

# INVESTIGATING THE CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM AT THE WORKPLACE: EVIDENCE FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATION

**BERTHA MANVELA DASILVA OLUMENE**

Graduate, Durban University of Technology, ML Saltan, Durban, South Africa. E-mail: bolumene@gmail.com

**PAULINE NGO HENHA EYONO**

Head of Department -Human Resources Management, Durban University of Technology, ML Saltan, Durban, South Africa. E-mail: paulinen@dut.ac.za

**REWARD UTETE**

Senior Lecturer, Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, University of Johannesburg, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, South Africa. Corresponding Author E-mail: rewardu@uj.ac.za, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9086-1052>

## Abstract

Currently, there is a great interest in comprehending the causes of employee absenteeism at the workplace, with various organisations attempting to create a conducive environment for productivity. However, there is evidence of ongoing confusion regarding the main causes of absenteeism at the workplace. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the causes of absenteeism at the workplace. The study adopted a descriptive research design and quantitative research approach. The data was gathered from 251 employees using a close-ended questionnaire. The collected data was analysed using the computerised Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27 for Windows). The results indicated various causes of absenteeism of employees at the workplace. However, the study found that interpersonal difficulties, supervisors not managing and regulating employees properly, money problems, employees not being treated fairly at work, and employee performance concerns are some key causes of absenteeism at the workplace. Hence, debates concerning what would constitute causes of absenteeism have been settled by this study. Multiple interventions are needed to combat absenteeism. The management should develop an Employee Assistance Programme implementation plan for every problem category, monitoring and evaluation tool assist employees who face both personal and work-related issues. The study underscores the fundamental aspects that cause absenteeism which in turn assist managers and policy makers to implement sound decisions. The study provides guidance for future research and practice on how best to counter the identified causes of absenteeism.

**Keywords:** Employee Absenteeism, Causes of Absenteeism, Presenteeism, South Africa, Productivity.

## INTRODUCTION

There are concerns about the increasing level of instability within organisations due to high level of absenteeism. As such, the workplace has changed significantly over the past few years. Employee empowerment, technological advancements, increasing competitiveness and professional advancements have all combined to produce a new working reality which drastically different from the one that existed previously which has implications on absenteeism. Furthermore, challenges and rising productivity demands from companies lead to a slew of issues that employees must deal with. Siddiqui (2016) attests that the issues pertaining

to work-life and employee job performance have been considered an essential matter to deal with. The daily challenges confronting employees increase their absenteeism from the workplace. Likewise, regardless of their job category, gender or years of service and age, employees at the organisation may be affected by various challenges that not only affect them personally, but that also negatively impact their work output. These challenges and the increasing productivity demand from employers contribute to a variety of problems being faced by employees which pose absenteeism.

Several employers recognise that helping employees to deal with causes of absenteeism could lead to productivity enhancements. The workplace is well-positioned to assist individuals with their issues, according to Richmond, Pampel, Wood and Nunes (2017); whilst also enhancing employee self-confidence and performance. Siddiqui (2016) attests that those issues pertaining to work-life balance and employee job performance have been considered critical to the aspect of absenteeism. The majority of firms offer help through a formal participation technique that recognises and supports employees with a variety of personal and work-related concerns that might lead to absenteeism. Such services are frequently given by larger organisations, but not by small and medium businesses (SMEs), according to Altshuler, Berry, McIninch and Nayeem (2014). Although there has been considerable research interest in absenteeism, limited effort has been spent on drawing the causes of absenteeism. The key objectives of this study is to investigate the causes and prevalence of absenteeism at the workplace; and to understand the impact of absenteeism on organisation.

### **The aspect of absenteeism**

There is a growing realisation of the importance of eradicating absenteeism as it has reached unsustainable levels in various organisations across the globe. Absenteeism is described as failing to show up for work, regardless of the reason (Evans-Lacko and Knapp, 2016). Employees who are absent from work on a regular basis pose a risk to the company. In their study, Senel and Senel (2015) maintain that absenteeism is the absence of an employee from scheduled work. Badubi (2017) believes that absenteeism is every manager's nightmare. As a result, businesses should investigate the causes of absenteeism. Furthermore, absence is bad for an organisation, according to Silpa and Masthanamma (2016). In other cases, however, failing to show up for work is preferable to having an ill or weary employee execute their duties. Moreover, Lynch and Bryan (2018) confirm that illness and family responsibility are major causes of absenteeism. Sometimes, employees who are off-duty must come and cover the shift of the sick employee, which creates unplanned overtime.

