the hypotheses presented for the study. Chapter five concludes this study by discussing the results obtained in the empirical analysis. Finally, conclusions are drawn and some recommendations are made that may be of value in future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review will endeavour to provide a theoretical body of knowledge related to the two variables of the present study, namely absenteeism and job satisfaction. The main purpose of the present study is to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction. Literature suggests that absenteeism is a major problem in many organisations, hence, the importance of focusing on this behaviour within the organisation.



Various studies have attempted to examine the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction as absence is commonly viewed as one of the means of withdrawal from stressful work situations. According to Luthans (1995), research has generally revealed a consistent inverse relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism, i.e. when satisfaction is high, absenteeism tends to be low and when satisfaction is low, absenteeism tends to be high. Even though this correlation has been found to be rather moderate, the underlying assumption is that absence is at least in part, the result of dissatisfaction on the job (Anderson, 2004; Hardy, Woods & Wall, 2003).



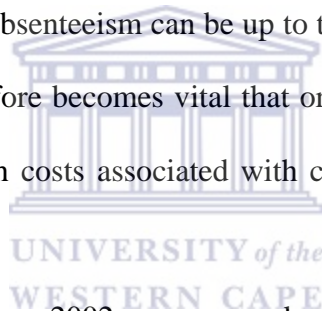
There is a further suggestion that the effects of job satisfaction will be more evident from the frequency of absences rather than from the total number of days absent (Johns, 1996). However, even though it makes sense that dissatisfied employees are more likely to miss work, absenteeism is a complex variable and is influenced by multiple factors. (Robbins, 1998; Robbins, Odendaal & Roodt, 2003; Spector, 1997). An employee might therefore be absent for various other reasons, than being dissatisfied with the job. These reasons include family responsibilities, genuine illnesses and absence policies governing absence behaviour in organisations. Looking at absence policies, it is expected that “the satisfaction-absenteeism relationship would be weaker in organisations with a clearly communicated absence policy entailing low tolerance for absenteeism, close monitoring of absence behaviour and disciplinary action ” (Brief, 1998, p. 37). On the other hand, Robbins et al. (2003) note that organisations with liberal sick leave benefits might be encouraging their employees to take sick leave. It is important for organisations to understand the implications of satisfaction on the job as it might lead to absenteeism, which in turn can become a costly problem to employers.

The next section provides a theoretical overview of absenteeism in an endeavour to understand its relationship with other variables in the organisation and to highlight its impact on organisations today.

## 2.2 ABSENTEEISM

### 2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Unscheduled absences affect almost every type of organisation. Hoque and Islam (2003, p. 81) describe absenteeism as a “subject to be studied, matter to be thought over and a problem to be solved.” Besides the direct costs associated with absenteeism, there are also indirect costs such as hiring of casual staff, reduced productivity, turnover and potential loss in revenue (Cole, 2002; Mason & Griffin, 2003). Robinson (2002) further notes that the indirect costs of absenteeism can be up to three times higher than the direct costs of absenteeism. It therefore becomes vital that organisations recognise the extent of this problem due to the high costs associated with continued unscheduled absences.



According to Aamodt (2004), a 2002 survey conducted by the Commerce Clearing House (CCH) revealed that employees in the United States took an average of 6.2 sick days per annum. He further states that this figure is standing at about 7.8 days for the United Kingdom. Aamodt (2004) notes that these figures are alarmingly high, hence the increased focus on absenteeism in organisations. In South Africa, absenteeism in the workplace is receiving increasing attention and organisations are taking a closer look at the costs of absenteeism as well as issues such as employee loyalty and commitment (Du Plessis, Visser & Fourie, 2003). It is estimated that about 4,5 % of the South African workforce are absent on any given day, and in certain companies this figure is as high as 18% (Vaida, 2005). Furthermore, a study conducted by Occupational Care South Africa

has revealed that South African companies are losing millions of rands a year due to absenteeism in the workplace. Robbins et al. (2003) indicate that South African managers consider absenteeism their most serious discipline problem. If not managed and controlled, absenteeism can “spread like an epidemic, creating a range of disciplinary problems for organisations” (Hoque & Islam, 2003, p. 19).

The main problem is perhaps that many employees believe sick leave is a “benefit ” like annual leave and they are entitled to take it, irrespective of the condition of their health. This has implications for organisations because it is difficult for an organisation to operate smoothly if employees fail to report for work. According to Robbins et al. (2003), having sick leave programmes in organisations, i.e. providing paid sick leave, actually enforces the wrong behaviour, which is absence from work. The authors argue that organisations should rather reward employees for attendance, not for being absent. Moreover, the importance of good attendance and its benefits should be clearly communicated to all employees (Bydawell, 2000).

It is however highly unlikely for organisations to completely eradicate absenteeism. Ericson (2001) maintains that organisations should look at ways in which they can accommodate the needs of their diverse workforce in order to attract and retain the best employees. The author states that “if people were only absent from their jobs when they needed to be- such as for family commitments or when they are truly ill- absenteeism would not be the major problem that it is today” (Ericson, 2001, p. 91). However, the issue of absenteeism is a multifaceted one and a phenomenon which requires a multi-

pronged approach. It becomes evident that absenteeism remains a daunting task for many organisations and should be managed, starting with an understanding of the causes.

### **2.2.2 ABSENTEEISM DEFINED**

Owing to the large amount of research conducted on absenteeism there are a plethora of definitions of absenteeism. Absenteeism is defined as “an unplanned, disruptive incident and can be seen as non-attendance when an employee is scheduled for work ” (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988, p. 3). Milkovich and Boudreau (1994) further define absenteeism as “the frequency and/ or duration of work time lost when employees do not come to work.” Johnson, Croghan and Crawford (2003) posit the view that absence is attributed to illness or injury and accepted as such by the employer.

Cascio (2003, p. 45) defines absenteeism as “any failure of an employee to report for or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of the reason.” The author points out that the term “as scheduled” carries significance in that it automatically excludes holidays (annual leave), court cases, maternity leave and the like. This definition also eliminates the problem of determining whether an absence is excusable or not for example, in the case of verified illnesses. Cascio (2003, p. 45) maintains that “from a business perspective, the employee is absent and is simply not available to perform his or her job; that absence will cost money.”

Rhodes and Steers (1990) maintain that people tend to have different perspectives or attach different meanings when viewing the topic of employee absenteeism. To the

manager, absence is often seen as a problem to be solved, but to the employee it can take on a very different meaning. For the employee, absenteeism can be symbolic of deeper feelings of hostility or perceptions of inequitable treatment in the job situation or a way to sabotage the organisation for the poor work environment or other attributes of the job. Attempts to understand and deal with absenteeism will therefore, according to Rhodes and Steers (1990), depend on the assumptions being used. When viewed from an organisational perspective, the resulting actions/recommendations will more likely focus on absence control policies within the organisation. On the other hand, viewing it from the employees' perspective may lead to a focus on improving the work environment and a culture of attendance rather than absenteeism. A combination of both models can also be employed to solve this problem.

### **2.2.3 TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM**

Van der Merwe and Miller (1988) classify absenteeism into three broad categories that help to understand the nature of this phenomenon. They are:

- (1) sickness absence,
- (2) authorised absence/absence with permission and
- (3) unexcused absence/ absence without leave.

### **2.2.3.1 Sickness absence**

Sickness absence is a category where employees claim ill health as their reason for absence. Requirements regarding medical/doctor's certificates vary and are determined by company policy or the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA). The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 (1997) stipulates that a certificate needs to be produced after two days of sickness absence. Most managers have found that certification is not a guarantee of genuine absence as it has become easy for people to gain access to medical certificates. Van der Merwe and Miller (1988, p. 10) maintain that "having a critical attitude to short sick absence, and indicating to employees that their absence behaviour is regularly monitored, is likely to result in a better norm of attendance. "



### **2.2.3.2 Authorised absence**

Absence with permission is where employees provide an "excuse" for their absence whether that be for holidays, study leave, special leave and the like. Normally such a request is included in the absence policy (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988, p. 11).

### **2.2.3.3 Unexcused absence**

All absences not falling into the two previous categories and where no reason is given, or not accepted, are regarded as unexcused (Van Der Merwe & Miller, 1988, p. 11). This type of absence, when it reaches problematic proportions, will have to be pointed out to employees in question in order to bring their attendance in line with acceptable norms.

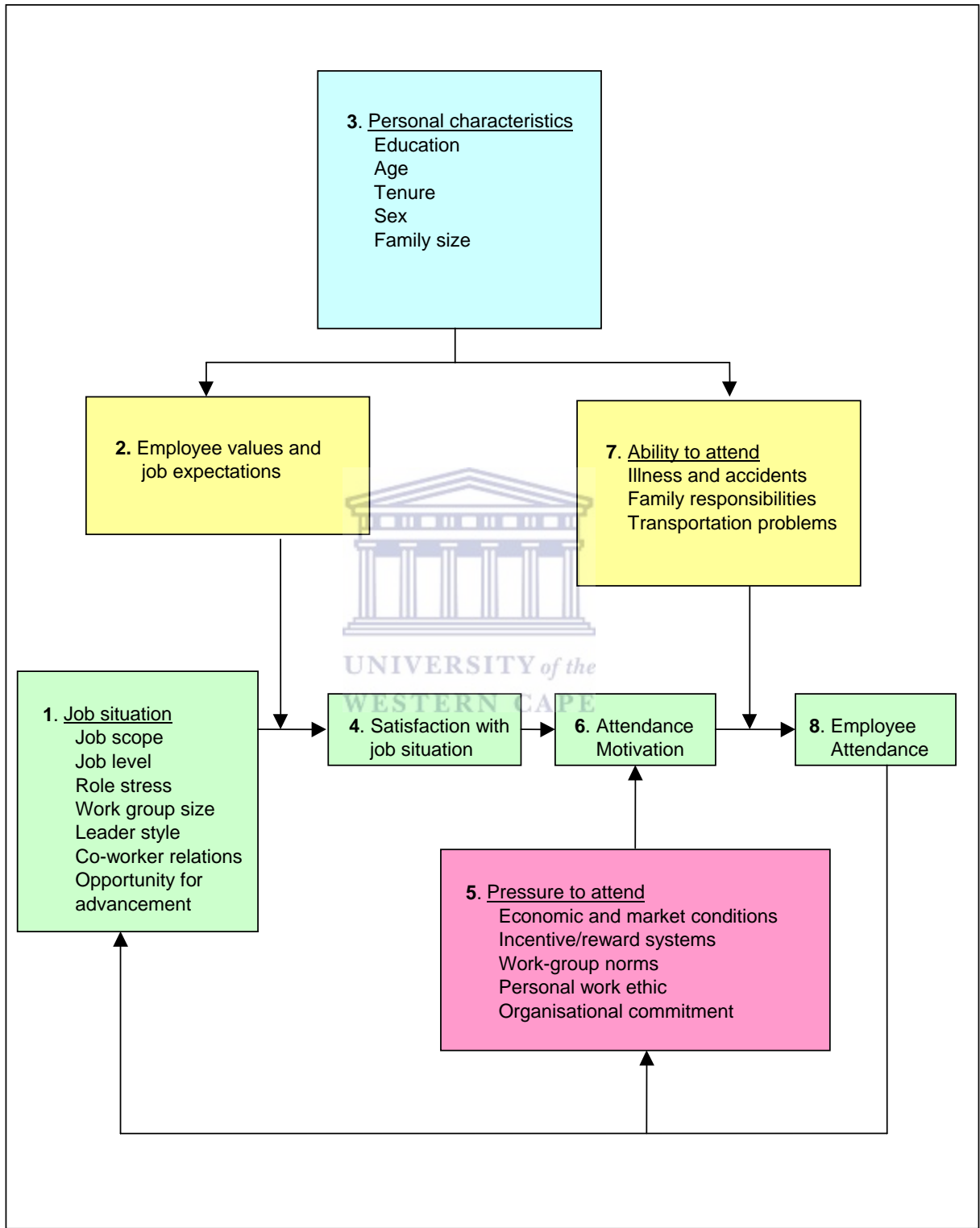
Employees who come to work later in the day or who leave earlier are normally not recorded on the leave records of employers and the supervisor is normally aware of such absences (Wolmarans, 1994).

#### **2.2.4 A MODEL OF ABSENTEEISM**

Aamodt (1996) maintains that before an organisation spends time and money trying to stop absenteeism, it must first understand the theories around why people miss work. Various models have been developed to explain absence behaviour, but the Integrated Model of Attendance developed by Rhodes and Steers (1990) provides a heuristic framework on the various factors influencing employee attendance (cf. Figure 2.1.).



**FIGURE 2.1**



Source: Rhodes & Steers (1990, p. 46)

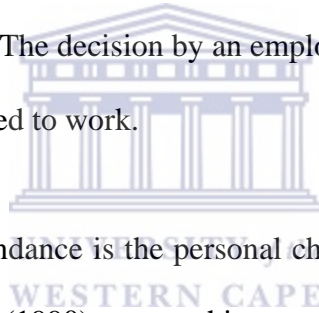


Figure 2.1. suggests that an employee's attendance (Box 8) is primarily determined by two important variables: (1) an employee's *motivation* to attend (Box 6), and (2) an employee's *ability* to attend (Box 7) (Rhodes & Steers, 1990, p. 45). The authors further suggest that the employee's motivation to attend is influenced by two factors: (1) satisfaction with the job situation (Box 4), and (2) pressures to attend (Box 5). In the context of this model, the job situation refers to the general working environment and not only the nature of the tasks.

Rhodes and Steers (1990) list seven factors related to the job situation that could lead to increased job satisfaction, namely, job scope, job level, role stress, size of the work group, style of the leader, co-worker relations and the opportunity for advancement (Box 1). A few of these factors are explained briefly. If, for example, the particular management style is autocratic and disliked by staff, it could cause friction and poor attendance might be the consequence (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). In terms of co-worker relations, Johns (1996) argues that group norms have a strong impact on attendance levels. Du Plessis et al. (2003) found that a "culture" of absenteeism amongst one group of employees might affect work values and commitment of other employees. New employees seem to adopt the existing culture, values, norms and standards of the organisation which they join, i.e. they might be influenced by the current absenteeism norms in the organisation (Rosseau, 1985 as quoted by Du Plessis et al., 2003). Lau, Au and Ho (2003) found that industries with a high group absence rate also had higher levels of individual absences. Organisations are therefore faced with the challenge of managing absence behaviours within groups as it influences the behaviour of employees

entering the organisation.

Furthermore, the model suggests that employee values and expectations also have an influence on employee attendance (Box 2). Attitudes, values and goals differ considerably from person to person, depending on what is important for the individual at a particular point in time. Rhodes and Steers (1990, p. 60) postulate that “work related attitudes (for example, job involvement) can play a significant role in determining how employees view the psychological contract between employees and management, as well as how committed they are to coming to work.” Further variables cited by these authors include personal work ethics and the centrality of work which refers to how important work is in a person’s life goals. The decision by an employee to absent him/herself is thus related to the importance attached to work.



Another factor influencing attendance is the personal characteristics and backgrounds of employees (Box 3). Tylczak (1990) terms this category “employee specifics” and includes things like gender roles, desire to spend time with friends and hobbies. As an example, older, more established employees might be more stable and might report fewer sick leave incidents than younger employees who do not mind risking their jobs due to absence.

Closely related to this is the question of whether lifestyle choices influence absenteeism. According to Ericson (2001), lifestyle choices such as smoking, drinking and other substances could influence absenteeism. Common in organisations is the trend of employees taking sick leave either on a Friday or on a Monday due to alcohol and other

substance abuse. Ericson (2001, p. 90) maintains that “the area of lifestyle choice is probably the hardest part of absenteeism management to address, as it blurs the lines between personal habits and the workplace.” An organisation can offer counselling services to help solve these personal problems in an effort to reduce absenteeism levels. These programmes are generally referred to as employee assistance programmes (EAP’s) and is defined as “a confidential counselling and referral service provided by organisations as an employee benefit” (Strazewski, 2005, p. 52).

Finally, the model suggests that there are certain “pressures to attend” (Box 5) which have an influence on an employee’s motivation to attend and these include the economic/market conditions (like unemployment), incentive and reward systems, personal work ethic and organisational commitment. Hence, if unemployment levels are high, people might be less willing to take sick leave for fear of losing their jobs (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). There are also factors that constrain an employee’s ability or capacity to attend (Box 7) include (a) genuine illnesses and (b) family related and transportation problems. A brief discussion of these factors is given below.

#### **2.2.4.1 Illnesses**

According to Ericson (2001), the stresses and strains of modern working life have been advanced as a reason why employees take sick leave. From an employer’s perspective, they do not have much control over employees becoming ill and taking sick leave for this purpose. However, organisations can exercise some control over illnesses by ensuring a safe and healthy workplace, proper ergonomic design, health and safety management

policies/practices to address absenteeism in the workplace (Ericson, 2001). These can facilitate healthier working environments and provide conducive conditions to reduce absenteeism and enhance satisfaction and productivity.

#### **2.2.4.2 Family related and transport problems**

Cascio (2003) notes the leading cause of absenteeism is due to personal or family related issues. Increasingly organisations are being characterised by issues such as child- and eldercare and single-parent families, which can all have an impact on the absenteeism levels in organisations (Ericson, 2001). The author further notes that employers need to develop a culture within organisations that recognises employees not only as employees but as individuals who have lives outside of work. Therefore, one of the strategies available to organisations to address absence resulting from family related problems, is the introduction of flexible work practices. These include alternative working arrangements such as a few hours leave for school functions, telecommuting and also compressed work weeks (Rauch, 2005). Telecommuting is a practice where employees do their work at home, mostly on a computer that is linked to their office (Robbins, 1989). A compressed work week is a four-day week, with employees working ten hours a day, therefore allowing employees more time off to tend to family related responsibilities (Saal & Knight, 1988). According to Rauch (2005), these flexible work schedules are the most successful in stemming unscheduled absences.

Another contributing factor to absenteeism in the workplace is when employees are presented with transportation problems, for example, when a car breaks down en route to

work (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). From the employees' perspective, it is important to inform the relevant manager/supervisor timeously so that the necessary work schedules can be adapted. According to Aamodt (2004, p. 339) "organisations can offer some type of shuttle service to avoid mechanical failures of employees' automobiles."

Based on the discussion, the Integrated Model of Rhodes and Steers (1990) provided useful insight into the causes of both voluntary and involuntary absence. The model does not address the relationship between personality and absenteeism, even though "...prior absence has been established as an efficient predictor of future absence" (Judge, Martocchio & Thoresen, 1997, p. 745). The relationship between personality and absence is therefore briefly discussed below.

### **2.2.5 PERSONALITY AND ABSENTEEISM**

Aamodt (2004) advances an interesting theory of absenteeism, which argues that absenteeism is a result of an individual's personality traits. Certain types of people will therefore more likely miss work than other types of people. Porters and Steers (1973) as quoted by Du Plessis et al. (2003) supported this theory and espouse the view that employees with extreme levels of emotional instability, anxiety, aggression, independence and self-confidence are more prone to absenteeism than employees with more moderate personality characteristics. Ferris, Bergin and Wayne (1988) as quoted by Judge et al. (1997) maintain that past absenteeism has been found to predict future absenteeism. Aamodt (2004) and Ones, Viswesvaran and Schmidt (2003) state that if more research supported this theory, taking cognisance of personality dispositions in

placement decisions may become a feasible organisational intervention in combating the costly and disruptive problem of absenteeism.

## **2.2.6 IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON ABSENTEEISM**

Demographic variables are widely used in the study of absenteeism and turnover (Goldberg & Waldman, 2000; Price, 1995). Price (1995) further postulates that demographic variables can assist in the construction of causal models and assist in the management of organisations. Information of this nature can, for example, assist with recruitment and selection decisions in organisations.

One of the goals of the present study is to investigate the relationship between absenteeism and demographic variables, hence, a brief discussion will be provided in the next section. The most common demographic variables used in research will be discussed, namely, age, tenure, marital status, number of dependents, gender and job level.

