



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**THE EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM ON PRODUCTIVITY AT DURBAN CONTAINER
TERMINALS**

Submitted in fulfilment of requirements of the degree of
Master in Management Sciences: Business Management in Management Science at
the Durban University of Technology.

BY

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ABSTRACT

The Durban container terminal (DCT) is the biggest and busiest container terminal in the African continent. The terminal has a throughput capacity of 2.9 million per annum but is now under threat due to absenteeism. In recent years, the DCT struggled with a high rate of absenteeism which is thought to be the reason for decreasing productivity. The study, therefore, sought to investigate the effect of absenteeism on productivity at DCT with a view to finding ways of curbing the scale of absenteeism. A quantitative research approach was adopted with a view to finding ways of curbing the scale of absenteeism. Stratified random sampling was used to select 321 participants from the human resource inventory at DCT. The data were analysed using both descriptive statistics. The study questionnaire was validated by pretesting the questionnaire to some selected employees at the DCT. Ethical approval was requested and obtained from the Research and Ethics Office at the Durban University of Technology. The study revealed that employees perceived absenteeism as the reason for lower productivity, lower quality of product and service. Absenteeism is perceived as the source of increase in losses and as well as increase in administrative costs. The study found that absenteeism at DCT is caused illness, toxic organisational culture, stress levels, family problems, personal need and poor relations amongst core workers and between managers. In addition, the study also found that improving conditions of service and organisational culture can potentially lower absenteeism at DCT. On the other hand, the study concluded that offering employee assistance, disciplinary action and a caring leadership were not helpful in reducing absenteeism at DCT. Drawing from the findings made, the study recommended the need to establish the employee health centres such as clinics manned by full time personnel such as nurses and doctors to provide health care and support to all employees of the organisation. There was also need for leaders/managers to undergo training on effective leadership that fosters on a learning organisation in order to improve organisational culture leading to a culture that motivates the workforce. It is through this culture that issues of personal needs, family matters and relationships will be take care of. The study also recommended an overhaul of the conditions of service that includes salary upgrade, allowances such as transport and housing, medical care etc. There was need also to investigate the current disciplinary measures used by DCT that include disciplinary action and the employee assistance programs as they have proved to be helpful in other organisations globally except for DCT becoming cause for concern.

DECLARATION

I, Buyani Zondi, declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. Any assistance that I have received has been duly acknowledged in the dissertation. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Business Management at the Durban University of Technology. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or at any other University.

BMC Zondi

Buyani Zondi

04 November 2021

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Definition of key terms

Employee absenteeism

Is when an employee begins continuously miss work without a valid excuse and without prior permission to do so.

Productivity

A measure of the efficiency of an organizational resource in converting inputs into useful outputs, computed by dividing average output per period by the total costs incurred or resources consumed in that concerned period.

Employee turnover

Refers to the measurement of the length employees stay with an organisation and the relative frequency of replacement of those who would have left. In simple terms is the separation of an employer and employee, for any reason.

Globalisation

Is defined as the international movement, interconnectedness, and interdependence of national frontiers toward economic, financial, trade, and communications integration.

Supply chain management

This is a commercial term for the management of the flow of goods and services from point of origin to point of consumption, with the core view of maximizing customer value and achievement of a sustainable competitive advantage.

Economic value

This is the amount of gain obtained from a good or service to an economic agent, expressed relative to units of currency.

CHAPTER 1-INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Durban container terminal (DCT) is the biggest and busiest container terminal in the African continent. The terminal has a throughput capacity of 2.9 million TEU's per annum. The terminal has six berths and uses the ship to shore cranes to handle container across the quay (Vacca, Bellaire, and Salani, 2010). For neighbouring countries, DCT serves as a gateway for many lands logged regions of Southern African countries. DCT is the only terminal in Africa that has tandem lift capability on its ship to shore cranes with a carrying capacity of 80tons.

Of late, the terminal has been rocked by unprecedented absenteeism levels which may or does hinder overall terminal performance and productivity. This study was motivated by this emerging development with a view to establishing if the unprecedented levels of absenteeism may already have influenced productivity. If that is the case, the study would then come up with measures to curtail the absenteeism. In any case, absenteeism has never been a good thing; hence the purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of absenteeism and suggests ways of reducing the problem.

Chapter one of the study presents the background information, the problem statement, and aims, and objectives, significance of the study and a brief account of the research methodology, concluding with a sketch of the overall study structure.

1.2 Background to the study

The Kwa-Zulu Natal Province is viewed as a province of job opportunities by South Africans as well as neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Swaziland. The impact of these inward labour flows have significantly shaped the labour supply for container handling services at Durban Container Terminals (DCT) including the services provided within the confines of the province. The growth of demand for the terminal's services have led to a growth in demand for labour at the terminals and have increased

the workload of Container Terminal Employees (CTE). One of the outcomes of the increase in the workload appear to have been unacceptably high levels of absenteeism, seemingly sub-standard levels of container services and higher costs of delivering the container handling services.

Absenteeism poses a threat and can lead to the collapse of container handling services if it is not curtailed. The study investigates the extent to which absenteeism affects productivity in two container terminals in Durban out of eight container terminals Pier 1& Pier 2

The port terminal industry of late has become highly competitive due to globalisation and technological advancement, to the extent that only competitive terminals will survive. For both terminals, sustaining productivity can only be possible through effective employee performance. Unfortunately, current developments at the two selected container terminals depict high levels of employee absenteeism. In an effort to maintain acceptable production levels, effective absenteeism management has become a key focus the Durban Container Terminal.

In reviewing the literature relating absenteeism, there has been several causes to absenteeism as well as damming negative effects on productivity (Armstrong 2010). Equally concerning, it was worth stressing that the threat posed by absenteeism can lead to the collapse of container handling services at Durban Harbour Container Terminal (Pier 1) if not properly managed. With this in mind, this study aimed to examine the management and control of absenteeism in two Durban container terminals. The container terminals that have been targeted for the research are Durban Container (Pier1&Pier2).

1.3 Context of the study

Transnet SOC Ltd, the holding company with five operating divisions, is a state-owned entity and was formed in 1990. The South African government is the sole shareholder, through the Department of Public Enterprise. The company employs close to 50 000 employees and has an annual turnover of over R38 billion.

The operating divisions making up Transnet Group consist of:

- Transnet Freight Rail (TFR): the freight rail division
- Transnet Rail Engineering (TRE): the rolling stock maintenance business
- Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA): fulfilling the landlord function for South Africa's port system
- Transnet Port Terminals (TPT): managing the port and cargo terminal operations
- Transnet Pipelines (TPL): the fuel and gas pipelines business.

Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) is the operational division responsible for commercial handling services of the sea –route freight across exports, imports and transshipments in breakbulk, bulk, containers and automotive. TPT operates seven terminals in South African commercial ports namely; Ngqura; Saldanha; Durban; Cape Town; East London; Richards Bay; and Port Elizabeth. The TPT division has a staff complement of over 7000. This present study will, however, focus on Durban Container Terminal (Pier 1& Pier 2). It is worth stating here that Durban Container Terminal is a unit within the TPT division with a terminal capacity of 0.7million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs). The terminal plays a strategic role in providing support for the South African government's export-led strategy. The Durban Container Terminal (Pier 1) employs over 500 permanent staff with temporary staff being utilised when container cargo volumes are high (Transnet, 2014), whilst Pier 2 employs 1 700 permanent staff and employs temporal staff being utilised when container cargo volumes are high.

1.4 Problem statement

The problem is that employee absenteeism is on the increase at the DCT and the effect and is not yet known **despite** increasingly becoming unbearable as it negatively affects productivity levels. According to Kocakulah and Kelley (2016), employee absenteeism is both costly and disruptive on productivity with the trend increasing steadily over the years. There are various factors leading to employee absenteeism, such as lack of motivation, poor leadership, and lack of resources (Kocakulah and Kelley, 2016). As a result of employee absenteeism there is ongoing heated discussion around re-locating the

Transnet terminal to the Eastern Cape Province, citing lower levels of productivity due to employee absenteeism. Therefore this study investigates the effect of absenteeism on productivity at the DCT.

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

The overall aim of the study is to investigate the effect of absenteeism on productivity at DCT by gathering data through a questionnaire with a view to finding ways of curbing absenteeism while enhancing productivity.

1.5.1 Objectives of the study

- To establish the effect of absenteeism on productivity at the Durban Container Terminals
- To establish the causes of employee absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminals
- To establish the strategies to reduce absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminal
- To recommend to Durban Container Terminals Human Resource department appropriate ways of minimising employee absenteeism

1.5.2 Research questions

- What are the effects of absenteeism on productivity at the Durban Container Terminals?
- What are the causes of employee absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminals?
- What are the strategies to reduce absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminal
- What recommendations can be made to the Durban Container Terminals senior management towards providing appropriate ways of minimising employee absenteeism?

1.6 Focus of the study

The study seeks to investigate the effect of absenteeism on productivity in Durban Container Terminals. The Durban Container Terminals falls within the KZN regional economic structure.

1.7 Significance of the study

Conducting a study of this nature is potentially very significant for the provincial economy, taking into account the role DCT plays towards local economic development as well as the overall economy. If absenteeism is left uncontrolled at DCT, it may lead to lower productivity, loss of economic value, restricted growth and ultimately loss of jobs. DCT handles various types of categories of goods with some falling under the perishable category to the extent that employee absenteeism may end up delaying receipt of goods on time, leading to losses. Hence, recommendations from this study may play an important role in this regard. DCT is a key strategic player in the supply chain management of goods from all over the globe to the extent that delays caused by absenteeism could derail the supply chain management of goods. All this goes to explain how important a study investigates the effect of absenteeism might be.

The study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge on employee absenteeism, particularly in port terminals. While there could be vast sources of literature on absenteeism, there is not much in the port industry (see Chapter 2). Hence, this study would add to the limited existing literature on absenteeism in the port terminal industry.

On a personal level, as a researcher, the study would be very helpful considering that the researcher is employed by DCT as a manager. Understanding effects and causes of absenteeism on productivity would sensitise the researcher to the attention that needs to be directed towards minimising absenteeism.

1.8 The research methodology

The study employs a mainly quantitative methodology approached from the positivist paradigm in which a questionnaire is used as a data collection instrument plus a review of secondary data and analysis. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), the quantitative methodology anchored in the positivism paradigm has the advantage of collecting a vast amount of data from a large population in a short space of time; hence a quicker approach to collecting objective data as opposed to the phenomenological paradigms which have the main weakness of subjectivity (Creswell, 2009).

Since this study collects data from a relatively larger population, a quantitative methodology is appropriate.

The study, conducted approximately over a year, uses closed-ended questionnaires distributed to 381 operational employees out of the population of 50 000 employed by the organisation. The simple random sampling method was used to choose the participants. The questionnaire was designed from literature reviews using similar or modified research questions. Data were collected through two different sources, primary and secondary. The primary source will be through questionnaires to targeted participating employees. The secondary information collection method will be through the use of company internal documents, annual reports, and office files. Data is analysed using SPSS statistical software.

1.9 Delineation

The study is located at the DCT and specifically on the Durban Harbour Terminal (DHT). Only permanent employees who have been with DCT for at least five years were selected to participate in the study. Hence, the study excludes employees on probation and those that might be transferred from other port terminals such as Cape Town, Richards Bay and other.

1.10 Structure of the study

Chapter 1 – In the foregoing chapter introduces the context of the study by providing the background, problem statement, aims, and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2- presents an overview of absenteeism. This includes a discussion on the effects of absenteeism on productivity, absenteeism trends and factors causing employee absenteeism. The theoretical framework for absenteeism will be critically reviewed.

Chapter 3 – detailed the research design and methodology. This includes an explanation of the target population, the sampling techniques, as well as the validity and reliability of the research.

Chapter 4 – presents the results and discussion of the research findings. Tables and graphs will be used to support the presentation of the results.

Chapter 5 –forms the final chapter and provides the conclusions drawn from the study. It provides recommendations for the study.

1.11 Conclusion

Drawing from the above chapter, it is clear that DCT has perceived absenteeism related challenges, but the truth about its effect are merely speculative. Hence the need to conduct a study to investigate the effect of absenteeism on productivity at DCT. In the next Chapter therefore presents literature related to work absenteeism.

CHAPTER 2-LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study by presenting the background on employee absenteeism at the DCT which is believed by management to be the source of deteriorating production levels. This chapter thus, reviews literature on what absenteeism and productivity is. The chapter also reviews literature on the effect and cause of absenteeism, the trends in absentees”, the impact of absenteeism, ways to reduce absenteeism and some theories on absenteeism.

2.2 The concept of absenteeism

Wolff (2012:122) defines absenteeism as failure to report for work at a given place and time as expected by the employer. Alder (2009: 257) reiterates either that absenteeism should be a lot easier to understand, as an employee is either present or absent from work. However, Spector, Paul, and Suzy (2010:39) argue that defining absenteeism is not as simple as assumed mindful of the fact that academicians and organisational development specialist have failed to come up with a universal definition of absenteeism.

Tucker, Sinclair Mohr, Thomas, Salvi and Alder (2009:271) “view absenteeism as employee nonattendance for scheduled work creates divisions between scheduled and nonscheduled absenteeism. Scheduled absenteeism entails absenteeism in advance as the employee applies for annual leave. Absenteeism is viewed by many organisations in two distinct groups namely, voluntary and involuntary absenteeism (Spector *et al.* 2010:39). According to Semmer, Tschan, Meier, Facchin, and Jacobshagen (2012:70) absenteeism becomes voluntary when an employee requests to be on leave or is due to holidays, while involuntary absenteeism entails any form of employee absence arising from ill health other inevitable circumstances such and attending to funerals.

According to Georges and Benoit. (2017), absenteeism also refers to a habit or pattern of absence from work with no valid reason. Thus, Georges and Benoit (2017) define absenteeism generally represents unplanned absences from duty viewed as an indicator of a breach of an implicit contract between employee and employer. Harris, Harvey and Harris (2010:38) argue that it is a management problem that undermine productivity.

Liu, Liao and Loi (2012) categorized absenteeism into type A and type B. While Type A absenteeism entails employee absence from work due to unavoidable situations, viewed as a genuine and legitimate by the employer encompassing bereavement, injury on duty and sickness, type B absenteeism entails employee absence due to deliberate ploy to avoid going to work viewed as avoidable by the employer. Liu *et al.* (2012) argue that type B absence is often a result of lack of motivation on the part of the employee.

In the same vain, Harris et al. (2010:38) also view absenteeism as unplanned and disruptive incident workplace incident that has detrimental effects on the organisational processes. Krischer, Penney, and Hunter (2010:54) regard absenteeism as employee withdrawal behavior from work with the motive to escape from work environment perceived to be undesirable. Krischer *et al.* (2010) in their own asserted view, identifies a lack of motivation as a common denominator to unauthorized employee withdrawal from work.

Drawing from the above, it can be viewed that different scholars have proposed a different interpretation to work absenteeism. This notwithstanding, it was generally acknowledged that absenteeism leads to disruption of work activities. Krischner *et al.* (2010:1275) in their asserted views stress that it is the responsibility of the human resources department to monitor and establish the reasons for absenteeism. However, Chang and Smithikrai (2010:1278) lamented that absenteeism is often neglected by human resource practitioners with implications on employment relations. Corroborating further, Bowling and Gruys (2010:54) noted that an increase in absenteeism is signs of management failure to deal with labour issues in the workplace.

For example, and as alleged by Nel *et al.* (2001), there could be low productivity because of employee sickness or stress caused by the inability to take care of relatives who are ill. The author opined that service delivery could be negatively impacted by some prevalence ailment such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic whether directly or indirectly. They, therefore, advised that organisations put in place policies to deal with this situation and these must be communicated throughout the organisations for clarity and understanding to all the employees. Given the negative effect of absenteeism, it becomes highly, critical for organisation to pay close attention to employee's absenteeism.

The early work of Ferris and Bruckley (1996) therefore hypothesized that absenteeism in organisations could manifest in two ways namely, frequent offender, and long-term offender. According to their theory, the frequent offenders are the employee who's numerous one-day absences often fall on a Monday or a Friday or has frequent one or two days absence from work could be described as a frequent offender. Moreover, frequent offenders are known to collect a high number of 'so-called' attitudinal absences. This alluded to a temporary respite from work generally reflects a preference to do something else other than spending eight hours in the office.

Long term offender, by contrast, is not deliberate or planned absenteeism from work. Ferris and Bruckley (1996) assumed this kind of absenteeism could result from work or non-work injury, and thus has nothing to do with the employee's work ethic or personal value system. According to the authors, elements in the organisation affected by long-term absenteeism include the following:

- Cost to the organisation: Here it is speculated that employees continue to enjoy benefits who are absent for the number of stipulated days.
- Loss of productivity: Given that the employees are unavailable at work, the time use to recruit, and train a replacement could disrupt the normal functioning of the organisation.

Although work absenteeism can be linked to stress, Ivancevich and Matterson (1996), however, pointed out that the high vacancy rate and other factors suggest absenteeism

in one job is related to subsequent absenteeism in a new job in the same organisation. Elaborating further, the aforementioned authors reveal that absenteeism on new jobs is associated with work attitudes, namely; role overload, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction. They postulate that past absenteeism is a better predictor of new job absenteeism in the same organisation compared to employee attitudes. This relationship can be affirmed by an example of an organisational culture where absenteeism is acceptable as organisational working conditions and penalties are very minimum.

In contemporary organisations such as Transnet of South Africa for example, absenteeism can be viewed as an indicator of negative individual performance that may be associated with management action (Dirk 2008). Robbins, Odendaal, and Roodt (2014:15) in their asserted views consider absenteeism as an indicator of the psychological, medical, or social adjustment to work. Whilst it is assumed that absenteeism is a universal problem that affects all organisations in some way, the early work by Rhodes and Steers (1990: 12) moots that defining absenteeism is not as simple as some believe as there is no universal agreement on the definition of absenteeism. According to the author's reason, there is a clear line between absenteeism of an employee for scheduled work and that from annual leave. As a consequence, many organisations view absenteeism in two categories, voluntary absenteeism, and involuntary absenteeism

March and Simon (1958) were the first to conceptualize the above-mentioned view on absenteeism. James *et al.* (2006) noted that voluntary absenteeism includes absenteeism as a result of deviance and holidays, while involuntary absenteeism is summed up by reasons out of an employee's control, such as sickness and funeral attendance.