### **Causes of absenteeism and their impact to the organisation**

Professionals in the field of Human Resources Management agree that organisational factors are the major causes of workplace absenteeism (Mat-Saruan, Mohd-Yusoff, Mohd-Fauzi, Wan-Puteh & Muhamad-Robat, 2020; Ali-Shah, Uddin, Aziz, Ahmad, Al-Khasawneh & Sharaf, 2020). Such organisational factors include job dissatisfaction; work-related stress; a lack of employee motivation; organisational culture and leadership; working conditions; environmental and personal factors such as psychological wellness, illness; and demographic

characteristics (Sharma, Singh and Kishor, 2013; Joseph, 2015). Furthermore, harassment and bullying, stress and burnout, mental health problems, low morale, bereavement and illness are some of the challenges that employees face, which are all listed as additional causes of absence by Collier (2018).

Andrew (2017) discovers that employee absenteeism can damage productivity, economics and workplace morale in a study on the negative consequences of employee absenteeism in the workplace. As a result, the impact of absenteeism is a problem that organisations need to understand and address. Furthermore, some organisations may need to replace employees who are absent, thereby increasing costs while simultaneously putting pressure on other employees. According to Cushard (2017), the consequences of absenteeism include low morale amongst employees; frustrated employers; the non-achievement of targets; increased costs as well as workloads; loss of productivity and the attrition of skilled employees.

Similarly, according to Terblanche (2018), absence in the workplace causes a loss of production; increased labor expenses for replacement workers; increased administrative duties; lost morale; and increased stress amongst the remaining employees. Shabangu (2018), in a similar vein, believes that absenteeism is one of the toughest employee issues. Furthermore, Shabangu (2018) claims that employee tardiness and absenteeism are two of the costliest and disruptive staff issues that businesses confront, both of which have a substantial impact on an organisation's productivity. Badubi (2017) states that, as a result of years of isolation and a lack of global competitiveness, South African enterprises are complacent about the importance and expense levels of absenteeism. The influence of absenteeism, according to Senel and Senel (2015), can be seen at different levels in organisations, including organisational productivity, employee productivity and employee unions.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is guided by Nicholson's attachment theory. In 1977, Nicholson established the Attachment Theory to explain the employee absenteeism. The Theory of Attachment was created to aid in the prediction of employee absenteeism. Nicholson (1977) developed his theory by discovering the nature of absence whilst also taking into consideration methodological and measurement problems. He chose to emphasise absence as a measured variable rather than concentrating it on attendance, which several other studies on absenteeism have done (Keller, 2021). Additionally, Nicholson (1977) developed the 'A-B' field as part of his theory, characterising absence events by their availability. Furthermore, based on the influence of the attendance motive, Nicholson (1977) noticed how these absence actions differ from one person to the next. As a technique of gauging attendance motivation, Nicholson (1977) proposed an attachment theory on absenteeism. An organisation typically categorizes absences based on research related with absenteeism. Voluntary, involuntary, disease, sanctioned and unsanctioned are the most common categories. Nicholson's (1977) 'A-B' continuum is stated in terms of attendance limitations/barriers. The 'A-B' continuum was created by Nicholson (1977) to allow absences to be seen on a scale, depending on how much individual choice favours an absence occurrence or non-occurrence. Absences which fall at the 'A' end of the continuum are those which individual choice would not count, and those that

fall at the 'B' end are those that are entirely controlled by individual choice. Thus, those at the 'A' end are unavoidable and those at 'B' are avoidable. Additionally, Inalhan, Yang and Weber (2021) defined 'attachment' in the context in which an employee is dependent upon the structure and regulations of organisational life. Furthermore, Nicholson (1977) argued that there are four sets of stimuli that constitute attachment, namely personal traits, work orientation, job involvement and employment relationship. Maree (2016)