### **2.2.6.1 Age**

The impact of the aging workforce on organisations has become an important research area. This is mainly due to recent legislation, such as the Labour Relations Act 66 (1995), which practically outlaws mandatory retirement (Kacmar & Ferris, 1989; Robbins et al., 2003). In addition to this, the continuing threat of potential age discrimination lawsuits has created awareness around the aging work force. Moreover, Robbins et al. (2003) maintain that in South Africa, the impact of HIV and AIDS will have a crippling effect

on the labour force in the 20-29 year age group. This implies that South African organisations will be faced with an aging workforce as there would be a decline in the number of young employees entering the organisation due to the impact of HIV and AIDS. Employers will thus have to become more aware of the values, abilities and skills of older workers. The presence of an older workforce has implications for organisations as they impact on organisation variables such as productivity, turnover and absenteeism (Robbins et al., 2003).

Currently, the literature posits that absenteeism is negatively related to age (Johnson et al., 2003; Lau et al., 2003; Voss, Floderus & Diderichsen, 2001). This implies that absenteeism is higher amongst younger employees. According to Martocchio (1989), the rationale for this has been attributed to greater job commitment amongst older employees. Furthermore, Siu (2002) and Voss et al. (2001) found that short periods of sick leave are more common among younger employees, probably because older employees usually take up higher responsibility at work and will not request sick leave for minor illnesses.

In contrast to the above view, researchers such as Peiro et al. (1999) as quoted by Siu (2002) found that older workers are more prone to sickness absence than younger workers. The most common reasons cited are health deterioration of older employees and longer recovery when injured (Robbins et al., 2003).

Another contradiction to the age-absenteeism relationship has been reported in a study conducted by Hoque and Islam (2003). They found a non significant relationship between

age and absenteeism. Rhodes (1983) as cited by Martocchio (1989) concluded that the relation between age and absenteeism may depend on things such as the type of absence measures used, whether the job is physically demanding, the employee's gender and inconsistencies in absence classification. According to these researchers, employee absences will therefore be dependent on these type of factors, and not necessarily their age. Research on the relationship between age and absenteeism is, at best, equivocal.

#### **2.2.6.2 Tenure**

Tenure is generally defined as the length of employment for which an employee has worked for an organisation. According to Robbins et al. (2003), studies consistently demonstrate an inverse relationship between tenure and absenteeism, which means that employees with higher work experience will be less absent than those with lower work experience or length of employment. Employees who have been in employment for long periods, tend to express higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, resulting in lower rates of absenteeism (Martocchio, 1989).

On the other hand, studies by Hoque and Rahman (1999) as quoted by Hoque and Islam (2003) found that workers with higher work experience report higher levels of absenteeism than workers with lower work experience. The authors attributed this to the fact that employees with higher work experience believe they have been loyal to their organisation and are entitled to a few days of sickness absence.



Another contradiction in the tenure-absenteeism relationship has been reported by Lau et al. (2003) who found there is no association between tenure and absenteeism. Research in this regard is thus contradictory.

#### **2.2.6.3 Marital status**

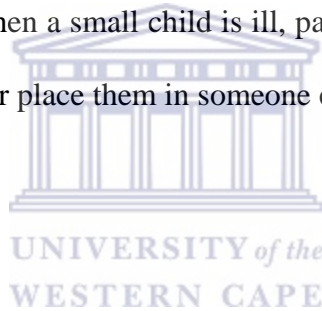
According to Robbins et al. (2003), available research indicates that married employees have fewer absences than their unmarried co-workers. The authors postulate that marriage imposes increased responsibilities that make a job more valuable and important, therefore married employees will be less likely to miss work. The question of causation however, remains unclear as it is possible that unmarried employees might also report low levels of absenteeism, given that absenteeism is dependent on different factors. Consistent with this, Hogue and Islam (2003) and Lau et al. (2003) found that marital status is not a significant factor in determining the proneness of an employee for absenteeism.

#### **2.2.6.4 Number of dependents**

Many times employees report absence because of events or conditions that are beyond their control. It is estimated that 40 % of absenteeism is unavoidable. One such unavoidable event is when employees' children suddenly become ill and they have to report an unscheduled absence (Aamodt, 2004).

Research on the relationship between number of dependents and absenteeism is contradictory. In their research, Hoque and Islam (2003) found a non-significant relationship between absenteeism and number of dependents. This could be attributed to the fact that many employees invest in after-care and day-care facilities for their dependents.

On the other hand, Voss et al. (2001) and Goldberg and Waldman (2000) found a modest relationship between absenteeism and number of dependents. Voss and his colleagues found that respondents with small children between the ages 0-6 years reported higher rates of absence than those with older children. A logical explanation, according to Robbins et al. (2003), is that when a small child is ill, parents would normally stay home to either take them to a doctor or place them in someone else's care.



#### **2.2.6.5 Gender**

There has been an influx of women into the labour force over the last number of years and in South Africa women constitute about 54 % of the labour force (Robbins et al., 2003). The authors postulate that women's preferences are significantly different to men in that they would prefer part time work and flexible work schedules in order to accommodate their family responsibilities. It is therefore possible that if these options are not available to women, it could influence their absence patterns within organisations.

A large body of research indicates that absenteeism is higher among women than men (Fried et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 2003; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990 as quoted by Siu, 2002;

Robbins et al., 2003). Explanations for this finding are that working women have multiple roles as female home makers, carers of children and sometimes caring for the elderly. Hardy et al. (2003), Lau et al. (2003) and Voss et al. (2001) support this theory as their research also reports that women are generally more absent than men due to domestic problems as well as general health issues. Furthermore, Fried et al. (2002) found that differences in absenteeism among women and men hold even if both are doing the same job.

However, Robbins et al. (2003) postulate that the historical role of women in caring for children has changed in the last generation and that men are nowadays taking responsibility for problems associated with child care. Differences in absenteeism, based on traditional female roles will therefore disappear as more women join organisations and follow long term careers.



#### **2.2.6.6 Job Level**

Most organisations classify their jobs into certain levels based on criteria such as level of responsibility, skill level and task variety (Aamodt, 2004).

Research consistently indicates an inverse relationship between job level and absenteeism. This implies that employees in lower level jobs are more likely to be absent than employees in higher level jobs or jobs that require a higher level of skill. Giraud (1987) as quoted by Du Plessis et al. (2003) and Voss et al. (2001) present a similar

argument. According to Voss et al. (2001), this correlation could be attributed to the fact that higher –level jobs tend to be more complex and have better working conditions, pay, promotion prospects, supervision, autonomy and responsibility.

## **2.2.7 MEASURING ABSENCE**

Rhodes and Steers (1990) point out that measuring absenteeism can serve four purposes to organisations, namely, to administer payroll and benefit programmes, for production scheduling, to identify absenteeism problems and to measure and control personnel costs.

### **2.2.7.1 Administering payroll and benefits programs**

According to Rhodes and Steers (1990), information about who is present and who is absent from work can assist organisations in determining whether absence is compensable under a benefit program or other contractual arrangements.

### **2.2.7.2 Production scheduling**

Rhodes and Steers (1990) maintain that it is important to have absence data available as it can assist managers in planning for which human resources will be needed to meet production requirements. In this way, organisations will avoid the cost of overstaffing and also be protected from having too few employees at work.

### 2.2.7.3 Identifying absenteeism problems

To assess whether there is an absenteeism problem, it is important to measure absenteeism and have this data available. This could assist in determining if some departments have higher absence rates than others, how an organisation compares with others in the industry, whether there is a certain trend and so forth (Robinson, 2002).

### 2.2.7.4 Measuring and controlling personnel costs

Excessive absence can be costly to organisations. Anderson (2004, p. 26) notes that “unexpected absence costs corporate America billions of dollars annually in direct costs.” By measuring absence, the organisation could estimate the costs, thereby reducing its effect on the organisation. Moreover it can facilitate the determination of which proportion of absenteeism managers are able to control, in order to devise appropriate strategies to reduce absence in the workplace (Rhodes & Steers, 1990).

The two most widely used measures of absence are the Gross Absence Rate (GAR), which measures the extent of absence, and the Absence Frequency Rate (AFR), which measures the incidence of absence taking (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988, p. 2).

The formula for GAR is as follows:

$$\text{GAR} = \frac{\text{Total days lost through absence}}{\text{Total possible man-days}} \times 100$$

The disadvantage of the GAR is that it provides an overall figure and can be distorted by long sick absences. Two or three employees who are on sick leave for a few weeks, could inflate the organisation's GAR and could give an incorrect impression of a severe absence problem.

The AFR is used to overcome these disadvantages. The formula for calculating AFR is as follows:

$$\text{AFR} = \frac{\text{Total number of absence incidents over period}}{\text{Average in employment for that period}}$$

Van der Merwe and Miller (1988, p. 12) note that “when computing the AFR, each absence, irrespective of the length, is counted as one incident.” The AFR is expressed as a ratio, and normally it is given per month, i.e. the absence incidents per person per month. These two measures provide a useful summary description of both the extent and frequency of absence in organisations.

### **2.2.8 CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM**

Goodman and Atkin (1984) as cited by Winfield (1991), suggest that absenteeism can have both positive and negative consequences for different groups. These groups include the individuals themselves, their co-workers, the larger work group, the organisation and management, trade unions, the family and the society at large. The proposed

consequences of absenteeism are presented in Table 1. Furthermore, it is noted that this list is not comprehensive as situations do vary and “...the effects may not always be felt immediately and absence duration could determine different outcomes” (Winfield, 1991, p. 26).



**Table 1 - Consequences of absenteeism**

	<b>POSITIVE</b>	<b>NEGATIVE</b>
<b>Individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction of job related stress</li> <li>▪ Meeting of non-work role obligations</li> <li>▪ Benefit from compensatory non work activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of pay</li> <li>▪ Discipline, formal and informal</li> <li>▪ Altered job perception</li> </ul>
<b>Co-workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Job variety</li> <li>▪ Skill development</li> <li>▪ Overtime Pay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased work load</li> <li>▪ Undesired overtime</li> <li>▪ Increased accidents</li> <li>▪ Conflict with absent worker</li> </ul>
<b>Work group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work group's knowledge of multiple jobs</li> <li>▪ Greater flexibility in responding to absenteeism and to production problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased accidents</li> <li>▪ Decreased productivity</li> </ul>
<b>Organisation/ Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greater job knowledge base in work force</li> <li>▪ Greater labour force flexibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased costs (overtime, etc.)</li> <li>▪ More grievances</li> <li>▪ Increased accidents</li> </ul>
<b>Union officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Power position is strengthened as they are often seen by management as a means to get employees back to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Where absence is high, lose credibility for being unable to control their members</li> <li>▪ Increased costs in processing grievances</li> </ul>
<b>Family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Opportunity to deal with health or illness problems, marital, child and other family related issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less earnings</li> <li>▪ Decline in work reputation</li> </ul>
<b>Society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduction of job stress and mental health problems</li> <li>▪ Participation in community political processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of productivity</li> </ul>

*Source: Goodman and Atkin (1984) as cited by Winfield (1991, p. 25)*



### 2.2.9 THE COST OF ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is costly and managers are constantly exploring ways to reduce it. Bydawell (2000) and Schumacher (2004) highlight the growing concern that employees who absent themselves and present doctor's certificates, are actually absent for non-health related matters. Some employees even use their sick leave as vacation days when they have exhausted their annual leave benefits. This makes it extremely difficult for managers as some employees have an "entitlement" mentality.

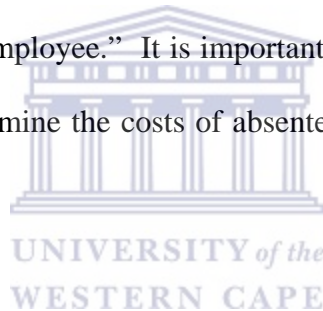
Haswell (2003) maintains that it is unlikely that absenteeism can be completely eradicated in organisations, hence, financial provision should be made for sick benefits. To determine whether absence is really a problem to be addressed, the organisation has to assess the costs of absence to the organisation.

A number of studies have attempted to determine the financial implications of absenteeism. Chadwick-Jones (1982) as cited by Butler (1994, p. 26) estimated that "one day's absence by an employee costs the organisation one and a half times the daily rate of pay of that employee." Most companies probably use their own methods of determining the cost associated with absenteeism. However, according to Butler (1994), there are a few ways to estimate absenteeism costs.

One of these is the aggregate approach that estimates the number of additional employees to be hired to offset the effects of absenteeism. The company thus hires casual labour or temporary employees to fill in for the absent employees, especially in positions that

cannot be left vacant, for example, an organisation's receptionist position. Goodman and Atkin (2000) as cited by Butler (1994, p. 26) indicate that "the cost therefore of recruiting, selecting, training and paying these additional employees represents one way in which the costs of absenteeism can be estimated."

Another approach estimates the incremental costs per day associated with the absent employee, for example, salary and pension that still have to be paid during the employee's absence. According to Butler (1994, p. 26), "if an employee is absent and a casual/temporary employee is hired, the task of management is to compare the costs that would have been involved if the absent employee had come to work, plus the additional costs of hiring a replacement employee." It is important then for organisations to have a proper system in place to determine the costs of absenteeism, so that it can be managed effectively.



### **2.2.10 STRATEGIES TO MANAGE ABSENTEEISM**

Most employers expect some degree of absence, but most organisations find the effects on profitability and employee morale very damaging (Harris, 2005). According to Paton (2004, p. 25), "sickness absence is no longer a medical issue for employers, it is a strategic one." Organisations can no longer wait for employees to come back from sick leave, hoping the problem will disappear. There is a growing realisation that it is very much up to employers to get employees back to work as absenteeism is costly. Bydawell (2000) believes that programmes to manage absenteeism should not be initiated with the intention to pressurise employees to be at work, irrespective of their personal situation.

Nor should employees be unfairly treated when they absent themselves for legitimate reasons.

According to Johnson et al. (2003), successful absenteeism management strategies begin with the belief that something can actually be done to reduce absenteeism. Managers need to keep in mind that there is no “one-size-fits” all solution that is appropriate for all organisations. Every organisation is unique and absenteeism reduction strategies should be customised to the particular work environment.

Harris (2005) states that employers should distinguish between short- and long-term absence when dealing with the problem of absence. The author mentions that for short-term absence, an effective sickness absence policy should be implemented. This policy should indicate the procedure to be followed as well as the possible consequences of unacceptable sick leave levels. For long term absences, an employer should keep record of these events as well as ensuring that medical certificates are supplied. In cases where employees' health is not improving and they are unable to perform their work, a fair incapacity process should be followed (Harris, 2005).

Other strategies for managing absenteeism are discussed below.

#### **2.2.10.1 Pooling of leave**

Some of the ways in which American companies have tried to deal with the absenteeism problem is by introducing a system where all the leave categories are “lumped” together

and employees can take their leave as they wish (Cole, 2002). This includes scheduled vacations and unscheduled events like illnesses. Employees therefore have more control and become more accountable for their own time, taking as much or as little as they need to tend to personal and family needs.

American companies have seen absences plummet after introducing this approach to time off (“With sick leave, time matters”, 2003). Perhaps in the South Africa this approach might serve to minimise the abuse sometimes associated with sick leave benefits.

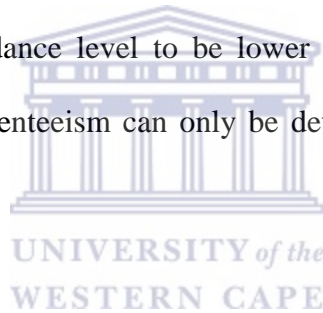
#### **2.2.10.2. Record keeping**

According to Robinson (2002), organisations need to have a system in place where they can effectively capture and track absence data. This is key to the success of any absence management programme. Moreover, Bydowell (2000) states that most organisations fail to track attendance adequately. The result is - what does not get measured, is not managed. If this happens, “excessive absenteeism escalates to the point that it directly affects productivity, quality and morale and employing people is eventually seen as a liability” (Bydowell, 2000, p. 14). If proper records are kept, management can establish the problem areas and take the necessary remedial action. The information is necessary in order to convey the scope of the problem and to identify the sources of highest risk (Robinson, 2002).

Anderson (2004, p. 29) further advances that “management must understand the processes and procedures that are poisoning the workplace and driving up absences

across the board.” Useful measures of absence include frequency and duration of sick leave, reason for sickness absence, seniority levels and absence data on different departments within the organisation (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 340).

According to Aamodt (1996, p. 515), “....absenteeism can also be decreased by setting attendance goals and providing feedback on how well the employees are reaching those goals and how it compares to their co-workers.” A study by Harrison and Shaffer (1994) as cited by Aamodt (1996) found that almost 90 % of employees think that their attendance is above average and they estimate their colleagues’ absenteeism as two times higher than it actually is. Thus, one reason why employees miss work is that they incorrectly believe their attendance level to be lower than their team mates at work. Hence, proper solutions to absenteeism can only be devised if management knows the extent of the problem.



### **2.2.10.3 Absence control policies**

This strategy suggests that managers make use of either positive reinforcement (public recognition and rewards) or negative reinforcement/ punishment (employee call-in to give notice of absence, progressive discipline for excessive absence and doctor’s certificates for all illnesses) to shape employees’ behaviour in the desired direction. It is important that employees are educated in the company’s expectations/standards of acceptable attendance. Johnson et al. (2003, p. 340) maintain that “absence policies purely aimed at controlling absence have been found to actually cause higher absence levels by undermining employee commitment. ” According to Anderson (2004),

employers should rather focus on building a present and committed workforce to reduce the number of absences. The author further holds that organisations should create a working environment where employees actually want to come to work because if employees are dissatisfied with particular workplace realities like job design, policies and work climate, they will use the avenues available to them, including sick leave.

#### **2.2.10.4 Return to work interviews**

Under this approach an interview is held with the relevant employee immediately on return to work, especially for short-term absence (Johnson et al., 2003; O'Reilly, 2003; Paton, 2004). The benefit of this strategy is that it provides an opportunity to identify any long term health issues as well as other personal or family related problems which might be the cause of absence. Managers should use their discretion with this approach by only focusing on employees with sickness absence above the required norm (Hodgkiss, 2004). This approach might help deter employees from taking unnecessary sick leave if they know they will be having a meeting around their absence on their return to work.

#### **2.2.10.5 Attendance oriented culture**

Organisations should have policies in place that create a work environment where employees want to work in, including flexible working arrangements and rewards for good attendance, as such policies have been found to reduce sickness absence (Evans & Walters, 2002 as quoted by Johnson et al., 2003; O'Reilly, 2003). Rhodes and Steers

(1990, p. 99) advance two general strategies that can be employed to develop a work environment that is more conducive to attendance. First, efforts can be made to create a more inviting workplace which relates more to the physical environment. Secondly, attention can be given to create a work culture that fosters attendance rather than absence.

#### **2.2.10.6 Flexible work practices**

Many employees care for children or elderly relatives and these responsibilities are a frequent cause of absence (Gragg, 2004; O'Reilly, 2003). Family-friendly initiatives by organisations could be an effective way of cutting absence. This may mean providing more flexible working hours, child care facilities and time off for school events that may help employees strike a balance between their work and personal lives (Johnson et al., 2003).



Telecommuting is another strategy employed by some organisations as it gives employees freedom to work in an environment that fits their personal needs, without jeopardising the outputs expected by the employer (Gragg, 2004). With telecommuting, employees can schedule their personal appointments to fit into their work schedules. This could help to reduce the number of unscheduled absence. Gragg (2004) however, also cautions against telecommuting as there could be employees who abuse this privilege.

### **2.2.10.7 Employee assistance programmes (EAP's)**

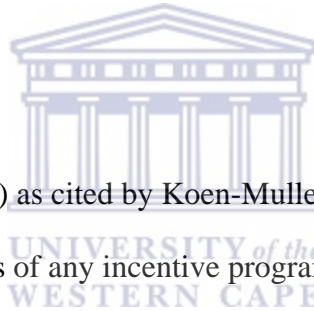
An EAP can be described as “a manpower management control system designed to facilitate early identification of employees with a variety of medical, emotional and financial problems that impair these employees’ job performance and also to motivate them to receive assistance, thereby improving their job performance and quality of life” (Van der Burgh, 1988 as quoted by Koen-Muller, 2005, p. 41). Hence, an EAP is one of the fundamental ways in which an organisation can assist its employees in dealing with problems related to their “mental” health, thereby reducing the effect on long-term absenteeism.

A common reason for employing an EAP is to assist employees with problems relating to drug and alcohol abuse (Employee assistance programmes, 2004). Typical EAPs entail face-to-face counselling sessions with professional counsellors, however, telephone counselling is also used in some organisations (Strazewski, 2005). According to Haswell (2003), the key principle of an EAP is the referral of employees by their immediate supervisors, particularly when job performance is affected. Essential to an employee assistance programme, is the issue of confidentiality as well as easy access, follow-up and evaluation (Rhodes & Steers, 1990).