Watson (2010:12) argues that highly engaged employees have lower presentism and less absenteeism than disengaged employees do. The outcome revealed that engaged employees lose average 4, 2 days per year to absent compared to 6.8 days for the disengaged employee.

According to Serneels *et al.* (2008:210), there is an increasing absenteeism amongst the public sector employees in developing countries arising from lack of accountability and a failure to punish those who transgress. Watt (2015) argues that absenteeism in the public sector was high in comparison to the private sector in developing countries. Thus, Watt (2015) highlights that an unacceptable abuse of sick leave by public sector employees with research revealing that civil servants took an average of 9.5 sick days per year which implies that approximately 4.3% of working hours were lost to absenteeism.

A study conducted by Aykje Nauta (2005:25) revealed that absenteeism was increasing becoming higher in older employees suggesting older employees needed more time to rest. However, a secondary analysis of data from the Labour Force Foundation revealed that almost 22,000 employees self-reported absenteeism which was related to job tenure against as opposed to age of the employees (Serneels *et al.*, 2008:210).

2.3 The concept of productivity

Several researchers express various opinions on the meaning of productivity. Boddy (2011:68) defines productivity as employee's ability to produce the intended products or services as planned. Employee productivity is the same as organisational productivity, therefore if employees absent themselves from work, organizational productivity is negatively affected. According to Thomas (2010:89), organizational productivity is what the organization produces through its employees. Explained differently, organizational productivity is a function of employees, hence a productive workforce means a productive organisation and if employees absent themselves, the opposite is experienced in an organisation. Thomas (2010:89), however, argues that absenteeism and productivity presents a contentious view. For instance, Jones (2006) believes that compelling employees to work may negatively affect organisational productivity and working with fewer productivities' employees could be productive for the organisation, hence it is not about encouraging presenteeism but rather approving genuine absenteeism and punishing those who abuse sick leave.

Tepper *et al.* (2009:122) define productivity as the organisation's ability to meet its targets by making use of available material and financial resources, with available employees putting their mind and energy to produce. Similarly, Boddy (2011:70) posit that productivity refers the organisation's ability meet its goals and objectives towards enhancing organisational productivity with employee attendance as a critical function. Thus, Boddy (2011:70) argue that employee absenteeism hinders organizational productivity.

Martochchio and Jimeno (2010) views productivity as the effectiveness of the organisation's workforce in producing the services and products to meet the overall intended goals. James *et al.* (2006) provides a slightly different view of productivity by refereeing it as a measure of labour and machine efficiency in the production equation of goods and services. Grogan (2005:237) emphasise that productivity could be viewed in terms of employee output over a specific period of time. Interestingly, Grogan (2005) argues that from an industry perspective, productivity relates to labour's efficiency in converting inputs, capital, and raw materials into output. In carrying out this function, Grogan (2005) argues that the generation and application of technology and innovation are the main drivers of productivity growth in a contemporary organisation.

2. 4 Perceptions of absenteeism on productivity

Robbins and Judge (2014) argue that absenteeism among workers is the chief culprit responsible for delayed production, lower quality levels, and disruption of workflow, low morale and general dissatisfaction leading to significant reduction in productivity. A study by Goodman and Atkin (2014) revealed that organisation often hurriedly replace an absent worker with a less skilled worker leading to a worse off situation of poor performance that lead to continued decline in productivity. Thus, the Goodman and Atkin (2014) study recommended that implementing disciplinary procedures on those who abuse sick leave was the only answer or solution to minimising the effect of absenteeism on organisational productivity.

McHugh (2011) points out interesting thoughts on absenteeism locating it as having pros and cons on organisational productivity. In other words, the author attests that absenteeism can bring positive or negative outcomes mindful of the fact that it is inevitable and organisations must be prepared to deal with the inevitability. Thus, on the negative absenteeism leads to lost production and a reduction in work quality while the positive, entails the benefit derived from a fatigued employee's absence (Robbins and Judge, 2014). In agreement to the above views, Goodman and Atkin (2014) state that the impact of absenteeism varies from case to case and can be positive or negative. While Coughlan (2014) does not mention that there are positive and negative outcomes associated with absenteeism, the author agrees that absenteeism effects are multifaceted as they are not only limited to production losses or inferior outputs – which may eventually translate into a potential loss of clients – but also have an immediate effect on an absentee's colleagues and managers. Coughlan (2014) comments are the findings from interviewees of co-workers, supervisors and departmental managers, who had lived experiences. Thus, the study revealed that, workers who have been absent usually return to an increased workload, which in turn leads to increased work pressure, making them susceptible to further absence from work (McHugh 2011).

McHugh (2011) findings aligned with several studies on effect of absenteeism in various work environments. Thus, according to Arnell and Brown (2012), colleagues of an absent employee reported being over- burdened, because they may have to plan for the work of the absent colleague. In addition, temporally hired workers often do not always have routine and methods to engage with the processes and procedures leading to lower motivation and morale and poorer performance. In view of such interesting but damning evidence, it is clear that absenteeism negatively affects the individual and his or her co-workers, management, the organisation as a whole and even the community at large.

Summarily, Arnell and Brown (2012) attests that the long and short of it is that absenteeism can lead to decreased productivity levels arising from unplanned leave which is always disruptive to everyone and the organisation. Absent employees simply mean that duties have to be re-delegated to other employees who may not be familiar

with the tasks/duties. According to the organisation may also experience a drop-in quality mindful of the fact that it may take some for the delegate to acclimatise with the news duties depending on the skill level of the absent employee. Thus, the affected department often experience a drop in quality translating to decreased employee morale and customer satisfaction(Arnell and Brown, 2012). While it is hard to quantify the effect qualitatively, absenteeism is a breeding ground for animosity amongst the workforce, a hinderance to morale as fewer employees have to absorb extra tasks and responsibilities in addition to their workload possibly leading to turnover that further digs into productivity.

Robert (2014:135) in a study on absenteeism and its impact on productivity sought to establish the relationship between absenteeism and productivity revealed a positive relationship confirming an inverse relationship between productivity. According to Chauke (2007), absenteeism impacts on the organisation in three aspects: lower productivity and increased financial and administrative costs. This study seeks to investigate the extent to which absenteeism impact on productivity. Martochhio and Jimeno (2010) point out that absenteeism in most cases reduces productivity. Equally concerning, employees are forced to take extra workload than their scheduled responsibility thereby compromising on their productivity and outputs (Martochhio and Jimeno 2010). In addition, employees at work may be required to spend extra time or take time out of their own work schedules to train and orientate new temporary replacements or relief workers (for the absent person). Because of these extra workloads (overtime) and demands on time staff morale and employee service deliveries may suffer (Martochhio and Jimeno 2010).

According to Ndhlovu (2012: 11) the impact of absenteeism and cost in terms of time lost in the Total Absence Management (TAM) concept and found that the aging employee exposes institutions to high levels of absenteeism through a higher probability of becoming incapacitated for longer periods of time.

2.5 The causes of employee absenteeism

Alexander Forbes (2013) highlights that the cause of absenteeism in the workplace; is due a various reason, many which are legitimate or other less and cost can be attributed to many factors. Also revealed to tackle the absenteeism problem like this, companies have moved toward mandatory paid sick leave policy. Where each employee receives a specified number of days each year to use when sick. According to Liu *et al.* (2012), there are various causes of employee absenteeism in the workplace. Liu *et al.* (2012) warns that the causes are complex in nature and difficult to be understood by the respective organisations. Semmer *et al.* (2010:96) in the study on counterproductive work revealed that the majority of organisations do not have a clear understanding of the sources of absenteeism. According to a study by Bolton and Hughes (2001: 27) workplace absenteeism can be a result of minor illness, serious illness family responsibility, personal problems, lack of commitment, poor morale unauthorised holiday and effect of long hours. Chang, Smithikrai (2010:1288) identify drink, drugs and leisure, personality and background as well as relationships at work accidents as contributing to absenteeism.

The CIPD (2012) highlights that minor illness present as the main cause of workplace absenteeism. Krischner *et al.* (2010 55) argue that in the majority of cases, employees who are absent due to minor illnesses may have been well enough to go to work aligning well with lack of motivation as a variable for employee absenteeism. This view is also aligned to the A and B type of absenteeism, which attaches to genuine and devious absenteeism.

2.5.1 Employee illness

The study by Watson (2010:12) indicates that workplace absenteeism can arise due to sickness caused by accidents, inflexibility, and lack of leadership, bereavement, change, and ergonomics. According to Watson (2010:12) employees that are highly engaged have lower absenteeism than employees that are disengaged. According to Wolff (2012)

engaged employees to lose an average of 2 days per year compared to the disengaged who lose an average of 4 days per year.

According to Forbes (2013) sickness absenteeism presents as the main challenge in developing countries due to lack of safety measures within the workplace and the general poor health care associated with developing countries. According to Bernstein and Paul (2012:299), the use of sick leave as an incentive to reduce absence from work based on ill health under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) reduced absenteeism rate in Europe.

2.5.2 Family responsibilities

According to Al-Fudail and Mellar (2018), absenteeism from duty is largely a result of family responsibilities as employees try to balance work and family life. As part of family responsibilities, childcare often compels workers to be absent from work as parents have no choice but to give priority to their children especially taking into account the the cost of paying for a child caregiver is going up due the high demand of child care services (Al-Fudail and Mellar, 2018). Arnell and Brown (2012) argue that with the cost of childcare rising, more individuals find it hard to pay child care rates. According Arnell and Brown (2012), an increasing number of the workforce take their children to private care givers or baby minders to reduce the increasing costs, however the problems arise when the private care giver gets sick or has a personal commitment leading to them absenting themselves to take care of their own children without necessarily providing a valid reason to the employer.

On the other hand, workers as adults have the responsibility to care for their elderly parents and grandparents to the extent that they are compelled to employ someone as a care giver. When there is a problem with the care giver, the adult child (who is also the worker), has no choice but to immediately absent himself/herself in order to provide care to their elderly (Goldberg and Waldman, 2000). A study by the National Alliance for Caregiving revealed that more than 200 million workers around the world provide some care to their elderly family members or friend with many these individuals providing care to parents at their homes as opposed to sending them to a care facility adding additional

responsibility and constraints to their work load to the extent that, the worker will end up absenting from work without reason due too much work commitments (Goldberg and Waldman, 2000).

Other family situations such as divorce developments within the family create a difficult scenario for those involved in divorce to the extent that they both cannot cope with work demands while dealing with divorce (Arnell and Brown, 2012). According to Arnell and Brown (2012), divorces are common across organisations and nations and they often negatively impact families in one way or the other and in most cases the proceedings take years to resolve and over this period, those affected may end up absenting themselves from work without valid reason. Even after the divorce has ended, those affected are often emotional traumatised to the extent that they may need additional time off from work.

2.5.3 Personal employee needs

Employees as human beings have personal needs that needs to be attended and in most cases this has to be done privately (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018). Thus, employees sometimes just absent themselves from work to pay attention to their private life demands which they may not need to explain to their employer (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018). The problem is that the standard official vacation and annual leave days may not be adequate for individuals to attend to the respective personal needs, hence there is always a certain number of employees that would absent themselves from work without valid reasons (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018).

2.5.4 Employee stress levels

One of the reasons for employee absenteeism is stress related cases of which depression is a major contributing factor. The causes of stress, or the stressors, are numerous and can be found anywhere in the workplace. Stressors can include dangerous working conditions, long working hours, job security worries and job monotony (Bradford). This stress can lead to poor mental health, heart disease, back pain, and gastrointestinal disturbances. It can also lead to unaccommodating behaviors such as drinking too much alcohol and smoking. Stress can cause accidents. One investigation stated that of all

factors related to the cause of accidents, only one emerged as a common denominator- a high level of stress at the time the accident occurred. All of this culminates to lowering morale among employees and lowering productivity because of poor performance (Haswell, 2003). The end result can be job burnout where the worker has no energy left to put forth, is dissatisfied, pessimistic, and has very low resistance to illness

Many researchers have labelled work load as a stressful (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018). Liu and Ramsey (2018) found that stress due to poor work conditions – for example, inadequate offices or equipment and the danger of physical violence to their persons. The researchers further report that inadequate time-planning and preparation and a heavy work load also reduce the satisfaction that educators may otherwise glean from their profession. The problem is further compounded by the demands of administrators, colleagues, students and parents, student's behaviour, as well as failure to recognise their achievements (Greenglass and Burke, 2003). Over time, the cumulative effect of these stressors and the negative emotions they engender may lead teachers to absent themselves in order to recuperate and restore their physical and mental energy levels (Kyriacou 2001). This is not only highly relevant to teachers but is also true of school administrators and policymakers.

2.5.5 Organisational culture

Organisational culture also causes absenteeism in one way or the other (Tepper *et al.* 2009). If an organization has a permissive culture regarding absence, there is more likely wood that employees will regard sick leave as a benefit they must enjoy and if they fail to take leave, they will lose it forever within a given year. If an unnecessary absence is managed by management employees will have to reconsider before abusive the leave (Chang *et al.* 2010:1272). In organisations that have a liberal sick leave as a benefit, there is a general sense that employees are encouraged to go on leave whether one is satisfied or dissatisfied with work.

2.6 Strategies to minimise absenteeism in the workplace

There are several ways through which organisations can deal with absenteeism in the workplace and these include disciplinary proceedings, employee assistance, organisational culture, child care support and providing incentives to employees.

2.6.1 Disciplinary proceedings

According to Poirier (2013), organisations have the power to discipline employees who absent themselves from work without valid reasons. The disciplinary action is usually practiced case by case following the organisation's disciplinary code of conduct and this way employees may refrain from the practice of unlawfully absenting themselves from work. Some organisations question a worker after one incident in order to determine why the employee was absent while some punish the employee immediately and compel the employee to complete absent forms (Poirier, 2013).

2.6.2 Employee assistance

When tackling the absenteeism problem companies often need to focus their energies on non-work-related issues. This can prove to boost both productivity and to curtail disability costs (Quinley, 2013). Employee assistance programs can be implemented to help workers deal with issues outside of work that employees bring to the workplace. Under most employee assistance programs, employers give their employees the names and numbers of an outside service that can be called for help. The goal is to minimize the effect that issues such as parenting and marital issues have on the worker while on the job (Quinley, 2013). Said issues obviously will determine how efficiently and effectively workers do their job. In industrial environments, a study shows that employee assistance programmes can reduce confrontations, accidents, and workers' compensation cases that result from off the job stress, which leads to a reduction in unplanned days off (Quinley, 2013). Those who volunteered information about employee assistance programs within their workplace gave positive feedback. Employees concluded that because their employer provides such a program it helps with their return to work and it makes them

feel that their employers care about their wellbeing, thus emphasizing their importance to the company. However, employee assistance programs are expensive and it is difficult to monitor whether their usefulness is substantial. This is primarily due to privacy issues, but many employers feel that they help. The six traits of highly successful employee assistance programs include ongoing public relations to encourage employee use of employee assistance programs, employee workshops (including but not limited to smoking cessation, nutrition and diet counselling, exercise and stress management issues), management consultations and supervisory training, resource and referral for life/work issues and legal and financial services (Quinley, 2013)

Once a program is in place, it should be monitored. Constant reminders of a company's employee assistance program should be given to employees as a great way to maximize its benefits. Suggestions should be made to employees of situations where they might benefit from using the employee assistance program system. Employees love to hear when something is offered as a benefit for them. Publicize the employee assistance program system as a wonderful benefit created for the employee. Furthermore, allowing employees to vent their feelings about whatever is causing their anger, depression, sickness, et cetera, is going to improve productivity and attendance, thus benefiting the employer. With this employee assistance concept, a company can save money from reduced absences and likely increase revenues from increased productivity.

2.6.3 Creating a positive organisational culture

Many employers believe absenteeism can be reduced before it begins by making the workplace a positive and welcoming environment. A positive company culture helps to promote job satisfaction and job satisfaction is one of the most important factors in reducing absenteeism. Having clear expectations with regard to employee and company expectations and ensuring that there is a true match is important in establishing job satisfaction (Truman, 2013). Some studies have indicated that a lack of management knowledge of the employees' real perceptions and feelings about the organization have negatively impacted corporate culture. An effective tool is to distribute anonymous employee surveys and communicate seriously from the top down. Anonymous web-

based employee surveys are becoming more popular, and offering incentives such as cash or gift certificates can be used to increase the response rate. At Avery Dennison, an employee board is established with its own budget and is responsible for putting together company parties that can be enjoyed both by the employee and their family (Truman, 2013). Another key to fostering a positive company culture and employee happiness is a quarterly meeting that allows the employees to ask candid and up-front questions to executives about company goals and policies. Other companies offer tuition reimbursement, employee health club memberships, and allow participation in new employee reviews (Truman, 2013). Wellness programs also have been shown to help employee morale. It is all about having a good place to work, which in turn, causes employees to want to be there. Their jobs are not a depressing, draining a portion of their lives. Allowing employees to bring food to work at regularly scheduled intervals and offering continental breakfasts are added perks that some companies vow is worthwhile (Truman, 2013). The companies that take this approach toward diminishing absenteeism in their company emphasize that their company culture is what makes the difference.

Child care support and rescheduling of working hours

Company childcare support is an invaluable benefit for employees with young children. Arnell and Brown (2012) argue that with the cost of childcare rising, more individuals find it hard to pay child care rates. According Arnell and Brown (2012), an increasing number of the workforce take their children to private care givers or baby minders to reduce the increasing costs, however the problems arise when the private care giver gets sick or has a personal commitment leading to them absenting themselves to take care of their own children without necessarily providing a valid reason to the employer.