## METHODS

For this study, a quantitative method was applied because it saves time and resources (Daniels and Minot, 2019). In this study, the target population (N) is the total number of 1800 employees working in various branches in South Africa. As a probability sampling method and random sampling technique was used in this investigation. Every person of the population has an equal chance of getting chosen as a subject under this procedure. It is appropriate because it reduces unfairness by giving each element an equal chance of being chosen, and it is less expensive, complicated and time-consuming to implement. The study was conducted on employees from different branches of organisation in South Africa. The sample (n) for this study is 317 out of a total population of 1800 (N). The sample was calculated based on a scientific table for sample selection proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (2016), which stipulates that if the target population is 1800, the sample should be 317. The sample is 317, but due to Covid-19 restrictions and site accessibility restrictions, only 260 questionnaires were distributed to employees from various organisation's branches around South Africa. For the purposes of this study, the researcher used questionnaires to obtain data in order to analyse the causes of absenteeism at the workplace. Additionally, a Five-Point Likert scale format was used to examine how strongly the subjects agree or disagree with the statements (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). The questionnaire comprised five sections. Data was collected and analysed using SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 27 for Windows. The researcher personally distributed 260 (n) questionnaires to employees (all categories) from three different sites on different days and collected them the following day to accommodate the night shift.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 260 questionnaires distributed, 250 questionnaires were correctly filled out, returned, analysed, interpreted and the response rate was 96.5%. The study has more male respondents than females. The majority of the respondents (67,2%) were between 30-49 years. Almost half of the respondents who participated in the study were single. Approximately, half of the respondents had Matric certificate as their highest qualification. Majority of the respondents had the length of service not more than 9 years. Overall, it was found that respondents 60 years and above have worked in the organisation 15 years and above, are separated, are executives and hold a Post-graduate degree, and they tend to agree more that the highlighted statements causes absenteeism in the organisation. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (Table 3.6) for the 15 items measuring respondents' perceived causes of absenteeism ( $\alpha= 0.960$ )

### T-test (perceived causes of absenteeism at work)

To assess the perceived causes of absenteeism, a one-sample t-test was performed, as shown in Table 2. The section sought to address the research question, which states: “What are the causes and prevalence of absenteeism at the organisation under the study?”. The mean (*M*) values in all the statements were above 3.5.

This suggests that most of the respondents agreed that all the items portrayed in Table 1 cause absenteeism at work. The one-sample t-test below determines if employees in the study differed in their perceptions on the causes of absenteeism at work. The findings are shown in Table 2.

**Table 1: Respondents’ perceived causes of absenteeism at work**

	Perceived causes of absenteeism at work (n=250)					Mean	T	SD	P-value
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree				
They are going through interpersonal problems.	0.8%	4.4%	32.8%	38%	24%	3.80	68.069	0.883	0.000***
They experience stress and anxiety at work due to work overload.	0.8%	3.2%	37.2%	33.6%	25.2%	3.79	67.720	0.885	0.000***
They work long hours which result in fatigue	0.8%	3.6%	10.8%	54.8%	30%	4.10	82.432	0.786	0.000***
They have substance abuse problems.	0.8%	1.6%	18.4%	49.6%	29.6%	4.06	81.755	0.784	0.000***
Their manager does not manage and control them well.	0.8%	2%	20.4%	44%	32.8%	4.06	77.668	0.827	0.000***
They have a chronic sickness.	1.2%	1.6%	26%	42.4%	28.8%	3.96	73.724	0.849	0.000***
They are going through a divorce.	0.8%	2%	26%	40%	31.2%	3.99	73.965	0.853	0.000***
They are emotional most of the time.	1.2%	1.6%	20%	43.2%	34%	4.07	76.428	0.842	0.000***
They do not have maintenance and child support for their children.	0.8%	2.8%	21.2%	41.2%	34%	4.05	74.573	0.858	0.000***
They are dissatisfied with their role at work.	0.8%	2%	22.8%	39.6%	34.8%	4.06	75.174	0.853	0.000***
They have financial problems (transport money, money spending, and excessive spending).	1.6%	1.2%	21.2%	42.8%	33.2%	4.05	74.573	0.858	0.000***
They experience work-family conflicts.	1.2%	1.2%	18.8%	44.8%	34%	4.09	78.562	0.824	0.000***
They have diseases illnesses, sickness, and health problems.	0.8%	2.4%	20.8%	43.2%	32.8%	4.05	76.255	0.839	0.000***
They are not treated fairly at work.	1.2%	2.8%	19.6%	40.8%	35.6%	4.07	73.278	0.878	0.000***
They have performance issues.	0.4%	3.2%	29.2%	45.6%	21.6%	3.85	75.378	0.807	0.000***

Source: Authors' analysis (2024)

As depicted in Table 2 above, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived

employees going through interpersonal problems causes absenteeism at work. The results indicated a mean value of  $M=3.80$ , a standard deviation ( $SD=0.883$ ), a  $t$  value ( $t=68.069$ ) and was significant at  $P<0.001$ .