### 2.2.10.8 Employee incentive programmes

Rhodes and Steers (1990) indicate that workplace absenteeism is on the increase and reward systems can be employed to control absenteeism. Different methods could be used by employers to recognize employees for good attendance. Some of these include publicising their names in the company newspaper, giving employees a certificate, sending the employee a letter and publicly presenting awards (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Other methods involve paying employees for their unused sick leave and providing a financial bonus for reaching a certain level of attendance (Aamodt, 2004). Robbins et al. (2003) note that bonuses given in the light of good attendance, have proved to reduce absenteeism.



According to Woolnough (2004) as cited by Koen-Muller (2005, p. 43), the following points are crucial for the success of any incentive programme:

- Employers should communicate the goals of the programme and the rewards for achieving those goals.
- Employees need to understand how the incentive programme can improve the absenteeism rate.
- Employees should be involved from the beginning so that the rewards can be relevant to them and

- The success of the programme needs to be measured and monitored to determine whether there is a reduction in absence levels and this needs to be shared with the employees.

### **2.2.11 Summary on absenteeism**

This previous section provided an overview of the importance of absenteeism in organisations and its impact on the organisation's effectiveness. Absenteeism can place a huge financial burden on organisations and if not managed properly it can have a detrimental effect on an organisations' productivity. Robbins et al. (2003, p. 16) note that "in organisations who rely heavily upon assembly-line production, absenteeism can be considered more than a disruption; in some cases, it can bring about a complete shutdown of the production facility." Solutions can therefore only be devised if management knows the extent of the problem.

The last section will focus on the second variable of the present study which is job satisfaction. The various causes of job satisfaction will be highlighted as well as some theories associated with job satisfaction. Finally, the consequences of job satisfaction are examined.

## 2.3 JOB SATISFACTION

### 2.3.1 Introduction

Research indicates that employee satisfaction is important to an organisation's success. It is a widely studied construct in organisational behaviour as it influences other organisational variables like productivity, turnover and absenteeism. Atchison (1999) states that many organisations are spending much time on employee satisfaction initiatives in an effort to reduce turnover, improve productivity and to help organisations succeed.

Hoole and Vermeulen (2003) maintain that the popularity of this field of study is also due to its relevance to the physical and mental well-being of employees. Furthermore, Robbins (2005, p. 2) postulates that managers have a humanistic responsibility to provide employees with jobs that are challenging, rewarding and satisfying. According to Alavi and Askaripur (2003, p. 591), there are at least three reasons why managers must focus on the job satisfaction of its employees:

1. Evidence suggests that unsatisfied individuals leave organisations.
2. Satisfied employees are in better health and have longer life expectancy. Connolly and Myers (2003) further maintain that a lack of job satisfaction has been associated with symptoms like anxiety, depression and poor physical and psychological health, which have concomitant consequences for absenteeism and commitment.

3. Job satisfaction in the workplace also affects individuals' private lives which in turn has an effect on absenteeism and other important work-related attitudes and behaviour.

### **2.3.2 Job satisfaction defined**

Job satisfaction is generally regarded as an employee's attitude toward the job and job situation. Spector (1997, p. 1) defines job satisfaction simply as "the degree to which people like their jobs." Some people therefore enjoy work and consider it a central part of their lives while others do so only because they have to.

Robbins (2005, p. 24) defines job satisfaction as "a collection of feelings that an individual holds towards his or her job." This implies that a person with a high level of job satisfaction will hold positive feelings towards the job and a person who is dissatisfied will hold negative feelings about the job.

Locke (1976) as cited by Cooper and Locke (2000, p. 166) offers a further definition of job satisfaction as a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences."

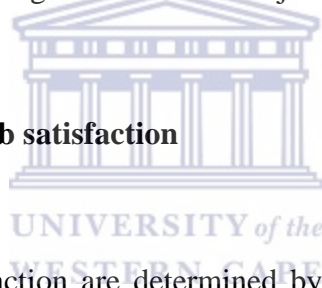
Job satisfaction is also defined in terms of equity. Robbins et al. (2003, p. 16) define job satisfaction as "the difference between the rewards employees receive and the reward they believe they should receive." As a result, the higher this discrepancy, the lower job satisfaction will be.

### **2.3.3 Factors influencing job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is a complex variable and is influenced by factors of the job environment as well as dispositional characteristics of an individual. These factors have been arranged according to two dimensions, namely, extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Buitendach & De Witte, 2005).

The extrinsic factors include things like pay, promotion opportunities, co-workers, supervision and recognition. Intrinsic factors include personality, education, intelligence and abilities, age and marital status (Mullins, 1999). According to Spector (1997), these categories of factors often work together to influence job satisfaction.

#### **2.3.3.1 Extrinsic sources of job satisfaction**



Extrinsic sources of job satisfaction are determined by conditions that are beyond the control of the employee (Atchison, 1999). The following factors will be discussed, namely, pay, the job itself, promotion opportunities, supervision, co-workers, working conditions and the issue of fairness.

##### **2.3.3.1.1 Pay**

Pay refers to the amount of compensation received for a specific job (Robbins et al., 2003). Luthans (1995, p. 127) notes that “wages and salaries are recognised to be a significant, but complex, multidimensional predictor of job satisfaction.”

According to Spector (1997) and Berkowitz (1987), the correlation between the level of pay and job satisfaction tends to be surprisingly small. This suggests that pay in itself is not a very strong factor influencing job satisfaction. Berkowitz (1987, p. 545) notes that “there are other considerations, besides the absolute value of one’s earnings that influences attitudes toward satisfaction with pay.”

Spector (1996, p. 226) postulates that “it is the fairness of pay that determines pay satisfaction rather than the actual level of pay itself.” If an employee’s compensation is therefore perceived to be equitable, when compared to another person in a similar position, satisfaction might be the likely result. Atchison (1999) however, points out that an increase in pay only acts as a short-term motivator and management therefore has to look at other ways to increase the levels of job satisfaction.


#### **2.3.3.1.2 Job or the work itself**

According to Luthans (1995), the content of the work performed by employees is a major predictor of job satisfaction. Not surprisingly, “research is fairly clear that employees who find their work interesting, are more satisfied and motivated than employees who do not enjoy their jobs” (Gately, 1997 as cited by Aamodt, 2004, p. 326). Employees tend to prefer jobs which afford them the opportunity to apply their skills and abilities, offer them variety and freedom as well as jobs where they get constant feedback on how well they are doing (Robbins, 2005). Hence, it is important for managers to take innovative steps to make work more interesting in order to increase the levels of job satisfaction of

employees.

Furthermore, if a job is highly motivating, employees are likely to be satisfied with the job content and deliver higher quality work, which in turn could lead to lower rates of absenteeism (Friday & Friday, 2003). Fox (1994) as cited by Connolly and Myers (2003, p. 152) however, advances a contradictory view and maintain that “as workers become more removed from the ability to make meaning through work, the opportunity to experience job satisfaction becomes more difficult.” This stems from the fact that job satisfaction is related to a myriad of factors, including physical, psychological and demographic variables, which are unrelated to the workplace.

#### **2.3.3.1.3 Promotion opportunities**



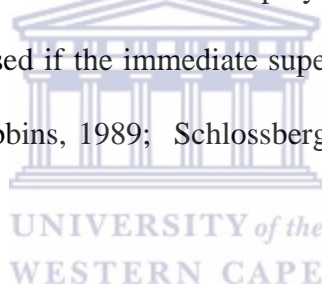
According to Friday and Friday (2003), satisfaction with promotion assesses employees' attitudes toward the organisation's promotion policies and practices. In addition to this, Bajpai and Srivastava (2004) postulate that promotion provides employees with opportunities for personal growth, more responsibilities and also increased social status.

Robbins (1989) maintains that employees seek promotion policies and practices that they perceive to be fair and unambiguous and in line with their expectations. Research indicates that employees who perceive that promotion decisions are made in a fair and just manner are most likely to experience job satisfaction.

#### **2.3.3.1.4 Supervision**

Research indicates that people who enjoy working with their supervisors will be more satisfied with their jobs (Aamodt, 2004). Furthermore, a study by Bishop and Scott (1997) as cited by Aamodt (2004) found that satisfaction with supervisors was related to organisational and team commitment, which in turn resulted in higher productivity, lower turnover and a greater willingness to help.

According to Luthans (1995), there seem to be three dimensions of supervision that affect job satisfaction. The first dimension has to do with the extent to which supervisors concern themselves with the welfare of their employees. Research indicates that employee satisfaction is increased if the immediate supervisor is emotionally supportive (Egan & Kadushin, 2004; Robbins, 1989; Schlossberg, 1997, as cited by Connolly & Myers, 2003).



The second dimension has to do with the extent to which people participate in decisions that affect their jobs. Research by Grasso (1994) and Malka (1989) as cited by Egan and Kadushin (2004) found a positive relationship between managerial behaviour that encourages participation in decision-making and job satisfaction. Robbins (1989) supports this view and maintains that satisfaction is increased if the immediate supervisor listens to employees' inputs.

A third dimension of supervision which is related to job satisfaction, according to Luthans (1995), is an employee's perception of whether they matter to their supervisor



and their organisation. Connolly and Myers (2003) maintain that this aspect of an employee's work setting may also be related to enhancing job satisfaction.

#### **2.3.3.1.5 Co-Workers**

Another dimension which influences job satisfaction is the extent to which co-workers are friendly, competent and supportive (Robbins et al., 2003). Research indicates that employees who have supportive co-workers will be more satisfied with their jobs (Aamodt, 2004; Robbins, 1989; 2005). This is mainly because “the work group normally serves as a source of support, comfort, advice and assistance to the individual worker” (Luthans, 1995, p. 127).

Researchers further found that employees observe the levels of satisfaction of other employees and then model these behaviours (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1997 as cited by Aamodt, 2004). Hence, if an organisation's veteran employees work hard and talk positively about their jobs, new employees will model this behaviour and be both productive and satisfied. The reverse can also be true.

#### **2.3.3.1.6 Working conditions**

Working conditions is an extrinsic factor that has a moderate impact on an employee's job satisfaction (Luthans, 1995). Working conditions refer to such aspects as temperature, lighting, noise and ventilation. Robbins (1989) states that employees are concerned with their work environment for both personal comfort and for facilitating

good job performance. Studies have demonstrated that employees prefer physical surroundings that are safe, clean, comfortable and with a minimum degree of distractions (Robbins, 2005). According to Spector (1997), research has shown that employees who perceive high levels of constraints in terms of their work environment, tend to be dissatisfied with their jobs.

Contradictory literature, however, indicates that “most people do not give working conditions a great deal of thought unless they are extremely bad” (Luthans, 1995, p. 128).

#### **2.3.3.1.7 Fairness**

One factor related to job satisfaction is the extent to which employees perceive that they are being treated fairly (Aamodt, 2004). According to Robbins (1989), employees seek for policies and systems that they perceive to be fair as this will likely result in an increase in job satisfaction.

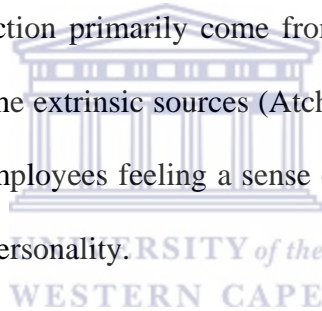
Johns (1996) distinguishes between distributive fairness and procedural fairness. Distributive fairness is perceived fairness of the actual decisions made in an organisation. If employees perceive that decisions are made in a fair manner, they are likely to express satisfaction with their jobs (Robbins, 2005).

Procedural fairness on the other hand, occurs when the processes to determine work outcomes/decisions are perceived to be reasonable. According to Johns (1996, p. 142),

“procedural fairness is particularly relevant to outcomes such as performance evaluations, pay raises, promotions, layoffs and work assignments. ” Hence, if the processes used to arrive at for example, promotion decisions, are perceived to be fair, it could lead to job satisfaction. Aamodt (2004) states that the relationship between perceptions of justice and job satisfaction is very strong, hence employers should be open about how decisions are made and provide feedback to employees who might not be happy with certain important decisions.

### **2.3.3.2 Intrinsic factors of job satisfaction**

Intrinsic sources of job satisfaction primarily come from within the individual and are essentially longer lasting than the extrinsic sources (Atchison, 1999). These sources are generally intangible, such as employees feeling a sense of pride in their work as well as individual differences such as personality.



#### **2.3.3.2.1 Person-Job fit**

According to Spector (1997), some research has attempted to investigate the interaction between job and person factors to see if certain types of people respond differently to different types of jobs. This approach posits that “there will be job satisfaction when characteristics of the job are matched to the characteristics of the person” (Edwards, 1991 as cited by Spector, 1997).

One stream of research has examined this perspective in two ways: (1) in terms of the fit between what organisations require and what employees are seeking and (2) in terms of the fit between what employees are seeking and what they are actually receiving (Mumford, 1991 as cited by Mullins, 1999).

Johns (1996, p. 140) refers to this as the “discrepancy theory” of job satisfaction and maintains that “satisfaction is a function of the discrepancy between the job outcomes people want and the outcomes they perceive they obtain.” Thus, the smaller the discrepancy, the higher the job satisfaction should be (Johns, 1996; Spector, 1997). For example, a person who desires a job that entails interaction with the public but who is office bound, will be dissatisfied with this aspect of the job.

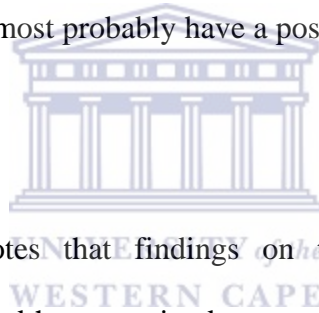
#### **2.3.3.2.2 Disposition/Personality**

Robbins (1989, p. 51) defines personality as “the sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others.” Research indicates that some people are predisposed by virtue of their personality to be more or less satisfied despite the changes to their working environment and other factors (Aamodt, 2004; Johns, 1996).

This idea can apparently be traced back to the Hawthorne studies, which found that certain people were continually complaining about their jobs (Spector, 1996). No matter what the researchers did, the participants found a reason to complain. They concluded that their dissatisfaction is a product of their personality. Thus one way to increase the

overall level of job satisfaction in an organisation is to recruit applicants who show high levels of overall job and life satisfaction (Aamodt, 2004).

Schneider and Dachler (1978) as cited by Spector (1996) also found that job satisfaction seemed stable over time and that it might be the product of personality traits. This view holds some truth in that people with a negative tendency towards life would most likely respond negatively to their jobs even if their jobs changed (Atchison, 1999). The author further advances that many organisations spend much time trying to turn these “negative” people around. In these cases, the best organisations could do is to keep these individuals from affecting the rest of their employees. On the other hand, people with a positive inclination towards life, would most probably have a positive attitude towards their job as well.



Aamodt (2004), however, notes that findings on the personality-job satisfaction relationship are controversial and have received some criticism, therefore more research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn. Spector (1997) further indicates that most research on the personality-job satisfaction relationship has only demonstrated that a correlation exists, without offering much theoretical explanations.

#### **2.3.4 Impact of demographic variables on job satisfaction**

Research on job satisfaction has further identified certain personal or demographic characteristics which influence satisfaction in one way or another. This typically

involves comparing job satisfaction ratings based on demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, job level, tenure and number of dependents.

#### **2.3.4.1 Gender**

More and more women are entering the workforce and it has become important to understand how men and women might differ in their job attitudes. There is a large body of research explaining the gender-job satisfaction relationship. However, research in this regard has been inconsistent. Some literature reports that males are more satisfied than females, others suggest females are more satisfied and some have found no differences in satisfaction levels based on gender.

According to Spector (2000), most studies have found only a few differences in job satisfaction levels amongst males and females.

Studies conducted by Loscocco (1990) indicated that female employees demonstrated higher levels of job satisfaction than male employees across different settings. This author purports that most women value rewards that are readily available to them, such as relationships with co-workers. It therefore becomes easier for them to experience job satisfaction. Male employees on the other hand, most likely desire things like autonomy and financial rewards which are not as readily available. This might result in lower levels of job satisfaction.

A study by Alavi and Askaripur (2003) amongst 310 employees in government organisations, found no significant difference in job satisfaction among male and female

employees. Carr and Human's (1988) research is consistent with this view. These authors investigated a sample of 224 employees at a textile plant in the Western Cape and found no significant relationship between gender and satisfaction. Furthermore, Pors (2003) conducted a study including 411 Danish library managers and 237 library managers from the United Kingdom and concluded that there is no overall difference in job satisfaction in relation to gender. A possible explanation is offered by Tolbert and Moen (1998), who maintain that men and women attach value to different aspects of the job. This therefore makes it difficult to measure differences in job satisfaction based on gender.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Okpara (2004) which involved 360 Information Technology managers in Nigeria, indicated that female employees are less satisfied than their male counterparts - specifically with pay, promotion and supervision. According to Okpara (2004), this finding may be attributed to higher educational levels of women in this sample. The author postulates that higher education levels raise expectations about status, pay and promotion and if these expectations are not met, they might experience lower levels of satisfaction.

#### **2.3.4.2 Age**

While research has yielded mixed evidence on the influence of age on job satisfaction, most studies suggest a positive correlation, that is, older workers tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than younger workers (Okpara, 2004; Rhodes, 1983 as quoted by Kacmar & Ferris, 1989; Saal & Knight, 1988).

Numerous explanations may be presented to explain the positive correlation between age and job satisfaction (Okpara, 2004):

- ⇒ Older employees have adjusted to their work over the years, which may lead to higher satisfaction.
- ⇒ Prestige and confidence are likely to increase with age and this could result in older employees being more satisfied.
- ⇒ Younger employees may consider themselves more mobile and seek greener pastures, which could lead to lower satisfaction levels.
- ⇒ Younger employees are more likely to hold high expectations of their jobs and if these expectations are not met, they may experience lower satisfaction levels.

However, in contrast to this, other studies found that age does not significantly explain the variance in job satisfaction levels (Alavi & Askaripur, 2003; Carr & Human, 1988; Kacmar & Ferris, 1989; Siu, 2002).

#### **2.3.4.3 Tenure**

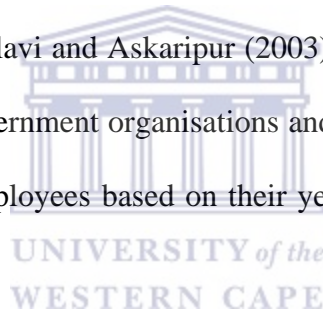
According to Saal and Knight (1988), research suggests that tenure is likely to influence job satisfaction. Literature overwhelmingly indicates a positive correlation between tenure and job satisfaction, that is, employees with longer job experience are more satisfied compared to those with fewer years of experience (Bilgic, 1998 as cited by Okpara, 2004; Jones-Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Staw, 1995). Okpara (2004) provides an explanation for this positive correlation and advances that employees settle into their



jobs over time, which leads to an increase in organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Furthermore, Robbins (1989) maintains that the longer an employee holds a job, the more they tend to be satisfied with the status quo.

Lambert, Hogan, Barton and Lubbock (2001) on the other hand argue that there is an inverse relationship between tenure and job satisfaction. Hence, longer tenured employees are less satisfied than those who have been in the organisation for shorter periods. A possible explanation could be that employees who hold the same jobs over a long period of time, may become bored and experience lower levels of satisfaction.

Another view is provided by Alavi and Askaripur (2003). The authors conducted a study amongst 310 employees in government organisations and found no significant difference in job satisfaction amongst employees based on their years of service. Research in this regard is thus contradictory.



#### **2.3.4.4 Marital status**

Research has consistently found that married employees are more satisfied with their jobs than their un-married co-workers (Chambers, 1999; Loscocco, 1990; Robbins et al., 2003). Chambers (1999) in particular, found that married employees experienced increased satisfaction with pay, work, supervision and co-worker subscales of the JDI.

A possible explanation is provided by Robbins (1989). He purports that marriage imposes increased responsibilities which might make a steady job more valuable, hence increasing their satisfaction. However, Robbins et al. (2003) note that the available research only distinguishes between being single and married. Divorcees, couples who cohabit and the widowed have been excluded from research and these are in need of investigation.

Furthermore, a study by Alavi and Askaripur (2003) reported no significant difference in job satisfaction and its five dimensions among single and married personnel. Researchers are therefore in disagreement concerning the relationship between marital status and job satisfaction.