2.6.4 Incentivising employees

Truman (2013) note that employee incentive programs on absenteeism reduction have been used in the business world for quite some time in particular the *carrot approach*. Using the carrot approach means that incentives can be offered in several different ways

towards reducing absenteeism. For example, companies introduce incentive based programs is to pay for every sick and personal day that employees do not take so that by the end of the year, employees receive a payment for unused days. Organisations that employ this approach confirm that approach runs smoothly and efficiently (Neuborne, 2013). On another hand, some employers offer time-off to those employees who have registered acceptable attendance levels in a year so that towards the end of the year, such employees receive a pay cheque (Truman, 2013). Some companies also host get-together parties for employees who have registered acceptable attendance (Poirier, 2013). Some researchers however caution on the practice of rewarding employees for something that they should already be doing results in an expectancy for things to come, others conscientiously endeavour to keep their employees happy and working. Whatever solution is chosen should be adopted and continually monitored to check successfulness. After all, it is a large investment, and an opportunity to save potential lost revenues.

2.7 Dealing with absenteeism at organisational level and its measurement

Harris *et al.* (2011) argue that policies on employee attendance and management often provide effective framework and principles behind the containment of absenteeism at work. According to the Industrial Society (IDS) on absenteeism (2001), a written absenteeism policy to all employees demonstrates the seriousness of the absenteeism problem to the organisation. Thus, the IDS (2001) return to work interviews have proved to be the most common ways of managing absenteeism in the workplace. The IDS survey (2001) revealed that two-thirds of organisations implement a return to work interview with all the absent employees upon their return to work. According Bernstein and Paul (2102), the aim of such interviews is to understand the reasons behind the absence while seeking deeper knowledge and measures of significantly reduce the absence. The IDS (2001) survey have indicated that majority of employers provide cash and kind rewards for employees with reduced absenteeism and vice versa to those who exhibit increasing absence.

According to Wolff (2012), companies sick pay policies vary from organisation to organisation with the focus of not to pay employees for unauthorised absence. Alder

(2009:257) state that some larger companies in Europe often provide comprehensive policies on the payment of full pay for a longer period without absence than smaller organisations. This differs from the South Africa context where employees are entitled to statutory sick pay for a certain number of days.

Aldler (2009:260) postulates that the most challenging practice remains the measuring absenteeism for most organisations as knowing the extent of absenteeism would inform how much pay should be paid for perfect attendance or for reduced absenteeism. The absence management report released by the CIPD (2012), state that the average employee absenteeism across organisations was 6.8 days per year with the length of absence measured in either the short term or long term and to successfully implement policies and procedures on absenteeism organisations must measure the extent to which the organisation has been affected. The CIPD (2013) thus argues that in order to measure and monitor workplace absenteeism, organisations ought to employ effective measurement tools include 'time lost rate' and 'frequency rate'. The CIPD (2013) thus reiterate that The Time Lost Rate method was one of the most preferred method which entails the percentage lost due to absence. The method applicable to most organisations as long as the organisation employs people.

2.8 Theories and models of absenteeism

In about forty decades ago, Nicholson (1977) propounded the absenteeism theory. According to Nicholson (1977:22) absenteeism referred to as the social fact in need of theory. Over the years more and more theories have emerged giving birth to the most famous theory on absenteeism referred to as the Steers and Rhodes (1978) 'Process Model' and Nicholson's 'Attachment' Theory explained below.

2.8.1 Steers and Rhodes (1978)

Liu *et al.* (2012) highlights that Steers and Rhodes (1978) contributed significantly to the research on workplace absenteeism. The model is underpinned by two variables namely attendance motivation and ability to attend. Chang *et al.* (2010:1276) argue that attendance motivation is dependent upon the extent of employee satisfaction by his/her

job situations, which includes the internal and external environment. Ability to attend is dependent upon the employee personal characteristics that include age, sex, education, and tenure which may present as illness and family challenges. According to Krischner (2010), attendance motivation is the main factors affecting attendance. Bowling and Gruys (2010:61) argue that both forms of attendance fuse with each other to define the actual attendance. Steers and Rhodes (1978) despite making a meaningful contribution to absenteeism has its limitations.

Robert (2014) highlights are a number of difficulties that affect the operationalisation of the model as explained below:

- The validity of the key components ability to attend and motivation to attend cannot be comprehended by a layman
 - The model is based on the assumption that the key components are complementary, which may not always be the case
 - The model lacks do not provide for a comprehensive discussion of the variables that are potentially important. Thus, the model lacks more theory suggesting that
- 2.8.2 Nicholson's Attachment Theory (1977)*

According to Ronald (2012), Nicholson argued that, despite overwhelming research on absenteeism, lack of theory on absenteeism marred the efforts. Ronald (2012), the lack of theory resulted caused the fragmented theory on such an important topic. Accordingly, Nicholson, (1977) as cited in Ronald (2012) propounded the 'attachment theory' on absenteeism with the sole aim of predicting employee workplace absenteeism. Thus, Nicholson (1977) cited in Ronald (2012) propounded the absenteeism theory by exploring factors leading to absenteeism considering the various methods and measurement instruments. The Nicholson model developed the 'A-B' continuum as part depicting all absence events noting how the events affect the respective employees depending on their situations. The theory introduces attachment' as a means of measuring attendance motivation (Nicholson, 1977, p.231).

The Nicholson's 'A-B' continuum entails the constraints on attendance. According to Ronal (2012), attachment is defined in the context in which an employee is dependent upon the structure and regulations of organisational life. He argues that there are four sets of influences that constitute attachment which include personality traits, work orientation, job involvement, and the employment relationship.

Work Orientation refers to the extent to which employee expectations and needs influence the quality of the work experience. According to Gray (2007), a mismatch between work orientation and experience can lead to increased stress levels which could affect employee work attendance. According to Tau *et al.* (2009), increasing stress levels depict as common reasons for prolonged particularly for non-manual employees. The CPD (2013) defines stress as the psychological and physiological response by employees to a perceived lack of balance degenerating into ill health that negatively retards employee performance.

Ronald (2012) views stress as a negative feeling that demoralises the mind and the body towards work leading to absenteeism. Job Involvement refers to how an employee fits into the job requirements defining whether the employee is the right person for the job or not. Regarding employment relationship the Nicholson Model underscores that benefits and results provided by the employer create an attachment among employees. The models assume that high attachment is achievable by using control mechanisms with benefits and results as functions of the outcome. The Nicolson 'Attachment' model enables researchers to focus on what motivates and demotivates employees to attend work.

Nicholson (1977) cited in Liu (2012) state that absenteeism has detrimental effects on the organisation. A study conducted by IBEC (2011) Ireland incurred €1.5 billion in total due to unauthorized absence from work. The costs came directly from salary, replacement costs, and overtime created by unofficial absence from work. Krichner *et al.* (2010) notes that the indirect costs to Ireland as a country included decrease in productivity and quality of service.

2.9 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

According to Smit et al., (2011: 387), motivation theories focus on the 'what' of motivation. The most prominent theories in this category are Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory. The focus of this section is on Maslow's hierarchy theory. Abraham Maslow propounded a Hierarchy of Needs consisting of five levels:

- **Physiological Needs** - food, water, shelter, air, sex. In organisations these represent needs such as salaries, wages or basic working conditions. If these are not met, behaviour will be directed towards satisfying them. However, once these needs are met, they no longer influence behaviour (Smit et al, 2011:388).
- **Safety Needs** - protection, order, security. In the workplace this involves job security, medical aid, insurance and pension schemes (Smit et al, 2011:388).
- **Social Needs** - affection, friendship, belonging. In organizations people join different groups to satisfy their social needs. By forming work teams and encouraging employees to interact amongst each other, managers can make sure that their employees' social needs are met (Smit et al, 2011:388). Low productivity, absenteeism and stress related behaviours may be some of the behaviours that employees express when the organisation does not meet their affiliation needs (Hellriegel et al., 2001:261)
- **Ego or Status Needs** - prestige, status, self-respect. In this area managers give recognition to achievers by rewarding them with certificates, prizes and other awards for success. This is usually done in front of their peers and managers.
- **Self-Actualization Needs** - self-fulfilment. This is the highest level in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It involves the full development of an individual's potential. Managers create a climate of skills development, and those who have achieved the top levels, usually go back and mentor new salespeople joining the organization (Smit et al, 2011:388).

According to Maslow, these needs rank from lowest to highest level. He suggests that individuals seek to satisfy lower-level needs before higher-level needs. When each level of needs is satisfied or partially satisfied, the next level of needs motivates the individual. This hierarchy is influenced by culture on two levels; firstly, Maslow's axiom that one level of needs must be satisfied before the next can appear is not true for every culture, and secondly similar kinds of needs may be satisfied by different products and consumption types.

Maslow's Hierarchy states that a person tries to satisfy the most important need first. When that need is satisfied, it will stop being a motivator and the person will then try to satisfy the next most important need (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001:186). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is of course a simplification of complex human behaviour. A person's needs do not necessarily progress from one stage to another in the same sequence as the Hierarchy. The usefulness of Maslow's Hierarchy is its universality. Although Maslow's theory is valuable from the point of view that it is easy to understand; it has a number of shortcomings (Smit et al, 2011:388). The theory fails to recognize that people reorder the levels of the hierarchy during their life span, and the fulfilment of any particular level of need is not necessarily permanent and that the determination of an employee's level of unsatisfied need is not an easy endeavour, but nevertheless, the theory squarely fits in expelling the motivation levels of employees in an organisation such as DCT.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, workplace absenteeism has been explored comprehensively with several definitions being reviewed. It is critical to note that Steers and Rhodes (1978) argue that a universal definition is one that enables organisations to manage while at the same time measuring it with a view to gradually assist the organisation towards increasing productivity. According to Steers and Rhodes (1978) personal characteristics, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment play a key role in employee attendance. Nicholson (1977) propounded a detailed attachment theory in response to Steers and Rhodes (1978) which according Nicholson lacked adequate theory. Similarly, Rhodes and Steers (1978) as well Nicholson viewed motivation as variable to workplace

absenteeism”. A key finding from this literature study is the effect on productivity that absenteeism has. Leading to the development of strict policies towards curtailing workplace absenteeism. The next chapter presents the methodology for the study.

CHAPTER 3-RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter outlined the research methodology that was used in this study. These entail the research design, sampling approach, and strategies for collecting and analysing data. Also, the validity and reliability of the research were. The construction of the questionnaire and ethical issues regarding the research was also discussed in the chapter.

3.2 Research design

Collis and Hussey (2003: 230) define research design as “the science and art of planning procedures for conducting research studies to get the most valid. The end-product of research design is a plan or blueprint for conducting the intended research (Babbie and Mouton, 2009:188). According to Wiid and Diggins (2010: 102), such a blueprint or plan for the intended research study is used to guide data collection and analysis. In essence, the research design focuses on the kind of study being planned, kind of results being aimed at, and the evidence required in adequately addressing the research questions. There are generally four main types of research design, which include exploratory, explanatory, descriptive and causal designs (Cooper and Schindler, 2003:146). According to Cooper and Schindler (2003:146), the design of a particular research has the potential to influence the choices of data sources as well as the types of data gathered. Below are the various types of designs:

- **Exploratory studies** – this design is applicable to studies that investigate a new area with variables viewed as unclear to assist in the development of an intelligent question (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:151). The design seeks to develop a clear review of the problem through a literature analysis augmented by an interview of participants to gain detailed knowledge (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:171). The design is popular for being flexible, with a bit of modification of the research process (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:171).
- **Causal Studies** – the designs seek to inquire the link between variables by way of analysing the extent to which variables influence the change among variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:165). According to Saunders *et al.* (2012:171) research in business is more focussed on identifying relationships between variables as opposed to determining causal factors.
- **Explanatory Studies**–Explanatory designs seek to investigate a problem towards establishing the relationships between variables. (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:172). These studies rely on what have been studied and the intelligent answers to explain new development (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:11). Exploratory studies are suited to research where the area being investigated is new or ambiguous and the variables may not be clear enough to develop hypotheses (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:151). The objective of this research design is to develop a clear understanding of the problem, which is usually done through a search of available literature, interviews with specialists in the topic or focus group interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:171). The main advantage of exploratory studies is that it is flexible, enabling the researcher to modify his focus during the research process (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:171).
- **Descriptive Studies** – This is suitable for studies that seek to produce summaries of people, occurrences or developments. Cooper and Schindler (2003:161)

highlight that descriptive studies can provide answers to data to the who, what, when, where and how of the subject being studied.

The study employed a descriptive research design because the discovery of answers to questions relating to fundamental characteristics that define the research subject was sought. In addition, descriptive studies are suitable for estimating, using percentages, leading to the establishment of the association between various variables (Cooper and Schindler (2003:161). Based on these reasons, the descriptive design was chosen.

3.3. Research method

The two main research methods available for use in research studies are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research aligns with the positivistic paradigm, whereas qualitative research aligns with the phenomenological paradigm (Keele, 2011; Gray, 2013). Quantitative research relies on numbers, measurements and calculations, and tends to be more highly structured and scientific in approach than qualitative research (Wiid & Diggines, 2010). In contrast, qualitative research relies on detailed description by respondents to gain insight into a particular problem (Wiid & Diggines, 2010). Qualitative research is a more systematic, subjective approach towards problem solving and tends to be less structured than quantitative research (Keele, 2011).

This study followed a quantitative method. According to Krause (2005), quantitative research has the unique goal of gathering data from a wide geographical location with speed, and allows for detailed statistical analysis of the data using quantitative means towards improving the overall quality and validity of the findings. This was aligned with the aim of this study, which was to investigate the effect and to an extent the causes of absenteeism and the effect they have on productivity at DCT following a decline in organisation productivity which was linked employee absenteeism

3.4 Research philosophy

A research philosophy entails assumptions, philosophies or paradigms that relates to how a study is conducted ultimately determining or influencing the validity and reliability of the study (Gray, 2013:160). Swetnam and Swetnam (2010:221) identify two main research philosophies perceived to exhibit the worldviews with opposing assumptions about reality. Wiid and Diggins (2010: 105) identify two main research paradigms used by researchers which include the positivist and phenomenological which are discussed below.

3.4.1. Positivist (Quantitative) Research Philosophy

Saunders et al. (2012:292) view the positivist philosophy as the same as the quantitative, drawing from the fact that the method uses numerical measurement and statistical expressions to define or assess a phenomenon. The method is based on the assumption that reality consists of observed phenomena that can be measured (Saunders et al., 2012: 192). The main advantage of the quantitative philosophy is its objectivity and reliability of findings that leads to replication (Wiid and Diggins, 2010:107). In social studies, this method fails to accurately measure the social phenomena, ultimately reducing validity of the findings.

3.4.2. Phenomenological (Qualitative) Research Philosophy

According to Saunders et al. (2012:192), phenomenological philosophy assumes that the world from which research is conducted is socially built with science driven by human interests leading to subjectivity in the process of observing the phenomena. The main advantage of the qualitative method is its interpretive orientation leading to findings that are valid and less artificial as the phenomena is observed in natural, real-life settings (Wiid and Diggins, 2010:106). According to Saunders et al. (2012:192), qualitative research boast of in- depth understanding and richness of detail. Unfortunately, phenomenological paradigms are sometimes undermined by researcher subjectivity as well as the poor reliability of the findings.

Saunders et al. (2012:195) highlight that considering the strengths and weaknesses of both positivistic and phenomenological bias in research; it is advisable for researchers to

employ a combination of methods that draw from both approaches. Wiid and Diggines (2010: 105) argue that combining the two methods produces findings that are more reliable. In addition, Saunders et al. (2012:193) argue that using more than one approach increases reliability and validity of study findings.

Krause (2005:90) highlights that quantitative method enables data collection from larger samples. Therefore, being mindful of the fact that this study seeks to investigate the effect of employee absenteeism and the effect on productivity at the DCT, collecting research data from a relatively larger population of 381, positivism philosophy was the most appropriate. According to Smith et al. (2002:28), the key idea of positivism is that the social world exists externally and that its properties should be measured through the objective methods, rather than being inferred subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition. The view that positivism provides the best way of investigating human and social behaviour originated as a reaction to metaphysical speculation. Positivist research is generally quantitative and involves the use of numerical measurement and statistical analysis of measurements to examine social phenomena. It views reality as consisting a phenomenon that can be observed and measured.

Based on the above, the study employed the positivist approach, since the study sought to gather data from a relatively larger sample, using the questionnaire as the data collection tool. In addition, the aim was to have a wide breath of data gathered, which was from a wide section DCT employees. Mindful of the fact that the positivist is about the wide coverage of data collection, which aligns with this study – to gather data from the entire DCT workforce, the study positivist philosophy was employed. (Wiid and Diggines, 2010: 105).

3.5. Research strategies

A research strategy is the plan of action that the researcher will follow in answering the research questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:173). Krause (2005:90) views a research

strategy as means used by the researcher to solve the research questions. The research strategies associated with the positivist approach are the experimental design, quasi-experimental design and survey methods (Wiid and Diggins (2010: 111). Since the study employed the positivist philosophy, only strategies associated with the positivist philosophy were discussed.

3.5.1. Positivist Research Strategy

3.5.1.1. Experimental Design Strategy

According to Krause (2005:90), an experimental design in research entails a strategy that rely on physical or biological experiments as means of data gathering as evidence. Thus, according Krause (2005:90), the basic experimental designs used in business research have been adapted from physical and biological sciences. Experimental studies seek to identify causal relationships (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:173). The aim is to manipulate the independent variable in order to observe the effect on the dependent variable. Due to the challenges in controlling, experimental conditions in social sciences, experimental designs are rarely used and if they are used under clearly defined conditions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:173).

3.5.1.2. Quasi-experimental design Strategy

Krause (2005:90) state that **quasi-experimental designs** do not have a high a degree of control over the independent variable. For instance, may be assigned to groups such as social class, type of injury, type of occupation and income group, for which the study is testing the effects. Saunders *et al.* (2012:173) posit that the experimental design isolates and control all the factors that could be responsible for any effects except the one under examination. The most important use of quasi-experimental research designs is where researchers cannot, in good conscience, assign people to groups and test the effect of group membership on some other outcome.