This is evident in research conducted by Quain (2019), who revealed that interpersonal conflict can not only affect morale, but also impacts the efficiency and productivity of the workplace, which leads to strained relationships, grievances, litigation, absenteeism and employee turnover. Equally, there was significant agreement that respondents perceived those employees experiencing stress and anxiety at work due to work overload as causes of absenteeism at work. The results indicated a mean value of  $M=3.79$ , a standard deviation ( $SD=0.885$ ), a  $t$  value ( $t=67.720$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ .

There was major correlation that working long hours which resulted in fatigue caused absenteeism, with a mean value of  $M=4.10$ , a standard deviation ( $SD=0.786$ ), a  $t$  value ( $t=82.432$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ .

Similar results were reported in a study by Karimbil (2019), which found that stress is on the rise in today's work environment because of deadlines and endless pressure from management. As employees fail to address the issue, they tend to absent themselves so that they do not have to deal with stress at the workplace. Congruent with the results of the study, Salih (2018) found that stress also has positive effects on workers based on the extent of causes of the strain.

In terms of substance abuse problems as a cause of absenteeism at work, the results showed highly significant agreement that respondents perceived it as a cause of absenteeism at work, with a mean value of  $M=4.06$ , a standard deviation of  $SD=0.784$ , a  $t$  value of  $t=81.755$  and significance at  $P<0.001$ . With regard to the statement: "their manager does not manage and control them well", the result indicated that there is significant agreement by the respondents that the failure of managers to control employees will cause absenteeism at work, with a mean value of  $M=4.06$ , a standard deviation of  $SD=0.827$ , a  $t$  value of  $t=77.668$  and significance at  $P<0.001$ .

According to Roche, Pidd and Kostadinov (2015), alcohol and drug-related absenteeism is a large and preventable burden on Australian firms. Furthermore, their research discovered evidence that legal drug abuse raises the rate of workplace absenteeism, as measured by both skipping and missing work due to illness or injury.

Moreover, there is significant agreement that respondents perceived chronic sickness as a cause of absenteeism at work, which yielded results as a mean value of  $M=3.96$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.849$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=73.724$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ . It also emerged that a significant number of respondents consider employees going through divorce as a cause of absenteeism at work, with a mean value of  $M=3.99$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.853$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=73.965$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ . The results concur with Fernandez (2019) who found that a divorce or breakup, bereavement, family problems, stress, anxiety, interpersonal problems and financial problems are the most common causes of absenteeism in organisations.

Furthermore, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceive employees without

maintenance and child support as a cause of absenteeism at work, with a mean value of  $M=4.05$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.858$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=74.573$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ . There is also significant agreement that the respondents perceived employees' dissatisfaction with their role at work as the cause of absenteeism at work, which yielded results as a mean value of  $M=4.06$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.853$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=75.174$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ . According to recent research by Canada Life Group Insurance, one out of every six employees who falsely took sick leave did so because they were weary.

These findings are backed up by Kocak, Bryan and Lynch (2018), who found that poor personal accomplishment, as well as a drop-in emotion of competence and burnout, lead to absenteeism. Epstein, Marler and Taber (2015) who found managers who demonstrate empathy for their employees by providing family-friendly behaviours like flexible working hours have a positive impact. Equally, there is significant agreement that respondents perceived financial problems such as transport money and excessive spending as causes of employee absenteeism at work, with a mean value of  $M=4.05$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.858$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=74.573$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ .

Moreover, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived work-family conflicts as the cause of employee absenteeism, with a mean value of  $M=4.09$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.824$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=78.562$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ . Work-family conflict is becoming more prevalent in society, according to Kossek and Lee (2017:14), and it has a significant impact on work and personal outcomes such as absenteeism and family well-being. Furthermore, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived employees without maintenance and child support as a cause of absenteeism at work. Equally important, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived employees who are absent from work to have diseases, illness, sickness and health problems, which yielded results as a mean value of  $M=4.05$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.839$ ), with the  $t$  value ( $t=76.255$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ . There is also significant agreement that not treating employees fairly at work causes absenteeism, with a mean value of  $M=4.07$ , standard deviation ( $SD=0.878$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=73.278$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ .

Furthermore, with a mean value of  $M=3.85$ , there is strong agreement that employees who were away from work had performance concerns, with a standard deviation ( $SD=0.807$ ),  $t$  value ( $t=75.378$ ) and significance at  $P<0.001$ . These findings are in line with Der Feltz-Cornelis, Maria, Varley, Allgar and De-Beurs (2020) who found the absence of a good working environment can affect employees' morale and prevent them from reporting to their workplace.

Employees with a greater absolute salary, a higher relative wage, and who work at a higher hierarchical level are less likely to be absent (Miraglia & Johns, 2021)

### **Chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) (demographic variables and the perceived causes of absenteeism)**

The link between the respondents' demographic factors and the perceived causes of absenteeism was tested using a Chi-Square (2) test, as shown in Table 2

**Table 2: Chi-square test of demographic variables and the perceived causes of**

absenteeism

Dimension		Gender	Marital status	Age	Length of service	Job category	Highest qualification
They are going through interpersonal problems.	P-value	0.770	0.098	0.018	0.061	0.007	0.000
	Chisquare	4.887	23.644	29.957	25.533	33.339	46.169
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They experience stress and anxiety at work due to work overload.	P-value	0.145	0.000	0.014	0.010	0.015	0.000
	Chi-square	12.147	47.724	30.766	32.096	30.728	44.586
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They work long hours which result in fatigue	P-value	0.283	0.047	0.004	0.001	0.028	0.042
	Ch-square	9.746	26.515	35.015	40.211	28.466	26.953
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have substance abuse problems.	P-value	0.940	0.075	0.077	0.147	0.053	0.000
	Ch-square	2.901	24.708	24.601	21.869	26.097	52.421
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
Their manager does not manage and control them well.	P-value	0.965	0.163	0.045	0.075	0.027	0.000
	Chi-square	2.433	21.415	26.658	24.733	28.625	44.723
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have a chronic sickness.	P-value	0.950	0.020	0.295	0.331	0.003	0.001
	Ch-square	2.736	29.708	18.503	17.884	36.268	39.850
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are going through a divorce.	P-value	0.967	0.009	0.128	0.223	0.272	0.009
	Ch-square	2.388	32.304	22.499	19.932	18.943	32.364
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are emotional most of the time.	P-value	0.909	0.006	0.181	0.225	0.172	0.000
	Chi-square	3.364	33.725	20.938	19.888	21.169	44.292
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They do not have maintenance and child support for their children.	P-value	0.759	0.035	0.022	0.009	0.122	0.002
	Chi-square	4.987	27.603	29.258	32.420	22.703	37.871
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are dissatisfied with their role at work.	P-value	0.877	0.032	0.118	0.039	0.235	0.068
	Chi-square	3.771	28.005	22.846	27.186	19.687	25.130
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have financial problems (transport money, money spending, and excessive spending).	P-value	0.984	0.123	0.099	0.177	0.420	0.010
	Chi-square	1.903	22.680	23.596	21.034	16.477	32.165
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They experience work-family conflicts.	P-value	0.463	0.021	0.230	0.213	0.120	0.046
	Chi-square	7.703	29.439	19.784	20.163	22.775	26.620
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have diseases illnesses, sickness, and health problems.	P-value	0.444	0.001	0.060	0.142	0.033	0.001
	Chi-square	7.891	39.761	25.586	22.050	27.819	40.740
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are not treated fairly at work.	P-value	0.688	0.165	0.224	0.598	0.078	0.001
	Chi-square	5.632	21.358	19.913	14.011	24.579	40.167
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have performance issues.	P-value	0.955	0.137	0.007	0.002	0.449	0.006
	Chi-square	2.641	22.185	33.215	37.338	16.056	33.827
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16

Source: Authors' analysis (2024)

Table 2 shows that no differences were found between gender and their perceived causes of

absenteeism. The Chi-square Test showed a significant difference ( $P>0.05$ ). Gender disparities influence the ability to cope with professional obstacles, according to Dipela (2016). Women are more susceptible to job insecurity and are more likely to engage in physically demanding jobs. These findings contradict a study by Tarro, Llauradó, Ulldemolins, Hermoso and Solà (2020), which found that males are more likely than females to have personal issues such as absenteeism, alcohol and drug misuse, and other male-related issues.