#### **2.3.4.5 Number of dependents**



Robbins (1989) purports that there is strong evidence suggesting a positive relationship between the number of dependents and job satisfaction. This implies that the higher the number of dependents an employee has, the higher the job satisfaction is likely to be. A possible explanation could be that employees with more children are probably older and longer in their jobs. They might therefore have adapted to their work situations, hence the increase in job satisfaction.

Studies by Alavi and Askaripur (2003) amongst employees in government organisations reported no statistically significant relationship between the number of dependents and job satisfaction. Research in this area is, however, limited.

#### **2.3.4.6 Job Level**

Oshagbemi (1997) highlights the fact that relatively few studies have attempted to investigate the relationship between employees' job level and corresponding levels of job satisfaction.

However, according to Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) and Saal and Knight (1988), the limited research available suggests that people who hold higher level jobs are more satisfied than those who hold lower level positions. Several other researchers also found support for a positive correlation between job level and satisfaction. Smither (1998) states that job satisfaction tends to be lower among employees in jobs characterised by hot or dangerous conditions, which is normally of a lower level nature. Furthermore, Miles, Patrick and King (1996) found that job levels moderates the communication-job satisfaction relationship.

It is possible that the more challenging, complex nature of higher-level jobs lead to higher job satisfaction. Also, employees in professional and managerial jobs are normally paid more, have better promotion prospects, autonomy and responsibility which might also increase the levels of job satisfaction (Saal & Knight, 1988).

It seems therefore that job level is a reliable predictor of job satisfaction, more specifically employees in higher level jobs have greater satisfaction than lower level employees.

### **2.3.5 THEORIES OF JOB SATISFACTION**

Over the years, researchers devised a number of theoretical approaches to explaining job satisfaction. The theories most frequently addressed in literature are presented below.

#### **2.3.5.1 Discrepancy theories**

According to Aamodt (2004), discrepancy theories postulate that job satisfaction is determined by the discrepancy between what employees want, value and expect and what the job actually provides. Employees will therefore experience dissatisfaction if there is a discrepancy between what they want and what the job offers. Theories that focus on employees' needs and values include Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, ERG theory, Two-factor theory and McClelland's needs theory (Aamodt, 2004; Robbins et al., 2003)

##### *Maslow's needs hierarchy*

Maslow's (1954) theory, which is one of the best known theories, holds that employees would be motivated by and satisfied with their jobs only if certain needs are met (Aamodt, 2004). Maslow advances five major types of needs which are hierarchical. This implies that lower-level needs must be satisfied first before an individual will

consider the next level of needs (Robbins, 1989). The five major needs are as follows:

1. *Basic biological needs.* According to Maslow's theory, individuals are concerned first and foremost with satisfying their needs for food, water, shelter and other bodily needs. An unemployed individual, who is homeless will be satisfied with any job as long as it provides for these basic needs (Aamodt, 2004).

2. *Safety needs.* These needs include security and protection from physical and emotional harm (Robbins et al., 2003). After basic biological needs have been met, employees become concerned with meeting their safety needs. This implies that employees will remain satisfied with their jobs only if they believe the workplace to be safe to work in (Aamodt, 2004).

3. *Social needs.* Once the first two levels of needs have been met, employees will remain satisfied with their jobs only when their social needs have been met (Aamodt, 2004). Social needs include the need for affection, belongingness, acceptance and friendship. In the work context this would typically involve working with others and feeling needed in the organisation. Organisations attempt to satisfy their employees' social needs by providing things like cafeterias, organising sport programmes and family events (Aamodt, 2004).

4. *Esteem needs.* Esteem or ego needs include the need for status, recognition and achievement (Robbins, 2005). Once an employee's social needs have been met, they start to focus on meeting their esteem needs. According to Aamodt (2004), organisations

can help to satisfy these needs through awards, promotions and salary increases.

5. *Self-actualisation needs.* These needs represent the fifth level of Maslow's needs hierarchy. According to Robbins et al. (2003), self-actualisation needs include the need for growth, achieving one's potential and self-fulfilment. An employee striving for self-actualisation wants to reach their full potential in every task. Therefore, employees who have been doing the same job for a long time might become dissatisfied and unmotivated in search of a new challenge.

Even though Maslow's theory has received wide recognition, there has been criticism of this theory. Robbins et al. (2003, p.132) state that certain reviews of this theory postulate that needs are not necessarily structured along these dimensions "as people simultaneously move through several levels in the hierarchy of needs." Furthermore, because satisfied needs activate movement to the next level, the employee will always have an active need, making long term job satisfaction unlikely in terms of this theory.

### ERG theory

Alderfer (1972) reworked Maslow's needs theory and classified needs into only three groups of core needs, namely, existence, relatedness and growth (Robbins et al., 2003). The existence group is concerned with providing basic needs and includes items that Maslow's theory considered as biological and safety needs (Robbins, 1989). The second group of needs relates to maintaining important relationships and the growth needs refers

to the desire for personal development (Robbins, 1989; Robbins et al., 2003).

According to Aadmott (2004), the major difference between Maslow's theory and the ERG theory is that the latter theory postulates that progression to the next level need not be fixed; a person can skip levels. People can therefore be simultaneously motivated by needs at different levels. A person can be concerned with satisfying growth needs even though existence and relatedness needs are not met.

The ERG theory removes some of the problems associated with Maslow's theory and several studies supported the ERG theory (Robbins et al., 2003).

### Two factor theory



One of the earliest theories of job satisfaction is Herzberg's two-factor theory, the factors being "intrinsic factors" and "motivators" (Cooper & Locke, 2000, p. 166). Herzberg found that intrinsic factors (achievement, responsibilities and recognition) were more strongly correlated with satisfaction than extrinsic factors like policies, benefits and working conditions.

According to Atchison (1999), external satisfiers tend to be short-lived. The author provides an example of employees wanting faster computers to make them happy. They could be excited at first, but if those computers are no longer the status quo a few months down the line, these employees will begin to look to other external factors in their search

for job satisfaction. As Randolph and Johnson (2005, p. 50) surmise “if you want to motivate workers, don’t put in another water fountain; provide a bigger share of the job itself.” It becomes apparent that internal satisfaction is longer lasting and more motivating than external satisfiers.

However, according to Cooper and Locke (2000), this theory has been widely criticised in that some research has shown that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

### McClelland’s needs theory

This theory focuses on three needs: achievement, power and affiliation (Robbins et al., 2003). Employees who have a strong need for achievement would be satisfied with jobs that are challenging and over which they can exert some control (Aamodt, 2004). In contrast, employees with low achievement needs are satisfied with jobs involving little challenge.

Individuals with a high need for affiliation would be satisfied with jobs that involve working with people and establishing close interpersonal relationships (Robbins, 1989).

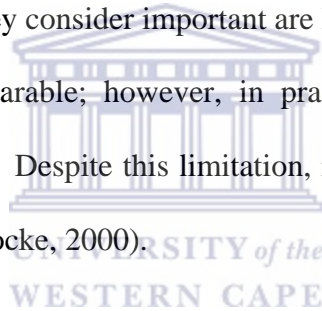
Finally, employees who have a need for power, have a desire to impact, influence and to control others (Robbins et al., 2003). Employees with strong power needs are most likely satisfied with jobs where they can direct and manage others.



### 2.3.5.2 Value-percept theory

Locke (1976) as quoted by Cooper and Locke (2000, p. 168) argued that “individual’s values would determine what satisfied them on the job.” Employees in organisations hold different value systems, therefore based on this theory, their satisfaction levels will also differ. Furthermore, this theory predicts that “discrepancies between what is desired and received are dissatisfying only if the job facet is important to the individual” (Anderson, Ones, Sinangil & Viswesvaran, 2001, p. 32).

According to Cooper and Locke (2000), the potential problem with this theory is that what people desire and what they consider important are likely to be highly correlated. In theory these concepts are separable; however, in practice many people will find it difficult to distinguish the two. Despite this limitation, research on this theory has been highly supportive (Cooper & Locke, 2000).



### 2.3.5.3 Equity theory

This theory proposes that job satisfaction is a function of what employees put into a job situation compared to what they get from it (Cooper & Locke, 2000; Robbins, 2005). Therefore, the more an employee receives relative to what they put into a job, the higher job satisfaction will be. Three components are involved in this perception of fairness, namely, inputs, outputs and input/output ratio (Aamodt, 2004):

**Inputs** refer to those elements we put into our jobs and include things such as effort,

experience, education and competence (Robbins, 2005). **Outputs** are elements that individuals receive from their jobs (Aamodt, 2004). These include things such as pay, benefits and challenge. **Input/Output ratio.** According to Aamodt (2004), employees subconsciously compute an input/output ratio by dividing output value by input value. Employees may attempt to increase their outputs, for example, by asking for a salary increase. Conversely, they can reduce their inputs by not working as hard as they would normally do (Aamodt, 2004).

Furthermore, employees compare their input-outcome ratio with that of other employees and if they perceive it to be fair, employees will experience satisfaction (Robbins, 2005). Conversely, if employees perceive an inequity in their input-outcome ratio compared to other employees, they become dissatisfied and less motivated.

#### 2.3.5.4 Job Characteristics Model

This model, introduced by Hackman and Oldham (1976), recognises that “certain aspects of the job are inherently motivating for most people and individuals may perceive and respond to the same stimuli differently” (Anthony, Perrewe & Kacmar, 1999, p. 306). Employees are thus motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction they derive from doing their job. The five core job characteristics are defined in the following terms (Spector, 1997):

- (i) **Task identity** refers to the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole piece of work (Robbins, 2005). Employees can complete a task from beginning to end with an identifiable outcome.

- (ii) **Task significance** is the degree to which the job is important (Spector, 1997). This is determined by the impact the employee's work has on others within or outside the organisation.
- (iii) **Skill variety** refers to the degree to which employees are able to do a number of different tasks using many different skills, abilities and talents (Anthony et al., 1999).
- (iv) **Autonomy** is defined as "the freedom employees have to do their jobs as they see fit" (Spector, 1997, p. 33). This freedom or discretion relates to things such as scheduling, prioritising and determining procedures for task completion (Anthony et al., 1999).
- (v) **Feedback** refers to the degree to which the job offers information to employees regarding performance and work outcomes (Spector, 1997).

According to Robbins (2005), the Job Characteristics Model has been well researched and evidence supports the general idea that certain job characteristics have an impact on behavioural outcomes.

### **2.3.6 CONSEQUENCES OF JOB SATISFACTION**

Satisfaction on the job influences many other organisational variables. These include not only work variables such as performance or turnover, but also personal or non-work variables such as health and satisfaction with life. The next section briefly discusses the potential effect of job satisfaction on different variables.

### **2.3.6.1 Productivity**

According to Robbins et al. (2003), managers' interest in job satisfaction tends to centre on its effect on employees performance and productivity. The natural assumption is that satisfied employees should be productive employees. A large body of research postulates that job satisfaction has a positive effect on productivity, however, this correlation is rather modest (Cranny, Cain-Smith & Stone, 1992; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Robbins, 2005; Spector, 1997). Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly (1997) surmised that some employees who are satisfied with work are poor performers, conversely, there might be employees who are not satisfied, but who are excellent performers.

Robbins (2005) concluded that productivity is more likely to lead to satisfaction than the other way around. Hence, if employees do a good job (productivity), they intrinsically feel good about it. In addition, higher productivity could lead to an increase in rewards, pay level and promotion, which are all sources of job satisfaction.

### **2.3.6.2 Life satisfaction**

Three hypotheses have been put forth about the relationship between job and life satisfaction (Cooper & Locke, 2000; Spector, 1996). The *spill over* hypothesis suggests that job experiences spill over into life and vice versa. Problems at home can affect satisfaction at work and problems at work can affect home life. In terms of the *segmentation* hypothesis, people compartmentalise their lives and satisfaction in one area of life has little to do with satisfaction in another area. The *compensation* hypothesis

states that people will compensate for a dissatisfying job by seeking fulfilment in non-work life and vice versa. The relationship between life and job satisfaction is thus reciprocal- being satisfied with a job is postulated to affect life satisfaction and vice versa (Spector, 1997).

### **2.3.6.3 Organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour**

According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2001, p. 227), organisational commitment “reflects the extent to which an individual identifies with an organisation and is committed to its goals.” Armstrong (1996, p. 319) advances that “organisational commitment has three components: an identification with the goals and values of the organisation; a desire to belong to the organisation and a willingness to display effort on behalf of the organisation.” There seems to be a strong correlation between job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Higher commitment can, in turn, facilitate higher productivity.


Closely linked to the concept of organisational commitment is the variable called organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Spector (1997, p. 57) defines OCB as a “behaviour by an employee intended to help co-workers or the organisation.” It is thus voluntary things employees do to help their fellow workers and their employers. Robbins (2005) states that job satisfaction is a major determinant of OCB in that satisfied employees would more likely talk positively about the organisation and go beyond their normal call of duty. According to Robbins et al. (2003), there is a modest overall

relationship between these two variables.

#### **2.3.6.4 Withdrawal behaviours**

Many theories purport that people who dislike their jobs will avoid them. This is commonly referred to as withdrawal, which refers to behaviours by which employees remove themselves from the workplace, either temporarily or permanently (Saal & Knight, 1988). Withdrawal behaviours have been widely considered in job satisfaction research. Three forms of withdrawal behaviour which have been linked to satisfaction will be discussed, namely, turnover, absenteeism and sabotage.

##### **2.3.6.4.1 Turnover**



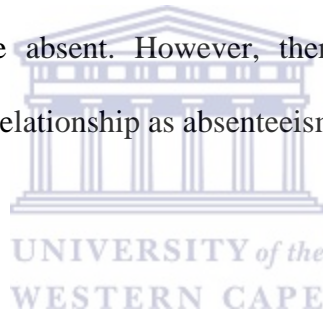
The first form of withdrawal is turnover, which is defined as “any permanent departure beyond organisational boundaries” Cascio (2003, p. 51). Turnover is important to managers as it disrupts organisational continuity and it is can be very costly. The different costs associated with turnover include separation costs (exit interviews, separation pay), replacement costs of new employee and training costs of the new employee (Saal & Knight, 1988).

According to Spector (1997), studies have been reasonably consistent in showing a correlation between job satisfaction and turnover. Employees with low satisfaction are therefore more likely to quit their jobs. According to Luthans (1995, p. 129), “high job satisfaction will not, in and of itself, keep turnover low, but it does seem to help. On the

other hand, if there is considerable job dissatisfaction, there is likely to be high turnover.” It is therefore important to manage satisfaction levels as it might trigger decisions by employees to leave the organisation.

#### **2.3.6.4.2 Absenteeism**

Absence is a phenomenon that can reduce an organisation’s effectiveness. Theories of absence hypothesise that job satisfaction plays a critical role in an employee’s decision to be absent (Spector, 1997). Most research indicates a consistent negative relationship between satisfaction and absenteeism, even though the correlation is not very high (Robbins, 1989; Spector, 1997). Literature therefore suggests that a dissatisfied employee will most likely be absent. However, there appears to be disagreement concerning the strength of this relationship as absenteeism is influenced by a number of inter-related factors.



#### **2.3.6.4.3 Counterproductive behaviours**

Counterproductive behaviours are the opposite of organisational citizenship behaviour. These behaviours include aggression against co-workers, aggression against the employer, sabotage and theft at work and they are associated with frustration and dissatisfaction at work (Spector, 1997). According to French (1998 , p. 110), sabotage- which is “the deliberate damaging of equipment or products by employees represents one of the more costly possible consequences of organisational frustrations.”

Spector (1997) notes that a limited number of studies have investigated the causes of counterproductive behaviours in organisations. It is, however, important for organisations to create workplaces that enhance job satisfaction, which could assist in reducing counterproductive behaviours.

## **2.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

There are high costs associated with low job satisfaction and high rates of absenteeism. Combined over time, it could have an adverse effect on the bottom line of organisations (Friday & Friday, 2003). The literature emphasises the notion that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to be better ambassadors for their organisations, would be more committed to their organisation and be less absent.

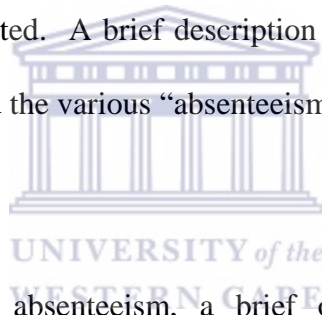
This chapter provided a theoretical overview on absenteeism and job satisfaction, the variables under review in the present study. In the first instance, an attempt was made to understand the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction, a second goal of the present study. Researchers differ in the view on the strength of this relationship, however, the underlying assumption is that absence is partly a result of dislike for various aspects of a job.

The chapter proceeded with a theoretical overview of the construct, absenteeism. Researchers have different views on the subject of absenteeism but they are all in agreement that it is one phenomenon in organisations that will not be eradicated overnight and there is no specific “cure” for this problem.



Following the definitions and types of absence, an Integrated Model of absenteeism was presented which provided useful insight into the various factors influencing employee attendance. A brief overview of the impact of demographic variables on absenteeism was also highlighted as this is one of the goals of the present study. According to the literature, some demographic variables are postulated to influence absenteeism more than others.

The different consequences of absenteeism were also reviewed and even though it is expected that these consequences would be only negative, some positive consequences of absenteeism were also highlighted. A brief description of the cost and measurement of absenteeism were presented and the various “absenteeism reduction” strategies concluded the review on absenteeism.



Following the discussion on absenteeism, a brief overview of the variable, job satisfaction was presented. Several contemporary theories of job satisfaction were provided in an attempt to explain this much researched topic in organisations. The various factors influencing job satisfaction were highlighted of which the most common factors are pay, supervision, promotion, co-workers and the job itself. The potential effects of job satisfaction were also reviewed as well as its importance for managers today.

The next chapter will focus on the research methodology, the research design, the procedure followed and the statistical techniques that were employed in testing the research hypotheses.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on how the research problem was investigated by discussing the sampling methods, data gathering instruments and the statistical techniques that were utilised to test the hypotheses for the present study.

The sample for the present study was drawn from a selected Field Services department of an Electricity Utility within the Western Cape. The measuring instruments included a questionnaire with three sections, namely, a biographical questionnaire, a self-report questionnaire on absenteeism and the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). These instruments were used to gather the data for the present study.

Permission was obtained from the senior manager of the selected department to administer surveys. This was done through group sessions with each of the Technical units, thereby ensuring optimal return rates. Participants were ensured of their anonymity and confidentiality as they did not provide their names or identification numbers.

## **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design provides the basic direction for carrying out a research project so as to obtain answers to research questions (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). According to Hair, Babin, Money and Samouel (2003, p. 57), “ the researcher should choose a design that will (1) provide relevant information on the research questions and (2) will do the job most efficiently.”

The present study used a cross-sectional study as it provides the user with a snapshot of business elements at a given point in time (Hair et al., 2003). This type of study seemed appropriate as it can be used within a short space of time and data can be summarised statistically. According to Hair et al. (2003), most surveys fall into this category.



### **3.2.1 Population**

The population for the present study consisted of employees in the Field Services department of an Electricity Utility in the Western Cape. The table below illustrates the profile of the above-mentioned population.

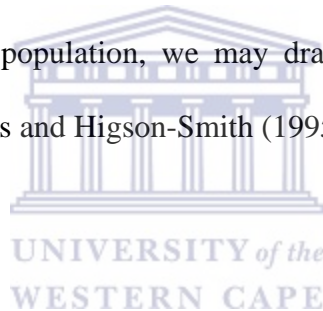
**Table 3.1**

<b>Patterson Grade</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>BL</b>	Technical Official	221
<b>BU</b>	Senior Technical Official	119
<b>CL</b>	Principle Technical Official	108
<b>CU</b>	Technical Services Officer	20
<b>M</b>	Field Services Area Managers	4
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>472</b>

*Employee profile of the Field Services Department as at 31 July 2005*

### **3.2.2 Sampling**

According to Cooper and Schindler (2003, p. 179), “the basic idea of sampling is by selecting some elements in a population, we may draw conclusions about the entire population.” Furthermore, Bless and Higson-Smith (1995, p. 86) highlight the main advantages of sampling:



- Gathering data on a sample is less time-consuming, especially when populations may be spread over large geographical areas.
- It is less costly.
- Sampling is a practical way of collecting data when the population is extremely large.