3.5.1.3. Survey strategy

According Saunders et al (2012:200), the survey is a positivist research design in which a sample is selected from a population and studied to make inferences about the

population. Surveys typically use questionnaires and interviews in order to determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of persons of interest to the researcher. In well-designed surveys where the sample has been carefully selected to ensure that it is representative of the larger population, it is possible to use statistical techniques to assess the applicability and generalizability of the findings to the larger population. To ensure greater reliability and validity, the researcher must also ensure that the questionnaire and interview do not reveal bias in the way the items and questions are presented. The way a question is asked, for example, can influence the responses. Thus, this study employed the survey method.

3.6 Target population

Sekaran and Bougie (2013) posits that a target population can be regarded as the number of all the people, issues, and or acquaintances that meet similar criteria in the intended study. According to the information obtained from the human resource inventory, it is worth mentioning that the Durban Container terminals have approximately 50 000 employees.

3.6.1 Sampling methods

Babbie and Mouton (2009:135) define sampling as the process of selecting study participants from population. There are basically two sampling methods which include probability and non-probability sampling as discussed below:

3. 6.2 Probability Sampling

Kolb (2008:210) defines probability sampling as a method of the selecting study participant using statistics and the probability approach which uses the quantitative and positivistic paradigms (Curry et al., 2009:440; Wiid & Diggines, 2010:108). The probability sampling method allows all the members of the population a chance to be selected and serve as a sample, which is a fair and reliable approach allowing for generalisability of findings to the whole population. Contrary, the non-probability sampling method select its sample based on the researchers' convictions (Wiid & Diggines, 2010:110). Wiid and

Digginess (2010:110) argue that non-probability sampling methods do not allow generalisability of findings to the population arising from the fact that the study participants are selected based on the researchers' subjectivity. Various probability-sampling methods exist including simple random, systematic, cluster and stratified sampling (Kolb, 2008:221). In simple random sampling, every subject of the population enjoys the benefit of being selected to be part of the sample removing the bias on the selection process. Unfortunately, simple random sampling is not practical since it requires a complete population list, a development that is impossible.

With systematic sampling, each element has a chance to be selected just like the simple random sampling, further, the method is practically possible and easier (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:138). Systematic sampling allows the selection of all the sub-groups in the population towards promoting representativity (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:137). The study will employ systematic sampling.

In cluster sampling, the population is divided into clusters with elements selected from each cluster (Saunders et al. 2012:290). Cluster sampling is done when it is not possible to select elements from the entire wide population (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:138).

3.6.3 Non-Probability Sampling

According to Curry, Nembhard and Bradley (2009:310), non-probability sampling techniques selects participants using methods that will select relevant participant. A participant considered relevant is one that will provide the needed responses and only the researcher will know. (Cooper, Donald and Chindler, 2006:120). Curry, Nembhard and Bradley (2009:199), argue that relevant participants despite providing data that is considered relevant and useful, the findings from such study may not be generalized to entire population due to the subjectivity on the part of the selection process.

A number of non-probability sampling methods exist which include convenience, snowball, quota and purposive sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:140). With convenience sampling the researcher chooses participants that are available and willing to partake in the study. Whereas in snowball sampling, participants are selected based on information tips given by the first interviewee (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:140). This is because the researcher relies on the knowledge given by the initial participant who may have knowledge on other players in the subject being studied.

With purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants that will meet the purpose of the study by providing the much-needed answers. This technique works well in a phenomenological and qualitative study as the right participants are selected (Kolb, 2008:221).

The advantage of these techniques is that they select samples that are well representative of the population. With probability, sampling researcher bias and subjectivity is reduced or eliminated through the random selection of elements. In addition, simple random sampling each element in the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected as part of the sample. There can thus be a relatively high level of confidence that the sample is representative of the population from which it has been drawn.

3.6.4 Selected sampling method and sample size

Taking into account that the study employed the quantitative method, only a sampling method that aligns with quantitative method would be used, thus the study used the probability sampling method. Out of the various sampling techniques that fall under the probability method, the study selected the stratified sampling technique where in participants were randomly selected within the clusters. Using the stratified sampling

techniques, a sample size of 381 participants was determined and selected systematically.

3.7 Data collection technique

Data collection can either be secondary or primary data with the most used primary data collection methods being the questionnaire and the interview (Babbie and Mouton, 2009:140). Such type of data collection tools permits the researcher to devise or develop question items that will solve problem. The point is, any research thrives to solicit responses to questions (Chambliss and Schutt, 2012:221).

The questionnaire and interview entails a data collection tool that have pre- set questions to subjects in his/her search for answers to the research questions with both tools used after careful consideration and after specific data collection purpose (Babbie and Mouton, 2009:138).

The interview is a common data collection tool suitable for exploratory research; however, it can also be used to gather valid and reliable data in other types of studies (Chambliss and Schutt, 2012:222). In contrast to questionnaires, interviews generally tend to have an open-ended approach, suitable to qualitative methods approaches, make use of small samples while providing in-depth analysis considered more reliable (Saunders et al., 2012:280).

According to Saunders et al. (2012:280), the questionnaire works well in surveys. They are also suitable for experiment designs and case study strategies. However, their appropriateness must be viewed in the context of each study. Saunders et al. (2012:280) argue that researchers must not rely solely on questionnaires; hence, they must use them in conjunction with other methods.

The study employed a questionnaire. Questionnaires are most widely used in surveys with descriptive purposes. They can, however, also be effectively used in studies with experiment and case study research strategies. The appropriateness of questionnaires as research tools, however, must be carefully examined in the context of each study. For this study, the questionnaire was selected because of the following advantages:

- It was the quickest means of gathering the data considering that the study period was needed to be completed within 6 months and;
- The questionnaire can gather data from a larger population such as across the DCT with ease.

3.8 Questionnaire construction

Mindful of the fact that the study employed quantitative methods; the questionnaire was the most appropriate tool for the study (Wagner et al., 2012:102). For this study, the questionnaire was designed in view of the objectives, the research questions and the literature reviewed on absenteeism, effect, causes, perceptions and strategies to reduce it. A total of 17 questions were crafted under the following sub-sections:

- Section A: The biographical information.
- Section B: The effect of employee absenteeism at DCT
- Section C: The causes employee absenteeism on productivity at DCT
- Section D: Ways to minimise employee absenteeism towards enhancing productivity at DCT

Closed statements on the Likert scale type format were used on sections B to D. The Likert-type of question required participants to state their level of agreement with given statements (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:436). The Likert scale included strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) neutral (3) agree (4) and strongly agree (5).

3.9 Pilot study

According to Saunders et al. (2012:196), a pilot study refers to a smaller version of a full study that is conducted in preparation of the complete study. The pilot study forms a critical part of a research design as it tests the readiness of research instrument to avoid unforeseen circumstances such as failure to gather the needed data at the middle of the research process causing confusion. Some of the important benefits of conducting a pilot study for this research include;

- The need to detect possible flaws in measurement procedures and give an indication in advance about where the main research may encounter problems.
- To identify unclear or ambiguous items in a measurement instrument (a questionnaire in this case)
- The reaction of participants in the pilot study to some of the information or wording in the questionnaire which may cause discomfort will provide a useful feedback to the researcher on what needs to be amended or changed.

A pilot study was conducted on 10 participants who were not part of the study sample. The study revealed that some of the statements were double barreled. In the revised questionnaire, a new correct was included. The researcher then removed all double-barreled statements within the questionnaire. The next section discusses the data collection process.

3.10 Administration of the questionnaire

The researcher administered the questionnaire by emailing it through their employee contact emails where they would responded as reply to the email. Thus, the questionnaire was distributed by the researcher with a letter of permission to conduct the research from DCT management attached. The researcher informed all the respondents that he would allow participants two weeks to complete the questionnaire and emailed back. A covering

letter was also attached on the questionnaire providing relevant information on why the study was being conducted as well as requesting voluntary participation on the part of the participants. The covering letter detailed the information about the objective of the research study as well as reason for the required responses. Sending an introductory mail proved a very effective way of encouraging participant participation (Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert and Choragwicka, 2010:10).

3.11. Data analysis

Data analysis entails the systematic application of statistical tools to describe, illustrate and evaluate data (Gay, 2013:70). Upon completion of the questionnaire, data was first coded and then analysed using the statistical package of social science (SPSS). Demographic data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data in a study and provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. The data was presented in order of the objectives formulated in chapter one, thus all research questions were addressed. Together with simple graphics analysis, descriptive statistics form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data. In this study, all data were reduced to numerical values, presented in graphs and tables.

3.12 Quantitative statistical analysis

Saunders et al. (2012:328) state that quantitative data can also be divided into two distinct categories, which includes categorical data and quantifiable data. According to Saunders et al. (2012:328) categorical data entails data that cannot be measured numerically but can be classified into categories according to specified criteria such as gender, religion, profession or qualification. On the other hand, quantifiable data is data whose values can be measured numerically (Saunders et al., 2012:328). Interval and ratio measures fall into this group. In this study, the SPSS for Windows, version 7.0 was used to analyze data.

- **Coding of data:** As soon as the information was collated from participants, data was recorded using numerical codes to categorize responses to each item on the research instrument. Simultaneously a code-book was designed to maintain a record of the codes for each variable. For example, for the gender of respondents, the code used was 1=male and 2=female or for an item which uses a Likert scale, 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree and 5=strongly disagree.
- **Statistical analysis:** After data coding, data was entered on a spreadsheet which was then presented in tables and graphs with percentages used as a measure of expression. According to Saunders et al. (2012:199), Tables and graphs can be used in descriptive analysis of data to identify trends and show proportions and with more detailed analysis, the researcher can reach conclusions about how the data collected relate to the original research objectives and hypotheses and how these results might be generalizable to the research population

3.13 Validity and reliability

All research requires validity and reliability in order to obtain accurate and objective results. Validity refers to the extent to which the research findings accurately and adequately reflect real meaning of the concept under consideration (Collis and Hussey, 2003: 280, Babbie & Mouton, 2009:130). Research reliability refers to the ability to obtain the same results if the research were to be repeated by any other researchers (Collis and Hussey, 2003: 320). Wagner *et al.* (2012:80) state that there are various kinds of validity, which includes face validity, content validity construct and criterion validity. All these are discussed in detail below.

3.13.1 Validity

Validity in research can generally be referred to as an indication of how sound the research is (Saunders et al.,2012:101). This mainly refers to data collection.

3.13.1.1. Face Validity

Face validity refers to appropriateness of the research instrument to be applicable or relevant to participants in the study (Saunders et al.2012:101). This was ensured by asking individuals within the target population to make some sense on the relevance of the questions during the pilot study. Under this part, participants provided very useful comments, which were used to improve the structure of the instrument.

3.13.1.2. Content Validity

Content validity refers to a situation where the researcher seeks expert opinion on the relevancy and appropriateness of the questions as opposed to face validity where non-experts views are sought. Cooper et al. (2008:290), noted that content validity entails the extent to which the data collection tool covers the subject under investigation.

3.13.1.3. Construct Validity

Construct validity refers to the degree to which the research measures the actual occurrence of those concepts that the researcher intended to measure (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:193; Wagner *et al.*, 2012:81).

3.13.1.4. Criterion-related validity

Criterion-related validity is about ensuring the accuracy of the predictions made (Saunders et al., 2007:366). In this study, all validity issues were addressed and ensured, the research was free from bias and was contextually relevant, which is a positive step towards criterion related validity.

3.13.2 Reliability

Reliability implies that the data collection methods and analytical procedures would produce consistent findings if they were repeated by another researcher or duplicated on another occasion (Saunders *et al.*, 2012: 429). Reliability is concerned with the stability of the measure, which can be established through re-testing according to Bryman and Bell (2007:162), as well as internal reliability and inter-observer consistency (Bryman & Bell, 2007:163). Reliability of a research instrument also refers to the consistency of repeatability of the measurement of some phenomena. The observed scores is one of the major components of reliability. Saunders *et al.* (2007:367) outlines three common approaches to assessing reliability.

- Test – retest reliability: which involves administering the questionnaire twice to respondent under as near equivalent condition as possible.
- Internal consistency: involves correlating the responses to each question in the questionnaire with those to other questions in the questionnaire. Consistency of responses was noted when this was performed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which is a measure of internal consistency.
- Alternative form: involves comparing responses to alternative forms of the same question.

To ensure reliability in a quantitative study, the research design was determined before commencement of the study. Cronbach's Alpha, indicating reliability was calculated. According to George and Mallery (2011:231), an alpha of ≥ 0.7 is normally considered to indicate a reliable set of items and hence all sections of the questionnaires administered were reliable. The total instrument reliability was 0.909.

3.14. Limitation of the study

Marshall and Rossman (2007:42) point out that all research projects have limitations and that these limitations are derived from the conceptual framework and design of the study. The limitations of the study included the following:

- Limited time frame: respondents were given only ten days to complete and return the questionnaires. The reason for the short period was connected to the second limitation listed and that is number of respondents.
- Number of respondents: the number of respondents was limited to the businesses persons who could write, read and speak in the English language. Thus, the study used participants who were capable of completing the questionnaires.
- The research was also limited to the DCT employee, hence the findings may not be generalized outside DCT.

3.15. Elimination of bias

Pannuchi and Wilkins (2011:60) define bias as any tendency that influences participant's responses. In the context of research, bias occurs when systematic error is introduced into sampling or testing by the researcher to influence the results to generate a particular outcome. According to Shuttleworth (2009:180) there are various types of research bias that includes design bias, measurement bias, sampling bias and procedural bias. By using the quantitative approach for the study, an attempt was made to eliminate bias by triangulating data Shuttleworth (2009:306). The question items were aligned to the objectives and the literature.

3.16. Ethical considerations

Saunders et al. (2012:305) emphasize on the need for researcher to demonstrate high level of ethical conduct in research. Research ethics is concerned with the moral principles that guides planning, collection and conducting a research (Brotherton, 2008:55).

It is the duty of the researcher to give recognition and subjectivity and integrity in conducting the research. In the human science, research is usually guided by fundamental ethical considerations to are related to researcher responsibility.

Consideration was given to various ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, obtaining permission and no harm and benefits.

3.16.1. Ensuring anonymity

According to Saunders et al. (2012:305) anonymity refers to the researcher's effort not to divulge the identity of the participants. In this study, names were not included in the questionnaire and participants name will not be disclosed. The participant letter attached to the questionnaire will clarify to the participants that their identity will remain anonymous. The identity of all participant was protected when reporting the findings.

3.16.2. Ensuring Confidentiality

According to Saunders et al. (2012:305) confidentiality is about keeping confidential the data gathered throughout the research process. Firstly, the participant letter clarified that data gathered would be used specifically for the study and nothing more. On the ground, the researcher was to treat the data gathered with utmost confidentiality by not attaching any names to data gathered. In addition, the data would be used specifically for this study and will be securely stored with no one having access to the data except the researcher and supervisor. The data would be discarded through shredding and deleting from the.

3.16.3. Recruitment

Regarding recruitment of participants, the researcher informed all participants through community meetings as well as postal letters placed on mailboxes of the selected participants. Phone calls and email were also being used to invite participants.

3.16.4. Ensuring no harm but benefits

This study has no harm to participants; instead, participants stand to benefit from the findings which will be communicated to participants. No benefit was given to participant and participation was voluntary.

3.16.5. Ensuring participants have given informed consent.

This is referred to informing the participant of the nature of the study. Informed consent implied that participants were aware of the nature and details of the research being conducted, had the right to discontinue in the research study and were not forced or to partake in any way. The researcher clarified that taking part in the study was voluntary and that participants were free to change their mind not to partake at any time without affecting the study. Participants signed consent forms as an indication that they understand the terms and conditions of the being involved in the study and that they do so willingly.

3.16.6. Ensuring permission is obtained

A formal request to conduct the study was sought from the DCT and granted before administering the questionnaire to the participants.

3.17 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the comprehensive summary of the research methodology that was used. This consists of the design of the study, methods of sampling, size of the sample, selection of respondents and techniques of data collection. The reasons why the researcher decided on choosing these methods were used has also been discussed. The next chapter will be an outline and discussion of the results taken from the participants' responses.

CHAPTER 4-PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology for the study. Thus, the quantitative method selected for the study was discussed to provide justification for its selection. This chapter now presents the results following the data collection through the questionnaire. The results are presented under the respective three objectives which include the establishment of the causes of absenteeism”, the effect of absenteeism on productivity and the strategies to minimise absenteeism at DCT.

4.2 Response rate

Out of the 381 questionnaires that were distributed for data collection, 321 complemented questionnaires were returned by the end of the data collection period giving a response rate of 84.25%. According to Saunders et al. (2016), response rate above 50% are considered acceptable for quantitative studies and taking into account that this study had 84.25%, its means that the response rate was more than enough.

4.3 Biographical data

Demographic data entail participant’s information on “age, gender, race and experience working at DC. Below is an analysis of the variables.

4.3.1 Question 1: What is your age?

The age distribution of the respondents are indicated in Figure 4.1 as shown below.