In terms of interpersonal difficulties, drug addiction problems, supervisors not managing and regulating employees properly, money problems, employees not being treated fairly at work, and employee performance concerns, there was no variation in replies based on marital status. A significant difference was found using the Chi-square Test ( $P>0.05$ ). The findings contradict Papakonstantinou and Tomos (2021)'s results, which revealed that marriage problems and family difficulties can always affect job performance and absenteeism. In terms of stress and anxiety at work due to work overload, there were statistically significant variations, significant at  $p<0.001$ ; working hours which result in fatigue was significant at  $P=0.047$ ; chronic sickness was significant at  $P=0.020$ ; going through a divorce was significant at  $P=0.009$ ; maintenance and child support for their children was significant at  $P=0.035$ ; work-family conflicts was significant at  $P=0.021$ ; and having diseases illness, sickness and health problems was significant at  $P<0.01$ . There were no differences in terms of substance abuse problems, chronic illness, divorce, dissatisfaction with their role at work, work-family conflicts, having diseases, illnesses, sickness and health problems, and not being treated fairly at work, regardless of the respondents' age. A significant difference was found using the Chi-square Test ( $P>0.05$ ). In contrast to the previous findings, Papakonstantinou and Tomos (2021) found that older workers are more sensitive to specific hazards such as infectious diseases, musculoskeletal problems, accidents and injuries as a result of a loss of strength and endurance, which could result in them missing work. There were statistical differences in terms of interpersonal problems, significant at  $P=0.018$ ; experiencing stress and anxiety at work due to work overload, significant at  $P=0.014$ ; work long hours which results in fatigue, significant at  $P=0.004$ ; their manager does not manage and control them well, significant at  $P=0.045$ ; do not have maintenance and child support for their children, significant at  $P=0.022$ ; and have performance issues, significant at  $P=0.007$ .

Interpersonal problems, substance abuse problems, having chronic sickness, going through divorce, emotional most of the time, financial problems, experiencing work-family conflicts, having diseases illness, sickness and health problems, and not being treated fairly at work were not found to be significant at ( $P>0.05$ ). There were statistical differences in terms of experiencing stress and anxiety at work due to work overload, significant at  $P=0.010$ ; work long hours which results in fatigue ( $P=0.001$ ); maintenance and child support for their children, significant at  $P=0.009$ ; dissatisfied with their role at work, significant at  $P=0.039$ ; and performance issues ( $P=0.002$ ). These findings are reinforced by Bayram and Burgazoglu (2020)'s study (2015), who found that there is no evidence that supports that the length of employment affects the utilisation of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs).

Blue-collar workers or those in lower-level professions, according to a study by Kenny (2014),

are the most frequent consumers of EAP. This could be because these workers are not worried about losing their jobs if others find out they have used the EAP services, according to research. As an alternative, it could be expected that these individuals would have more challenges or problems because of their positions and consequently would tend to use EAPs often because of psycho-social stressors in the workplace. Substance abuse problems, going through a divorce, emotional most of the time, do not have maintenance and child support for children, dissatisfied with their role at work, have financial problems, experience work-family conflicts, are not treated fairly at work, and have performance issues were not found to be significant at ( $P>0.05$ ). Differences were found in terms of going through interpersonal problems, significant at  $P=0.007$ ; experience stress and anxiety at work due to work overload ( $P=0.015$ ); work long hours which results in fatigue, significant at  $P=0.028$ ; their manager does not manage and control them well, significant at  $P=0.027$ ; have a chronic sickness, significant at  $P=0.003$ ; and have diseases illnesses, sickness and health problems, significant at  $P=0.033$ .