#### **3.2.2.1 Sampling Design**

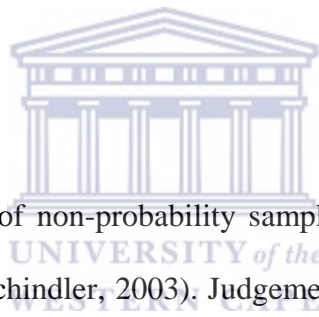
According to Hair et al. (2003, p. 211), “traditional sampling methods can be divided into two broad categories: probability and non-probability sampling.” In probability sampling each participant has an equal chance of being selected (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The

simple random sample is the simplest form of probability sampling.

On the other hand, “in non-probability sampling the selection of elements for the sample is not necessarily made with the aim of being statistically representative of the population” (Hair et al., 2003, p. 217). The probability of selecting elements within a population is therefore unknown.

The sampling design that was considered appropriate for the present study was non-probability sampling, as the researcher selected a specific section within the Field Service department of an Electricity Utility in the Western Cape.

#### **3.2.2.2 Judgement Sampling**

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

Judgement sampling is a type of non-probability sampling and is also referred to as a purposive sample (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Judgement sampling “involves selecting elements in the sample for a specific purpose” (Hair et al., 2003, p. 217). The researcher used judgement sampling for the present study because the selected Field Services section reported the highest incidence of sick leave compared to the rest of the Field Services departments, thus making it easier to answer the research questions of the present study. According to Hair et al. (2003, p. 217) in judgement sampling, “sample elements are chosen because the researcher believes they represent the target population, but they are not necessarily representative.” Based on this definition, the researcher selected the specific sample as it represents the bigger Field Services department in terms of job levels, nature of work and other relevant data. On the other hand, the selected

sample is not necessarily representative in the sense that there are different areas of operation (rural and urban), risk factors differ and the sick leave absence levels differ across the various sections within the Field Services department.

### **3.2.2.3 Considerations regarding sampling**

Even though a random sample will most likely provide for a true cross section of the population, this might not be the object of the research. Cooper and Schindler (2001) states that if there is no need to generalise to a population parameter, then the non-probability sampling method can be employed. In the present study, the sample was drawn from the Field Services department and it was based on their high absence rates over the past 4-5 years. Generalising to the bigger organisation is therefore limited.

Additional reasons for choosing nonprobability sampling over probability sampling, are due to cost and time. According to Cooper and Emory (1995), probability sampling requires more planning and repeated callbacks to ensure that each selected sample member is contacted. These activities can become expensive. It is further recognised that “carefully controlled nonprobability sampling often seems to give acceptable results, so the investigator might not even consider probability sampling” (Cooper & Schindler, 2001, p. 191).

#### **3.2.2.4 Sample Size**

The employee profile for the Field services department (cf. Table 3.1) was utilised to identify the sample of employees. The ideal sample size of 30 % is considered acceptable for most research purposes as it provides the ability to generalise to a population (Cresswell, 2003; Sekaran, 2000). The ideal sample size for the selected population of 472 is therefore approximately 140 individuals.

### **3.3 PROCEDURE**

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Senior Manager of the Field Services department. Once permission was granted, the researcher contacted each of the supervisors of the Technical Service Units (TSU's) in the selected sample, explaining the purpose of the research and to request permission to personally administer the survey to their employees. The supervisors agreed and confirmed that they will obtain consent from their employees for the proposed research. A cover letter was sent electronically to each of the supervisors (Annexure A), which they needed to share with their employees. The letter confirmed the purpose of the research and the ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity of participants. The supervisors confirmed the consent of the participants electronically one week before the research was conducted.

The research was then conducted over a two week period, involving group sessions with each of the five TSU's. On arrival at the TSU's, the supervisors opened the group



session, confirming that the employees have given their consent to participate in the study. The researcher reiterated the purpose of the research to employees, after which the questionnaires were handed to participants. The researcher briefed the participants regarding the questionnaires and they were allowed about 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

After completion, the researcher collected the questionnaires from participants and thanked them for their participation. Of the 140 questionnaires administered, a total number of 121 questionnaires were collected, yielding an 86 % response rate. Administering questionnaires within a group was convenient and the response rate was quite high.



### **3.4 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS**

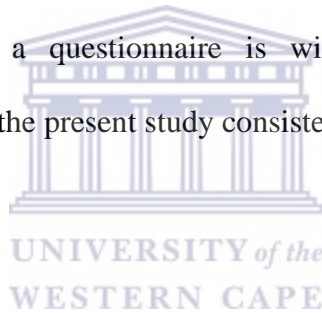
For purposes of the present study, questionnaires were considered appropriate data gathering instruments. According to Weiers (1988) there are specific benefits to utilising questionnaires:

- 1) The cost per questionnaire is relatively low.
- 2) Structured information in the questionnaire makes analysing questionnaires relatively straightforward.
- 3) Questionnaires give respondents ample time to formulate accurate responses.

### Disadvantages of questionnaires

The main problem associated with questionnaires relates to the issue of non-response on certain items in the questionnaire. In addition to this, participants could fail to return questionnaires which make it difficult to generalise from a sample to a population. Hussey and Hussey (1997) advance some methods to overcome this: (1) sending a follow-up letter to those who failed to respond to the first enquiry and (2) comparing non-response items to other similar answers within the questionnaires.

Despite these disadvantages, a questionnaire is widely used in research. The questionnaire that was used for the present study consisted of three sections (See Annexure B):



Section A - Biographical questionnaire

Section B – Questionnaire on sickness absence

Section C – Job Satisfaction survey (JSS)

#### **3.4.1 Biographical questionnaire**

The biographical questionnaire contained the following personal information to be completed by the participants:

- a) Gender
- b) Age
- c) Years of service
- d) Marital status
- e) Number of dependents
- f) Current position/job level

The biographical questionnaire was included to assist in answering the following research questions: “does absenteeism and job satisfaction levels differ based on biographical variables ?”

### **3.4.2 Absenteeism questionnaire**

The present study used a short self-report questionnaire designed by Pousette and Hanse (2002) and Goldberg and Waldman (2000) to determine the level of sickness absence. Participants had to report the total number of days they had been absent due to sick leave for the last six (6) months. They also had to indicate their sickness absence frequency (number of times they were absent due to sick leave) during the last six (6) months. Research by Pousette and Hanse (2002) indicated that these two variables had a bivariate correlation of  $r = .77$ .

Furthermore, studies by Rentsch and Steel (1998) as quoted by Goldberg and Waldman (2000), have also used the six (6) month period to obtain data from respondents. Their research indicates that the six (6) month balances the concerns associated with asking

respondents to recall their behaviour over long periods of time. Information in this section of the questionnaire is therefore subjective, however, the researcher is of the opinion that respondents reported this data reasonably honestly as this information could be corroborated by objective sickness absence data.

### **3.4.3 Job Satisfaction Questionnaire**

Job satisfaction is mostly assessed by asking people how they feel about their jobs, either through a questionnaire or an interview. There are a few measures of satisfaction that are widely used in research which will be briefly discussed. Specific attention will be given to the Job Satisfaction Survey as it was used for the present study.

#### *Job Descriptive Index (JDI)*



The most popular measure of job satisfaction is the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and it measures five dimensions of job satisfaction: pay, work, promotion, supervision and co-workers. According to Cooper and Locke (2000, p. 172), “the JDI is reliable and has an impressive array of validation evidence behind it.”

#### *Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)*

Another popular job satisfaction scale is the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Spector, 1997; 2000). Robbins (2005) states that the MSQ has the advantage of versatility in that long and short forms are available. It also makes provision for faceted

as well as overall measures. The long form contains 100 items and the short form contains 20 items measuring different facets of job satisfaction (Spector, 1997).

#### Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS)

The Job Diagnostic Survey was developed to study the effects of job characteristics on people (Hackman & Oldham, 1975 as quoted by Spector, 1997, 2000). The JDS covers several areas of job satisfaction, such as growth, pay, security, social, supervisor as well as global satisfaction.

#### Job-In-General Scale (JIG)

The Job-In-General Scale has been designed to measure overall job satisfaction rather than facets. According to Ironson et al. (1989) as quoted by Spector (1997, p. 18), “overall job satisfaction is not the sum of individual facets, it should rather be managed by using a general scale like the JIG.” Cooper and Locke (2000, p. 172) also argue that “faceted and global measures do not measure the same construct.”

#### Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)

The Job Satisfaction Survey is another common measure of job satisfaction and it was used in the present study to elicit data on the job satisfaction levels of participants. The JSS has been tested for reliability and validity across different studies (Spector, 1997). It assesses nine facets of job satisfaction as well as overall satisfaction. The nine facets

are listed in the Table 3.2 below:

**Table 3.2 – Facets of Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)**

<b>Facet</b>	<b>Description</b>
1. Pay	Satisfaction with pay and pay raises
2. Promotion	Satisfaction with promotion opportunities
3. Supervision	Satisfaction with immediate supervisor
4. Fringe benefits	Satisfaction with fringe benefits
5. Contingent rewards	Satisfaction with rewards (not necessarily monetary) for good performance
6. Operating conditions	Satisfaction with rules and procedures
7. Co-Workers	Satisfaction with co-workers
8. Nature of work	Satisfaction with type of work done
9. Communication	Satisfaction with communication within the organisation

Source : Spector ( 1997, p. 8)



### **3.4.3.1 The nature and composition of the JSS**

Each of the nine facets of the JSS is scored by combining responses to four items, which amounts to a total number of 36 items. Some of the items need to be reverse scored. Table 3.3 indicates which items go into which facet, the “r” indicating which items need to be reverse-scored.

**Table 3.3 – Subscale contents for the Job Satisfaction Survey**

<b>Facet</b>	<b>Item number</b>
Pay	1, 10r, 19r, 28
Promotion	2r, 11, 20, 33
Supervision	3, 12r, 21r, 30
Fringe benefits	4r, 13, 22, 29r
Contingent rewards	5, 14r, 23r, 32r
Operating conditions	6r, 15, 24r, 31r
Co-Workers	7, 16r, 25, 34r
Nature of work	8r, 17, 27, 35
Communication	9, 18r, 26r, 36r

*Source : Spector ( 1997, p. 9)*

The JSS utilises a Likert-type scale with six response alternatives for each item, ranging from “Disagree very much” (weighted 1) to “Agree very much” (weighted 6). To reverse the scoring, the items indicated with “r” above are renumbered from 6 to 1 rather than 1 to 6 (Spector, 1997). Each of the nine facets or subscales can produce a separate facet score and the total of all items produces a total score.

### **3.4.3.2 Reliability of the JSS**

Reliability refers to the consistency of measures (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). An instrument which therefore produces different scores every time it is used, has low reliability. According to Spector (1997), there are two types of reliability estimates that are important when evaluating a scale, internal consistency and test-retest reliability.

### Internal consistency reliability

Internal consistency refers to whether items are consistent across different constructs. (Cresswell, 2003). It therefore looks at how well items of a scale relate to one another. The JSS has been tested for internal consistency reliability and reported coefficient alphas ranging from .60 for the co-worker subscales to .91 for the total scale. According to Spector (1997, p. 12), “the widely accepted minimum standard for internal consistency is .70.”

### Test-retest reliability

Test –retest reliability reflects “the stability of a scale over time” (Spector, 1997, p.12). This means that if the same test is being administered a second time to the same subjects over a period of time, and it yields the same results, it is considered to have test-retest reliability. The JSS has reported test-retest reliability ranging from .37 to .74 (Spector, 1997).

### **3.4.3.3 Validity of the JSS**

Validity refers to whether the measuring instrument measures what it is supposed to (Bless & Higson-Smith,1995), or whether the measure reflects the phenomenon the researcher claims to be investigating. Validity can be assessed in different ways: content validity, construct validity and criterion-related validity (Cresswell, 2003).



### Content validity

Content validity of a measuring instrument reflects the extent to which the items measure the content they were intended to measure (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). It must therefore provide adequate coverage of the questions guiding the research. The JSS measures job satisfaction, using different subscales and it is considered to have content validity.

### Criterion –related validity

Criterion-related validity reflects the extent to which measures can successfully predict an outcome and how well they correlate with other instruments (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). According to Spector (1997, p. 12), “the JSS subscales of pay, promotion, supervision, co-workers and the nature of work correlate well with corresponding subscales of the JDI.” These correlations ranged from .61 for co-workers to .80 for supervision.

#### **3.4.3.4 Rationale for inclusion of the JSS**

The JSS was used for the present study as it has been proven to be a reliable and valid instrument (Spector, 1997). Koeske, Kirk, Koeske and Rauptis (1994) as quoted by Egan and Kadushan (2004) also indicate that the JSS has been examined for construct validity and reliability with good results in previous research. Furthermore, the JSS measures different facets of job satisfaction which is widely referred to in literature. It

uses a much shorter form compared to the popular Job Descriptive Index, which consists of 72 items. The items in the JSS are also relatively easy to understand. It was therefore considered appropriate for the present study as the education levels of the participants were relatively low.

### **3.5 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES**

#### **3.5.1. Descriptive statistics**

Descriptive statistics provide a statistical summary of the data which has been collected. De Vos (1998, p. 203) states that “the purpose of descriptive statistics is to reduce data to an intelligible and interpretable form so that the relations of research problems can be studied, tested and conclusions drawn.” The descriptive statistics considered appropriate for this research included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Data analysts must begin with a visual inspection of data to ensure that assumptions are not flawed (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The present study will provide a visual representation of data in graphical and tabular format.

#### ***Frequencies and percentages***

Frequencies and percentages are useful for arranging data either in graphical and tabular format. The frequencies are used in the present study to display the total number of observations for the overall job satisfaction as calculated in the JSS. These include, for example, the frequency of “disagree very much” compared to “agree very much.”

Percentages provide information on the percentage of respondents within each of the biographical variables, for example, the percentage of males compared to females participating in the study. Histograms and bar charts are commonly used to display these intervals (Cooper & Schindler, 2001).

### Mean

The mean is one of the common measures of central tendency and reflects the arithmetic average of frequency distributions (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Central tendency measures can be used to summarise information to better understand it. In the present study, for example, the mean number of days absent provides an overall indication of the prevalence of absenteeism in the selected sample.



### Standard Deviation

The standard deviation is a common measure of dispersion, which describes the tendency for sample responses to depart from the average data values (Hair et al., 2003). The standard deviation gives a measure of the spread of the distribution of data. For the present study, the standard deviation is employed to indicate the distribution of scores relating to absenteeism and job satisfaction.

### **3.5.2 Inferential statistics**

Inferential statistics enable the researcher to draw conclusions about a population from a sample (Hair et al., 2003). The inferential statistics that were used for the present study included the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression Analysis.

#### *Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient*

Correlation coefficients reveal the strength and direction of relationships between two variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2003; De Vos, 1998; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, sometimes called the *Pearson r*, is the most common of all correlation techniques. For the present study, the *Pearson r* was used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism and to determine the strength and direction of this relationship.

#### *Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)*

According to Tredoux and Durrheim (2002, p. 254), "ANOVA is used to test for differences between the means of more than two groups, and can be used in designs with more than one independent variable." In the present study, ANOVA was used to test for differences in job satisfaction and absenteeism based on the biographical characteristics of respondents.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Hair et al. (2003, p. 290) state that “regression analysis is perhaps the most widely applied data analysis technique for measuring linear relationships between two or more variables.” Furthermore, Neuman (2003, p. 355) postulates that multiple regression “indicates two things, (1) how well a set of variables explains a dependent variable and (2) the direction and size of the effect of each variable on a dependent variable.” In terms of the present study, multiple regression analysis was used to predict whether the independent variables gender, age, tenure, marital status and number of dependents contribute to predicting absenteeism and job satisfaction.

### **3.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**



In summary, this chapter explained the research design, the sampling design, the data gathering procedure and the statistical techniques that were employed to answer the research questions of the present study.

The next chapter focuses on the results obtained in the empirical analysis with specific reference to the testing of the hypotheses of the present study.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this section the results of the empirical analysis are reported and presented. The presentation proceeds with an analysis of the descriptive statistics on the variables under consideration.

The statistical programme used for the analyses and presentation of data in this research is the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12. The current chapter outlines the results obtained in the study and provides a comprehensive discussion of these results. The descriptive statistics computed for the study are presented first in an outline of the characteristics of the sample with regards to the variables included in the study. Thereafter, the analyses of the constructs relevant to the study, that is, job satisfaction and absenteeism, are presented with the aid of inferential statistical procedures. Conclusions are then drawn on the basis of the obtained results.

The information provided and discussed in the previous chapters will serve as a background against which the contents of this chapter will be presented and interpreted.

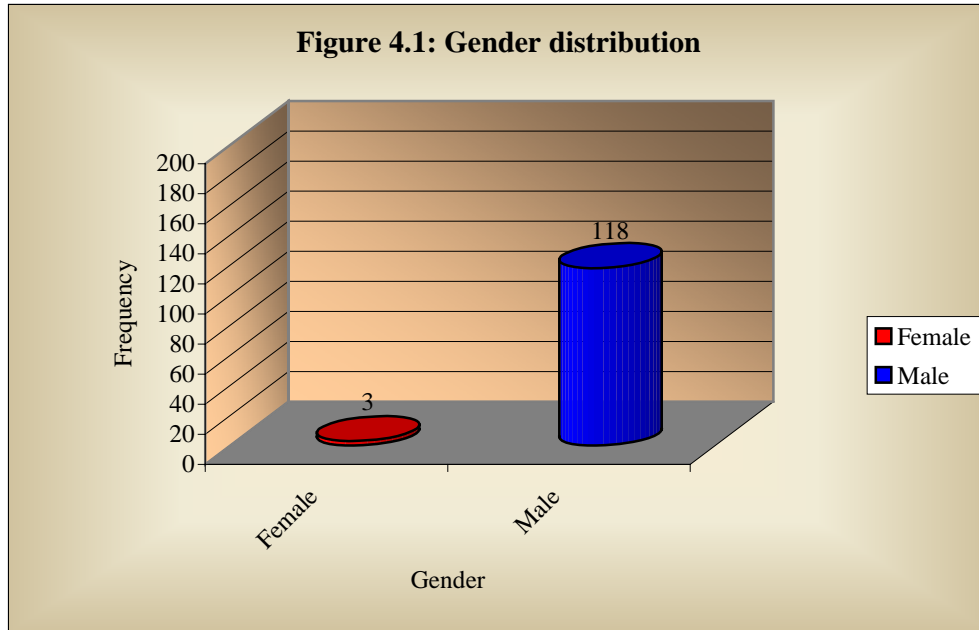
## **4.2 Descriptive statistics**

The descriptive statistics calculated for the sample are provided in the sections that follow. That is, the data pertaining to the variables included in the study, as collected by the three measuring instruments employed, are summarised by means of graphic representation and the calculation of descriptive measures. In this manner, the properties of the observed data clearly emerge and an overall picture thereof is obtained.

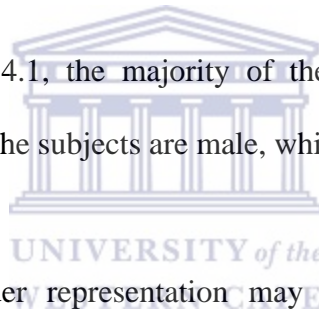
### **4.2.1 Results of the biographical questionnaire**

This section outlines the descriptive statistics calculated on the basis of the variables included in the biographical questionnaire. The demographic variables that receive attention are gender, age, tenure, marital status, number of dependents, job level, area employed, number of days absent and number of times absent. Descriptive statistics, in the form of frequencies and percentages, are subsequently presented graphically for each of the above-mentioned variables.

Figure 4.1 presents a graphical representation of the gender distribution of the selected sample.