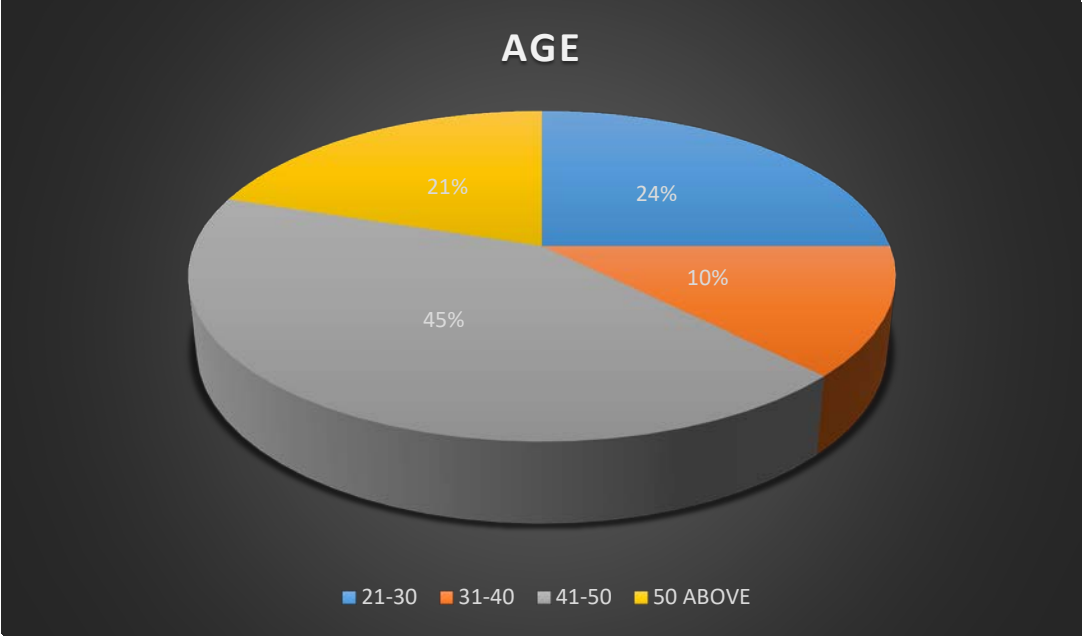


Figure 4.1 Participants age

Figure 4.1 it shows that that 45% of employees are between the ages 41-50 years, 21% are above 50 years, 10 % of are between 31-40 with 24% of those within age group 21-30 years. The finding suggests that in the overall 63% of DCT employees are 41 years old and above, noting that the DCT employees are elderly. On the other hand, 25% of employees are under 30 years old (the youth) suggesting the need to employ more youths at the DCT.

4.3.2 Question 2: What is your gender?

Below is a display of the gender distribution of the respondents

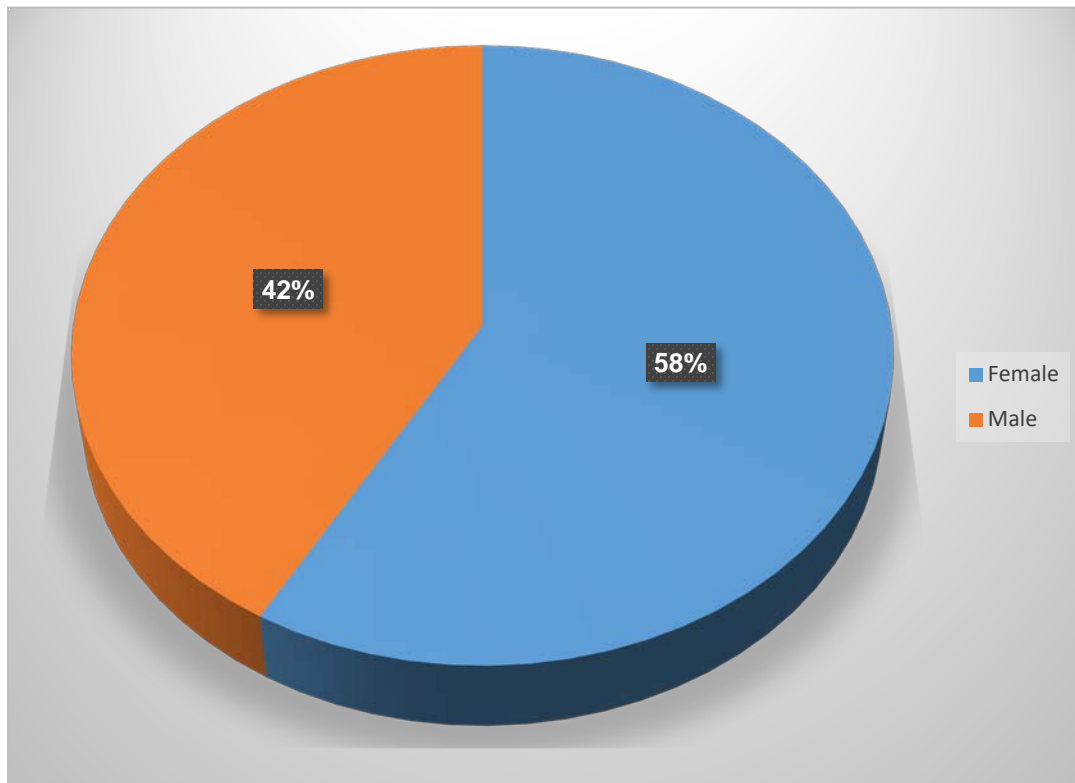


Figure 4. 2 Gender of respondents

It is clear that as reflected on figure 4.2 that DCT employs more males than females as demonstrated by the 58% for male's employees and 42% female employees. The reason why DCT employs more males could be the fact that the type of jobs/tasks offered by DCT are more masculine than feminine.

4.3.3 Question 3: What is your race?

This section sought to understand racial distribution with DCT taking into account that South Africa is a country of many races referred to as the rainbow nation.

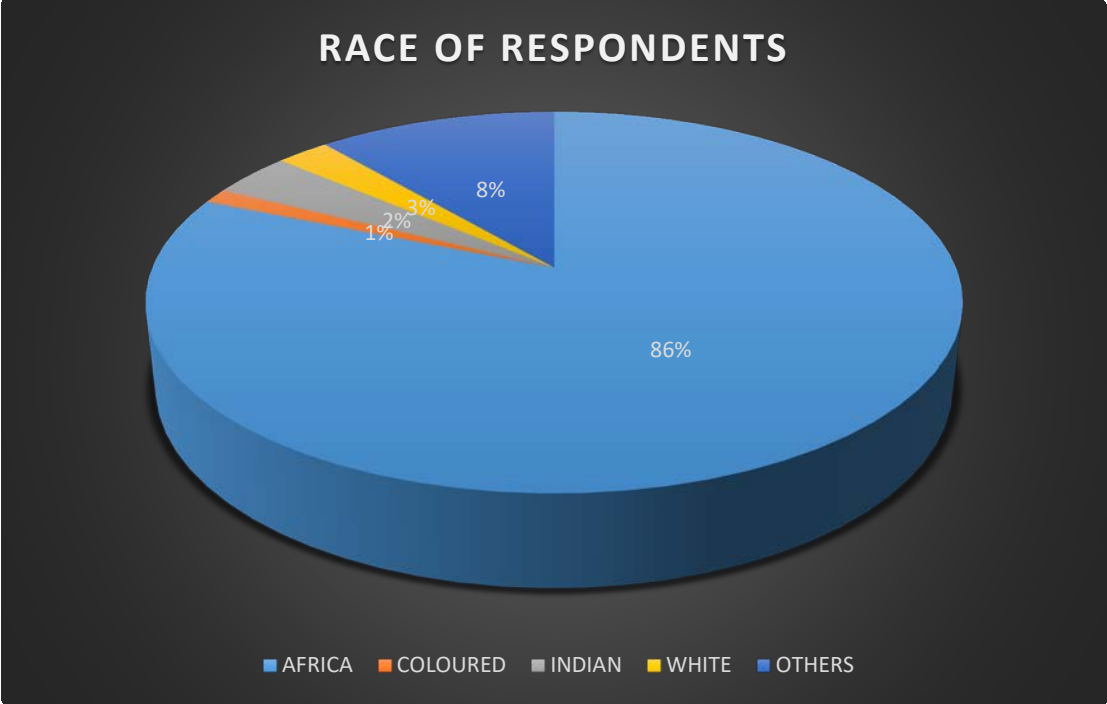


Figure: 4.3. Race respondents

Figure 4.3 above, shows that 86% of employees were black African, with 8% of others which include the Chinese and Pakistan's, 2% Whites, 3% Indians and 1% percentage of coloureds. Despite efforts to employ black South Africans, it is interesting to note that 19% of the employees are non- blacks, a good improvement towards transformation taking into account that previously, during apartheid, DCT was predominantly a white organisation. . However, more efforts to transform the organisation are encouraged.

4.3.3 Question 4: Experience working at DCT

This question sought to understand the duration of employees working at DCT and below is a graphic illustration.

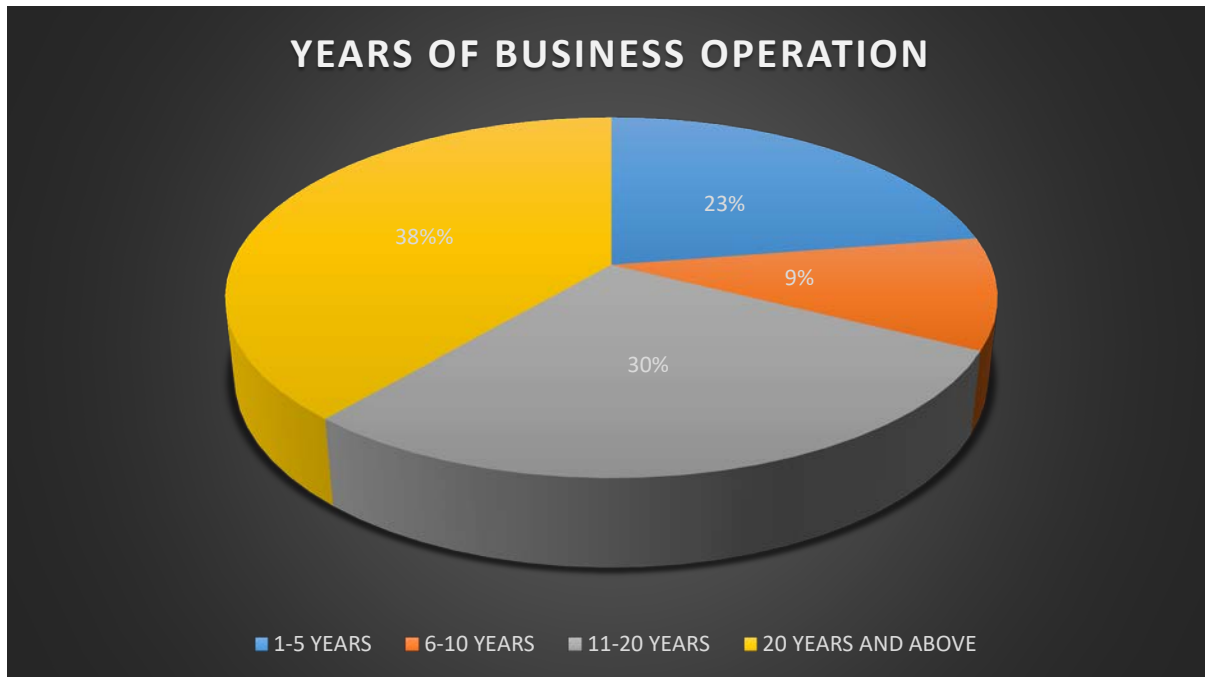


Figure 4.4: Respondents experience

Figure 4.4 above shows that 38% of employees had worked for five years, 9% in the range between 6 – 10 years, 23% between 11-20 years' experience and 30% with more than 20 years' experience at DCT. This therefore means that 61% of the employees have worked for DCT for 11 years and above, a period long enough to give them full understanding of what goes around within the organisation in many respects that include what motivates employees better, the conditions of offices and organisational culture of the organisation.

4.4 Findings based on objective 1: Effect of absenteeism on productivity

This was the first objective of the study as stated in chapter 1. The objective primarily sought to assess perceptions on the effect of absenteeism on productivity within DCT. It is important to stress that these were perceptions. To address this objective, 5 statements were developed and slotted into the research instrument to gather data with results on each statement graphically displayed in sections that follow.

4.4.1 Question 5: Absenteeism lowers productivity in general

This question sought to understand the effect absenteeism has on productivity at DCT with results shown on the following graph.

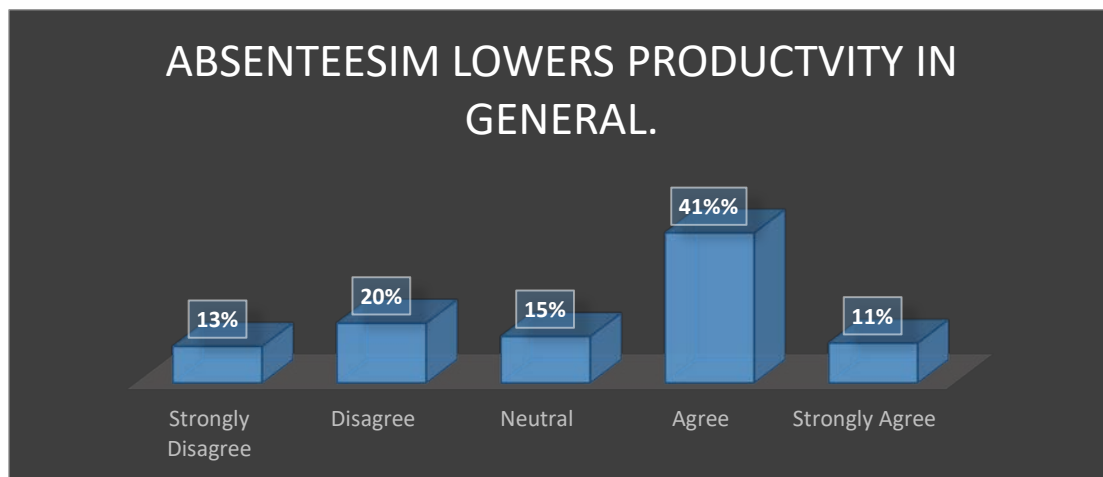


Figure 4.5 Absenteeism and productivity

Figure 4.5 shows that 41% of the participants agreed to the while 11% strongly agreed giving an overall 52% agreement to the statement. On the other hand 33% disagreed statement with 15% giving a neutral response. According to Robbins and Judge (2014), absenteeism among manual workers results means delayed production, lower quality levels, and disruption of workflow, low morale and general dissatisfaction, all of which lead to lower productivity. Goodman and Atkin (2014), also found that replacing an absent worker with a less skilled worker, either from within the organisation or outside, leads to

a decline in productivity, and emphasise disciplinary action and an increase in workplace accidents among other negative impacts.

4.4.2 Question 6: Absenteeism lowers quality of service

This question sought to assess if absenteeism by DCT employees lowered the quality of service. Data on the question is shown below.

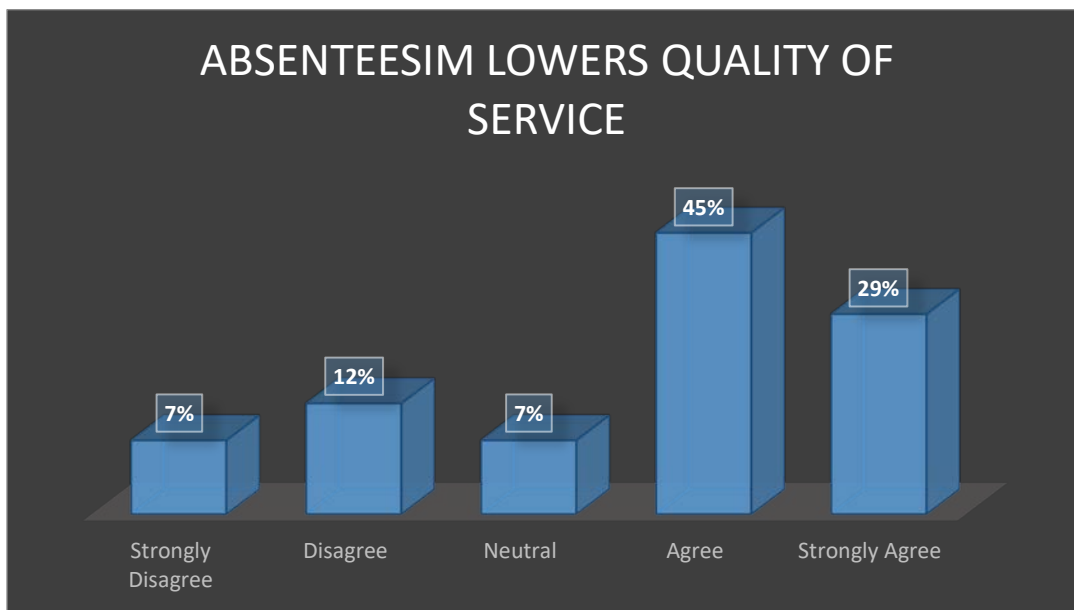


Figure 4.6 Absenteeism and quality of service

Figure 4.6 reflect that 45% of the participants agreed to the statement while 29% strongly agreed giving an overall 74% agreement to the statement. On the other hand, 19% disagreed to the statement while 7% provide a neutral response. Arnell and Brown (2012) reveal that absenteeism can lead to decreased quality of service and product which come through unplanned leave which is disruptive for everyone in the company. Absent staff means that tasks have to be re-delegated to other employees, and at times may even require, over time. The organisationa may also experience a drop in quality

depending on the skill level of the absent employee the affected department may experience a drop in quality that could also result in a decrease in customer satisfaction. There is also a decrease in overall morale (Arnell and Brown, 2012). While it is hard to quantify the effect, qualitatively, absenteeism can lead to animosity ultimately affecting morale as fewer employees have to absorb extra task and responsibilities in addition to their workload possibly leading to turnover that further digs into quality of service

4.4.3. Question 7: Absenteeism lowers quality of product

This question sought to assess if absenteeism by DCT employees lowers quality of product

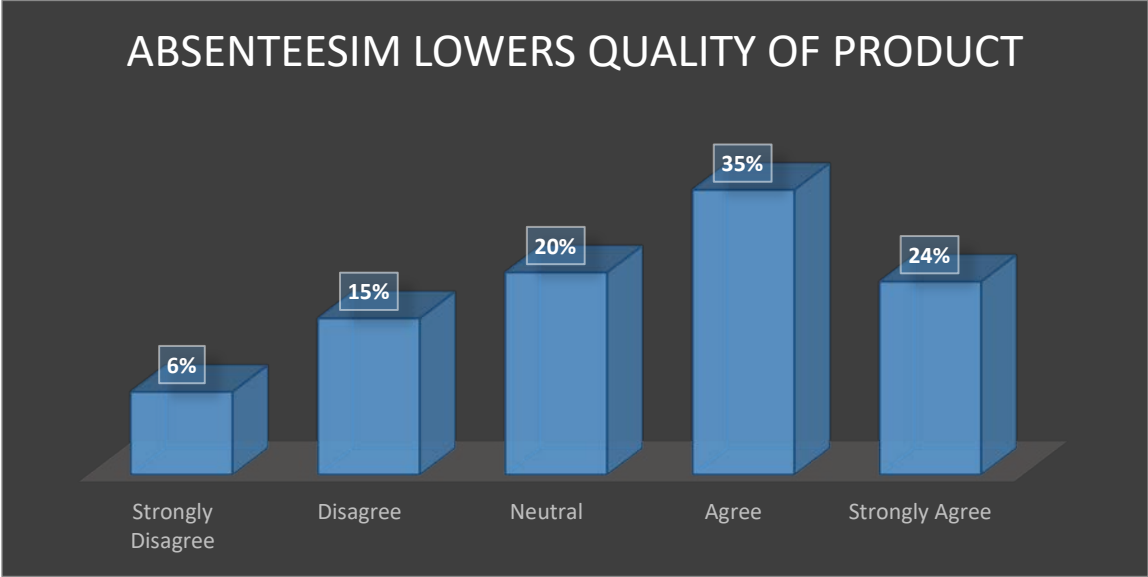


Figure 4.7 Absenteeism and quality of product

Figure 4.7 shows that 35% of the participants agreed to the statement while only 24% strongly agreed giving an overall of 59% agreement to the statement. On the other hand with 21% disagreed to the statement with a relatively huge figure of 20% on the neutral side. Robbins and Judge (2014) point out that absenteeism may have negative consequences for an organisation's quality of product citing use of less experienced

employees as responsible for poor workmanship production and a reduction in work quality (Robbins and Judge, 2014).