Regarding the respondents' highest qualifications and their perceived view of the causes of absenteeism, no difference was found for the statement 'dissatisfied with their role at work', significant at  $P>0.05$ . However, and as indicated by the level of significance in Table 2, there were statistically significant differences in terms of the respondents' qualifications and the highlighted perceived causes of absenteeism, significant at  $P<0.05$ . According to Lohaus and Habermann (2021), high absenteeism has been demonstrated to be a primary source of low morale in many businesses. However, education has been found to be negatively associated with absenteeism, meaning that the more educated people are, the less likely they are to be absent in organisations. This result is consistent with Lokke and Sorensen (2021) found that employees with little educational credentials, at junior levels with low compensation scales, and doing more labour work are most affected by a variety of difficulties, including substance abuse and absenteeism.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that causes of absenteeism are both voluntary and involuntary, as well as personal and organisational issues. The objectives of this study were accomplished. The key causes of absenteeism found in this study established include interpersonal problems; stress and anxiety at work due to work overload; substance abuse problems; failure of managers to control employees; chronic sickness; divorce; child support; and perceived employees' dissatisfaction with their role. Multiple interventions may be needed to eradicate absenteeism. The management should develop an Employee Assistance Programme implementation plan for every problem category, monitoring and evaluation tool assist employees who face both personal and work-related issues. Employers must also allow employees to take time off when needed in order for them to manage their well-being and perform efficiently, as working non-stop can lead to burnout, poor performance and eventually absenteeism. However, the main limitation of this study is that it focused on one organisation, hence it may be difficult to generalise the results to other organisations unless they share the same setting.

## Conflict of Interest

The study does not have any conflict of interest

### Funding Acknowledgements

The study was not funded

### References

- 1) Ali Shah, S. A., Uddin, I., Aziz, F., Ahmad, S., Al-Khasawneh, M. A., & Sharaf, M. (2020). An enhanced deep neural network for predicting workplace absenteeism. *Complexity*, 2020, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/5843932>
- 2) Altshuler, B., Berry, G., McIninch, G., & Nayeem, R. (2014). Assessing workplace wellness needs for small and medium-sized enterprises in Windhoek, Namibia. *A project paper for the Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the Namibia Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS. Windhoek, Namibia.*
- 3) Andrew, S. (2017). Detrimental effects of employee absenteeism on the workplace. Unpublished Masters Dissertation; University of Stellenbosch.
- 4) Badubi, R. M. (2017). A critical risk analysis of absenteeism in the work place. *Marketing*, 2(6), 32-36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.26.3004>
- 5) Bayram, M., & Burgazoglu, H. (2020). The Relationships between control measures and absenteeism in the context of internal control. *Safety and Health at Work*, 11(4), 443-449. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2020.07.007>
- 6) Cadete, N. L. D. J. (2017). Understanding individual workforce resilience of women in selected Durban organisational setting. (Doctoral dissertation).
- 7) Cekiso, N. A., & Terblanche, L. S. (2015). Pricing models of employee assistance programs: Experiences of corporate clients serviced by a leading employee assistance program service provider in South Africa. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 30(1-2), 154-178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15555240.2015.1000162>
- 8) Collier, E. (2018). Reducing absenteeism in the workplace. *Recuperado de https://www.highspeedtraining.co.uk/hub/reducing-absenteeism-in-the-workplace.*
- 9) Cushard, B. (2017). More eLearning needed to improve sales enablement efforts: 3 benefits of eLearning. HMC Sales, Marketing and Alliances Excellence Essentials. Aurora.
- 10) Cushard, B. (2017). The Impact of Absenteeism. *Spark News* (blog). <https://www.adp.com/spark/articles/2017/01/the-impact-of-absenteeism.aspx> (Accessed 26 June 2020).
- 11) Daniels, L., & Minot, N. (2019). *An introduction to statistics and data analysis using Stata®: from research design to final report*. Sage Publications.
- 12) Der Feltz-Cornelis, V., Maria, C., Varley, D., Allgar, V. L., & De Beurs, E. (2020). Workplace stress, presenteeism, absenteeism, and resilience amongst university staff and students in the COVID-19 lockdown. *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 11, 588803. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.588803>
- 13) Dipela, M. P. (2016). *Evaluating the effectiveness of an employee assistance programme within South African police services in the Waterberg District, Limpopo Province* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Limpopo).
- 14) Epstein, R. H., Dexter, F., & Maratea, E. A. (2019). Unscheduled absences in a cohort of nurse anesthetists during a 3-year period: statistical implications for the identification of outlier personnel. *Journal of clinical anesthesia*, 52, 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinane.2018.08.028>
- 15) Evans-Lacko, S., & Knapp, M. (2016). Global patterns of workplace productivity for people with depression:

- absenteeism and presenteeism costs across eight diverse countries. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 51, 1525-1537. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-016-1278-4>
- 16) Fernandez, V. (2019). Employee assistance programs: tools for reducing absenteeism. *LaCapitale beneva* (blog) <https://blogue.lacapitale.com/en/business/> (Accessed 3 April 2019).
  - 17) Inalhan, G., Yang, E., & Weber, C. (2021). Place attachment theory. In *A handbook of theories on designing alignment between people and the office environment* (pp. 181-194). Routledge.
  - 18) Keller, H. (2021). *The myth of attachment theory: A critical understanding for multicultural societies*. Routledge.
  - 19) Kenny, C. L. (2014). Perceptions of employers and employees on the need for an employee assistance programme in a financial services organisation in the Western Cape. <https://etd.uwc.ac.za/handle/11394/4230>
  - 20) Kossek, E. E., & Lee, K. H. (2017). Work-family conflict and work-life conflict. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of business and management*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.013.52>
  - 21) Lohaus, D., & Habermann, W. (2021). Understanding the decision-making process between presenteeism and absenteeism. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 716925. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.716925>
  - 22) Løkke, A. K., & Sørensen, K. L. (2021). Top management turnover and its effect on employee absenteeism: Understanding the process of change. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 41(4), 723-746. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X20931911>
  - 23) Kocakülâh, M.C., Bryan, T.G., & Lynch, S. 2018. Effect of Absenteeism on Company Productivity and Profitability. *Business and Economic Research*, 8(1), 115-135. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ber.v8i1.12395>
  - 24) Mat Saruan, N. A., Mohd Yusoff, H., Mohd Fauzi, M. F., Wan Puteh, S. E., & Muhamad Robat, R. (2020). Unplanned absenteeism: The role of workplace and non-workplace stressors. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(17), 6132. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17176132>
  - 25) McClean, S. T., Yim, J., Courtright, S. H., & Dunford, B. B. (2021). Transformed by the family: An episodic, attachment theory perspective on family–work enrichment and transformational leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(12), 1848. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000869>
  - 26) Miraglia, M., & Johns, G. (2021). The social and relational dynamics of absenteeism from work: A multilevel review and integration. *Academy of Management Annals*, 15(1), 37-67. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2019.0036>
  - 27) Nicholson, N. (1977). Absence behaviour and attendance motivation: A conceptual synthesis. *Journal of Management Studies*, 14(3), 231-252. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.1977.tb00364.x>
  - 28) Papakonstantinou, D., & Tomos, C. (2021). Workplace productivity loss as a result of absenteeism and presenteeism in chronic and episodic migraine: a scoping review. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, 15(1), 38-53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJWHM-05-2021-0123>
  - 29) Richmond, M. K., Pampel, F. C., Wood, R. C., & Nunes, A. P. (2017). The impact of employee assistance services on workplace outcomes: Results of a prospective, quasi-experimental study. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 22(2), 170. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000018>
  - 30) Roche, A., Kostadinov, V., Cameron, J., Pidd, K., McEntee, A., & Duraisingam, V. (2018). The development and characteristics of Employee Assistance Programs around the globe. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 33(3-4), 168-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15555240.2018.1539642>
  - 31) Senel, B. & Senel, M. (2015). The cost of absenteeism and the effect of demographic characteristics and tenure on absenteeism. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4 (1), 1142-1151.

- 32) Shabangu, L.J. (2018). Investigating the causes of high absenteeism at a water utility site. (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University).
- 33) Sharma, N., Singh, V. K., & Kishore, J. (2014). Demographic differences, causes and impact of workplace production deviance on organizations: an empirical study on non-punctuality of employees in service cluster. *Causes and Impact of Workplace Production Deviance on Organizations: An Empirical Study on Non-Punctuality of Employees in Service Cluster (January 16, 2014)*.
- 34) Siddiqui, M. N. (2013). Impact of work life conflict on employee performance. *Far East Journal of Psychology and Business*, 12(3), 26-40. <http://www.fareastjournals.com/files/FEJPBV12N3P3.pdf>
- 35) Silpa, N., & Masthanamma, B. (2015). A study on symptoms and preventions of employee absenteeism. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(6), 1-4. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=b4b0c220fd790f601d0447d15b26972e37510a75#page=282>
- 36) Tarro, L., Llauradó, E., Ulldemolins, G., Hermoso, P., & Solà, R. (2020). Effectiveness of workplace interventions for improving absenteeism, productivity, and work ability of employees: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(6), 1901. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17061901>
- 37) Terblanche, Lourie S. (2018). *Creating legacy in EAP Business. The South African approach towards employee assistance*. Pretoria: St Paul & John Publishers.