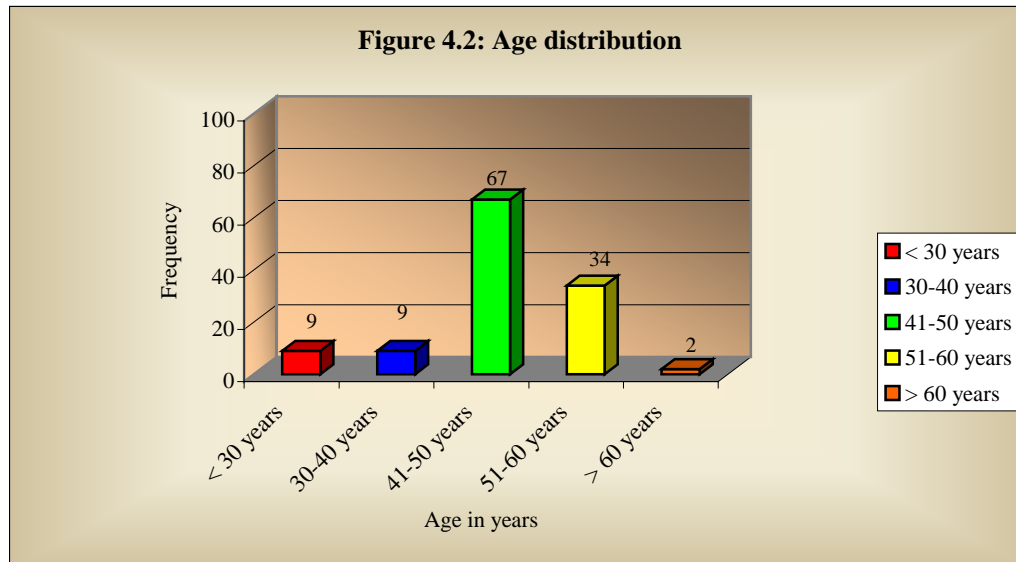
As can be seen from Figure 4.1, the majority of the respondents are male. More specifically, 97.5% (n=118) of the subjects are male, while only 2.5% (n=3) are female.



The large difference in gender representation may reflect true differences in the population. That is, it is possible that there are a greater number of males in the workforce of the organization under investigation. However, female subjects may also have been under-represented as a consequence of the sampling design employed.

The subjects' responses as regards their age are presented graphically in Figure 4.2.





From the frequency distribution presented in Figure 4.2, it may be deduced that a total of 18 of the 121 cases (14.9 %) in the sample are younger than 40 years of age. It can thus be seen that the majority of the individuals in the sample (55.4%) fall into the age category 41-50. This is followed by the 51 to 60 year age category into which 28 % (n=34) of the respondents fall, while only 1.7 % (n=2) of the respondents indicated that they are older than 60 years.

The results thus suggest a relatively older sample of subjects, from which may be deduced that the organization in question employs an older workforce. However, it has to be borne in mind that the sample was selected in accordance with a non-probability sampling procedure. Consequently, the possibility cannot be excluded that the other age categories are under-represented as a result of selection bias.

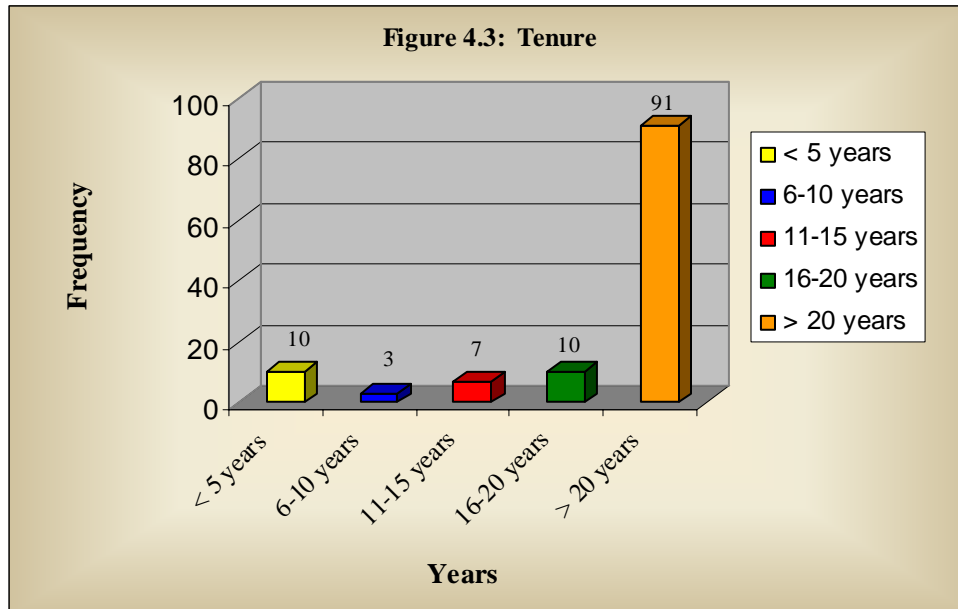
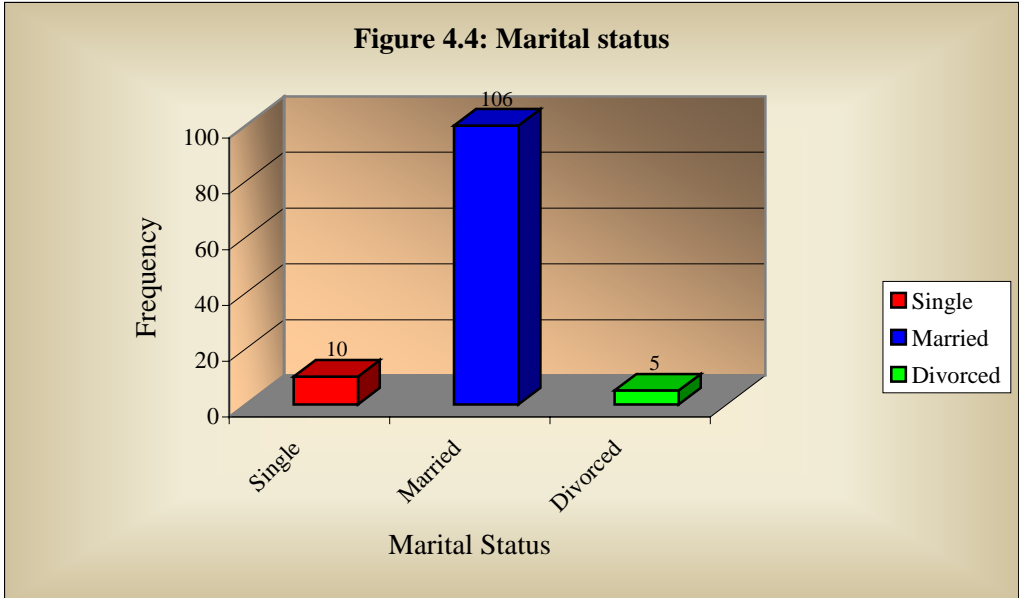
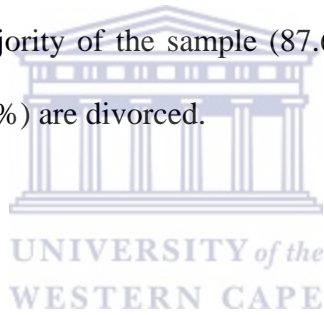


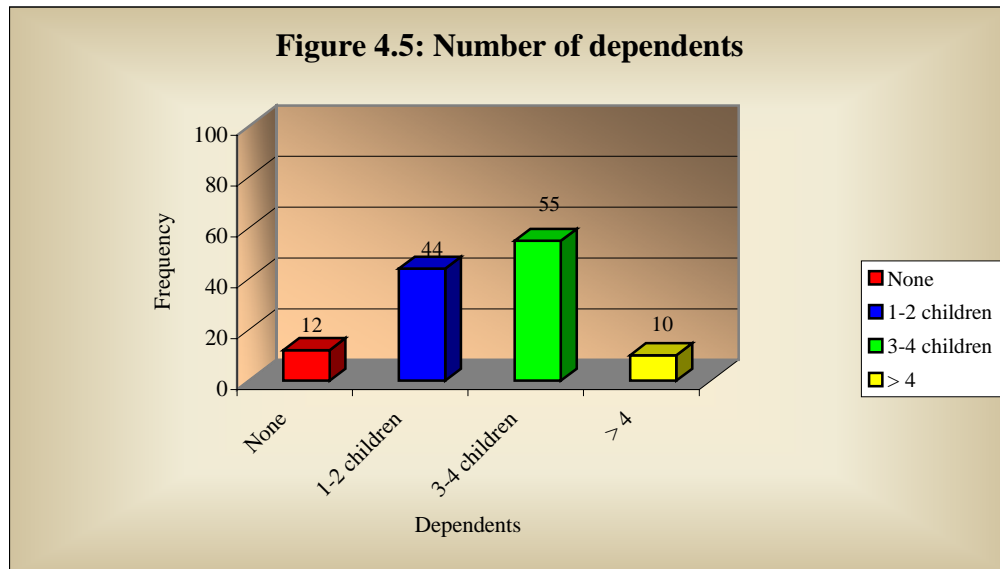
Figure 4.3 indicates that 91 of the sample (75.2%) have served more than 20 years in the organization in question. Ten (10) respondents (8.3 %) have worked for the organization for fewer than five years, and another ten employees (8.3 %) have worked for the organization for between 16 to 20 years. Three of the participants (2.4 %) indicated that they have been employed in the organization for between 6 to 10 years. Another, seven (5.8%) of the employees in the sample have served between 11 to 15 years in the organization.

Given that approximately 90% of the respondents have served in the organization for a period longer than 10 years, while only about 10 % have served less than 10 years, it may be concluded that the sample represents a relatively tenured group of employees.



In terms of Figure 4.4, the majority of the sample (87.6%) is married, ten respondents (8.3 %) is single and a five (4.1%) are divorced.





From Figure 4.5, it may be deduced that the majority of the sample (n = 55 or 45.5 % ) have 3-4 dependents, whilst 36.3 % (n=44) have between 1 to 2 dependents. Twelve respondents (9.9 %) have no dependents, while another ten employees (8.3 %) have more than four dependents.

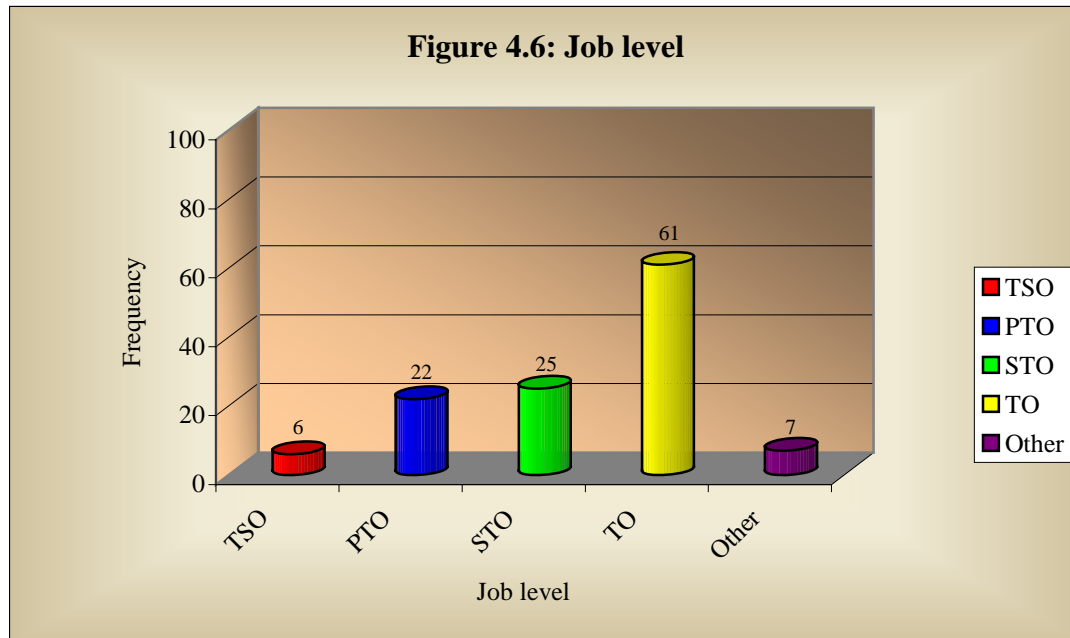
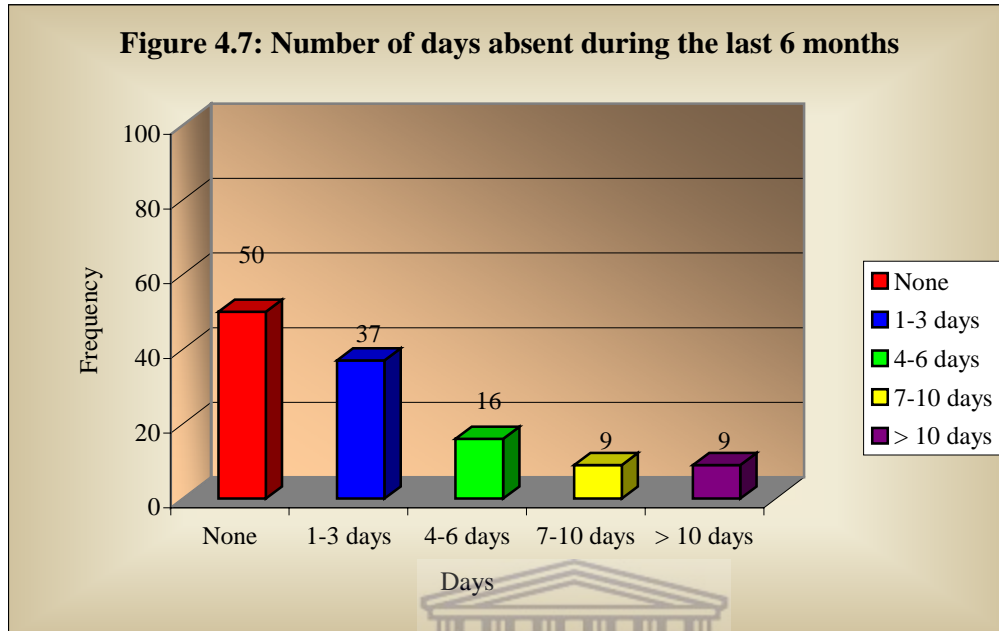


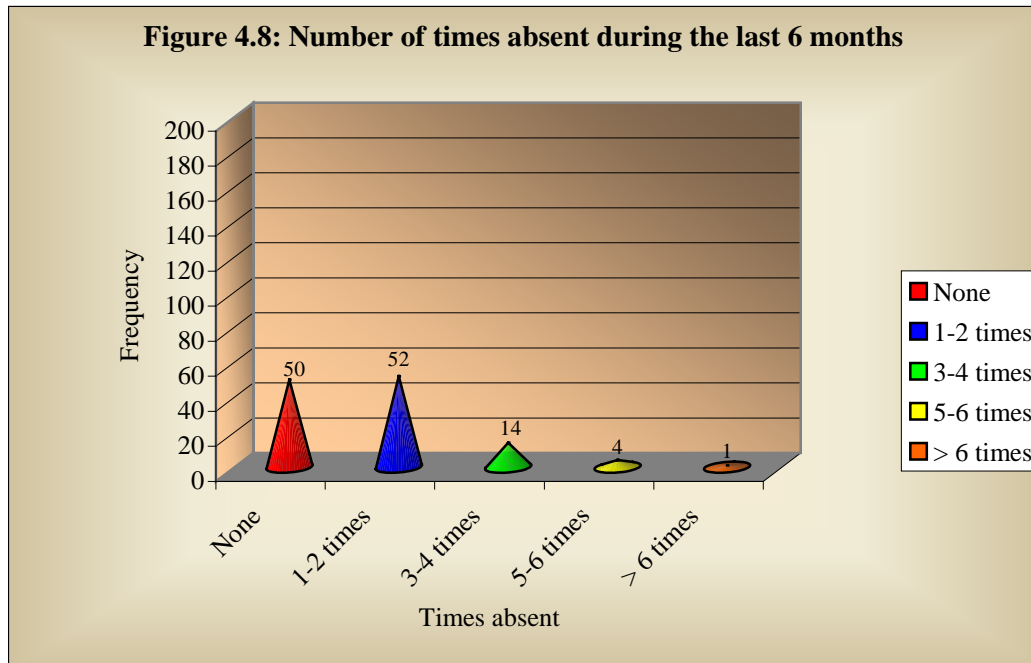
Figure 4.6 indicates that 50.4% (n=61) of the sample are employed in technical official (TO) positions within the organization, 20.7% (n=25) are in senior technical official (STO) positions, 18.1% (n=22) are in principal technical official (PTO) positions, while 5 % (n=6) of the respondents indicated that they occupy positions as technical services officers (TSO). While a further 5.8 % (n=7) indicated they were employed in other categories, largely as work schedulers.

The fact that the majority of the sample subjects fill non-managerial positions probably reflects true differences in the organization with regards to the distribution of employees on the basis of job level. However, the non-probability sampling method used may also have resulted in a larger number of the questionnaires being completed by non-managerial employees. Therefore, the possibility that some of the other categories have been under-represented as a result of the sampling design used cannot be excluded.

#### 4.2.2 Results of the absenteeism questionnaire



From Figure 4.7 it may be deduced that the majority of the sample ( $n=50$  or 41.3 %) did not take any days off due to sickness during the last 6 months, while 30.6 % ( $n=37$ ) indicated that they had taken between 1 to 3 days sick leave during the last 6 months. Sixteen respondents (13.2 %) indicated that they had taken 4 to 6 days sick leave during the last six months, while a combined 14.9 % took 7 to 10 days and more than 10 days sick leave during the last 6 months.

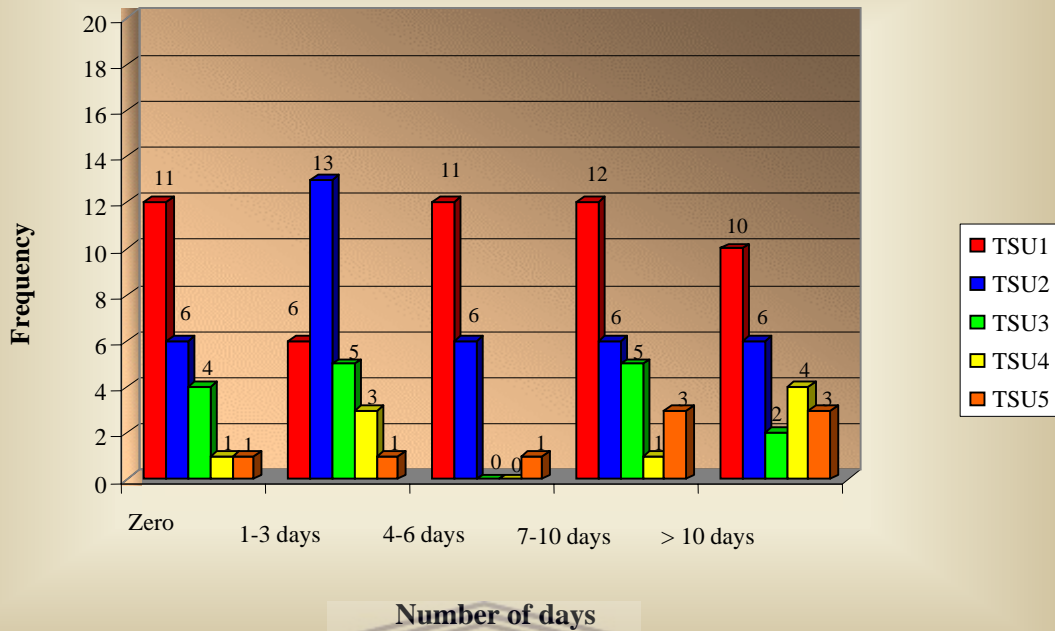


In terms of Figure 4.8, it can be inferred that the majority of the respondents ( $n=52$  or 43 %) were absent due to sick leave 1 to 2 times during the last six months, with 41.3 % ( $n=50$ ) indicating they were never absent during the last six months. A further 11.6 % ( $n=14$ ) indicated they were absent 3 to 4 times during the last six months, while 3.3 % ( $n=4$ ) employees indicated they had been absent 5 to 6 times during the last six months. One respondent (0.8%) indicated they had been absent more than 6 times.

#### 4.2.2.1 Number of days absent per technical service unit (TSU)

The descriptive statistics of the number of days sick leave taken by the total sample during the last six months is graphically represented in Figure 4.7. The results for each of the technical service units where the research was undertaken, are graphically represented in Figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9: Number of days sick leave taken per TSU**



In terms of Figure 4.9, it can be seen that the majority of respondents indicated that they had not taken sick leave during the last six months for all the technical services units (TSU), except TSU 2, where the majority took sick leave for 1-3 days during the last six months. Figure 4.9 reveals that the technical service unit which evidenced the highest number of days sick leave taken during the preceding six months was TSU 1, followed by TSU 2.



#### 4.2.2.2 Number of times absent per TSU

The descriptive statistics of the number of times absent for the sample was presented in Figure 4.8. These results were further explored for each of the five technical service units where the research was conducted. The descriptive statistics of the number of times sick leave was taken during the last six months within the various TSU's are graphically represented in Figure 4.10.