4.4.4 Question 8: Absenteeism increases financial loss

The question to assess if absenteeism increased financial loss at DCT. Data on the question is presented below.

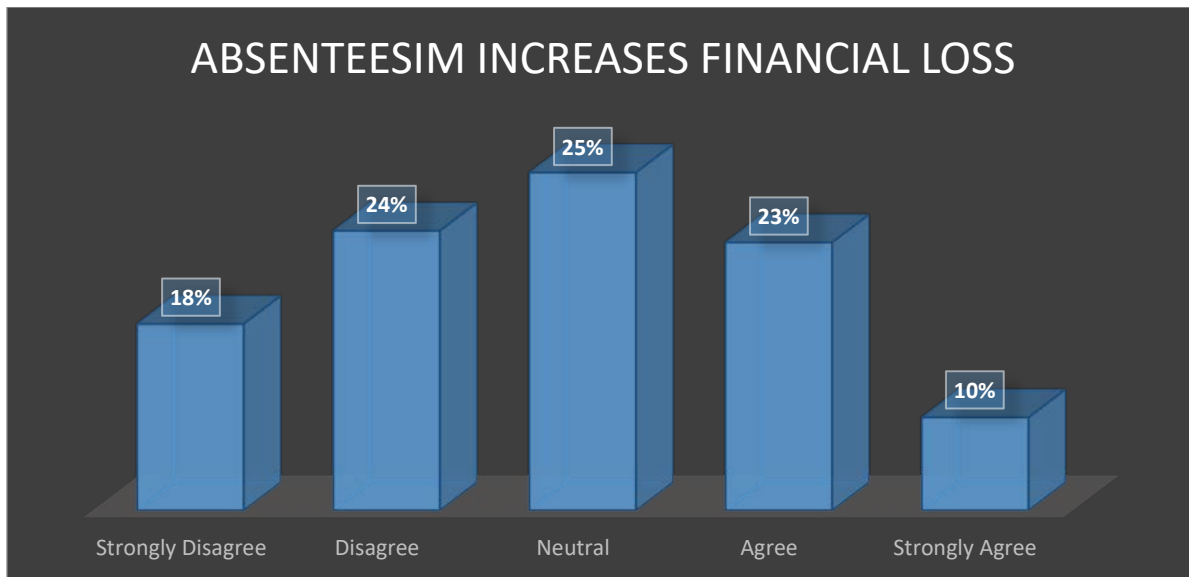


Figure 4.8 Absenteeism and financial loss

Figure 4.8 shows that 24% of the participants agreed to the statement with 18% strongly agreeing giving an overall 42% agreement to the statement. On the other hand, 33% disagreed to the statement. Of note, 25% gave a neutral response. While Coughlan (2014) does not mention any positive outcomes associated with absenteeism, she agrees that the impact of absenteeism are multifaceted, emphasizing that they are not limited to production losses or inferior outputs – which may eventually translate into a potential loss of clients – but also have an immediate effect on an absentee’s colleagues and managers. Coughlan (2014) opinion is borne out by a study where interviewees asserted that everyone, from co-workers to supervisors and departmental managers, who works with an absent employee, is affected by every incident of absence (McHugh, 2011).

4.4.6 Question 9: Absenteeism increases administrative costs

The aim of the question was to assess if absenteeism at DCT increased administrative costs. Data on the question is presented below.

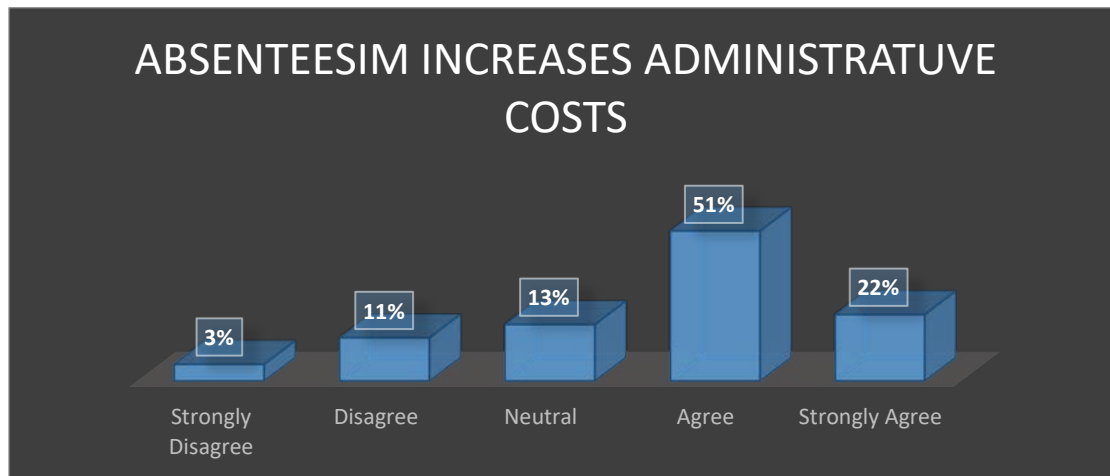


Figure 4.9 Absenteeism and administrative costs

Figure 4.9 shows that 51% of the participants agreed and 22% strongly agreed giving an overall 73% agreement to the statement. On the other hand, 14% disagreed to the statement while 13% gave a neutral response. According to Chauke (2007), absenteeism impacts on the organisation administratively in terms of increasing costs and since this study sought to investigate the extent to which absenteeism impact on productivity, an increase in administrative costs was not welcome. Martochhio and Jimeno (2010) point out that absenteeism in most cases increases administrative costs ultimately hindering productivity.

4.5. Findings based from Objective 2: Causes of absenteeism at DCT

Objective 2 of the study sought to investigate the causes of absenteeism at DCT and to address this objective a total of 6 questions were factored into the questionnaire with the findings from each statement presented graphically in sections that follow.

4.5.1 Question 10: Absenteeism is caused by employee illness

The focus of the question was to ascertain if absenteeism caused employee absenteeism at DCT. Below, the results are reflected.

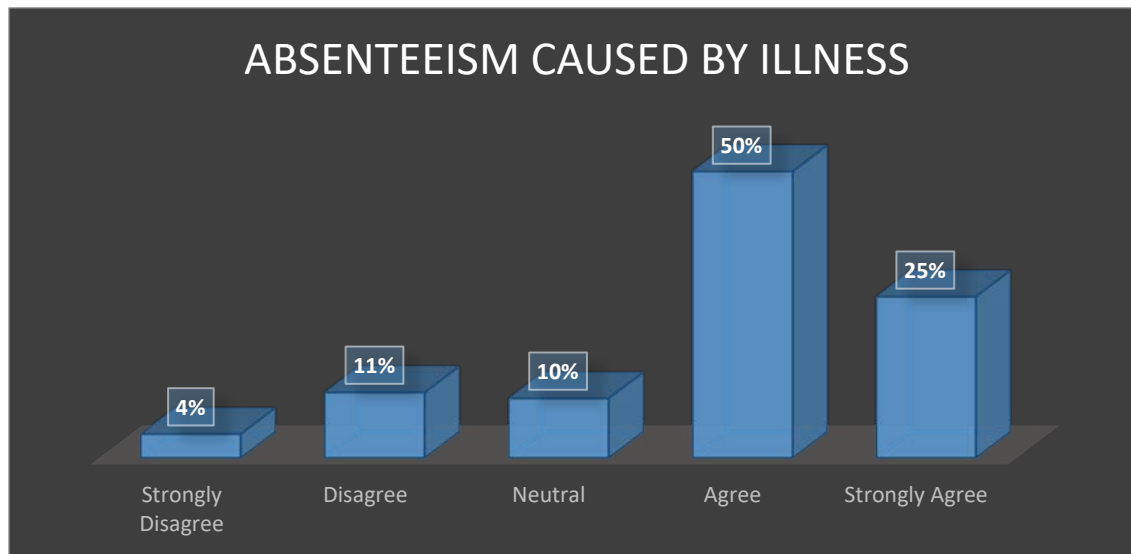


Figure 4.11 Absenteeism and employee illness

Figure 4.11 it shows that a total of 50% agreed while 25% of the participant strongly agreed giving an overall total of 75% agreement to the statement that illness was the cause of absenteeism at DCT. On the other hand, 15% of the participants disagreed to the statement while 10% were neutral.

Thus, the overall finding under this question shows illness leads causes absenteeism at DCT. These findings align with Bolton and Hughes (2001: 27) who argue that workplace absenteeism can be a result of minor illness, serious illness family responsibility, personal problems, lack of commitment, poor morale unauthorised holiday and effect of long hours. Chang, Smithikrai (2010:1288) identify drink, drugs and leisure, personality and background as well as relationships at work accidents as contributing to absenteeism. The CIPD (2012) highlights that minor illness present as the main cause of workplace absenteeism. Krischner et al. (2010 55) argue that in the majority of cases, employees who are absent due to minor illnesses may have been well enough to go to work aligning well with lack of motivation as a variable for employee absenteeism. This view is also

aligned to the A and B type of absenteeism, which attaches to genuine and devious absenteeism. The study by Watson (2010:12) indicates that workplace absenteeism can arise due to sickness caused by accidents, inflexibility, and lack of leadership, bereavement, change, and ergonomics. According to Watson (2010:12) employees that are highly engaged have lower absenteeism than employees that are disengaged. According to Wolff (2012) engaged employees lose an average of 2 days per year compared to the disengaged who lose an average of 4 days per year.

4.5.1. Question 11: Absenteeism is caused by toxic organisational culture

This question sought to establish if absenteeism was caused by toxic organisational culture. Data to answer the questions is presented below.

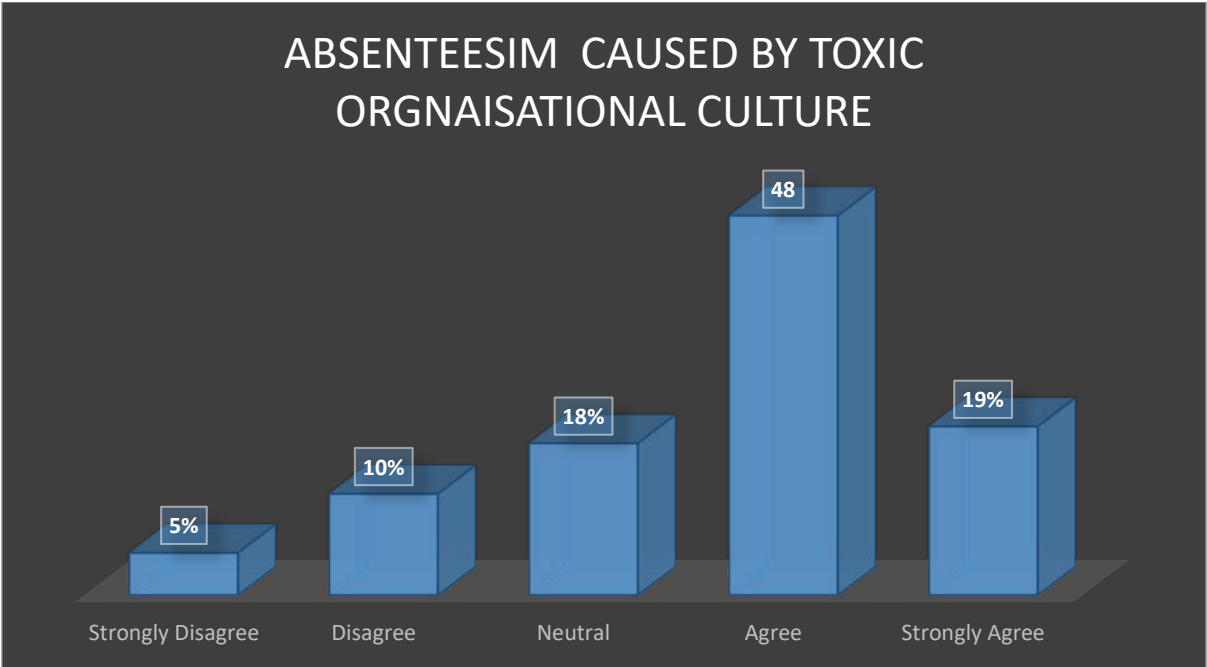


Figure 4.12 Absenteeism and toxic organisational culture

As shown on Figure 4.12, 48% of the participants agreed while 19% strongly agreed giving an overall total of 67% who agreed to the statement that absenteeism at DCT is caused by toxic organisational culture. On the other hand, while only 5% disagreed with the statement with 18% of the participants giving a neutral response. These findings

agree with Tepper *et al.* (2009) when they argue that organisational culture is a major cause of absenteeism. If an organization has a permissive culture regarding absence, there is more likely wood that employees will regard sick leave as a benefit they must enjoy and if they fail to take leave, they will lose it forever within a given year. If an unnecessary absence is managed by management employees will have to reconsider before abusive the leave (Chang *et al.* 2010:1272). In organisations that have a liberal sick leave as a benefit, there is a general sense that employees are encouraged to go on leave whether one is satisfied or dissatisfied with work.

4.5.3. Question 12: Absenteeism is caused by stress

This question sought was to establish if absenteeism was caused by stress levels on the part of employees at DCT and below is the evidence from the data collection process.

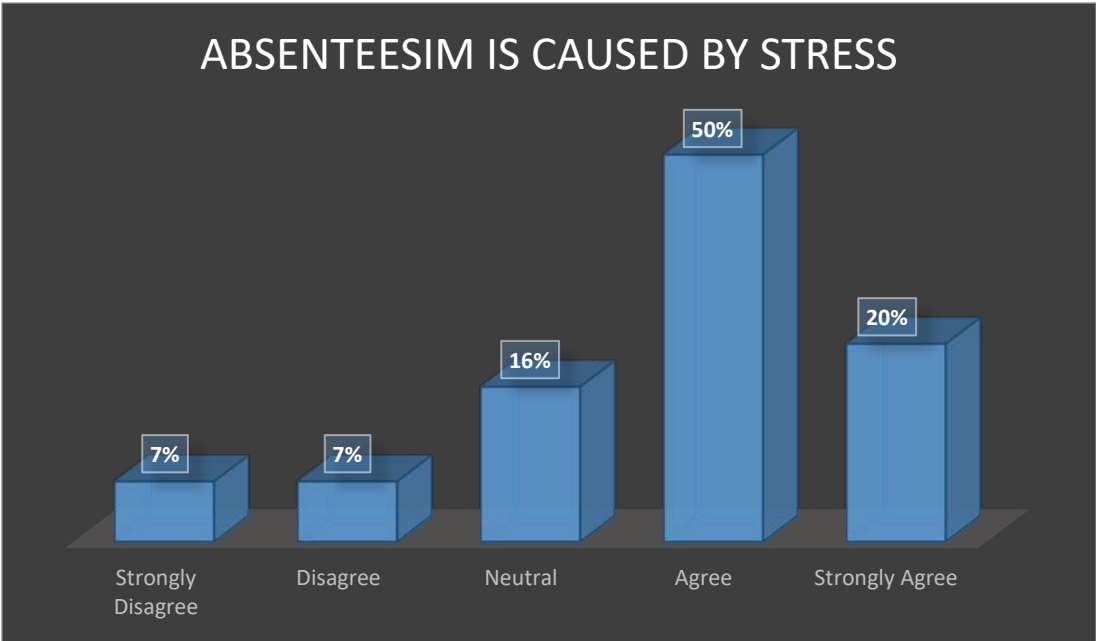


Figure 4.13 Absenteeism and employee stress

Figure 4.13, it shows that 50% agreed while 20% strongly agreed giving an overall 70% agreement to the statement that absenteeism at DCT was caused by stress. On the other hand 11% disagreed and to the statement with 16% taking a neutral position. The finding is that employee stress at DCT causes absenteeism. This finding aligns with Al-fudail and Mellar (2018) who argue that many studies have labelled work load as a stressful. Liu and Ramsey (2018) found that stress due to poor work conditions – for example, inadequate offices or equipment and the danger of physical violence to their persons. The researchers further report that inadequate time-planning and preparation and a heavy work load also reduce the satisfaction that educators may otherwise glean from their profession. The problem is further compounded by the demands of administrators, colleagues, students and parents, student's behaviour, as well as failure to recognise their achievements (Greenglass and Burke, 2003). Over time, the cumulative effect of these stressors and the negative emotions they engender may lead teachers to absent themselves in order to recuperate and restore their physical and mental energy levels (Kyriacou 2001). This is not only highly relevant to teachers but is also true of school administrators and policymakers.

4.5.5. Question 13: Absenteeism is caused by family responsibilities

The intention of the question was to ascertain if absenteeism at DCT was caused by family responsibilities and below is the data to answer the question.

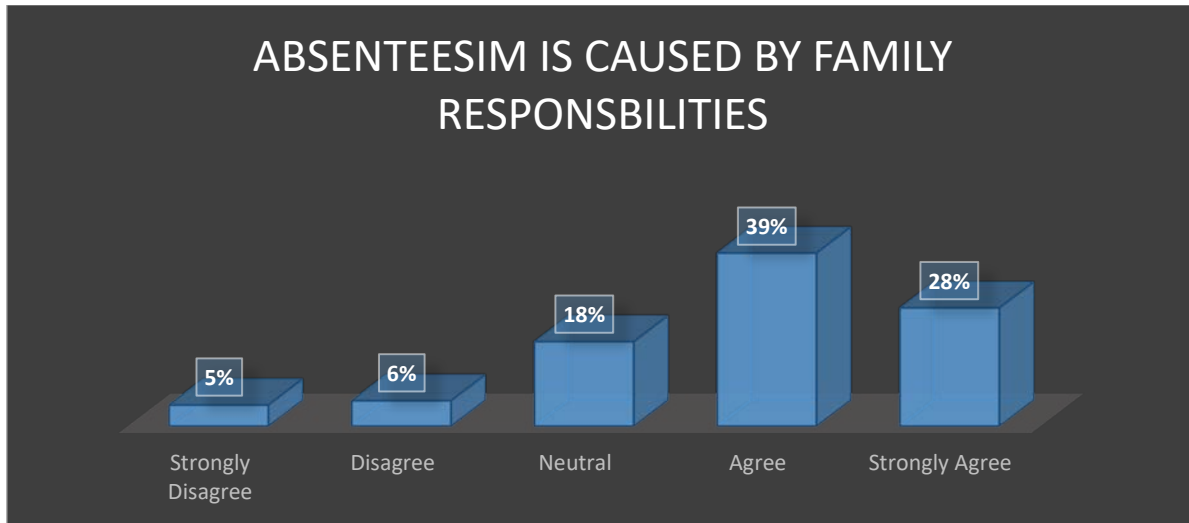


Figure 4.14 Absenteeism and family responsibilities

Data reflected on Figure 4.14 shows that 39% of the participants agreed while 28% strongly agreed giving an overall total of 67% agreement to the statement that absenteeism at DCT was caused by family. On the other hand, 11% disagreed with 18% giving a neutral response to the statement. Thus, the finding indicate that family responsibilities are a cause of employee absenteeism at DCT. According to Al-Fudail and Mellar (2018), absenteeism from duty is largely a result of family responsibilities as employees try to balance work and family life. As part of family responsibilities, childcare often compels workers to be absent from work as parents have no choice but to give priority to their children especially taking into account the cost of paying for a child caregiver is going up due the high demand of child care services (Al-Fudail and Mellar, 2018). Arnell and Brown (2012) argue that with the cost of childcare rising, more individuals find it hard to pay child care rates. According Arnell and Brown (2012), an increasing number of the workforce take their children to private care givers or baby minders to reduce the increasing costs, however the problems arise when the private care giver gets sick or has a personal commitment leading to them absenting themselves to take care of their own children without necessarily providing a valid reason to the employer.

4.5.6. Question 14: Absenteeism is caused by personal needs

One of the issues found in literature was that employees absent themselves for personal reasons and address this, the question sought to establish if absenteeism was caused by personal and data was gathered to address this question as shown below.

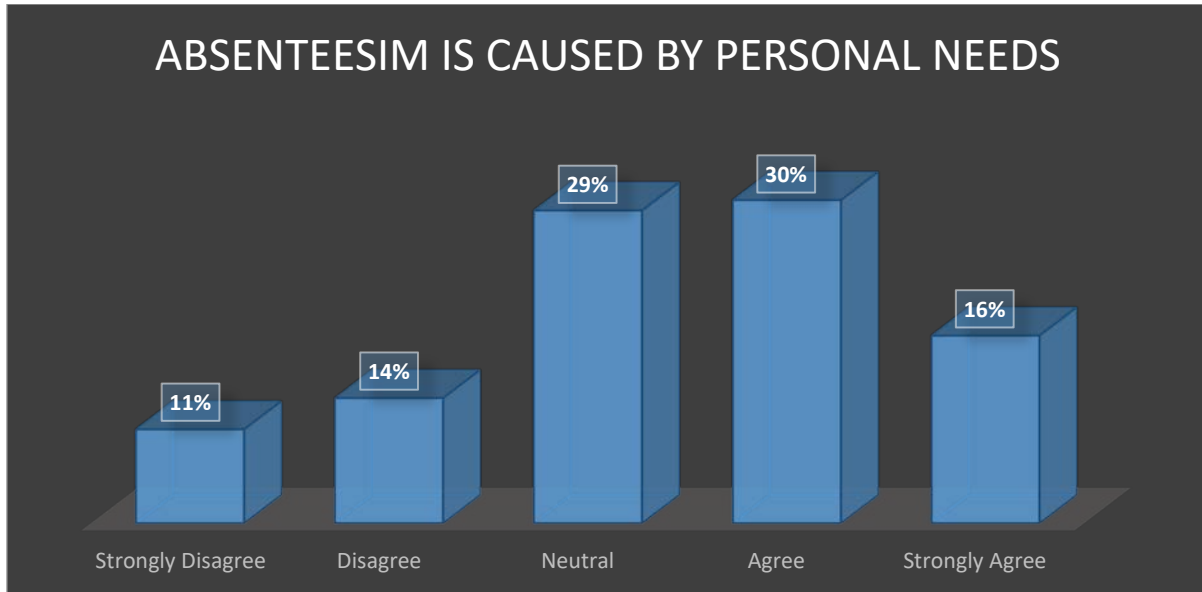


Figure 4.15 Absenteeism and personal needs

Figure 4.15 shows that 29% of the participants agreed while 16% strongly agreed giving an overall 46% agreement to the statement while 25% disagreed to the statement. Of note is the 29% neutral response to the statement. Employees as human beings have personal needs that need to be attended and in most cases this has to be done privately (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018). Thus, employees sometimes just absent themselves from work to pay attention to their private life demands which they may not need to explain to their employer (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018). The problem is that the standard official vacation and annual leave days may not be adequate for individuals to attend to the respective personal needs, hence there is always a certain number of employees that would absent themselves from work without valid reasons (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018).

4.5.7. Question 15: Absenteeism is caused by poor relations amongst co-workers

This question was concerned with relations within the organisation as a cause absenteeism at DCT. Thus, the question sought to establish if poor relations at DCT caused absenteeism.

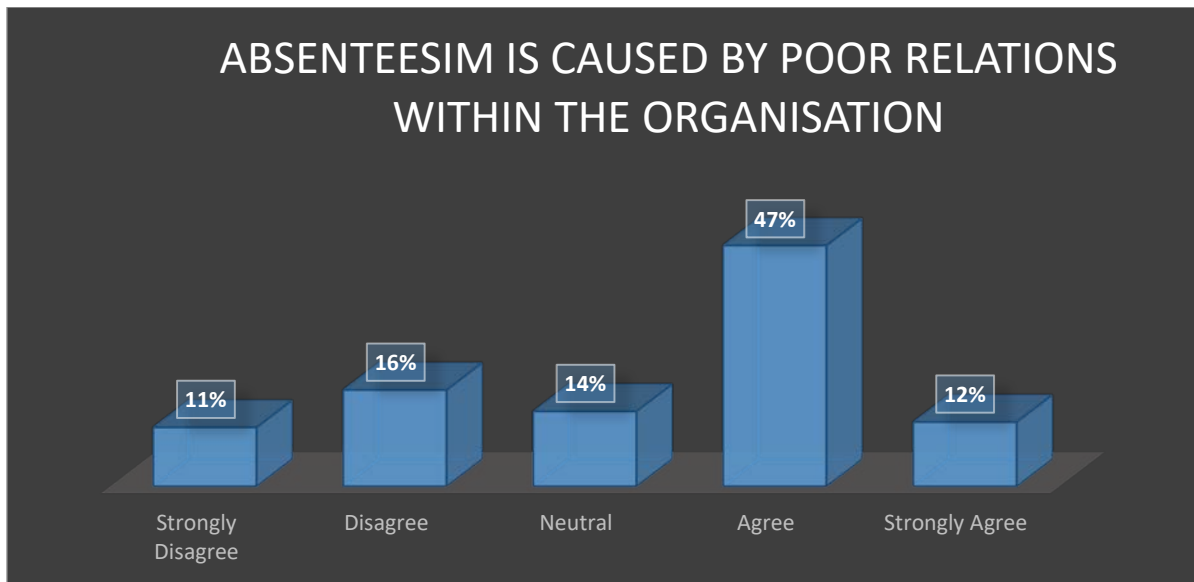


Figure 4.16 Absenteeism and relations amongst co-workers

Figure 4.16 shows that 47% of the participants agreed to the statement while 12% strongly agreed giving an overall of 59% agreement to the statement. On the other hand, 27% disagreed to the statement with 14% giving a neutral response. Thus, findings from this question show that poor working relations are a cause of absenteeism at DCT and this aligns with Robbins and Judge (2014) as they state that a poor employee and employer relationship across the organisation is a potential source of employee absenteeism

4.6 Findings based on objective 3: Strategies to minimise absenteeism at DCT

The final objective of the study sought to establish employee perspectives on the strategies to reduce absenteeism at DCT. Six statements were slotted into the questionnaire to tap into these views and below is a displays of results and analysis on each question.

4.6.1 Question 16: Improving conditions of service reduces absenteeism

This question sought to establish if improving conditions of service at DCT reduces absenteeism. Data gathered to solve the question is presented below.

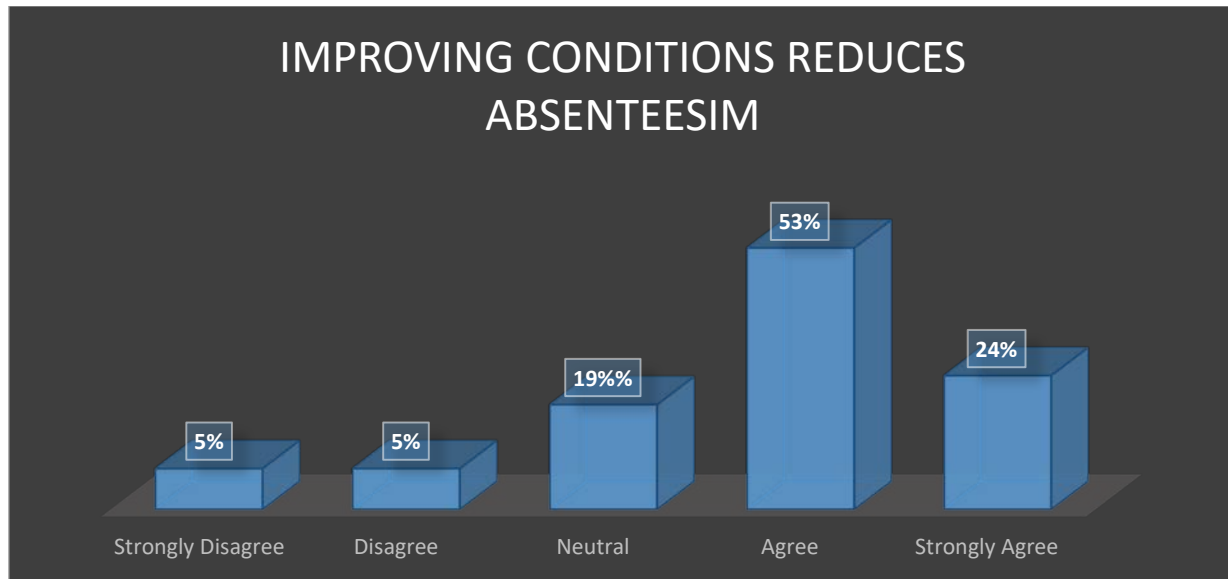


Figure 4.17 Conditions and absenteeism reduction

As reflected on Figure 4.17, 53% of the participants agreed and 24% strongly agreed giving an overall 77% agreement. On the other hand, only 10% disagreed to the statement while 19% were neutral.

The findings under this question align with Neuborne (2013) who indentify employee incentive programs as part of the conditions of service which help reduce absenteeism. One way that companies introduce their incentive based programs is to pay their employees for every sick and personal day that employees do not take. At the end of each year, the employees receive a check for their unused days. Employers who use this approach confirm that their operations run smoothly and efficiently (Neuborne, 2013). Other companies merely offer time off for perfect attendance each quarter and a day's pay at the end of a year (Truman, 2013). Companies also offer a company party, a company picnic, or a corporate gift for perfect attendance (Poirier, 2013). While some researchers caution that rewarding employees for something that they should already be

doing results in an expectancy for things to come, others conscientiously endeavour to keep their employees happy and working. Whatever solution is chosen should be adopted and continually monitored to check successfulness. After all, it is a large investment, and an opportunity to save potential lost revenues.

4.6.2 Question 17: Child care reduces absenteeism

The question sought to assess if provision of child care support by DCT reduces absenteeism with data on the question presented below.

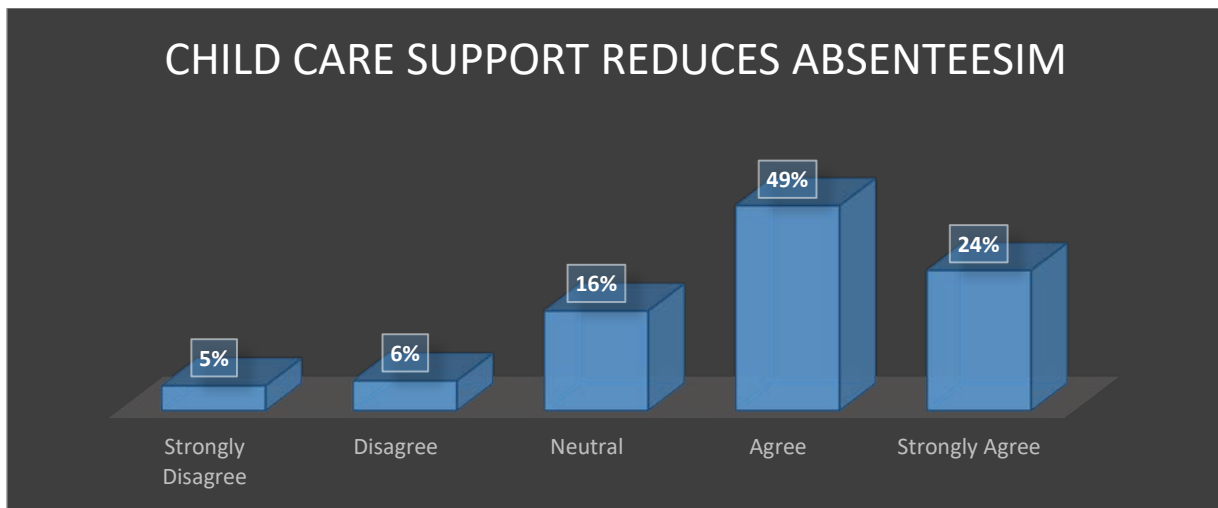


Figure 4.18 Child care support absenteeism reduction

According to Figure 4.18, it shows that 49% of the participants agreed to the statement, while 24% strongly agreed giving an overall 73% agreement to the statement. On the other hand, 11% disagreed to the statement while 16% gave a neutral response. Arnell and Brown (2012) argue that with the cost of childcare rising, more individuals find it hard to pay child care rates. According Arnell and Brown (2012), an increasing number of the workforce take their children to private care givers or baby minders to reduce the increasing costs, however the problems arise when the private care giver gets sick or has

a personal commitment leading to them absenting themselves to take care of their own children without necessarily providing a valid reason to the employer.

4.6.3 Question 18: Improving organisational culture reduces absenteeism

This question sought to assess if improving organisational culture reduces absenteeism with data on the question is presented on the figure below.

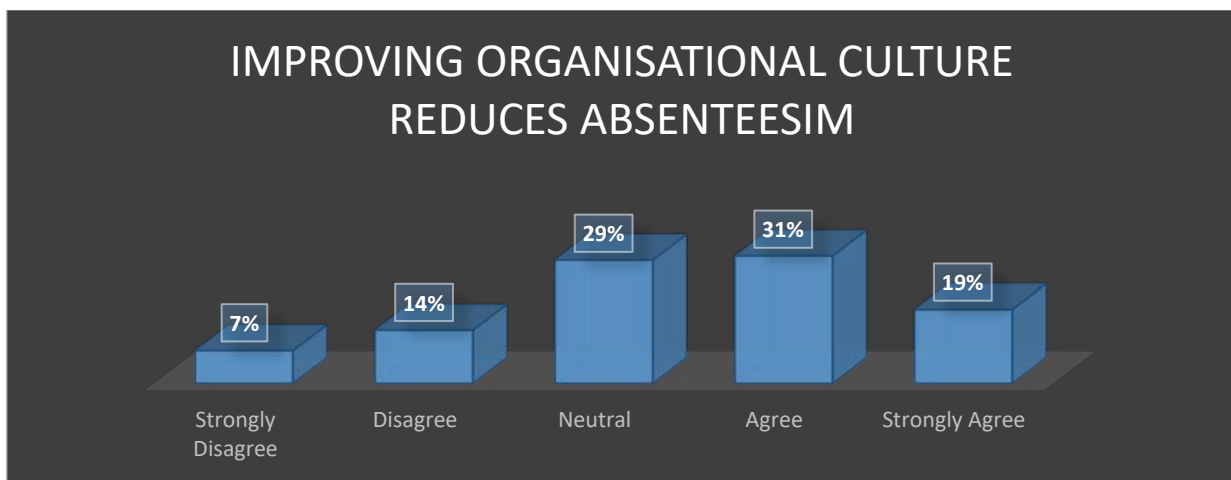


Figure 4.19 organisational culture absenteeism reduction

Figure 4.19 shows that 31% of the respondents agreed to the statement while 19% strongly agreed giving an overall 50% agreement to the statement. On the other hand, 21% disagreed to the statement while a huge figure of 29% gave a neutral response.