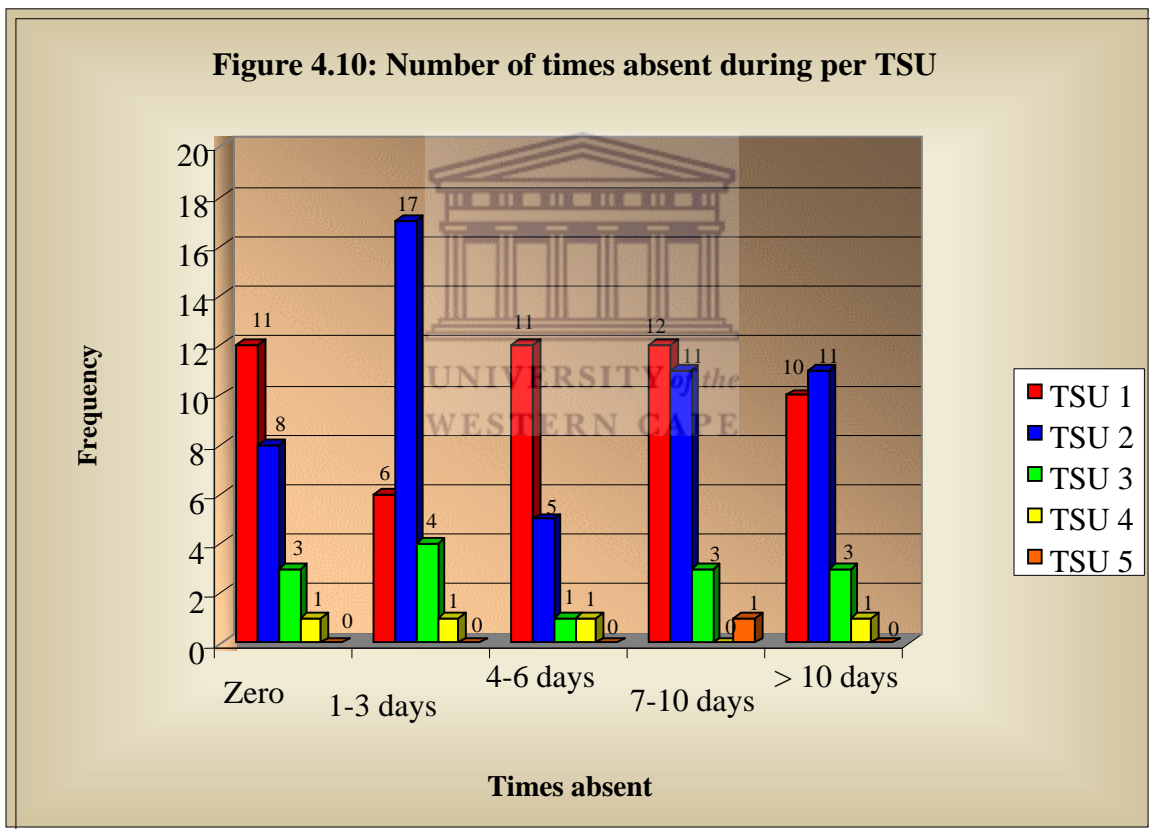


Figure 4.10 indicates that the majority of respondents indicated that they had not taken sick leave during the last six months, except for TSU 1 and TSU 2. Figure 4.10 reveals

that the area which evidenced the highest times sick leave was taken during the preceding six months was TSU 2, followed by TSU 1.

#### 4.2.3 Total number of employees per TSU

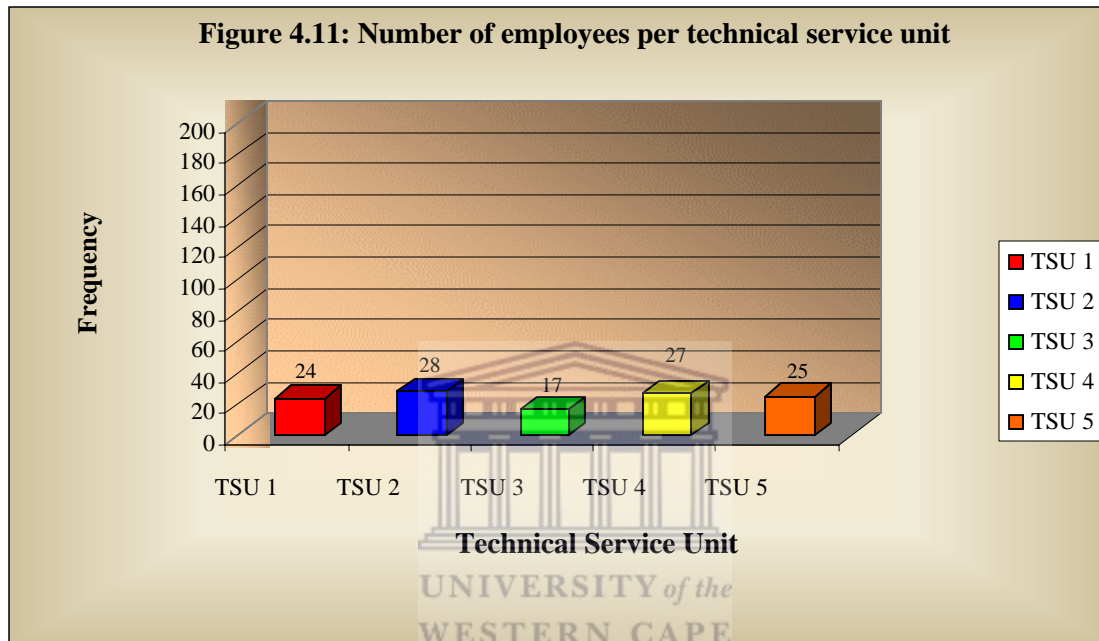


Figure 4.11 indicates the technical service units in which respondents work. In terms of Figure 4.11, 19.8 % (n= 24) of the sample respondents are employed in Technical Service Unit (TSU) 1, 23.1% (n=28) are from TSU 2, 14.1 % (n=17) are from TSU 3, 22.3 % are from TSU 4 and 20.7 % are from TSU 5.

#### 4.2.4 Results of the Job Satisfaction Survey

Descriptive statistics in the form of arithmetic means and standard deviations were computed for the various dimensions assessed by the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The results are presented in Table 4.1.

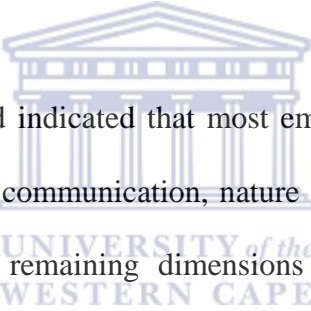
**TABLE 4.1: Descriptive statistics for the dimensions of job satisfaction**

VARIABLE	CASES (N)	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Benefits	121	9.6	4.2
Pay	121	9.3	2.6
Supervision	121	17.3	1.4
Promotion	121	9.8	1.8
Contingent rewards	121	10.2	2.1
Operating procedures	121	14.1	2.5
Coworkers	121	17.6	1.5
Nature of work	121	18.9	1.1
Communication	121	15.7	2.2
Total Job Satisfaction	121	93.5	16.2

Table 4.1 indicates that the arithmetic mean for the total job satisfaction of the sample is 93.5 with a standard deviation of 16.2. Based on the fact that an average level of job satisfaction, as measured by the JSS, would be represented by a mean of approximately 136.5, it may be concluded that the overall job satisfaction of the sample is relatively low.

The standard deviation for the overall level of job satisfaction is also not high, indicating that most respondents are close to the mean on this dimension.

With respect to the dimensions of job satisfaction assessed by the JSS, Table 4.1 indicates that the arithmetic means for the pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work and communication vary from a mean of 9.3 to 18.9. When measured against the norm tables for the JSS conducted by Spector (1997), it can be seen that the employees at the organization where the current research was undertaken, indicated average to below average levels of job satisfaction with the various dimensions assessed by the JSS.



While the mean values obtained indicated that most employees experienced average to above average satisfaction with communication, nature of work, supervision, coworkers and operating procedures, the remaining dimensions (pay, promotion, benefits and contingent rewards) were experienced as less satisfactory.

Moreover, it may be concluded from Table 4.1 that respondents are most satisfied with the nature of their work, followed by supervision they receive, co-workers, communication and operating procedures. They appear, however, to be least satisfied with their pay, benefits and with their opportunities for promotion. The standard deviations for all the dimensions of the JSS are relatively low, indicating similarity in responses obtained on the JSS from the sample.

### **4.3 Inferential statistics**

In the sections that follow, the results of the inferential statistics employed in the study are presented. For the purposes of testing the stated research hypotheses, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated and a multiple regression analysis was performed. With the aid of these statistical techniques, conclusions are drawn with regard to the sample and decisions are made with respect to the research hypotheses.

#### **4.3.1 Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient**

In order to determine whether there are significant relationships between the dimensions of job satisfaction, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was computed.



**TABLE 4.2: Relationship between the dimensions of Job satisfaction**

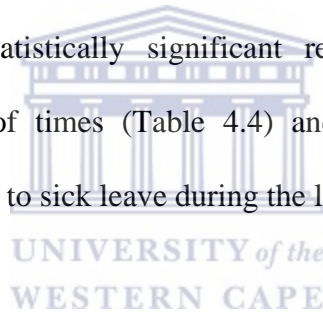
	Job Satisfaction	
	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Benefits	.812	.000**
Pay	.834	.000**
Supervision	.720	.000**
Promotion	.603	.000**
Contingent rewards	.682	.000**
Operating procedures	.704	.000**
Coworkers	.343	.023*
Nature of work	.634	.000**
Communication	.485	.041*

\*  $p < 0.05$ \*\*  $p < 0.01$ 

The results presented in Table 4.2 indicate that the correlation coefficients for the relationships between job satisfaction and its dimensions are direct, linear and positive ranging from moderate to high correlation coefficients. Significant correlations were shown to exist between co-workers and job satisfaction ( $r = .343, p < 0.05$ ), and between communication and job satisfaction ( $r = .485, p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that higher values of both of these dimensions translate into higher levels of job satisfaction. The converse is also true, however, with lower values on the dimensions corresponding to lower levels of job satisfaction.

The results indicate that there are statistically significant relationships between pay and job satisfaction ( $r = .834, p < 0.01$ ), benefits and job satisfaction ( $r = .812, p < 0.01$ ), supervision and job satisfaction ( $r = .720, p < 0.01$ ), operating procedures and job satisfaction ( $r = .704, p < 0.01$ ), contingent rewards and job satisfaction ( $r = .682, p < 0.01$ ), nature of work and job satisfaction ( $r = .634, p < 0.01$ ) and for promotion and job satisfaction ( $r = .603, p < 0.01$ ). The moderate to high correlations between these dimensions and job satisfaction suggest that the higher their relationship with job satisfaction, the more satisfied employees would be.

In addition, the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed for the purposes of determining whether a statistically significant relationship exists between job satisfaction and the number of times (Table 4.4) and number of days (Table 4.3) employees remained absent due to sick leave during the last six months.



**TABLE 4.3: Relationship between Job satisfaction and number of days absent**

	<b>NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT</b>
Pay	-0.04 (121) P = 0.006*
Promotion	-0.06 (121) P = 0.018*
Supervision	-0.04 (121) P = 0.032*
Benefits	-0.09 (121) P = 0.000**
Contingent rewards	-0.18 (121) P = 0.004**
Operating procedures	-0.15 (121) P = 0.0102*
Coworkers	-0.08 (121) P = 0.016*
Nature of work	-0.13 (121) P = 0.015*
Communication	-0.09 (121) P = 0.025*

\* p &lt; 0.05

\*\* p &lt; 0.01

In terms of Table 4.3, it may be seen that there are weak, though statistically significant relationships between each of the dimensions of the JSS and the number of days employees remained absent during the last six months due to sick leave. The strongest correlates of number of days' sick leave taken during the last six months based on the JSS were contingent rewards ( $r = -0.18$ ), operating procedures ( $r = -0.15$ ) and nature of the work ( $r = -0.13$ ).



In light hereof, the null hypothesis, which states that no statistically significant relationship exists between job satisfaction and number of days employees remain absent during the last six months, is rejected. The results thus indicate that there is a statistically significant, albeit inverse relationship between the number of days employees stay absent and their job satisfaction levels. This indicates that a low level of employee satisfaction is therefore associated with an increase in the number of sick leave days amongst the sampled employees.

Although the correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism translates into a relatively weak, inverse relationship, it is nevertheless statistically significant for all the dimensions of the JSS. That is, the probability of finding that no relationship exists between these two variables in the population from which the sample was drawn is 5% or less. It may therefore be concluded that the lower employees' satisfaction with their pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work and communication, the higher the number of sick days taken by employees during the last six months.

In conclusion, the results obtained on the basis of the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicate that statistically significant relationships exist between job satisfaction and the number of sick days taken during the last six months. Furthermore, as far as the subscales of the JSS are concerned, the study found significant, albeit inverse relationships between the dimensions of the JSS and frequency of sick leave taken.

**TABLE 4.4 : Relationship between Job satisfaction and number of times absent**

	<b>NUMBER OF TIMES ABSENT (FREQUENCY)</b>
Pay	-0.17 (121) P = 0.000 **
Promotion	-0.04 (121) P = 0.000**
Supervision	-0.08 (121) P = 0.00**
Benefits	-0.14 (121) P = 0.000**
Contingent rewards	-0.09 (121) P = 0.000**
Operating procedures	-0.21 (121) P = 0.05*
Coworkers	-0.12 (121) P = 0.006**
Nature of work	-0.19 (121) P = 0.002**
Communication	-0.10 (121) P = 0.004**

\* p &lt; 0.05

\*\* p &lt; 0.01

In terms of Table 4.4, it may be seen that there are weak, though statistically significant relationships between each of the dimensions of the JSS and the number of times (frequency) employees remained absent during the last six months due to sick leave. The strongest correlates of absence frequency during the last six months based on the JSS were operating procedures ( $r = -0.21$ ), nature of the work ( $r = -0.19$ ) and benefits ( $r = -0.14$ ).

In light hereof, the null hypothesis, which states that no statistically significant relationship exists between job satisfaction and number of times employees remain absent during the last six months, is rejected. The results thus indicate that there is a statistically significant, albeit inverse relationship between the frequency of absence and the job satisfaction levels. This indicates that a low level of employee satisfaction is therefore associated with the number of times sick leave is taken amongst the sampled employees.

Although the correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism translates into a relatively weak, inverse relationship, it is nevertheless statistically significant for all the dimensions of the JSS. That is, the probability of finding that no relationship exists between these two variables in the population from which the sample was drawn is 5% or less. It may therefore be concluded that the lower employees' satisfaction with their pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work and communication, the higher the frequency of sick leave was taken by employees during the last six months.

In conclusion, the results obtained on the basis of the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicate that a statistically significant relationship exists between job satisfaction and the number of days employees took sick leave during the last six months. Furthermore, as far as the subscales of the JSS are concerned, the study found significant, albeit inverse relationships between the dimensions of the JSS and the number of times sick leave was taken during the last six months.

**TABLE 4.5: Correlation between biographical variables and absenteeism**

	<b>Absenteeism</b>
Gender	.68**
Age	.58**
Years of service	.40**
Marital status	.29*
Number of dependents	.54**
Current position/job level	.18

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 4.5 indicates the relationship between the respondents' biographical characteristics and their absenteeism. The results indicate that the strongest relationship exists between gender and absenteeism ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). There was also a significant correlation between the age of respondents and absenteeism ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The number of dependents that respondents have was also significantly related with absenteeism ( $r = 0.54$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while there was a significant relationship between years' of service and absenteeism ( $r = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between the marital status of respondents and absenteeism ( $r = 0.29$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). There was no statistically significant relationship between the job level of respondents and absenteeism ( $r = 0.18$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

### 4.3.2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

#### 4.3.2.1 ANOVA - Job Satisfaction by Technical Service Unit

The results of a one-way ANOVA, depicting differences in job satisfaction for the five TSU's at which the research was undertaken, are set out in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6 : ANOVA- Job satisfaction by Technical Service Unit**

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P
Between groups	8.376	4	2.094	1.399	0.001**
Within groups	173.624	116	1.497		
Total	182.00	120			

\*\* p < 0.01

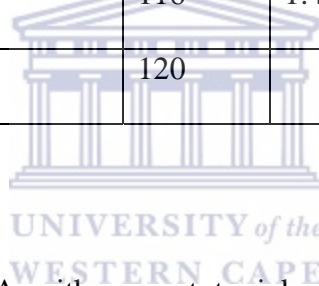


Table 4.6 depicts the ANOVA with respect to job satisfaction within the different technical service units. The results indicate that there are statistically significant differences in job satisfaction, F (1.399); p < 0.01, between the different units.

#### 4.3.2.2 ANOVA- Absenteeism by different Technical Service Units (TSU)

The results for the various areas in which the research was conducted was further explored to ascertain whether there were differences in the sick leave absence during the last six months in the five TSU's in which the research was undertaken. The results of a

one-way ANOVA depicting differences in the number of days employees took sick leave during the last six months for the five TSU's are set out in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7: ANOVA- Number of days absent by technical service unit**

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P
Between groups	8.214	4	2.535	2.466	0.001**
Within groups	119.234	116	1.028		
Total	127.448	120			

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 4.7 depicts the ANOVA with respect to the number of days employees took sick leave during the last six months, based on the different technical service units. The results indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the number of days sick leave was taken during the last six months,  $F(2.466)$ ;  $p < 0.01$ , between the different technical service units.

### 4.3.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

For the purposes of determining the extent to which the six demographic variables (gender, age, tenure, marital status, dependents and job level) explain the variance in the job satisfaction of employees, multiple regression analysis was performed.

The results of the multiple regression analysis, regressing the six demographic variables against job satisfaction, are presented in Table 4.8.



**TABLE 4.8: Multiple Regression – Biographical variables and job satisfaction**

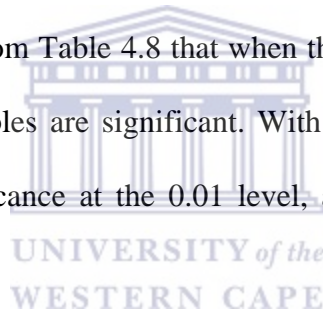
Multiple R	0.37651		
R Square	0.14176		
Adjusted R Square	0.10687		
Standard error	25.08685		
Degrees of freedom			
<i>Regression</i>	5		
<i>Residual</i>	118		
F	4.06328		
Sign F	0.0019 ***		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig T</b>
Gender	- 0.136760	- 0.385	0.7008
Age	- 0.029652	- 1.271	0.2438
Tenure	- 0.259773	- 1.826	0.0215*
Marital status	- 0.329712	- 3.113	0.0978
Dependents	- 0.352733	- 2.650	0.113
Job level	- 0.301364	- 1.352	0.0032**
	* p < 0.05	** p < 0.01	

From Table 4.8 it can be seen that the multiple correlation among the six demographic variables and job satisfaction is 0.37651, as indicated by Multiple R. Furthermore, given the R Square value of 0.14176, it may be deduced that only 14.176% of the variance in



job satisfaction can be accounted for by these six demographic variables. The F-statistic of 4.06328 at 5 and 118 degrees of freedom is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. On the basis hereof, it may be concluded that the six demographic variables of gender, age, tenure, marital status, number of dependents and job level together significantly explain 14.176% of the variance in job satisfaction. In effect, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is accepted that the six demographic variables significantly explain the variance in job satisfaction. It should be noted, however, that the variance accounted for by these six variables is relatively small, with the remaining 85.824% of the variance being explained by factors other than those considered.

Furthermore, it may be seen from Table 4.8 that when the other variables are controlled, two of the demographic variables are significant. With a Beta-value of -0.301364, job level reaches statistical significance at the 0.01 level, and is the best predictor of job satisfaction.



Furthermore, the Beta-value of  $-0.259733$  obtained for tenure is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Consequently, tenure, too, is a significant predictor of job satisfaction. Moreover, the fact that both job level and tenure carry negative Beta weights suggests that inverse relationships exist between these two variables and job satisfaction, with employees at higher job levels and more tenured employees experiencing lower levels of satisfaction.

Table 4.8 further shows that neither age, gender, marital status nor number of dependents were found to be statistically significant at even the 0.05 level. Moreover, it further appears as though age, with an obtained Beta-value of only -0.029652, is the poorest predictor of job satisfaction. On the basis hereof, it may thus be concluded that while job level and tenure are significant predictors of job satisfaction, age, gender, marital status and number of dependents do not predict job satisfaction based on the sample of employees.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter has focused on the presentation of results achieved in this study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, multiple regression analysis and analysis of variance were used to indicated relationships and differences in the various constructs included in the research. In the following chapter, the data will be discussed and where available, existing studies is integrated with results emanating from the current study to draw comparisons.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the results of the statistical analysis in relation to the hypotheses, previous research and related literature.

#### 5.2 Levels of job satisfaction amongst Field Service employees

The results of the study indicate average to below average levels of job satisfaction with the various dimensions assessed (cf. Table 4.1).

The respondents appear to be more satisfied with the nature of their work, the supervision they receive, their co-workers, communication and operating procedures. They however experienced lower levels of satisfaction with their compensation and opportunities for promotion. Their low levels of satisfaction with compensation and promotion could be based on the fact that 74 % of the sampled employees have served for more than 20 years in the organisation. Furthermore, the majority of the sample are above 40 years, which may limit their opportunities for promotion.

### 5.3. Relationships between job satisfaction and absenteeism

The results depict a statistically significant, albeit inverse relationship between the number of days employees stay absent and their job satisfaction levels (cf. Table 4.3). Furthermore, there is a statistically significant, inverse relationship between the number of times employees remained absent and their job satisfaction levels (cf. Table 4.4). This indicates that a low level of employee satisfaction is associated with an increase in the number and frequency of sick leave days amongst the selected sample of employees. *Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.*

Although the study indicates a relatively weak correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism, it is nevertheless statistically significant for all the dimensions of the Job Satisfaction Survey (pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work and communication).

These results are consistent with the findings presented by Lau et al. (2003). These authors conducted a meta-analysis on 19 different studies and found only a weak job satisfaction effect on absence from work. According to Mowday et al. (1982), there are many other variables, both personal and organisational, which seem to influence employee attendance. A person can be absent for many reasons, including genuine illness, personal business and family illnesses. Job satisfaction might be one of the factors that determine employees' motivation to attend (Spector, 2000).

A number of studies have found a stronger correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism. Hardy et al. (2003) in their study of 323 health services staff in the United Kingdom, found that job satisfaction is related to the number of days absent as well as to the frequency of absence. This view is supported by Hoque and Islam (2003), who conducted a study amongst 400 employees from textile and jute mills in Bangladesh. They found that job satisfaction contributes negatively to absenteeism, thus the lower the satisfaction levels, the higher absenteeism amongst the sample of workers. These authors maintain that it is essential to lay emphasis on enhancing job satisfaction in order to reduce absenteeism.

Research by Matrunola (1996) amongst 50 hospital nurses, however, did not find evidence of a relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism. Clarke's (1975) study as quoted by Matrunola (1996), reports similar findings since even more satisfied employees frequently had poor attendance records. Goldberg and Waldman (2000) in their study of 244 employees in a hospital in the USA, also found that job satisfaction is unrelated to absenteeism. Research findings in this area are therefore equivocal.

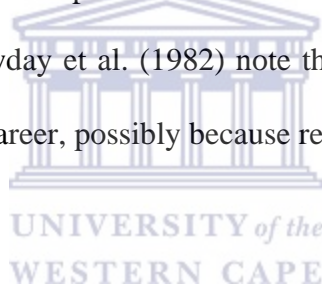
## **5.4 Differences in absenteeism based on biographical variables**

### **5.4.1 Gender**

There is a strong relationship between gender and absenteeism amongst the selected sample of employees ( $r = .68, p < 0.01$ ).

Most research on the gender-absenteeism relationship indicates that women are more absent than males. In accordance with this, Fried, Melamed & Ben-David (2002) conducted a study on a sample of 802 white-collar employees across twenty one organisations in Israel where they found that females are more absent than males. These authors suggest that women tend to respond to illnesses by being absent, whereas men would not.

Lau et al. (2003) reported similar findings. The authors postulate that it could be due to women taking up the role of caregivers of families and elder care. Such responsibilities could tax their ability to go to work. According to Lau et al. (2003), organisations could offer childcare to help alleviate the pressures on female workers which, in turn, could help reduce absenteeism. Mowday et al. (1982) note that absenteeism rates for women decline throughout their work career, possibly because responsibility associated with young children declines.



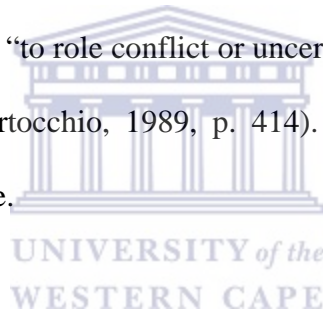
Contrary to these findings, Siu (2002) conducted a study on 2 samples of Hong Kong nurses (n=258). The results indicate that gender was not a significant predictor of absence in any of the samples.

#### **5.4.2 Age**

Results in the present study show a significant correlation between age and absenteeism ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.01$ ).

Most research on the relationship between age and absenteeism indicates that younger employees are more absent than older employees (Dillingham, 1981 as cited by Martocchio, 1989; Lau et al., 2003; Matrunola, 1996). Martocchio (1989) conducted a meta-analysis on about 17 studies to identify whether age has an impact on absenteeism. These studies also indicate that both absence frequency and number of days absent are inversely related to age. The rationale for this relationship is greater job commitment and sense of responsibility amongst older employees, hence the lower levels of absenteeism. (Martocchio, 1989).

A study by Super (1957) as quoted by Martocchio (1989) suggests that absence of younger employees may be due “to role conflict or uncertainty of what they believe is the most suitable work role” (Martocchio, 1989, p. 414). This conflict may lead to an increase in unscheduled absence.



Hoque and Islam (2003) on the other hand, found a non-significant effect of age on absenteeism. Consistent with this, Rhodes (1983) as quoted by Martocchio (1989), in a qualitative review of studies found no logical age-absence pattern for either frequency or number of days lost due to absence.

### **5.4.3 Tenure**

There was a significant relationship between absenteeism and the respondents' years of service in the organisation.

According to Robbins et al. (2003), studies consistently demonstrate an inverse relationship between tenure and absenteeism, which means that employees with higher work experience will be less absent than those with lower work experience. Employees who have been in employment for long periods, tend to express higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, resulting in lower rates of absenteeism (Martocchio, 1989).

Studies by Hoque and Islam (2003), on the other hand found that absenteeism were more amongst employees with longer service than those with few years of work experience. A further view is posited by Lau et al. (2003) who in their meta-analysis found no association between tenure and absenteeism.

#### **5.4.4 Marital status**

Results of the study indicate a significant relationship between marital status and absenteeism ( $r = 0.29, p < 0.05$ ).

There is contradictory evidence on the impact of marital status on absenteeism. Robbins et al. (2003) found that married employees have fewer absences, compared to unmarried employees. The authors note that it could be that married employees mostly have families, hence they are less absent due to these economic pressures.

Contrary to this, Hoque and Islam's (2003) and Lau et al.'s (2003) studies reveal a non-

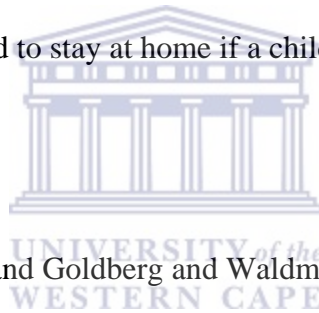


significant association between marital status and absenteeism.

#### **5.4.5 Number of dependents**

The number of dependents respondents have, was also significantly related to absenteeism ( $r = 0.54$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Research done by Robbins (1989), states that there is strong evidence suggesting that number of children is positively correlated with absence, i.e. the higher the number of dependents, the higher their absenteeism, especially amongst females. An explanation could be that women would tend to stay at home if a child suddenly becomes ill, to tend to their children's needs.



Findings by Voss et al. (2001) and Goldberg and Waldman (2000) indicate only a modest relationship between absenteeism and number of dependents. Furthermore, Hoque and Islam (2003) who conducted a study amongst 400 workers from textile and jute mills in Bangladesh, found a non-significant relationship between absenteeism and number of dependents.

#### **5.4.6 Job Level**

There was no statistically significant difference in absenteeism based on job level. These results corroborate research findings provided by Du Plessis et al. (2003). These authors

conducted a study of 145 employees within the meat industry over a period of one year and found a non-significant correlation between job level and absenteeism.

Contradictory findings are presented by Fried et al. (2002) who conducted a study on a sample of 802 white-collar employees across twenty one organisations in Israel. These authors found that employees in higher level jobs tend to be less absent than employees with relatively simpler jobs. According to Voss et al. (2001), this correlation could be attributed to the fact that higher-level jobs tend to be more complex and have better working conditions, pay, promotion prospects, supervision, autonomy and responsibility. Hence these employees would less likely be absent.

### **5.5 Differences in job satisfaction based on biographical variables**



The results of the study concluded that the six biographical variables namely, gender, age, tenure, marital status, number of dependents and job level significantly explain the variance in job satisfaction. *The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.* It should be noted that the variance accounted for by these six variables is relatively small.

Contrary to the findings in the present study, Sempene, Rieger and Roodt (2002) in their study of 200 employees in a service organisation, concluded that satisfaction with employee's job is not determined by their biographical variables.

However, each of the biographical variables will be considered respectively, to ascertain if there is research which is contrary to the findings as stated by Sempene, et al. (2002).

### **5.5.1 Gender**

Gender was not found to be a significant predictor of absenteeism. It must be noted that about 97 % of the sampled employees are male, and this could explain this finding.

There is a large body of research explaining the gender-job satisfaction relationship. However, research in this regard has been inconsistent. Some literature reports that males are more satisfied than females, others suggest that females are more satisfied and some have found no differences in satisfaction levels based on gender.

A study by Alavi and Askaripur (2003) amongst 310 employees in government organisations found no significant difference in job satisfaction among male and female employees. Carr and Human's (1988) research is consistent with this view. These authors investigated a sample of 224 employees at a textile plant in the Western Cape and found no significant relationship between gender and satisfaction. Furthermore, Pors (2003) conducted a study including 411 Danish library managers and 237 library managers from the United Kingdom. Overall no difference in job satisfaction in relation to gender was found.

On the other hand, in a study conducted by Okpara (2004), which involved 360 Information Technology managers in Nigeria, indicated that gender was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. Their studies found that female employees are less satisfied than their male counterparts - specifically with pay, promotion and supervision. According to Okpara (2004), this finding may be attributed to higher educational levels of women in this sample. The author postulates that higher education levels raise expectations about status, pay and promotion and if these expectations are not met, they might experience lower levels of satisfaction.

According to studies conducted by Loscocco (1990), female employees demonstrated higher levels of job satisfaction than male employees across different settings. This author purports that most women value rewards that are readily available to them, such as relationships with co-workers. It therefore becomes easier for them to experience job satisfaction. Male employees on the other hand mostly likely desire things like autonomy and financial rewards, which are not as readily available, therefore their lower levels of satisfaction.

### **5.5.2 Age**

Age does not significantly explain the variance in job satisfaction levels amongst the selected sample of employees. These results corroborate research findings provided by a number of researchers (Alavi & Askaripur, 2003; Carr & Human, 1988; Kacmar & Ferris, 1989; Siu, 2002).

However, research by Okpara (2004), Rhodes (1983) as quoted by Kacmar and Ferris (1989) and Saal and Knight (1988), concluded that overall satisfaction is positively associated with age. This implies that older workers are more satisfied than younger workers.

Numerous explanations may be presented to explain the positive correlation between age and job satisfaction (Okpara, 2004):

- ⇒ Older employees have adjusted to their work over the years, which may lead to higher satisfaction.
- ⇒ Prestige and confidence are likely to increase with age and this could result in older employees being more satisfied.
- ⇒ Younger employees may consider themselves more mobile and seek greener pastures, which could lead to lower satisfaction levels.
- ⇒ Younger employees are more likely to hold high expectations of their jobs and if these expectations are not met, they may experience lower satisfaction levels.

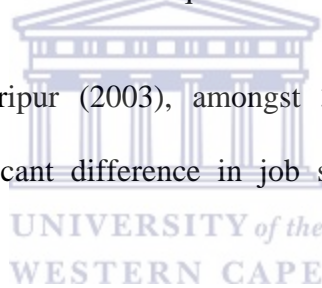
### **5.5.3 Tenure**

Results in the present study indicate an inverse relationship between tenure and job satisfaction, hence more tenured employees experienced lower levels of job satisfaction compared to those with fewer years in the organisation. This is consistent with findings reported by Lambert et al. (2001). This could be based on the fact that the more tenured

employees have been in the same job for a number of years. Their jobs might not be challenging to them, which could have contributed to these findings.

These findings are inconsistent with other research on the tenure-job satisfaction relationship. Bilgic (1998) as quoted by Okpara (2004) and Jones-Johnson and Johnson (2000) found that employees with longer job experience were more satisfied compared to those with fewer years of experience. According to Okpara (2004), this may be an indication that once the process of acculturation is over, employees settle into their jobs, have an increased organisational commitment and they seem to like their jobs. The author further postulates that the longer time spent in the organisation, the more employees tend to be satisfied with the status quo.

A study by Alavi and Askaripur (2003), amongst 310 employees in government organisations found no significant difference in job satisfaction amongst employees based on their years of service.



#### **5.5.4 Marital status**

Marital status does not predict job satisfaction amongst the sample of employees. This is consistent with research conducted by Alavi and Askaripur (2003) who reported no significant difference in job satisfaction and its five dimensions among single and married personnel.

Other research has consistently found that married employees are more satisfied with their jobs than their un-married co-workers (Chambers, 1999; Loscocco, 1990; Robbins et al., 2003). Chambers (1999) in particular, found that married employees experienced increased satisfaction with pay, work, supervision and the co-worker subscales of the JDI.

According to Robbins et al. (2003), it could be that marriage imposes increased responsibilities, which might make a steady job more valuable, hence increasing their satisfaction. However, these authors note that the available research only distinguishes between being single and married. Divorcees, couples who cohabit and the widowed have been excluded from research and these are in need of investigation.

#### **5.5.5 Number of dependents**



The study indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between number of dependents and job satisfaction. Studies by Alavi and Askaripur (2003) supported this view.

Robbins (1989) notes that most research points to a positive relationship between number of dependents and job satisfaction. This implies that employees with more children are more satisfied with their jobs. This could be that employees with more children are probably older and longer in their jobs. They might therefore have adapted to their work situations, hence, the increase in job satisfaction. Research in this area is, however,

limited.

### **5.5.6 Job level**

Job level is a significant predictor of job satisfaction amongst the sampled employees.

Oshagbemi (1997) states that relatively few studies have attempted to investigate the relationship between employees' job level and corresponding levels of job satisfaction. The limited research available however, suggests that people who hold higher level jobs are more satisfied than those who hold lower level positions (Mowday et al., 1982). The same findings have been reported by Saal and Knight (1988) who conducted a longitudinal study of employees in the US. Furthermore, Smither (1998) found that job satisfaction tends to be lower amongst employees in jobs characterised by hot or dangerous conditions, which is normally of a lower level nature. Miles et al. (1996) specifically found that job levels moderates the communication-job satisfaction relationship.

It is possible that the more challenging nature of higher-level jobs lead to higher job satisfaction. Also, employees in professional and managerial jobs are normally paid more, have better promotion prospects, autonomy and responsibility which might also increase the levels of job satisfaction (Saal & Knight, 1988).



It seems therefore that job level is a reliable predictor of job satisfaction, more specifically, employees in higher level jobs have greater satisfaction than employees who hold lower level jobs.

## **5.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Sickness absence has attracted attention in response to competitive pressures and tightening labour markets and by managing absence, organisations can achieve a better competitive edge (Johnson et al., 2003). For many organisations however, absenteeism management remains a daunting task, as it can place huge financial burdens on organisations. Aware of the indirect costs associated with absenteeism, management must determine what factors are responsible for absenteeism and how these factors can be addressed to curb this challenging problem.

The main goal of the present study was to determine the impact of job satisfaction on absenteeism as research generally states that dissatisfied employees are more likely to miss work than satisfied employees (Aamodt, 2004; Saal & Knight, 1988). The study however only found a weak, albeit inverse correlation between satisfaction and absenteeism. The role of other variables, for example personality, work-group norms, organisational commitment and family related responsibilities have not been included although their impact on absenteeism have been noted (Mowday et al., 1982; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). In order to improve on this, it is suggested that further research be undertaken to ascertain the potential effect of these variables on absenteeism.

Since the current research utilised a non - probability sampling method, certain groups may have been under-presented. Although the sample of 121 is considered appropriate, a larger, stratified random sample would have enabled greater precision and control with respect to the sample. Furthermore, the sample employed was relatively small, reducing the study's generalizability to the larger organisation. Moreover, the small number of female respondents prevented meaningful comparisons being made. The study was conducted in one organisation in the Western Cape, which further limits its applicability to a wider population.

A cross-sectional design was used for the study as it provided the researcher with a snapshot of the research elements at a given point in time. Even though this design is considered appropriate, a longitudinal study would allow for forming a better understanding of the true nature of absenteeism and job satisfaction as it uses the same sample over a period of time.

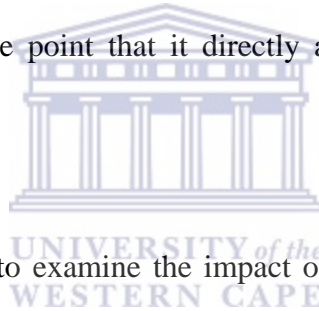
The study is further limited in that it used self -report measures of absence, which is highly subjective. Johns (1996) as quoted by Siu (2002) – argues that “employees do not have accurate perceptions of their own absenteeism, some employees underestimate their own absenteeism and overestimate the absenteeism of co-workers” (Siu, 2002, p. 218).

Further research should adopt more objective measures of absence.

The second goal of the study focused on the relationship between personal characteristics and absence. Significant correlations were found and it is important for management to

understand these dynamics in order to control absenteeism in the workplace. The importance of understanding specifically the impact of age on the work force will continue to grow, owing to changes in legislation (age discrimination, non-mandatory retirement) and also the impact of HIV and AIDS (Kacmar & Ferris, 1989). Organisations need to have stringent policies in place to control absenteeism, and a culture of attendance needs to be cultivated amongst employees.

Future research needs to also examine the absence severity rate (ASR) which indicates the number of days sick leave per incident over a period of time, which is how long employees are off when they do take sick leave (Mowday et al. ,1982). Excessive absenteeism can escalate to the point that it directly affects productivity, quality and morale.



A final goal of the study was to examine the impact of personal characteristics on job satisfaction. While the study focused on personal predictors of job satisfaction, there are other variables (job and organisational) that may be better predictors of job satisfaction (Spector, 1997; 2000). It is suggested that further research needs to be conducted to identify these factors that contribute to employees' job satisfaction.

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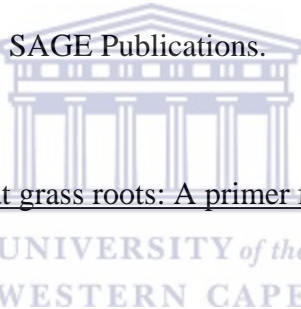
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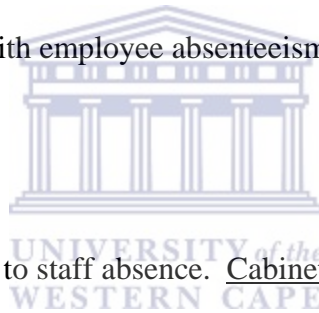
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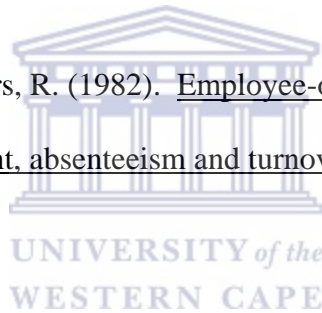
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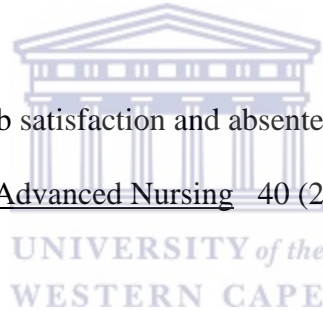
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