The finding under this question reveals that improving organisational would reduce absenteeism at the workplace. The study aligns with the work of Truman (2013) who argue that organisational culture is an underlying feature which can cause or reduce absenteeism in the workplace. Thus, according to Truman (2013), organisational culture, which entail a way of doing things in an organisation has the potential to influence employees to generally develop the tendency of not reporting for work. On the other hand, organisational culture can also influence the same employees to develop love for their organisation to the extent that one can only absent from work when they have a genuine

reason. In this context Truman (2013), present two kinds of organisational culture referred to as positive and negative organisational culture. In the words of (Truman, 2013:180), a positive company culture promotes high morale, job satisfaction and we know that job satisfaction significantly reduces absenteeism. According to (Truman, 2013), knowing what the company wants, what it offers against company expectations on its own creates a positive culture. On the other hand, a negative organisational culture is a culture that does not take care of its employees, one that treats employees as appendages of management without giving employees room to air their views. In situations such as this, employees will easily absent themselves from out of a very small or minor excuse.

4.6.4 Question 19: Offering employee assistance programs reduces absenteeism

This question sought to assess if offering employee assistance programs reduces absenteeism with data gathered to address the questions presented below.

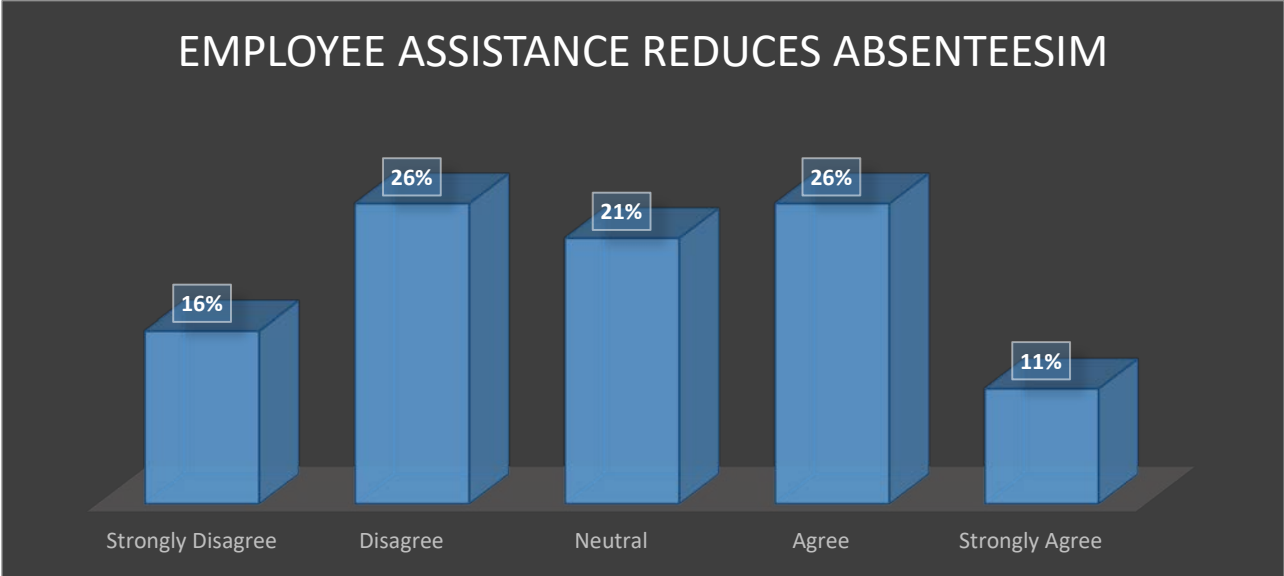


Figure 4.20 employee assistance programs and absenteeism reduction

Figure 4.20, shows that 26% of the respondents' disagreed to the statement and 16% strongly disagreed giving an overall 42% disagreement to the statement. On the other

hand, 37% agreed to the statement. Of note is the 21% neutral response to the statement. Employee assistance programs can be implemented to help workers deal with issues outside of work that employees bring to the workplace. The results align with studies by Quinley (2013) who argue that employee assistance programs should be implemented. According to Quinley (2013), the ultimate aim of the absence programmes is to reduce the absenteeism. A study on industrial environment shows that employee assistance programs often reduce confrontations, accidents, and workers' compensation cases that result from off the job stress, which reduces absenteeism (Quinley, 2013). Organisations that volunteered information about employee assistance programs got positive feedback. In this study and in particular under this section, participants believed that employee assistance programs are critical for aiding return to work making them feel that they are loved by their employers. Contrary, employee assistance programs are very expensive and difficult to monitor.

4.6.5. Question 20: Disciplinary action reduces absenteeism

The question sought to assess if disciplinary action reduces absenteeism with data gathered presented below.

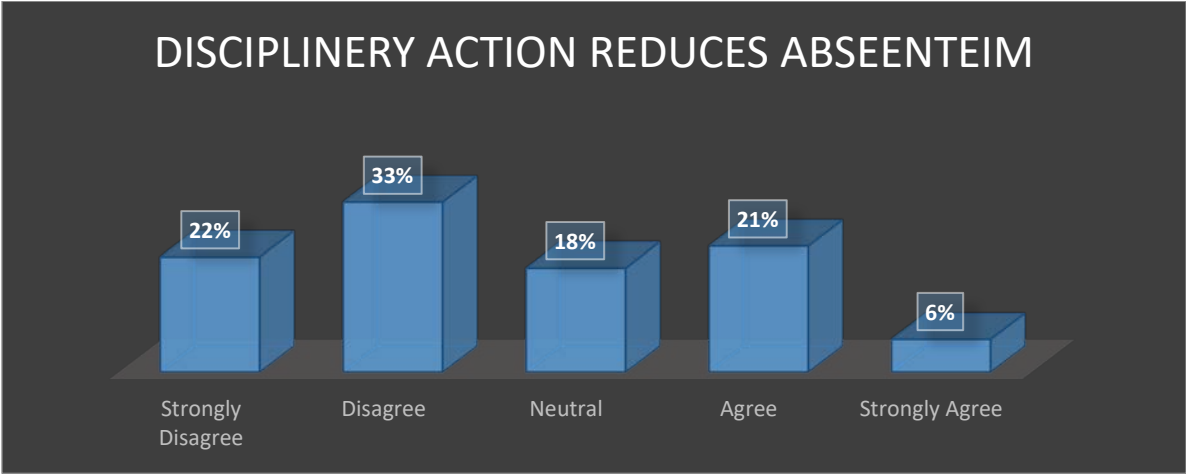


Figure 4.21 Disciplinary action and absenteeism reduction

As reflected on Figure 4.21, 33% of the respondents' disagreed to the statement that followed by 22% who strongly agreed giving an overall 55% disagreement to the statement. On the other hand, 27% disagreed to the statement while 18% gave a neutral response. Poirier (2013) highlights that organisations have the right and power to discipline employees who abuse sick leave by instituting disciplinary measures. The disciplinary measures, according to Poirier (2013) are usually on a case by case basis in line with the disciplinary code of conduct. Some organisations, however often warn a worker after a single incident to determine the reasons for absence while some subject the worker to a disciplinary hearing and subsequent punishment and compel the employee to complete absent form (Poirier, 2013).

4.6.6. Question 21: A caring leadership reduces absenteeism

The question sought to assess if a **caring leadership reduces absenteeism** and data gathered to answer the question is presented below.

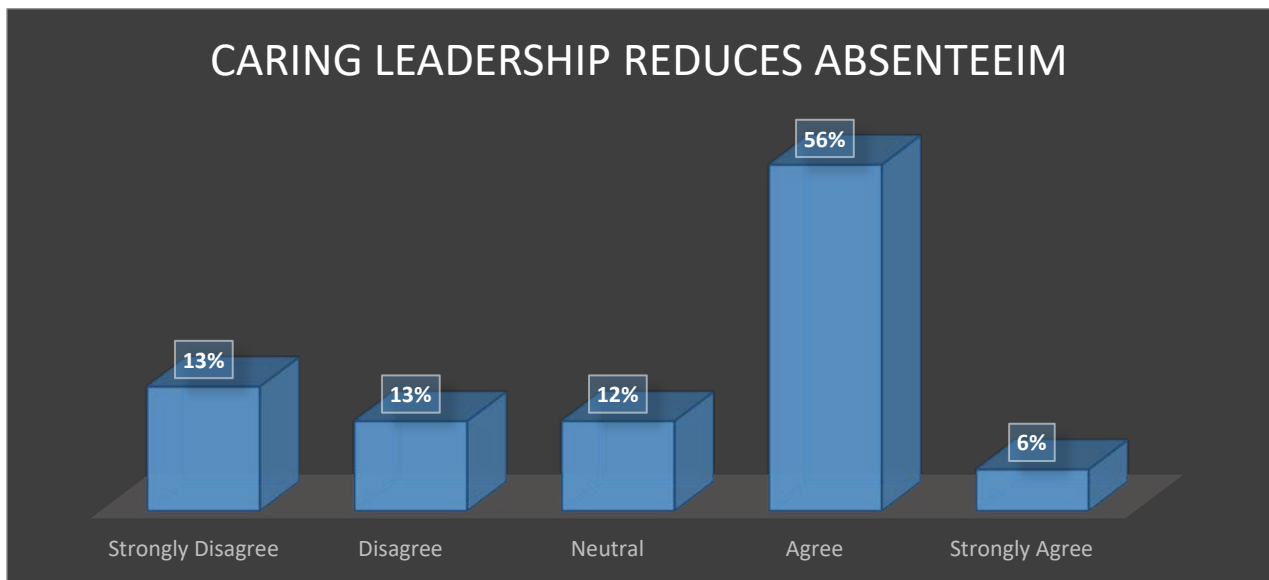


Figure 4.22 A caring leadership and absenteeism reduction

Figure 4.22, shows that 56 of the respondents' disagreed followed by 6% who strongly agreed. On the other hand, 26% disagreed to the statement while 12% gave a neutral

response. According Truman (2013) managerial or leadership expectations with regard to employee expectations and ensuring that there is a true match is important in establishing job satisfaction is critical in reducing employee absenteeism . Truman (2013) argue that a lack of leadership of the employees' real perceptions and feelings about the organization have fuelled absenteeism as opposed to reducing it”.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The focus of the chapter was to present the results obtained from the study as explained in chapter three. The chapter successfully presented the results under the respective objectives. The analysis and discussion were done attempting to interpret and link the findings to the literature that was reviewed in chapter two. The chapter however, began by reporting on response rate and Cronbach alpha values, which were deemed acceptable for the study. The next chapter documents the conclusions and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, results were presented, discussed and analysed. This chapter documents the conclusion and proceed to make recommendation drawn from the

conclusions. It is critical to note that the study conclusion were drawn from primary findings and to an extent literature that was reviewed.

The focus of the study was to investigate the perceptions of absenteeism on productivity and the DCT. The main problem was that absentee was on the increase ultimately affecting productivity at DCT which happens to be the main reason for organisational existence. To solve this issue the following objectives guided the study

- To establish the effect absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminals;
- To establish employee perceptions on the effect of absenteeism on productivity at the Durban Container Terminals;
- To establish the strategies to reduce absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminal; and
- To recommend to Durban Container Terminals Human Resource department appropriate ways of minimizing employee absenteeism

This chapter therefore presents the findings of the study based on, primary study, then draws conclusions. Finally the chapter makes recommendations and suggest the scope for further research.

5.2. FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE

5.2.1 Effect of absenteeism

According to Robbins and Judge (2014), absenteeism among manual workers means delayed production, lower quality levels, and disruption of workflow, low morale and general dissatisfaction, all of which lead to lower productivity. Goodman and Atkin (2014), also found that replacing an absent worker with a less skilled worker, either from within the organisation or outside, leads to a decline in productivity, and emphasise disciplinary action and an increase in workplace accidents among other negative impacts.

However, Robbins and Judge (2014) point out that absenteeism may have negative and positive consequences for an organisation. On the negative side, they also cite the impact of lost production and a reduction in work quality; on the positive, they mention the benefit that may be derived from a fatigued employee's absence when the nature of their work requires mental alertness (Robbins and Judge, 2014). Goodman and Atkin (2014) support this view, saying that the impact varies from case to case. While Coughlan (2014) does not mention any positive outcomes associated with absenteeism, she also agrees that the impacts are multifaceted, emphasising that they are not limited to production losses or inferior outputs – which may eventually translate into a potential loss of clients – but also have an immediate effect on an absentee's colleagues and managers. Coughlan (2014) opinion is borne out by a study where interviewees asserted that everyone, from co-workers to supervisors and departmental managers, who works with an absent employee, is affected by every incident of absence (McHugh, 2011).

5.2.2 Causes of absenteeism

Literature revealed a number of causes of employee absenteeism which include illness, family responsibilities, personal employee needs and family responsibilities as well as stress levels and toxic organisational culture.

According to Al-Fudail and Mellar (2018), “absenteeism from duty is largely a result of family responsibilities as employees try to balance work and family life. As part of family responsibilities, childcare and elderly care stood out and often compels workers to be absent from work as parents have no choice but to give priority to their children especially taking into account the cost of paying for a child caregiver is going up due the high demand of child care services (Al-Fudail and Mellar, 2018).

Literature also revealed that divorce within the family create a difficult scenario for those involved in divorce to the extent that they both cannot cope with work demands while dealing with divorce (Arnell and Brown, 2012). According to Arnell and Brown (2012), divorces are common across organisations and nations and they often negatively impact families in one way or the other and in most cases the proceedings take years to resolve

and over this period, those affected may end up absenting themselves from work without valid reason. Even after the divorce has ended, those affected are often emotional traumatised to the extent that they may need additional time off from work.

Personal needs also emerged as causes of for absenteeism. Thus, employees sometimes just absent themselves from work to pay attention to their private life demands which they may not need to explain to their employer (Al-fudail and Mellar 2018). Employee stress levels also emerged as one of the reasons for employee absenteeism is stress related cases of which depression is a major contributing factor. Many

Literature revealed that organisational culture causes absenteeism in one way or the other (Tepper *et al.* 2009). If an organization has a permissive culture regarding absence, there is more likely wood that employees will regard sick leave as a benefit they must enjoy and if they fail to take leave, they will lose it forever within a given year. If an unnecessary absence is managed by management employees will have to reconsider before abusive the leave (Chang *et al.* 2010:1272). In organisations that have a liberal sick leave as a benefit, there is a general sense that employees are encouraged to go on leave whether one is satisfied or dissatisfied with work.

5.2.3 Strategies to reduce absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminal

The literature reviewed in chapter two found several strategies through which organisations can deal with absenteeism in the workplace and these include disciplinary proceedings, employee assistance, organisational culture, child care support and proving incentives to employees.

According to Poirier (2013), organisations have the power to discipline employees who absent themselves from work without valid reasons. The disciplinary action is usually practiced case by case following the organisation's disciplinary code of conduct and this way employees may refrain from the practice of unlawfully absenting themselves from work. Some organisations question a worker after one incident in order to determine why the employee was absent while some punish the employee immediately and compel the employee to complete absent forms (Poirier, 2013).

Literature also showed that organisation can provide employee assistance programs to deal with absenteeism (Quinley, 2013). Employee assistance programs can be implemented to help workers deal with issues outside of work that employees bring to the workplace. Through employee assistance programs, employers give their employees support towards ensuring that their stay at work is not affected by issues such as child care, elderly care and their medical support and health issues.

Employers also believe that absenteeism can be reduced before it begins by making the workplace a positive and welcoming environment, hence a positive company culture helps to promote job satisfaction and job satisfaction is one of the most important factors in reducing absenteeism. Having clear expectations with regard to employee and company expectations and ensuring that there is a true match is important in establishing job satisfaction (Truman, 2013).

Literature revealed that employee incentive programs to help reduce absenteeism have been used in the business world for quite some time. Employers who use this approach confirm that their operations run smoothly and efficiently (Neuborne, 2013).

5.3 FINDINGS FROM PRIMARY RESEARCH

5.3.1 Findings aligned to research question 1: What is the effect of absenteeism on productivity at DCT?

This question sought to understand the effect of absenteeism on productivity at DCT. The findings arising from each revealed that employees perceive the following:

- Absenteeism lowers productivity as evidenced by 75% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Absenteeism lowers quality of service as evidenced by 74% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Absenteeism lowers quality of product as evidenced by 59% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Absenteeism increases financial loss as evidenced by 42% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Absenteeism increases administrative costs as evidenced by 73% of the participants who agreed to the statement.

5.3.2 Findings aligned to research question 2: What are the causes of absenteeism at DCT?

This question to establish the causes absenteeism at DCT. The findings arising from each question under revealed the following:

- Employee illness causes absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 75% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Toxic organizational culture causes absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 67% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Stress level cause absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 70% of the participants who agreed to the statement
- Family responsibilities cause absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 67% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Personal needs cause absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 46% of the participants who agreed to the statement
- Poor relations cause absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 47% of the participants who agreed to the statement.

5.3.3 Findings aligned to research question 3: What Strategies can be used to reduce absenteeism?

This research question sought to establish the strategies to reduce absenteeism at DC. The findings arising from each question revealed that employees perceive the following:

- Improving conditions of service reduces absenteeism as evidenced by 77% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Providing child care support reduces absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 73% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Improving organizational culture reduces absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 50% of the participants who agreed to the statement;
- Offering employee assistance does not reduce absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 42% of the participants who disagreed to the statement;
- Disciplinary action does not reduce employee absenteeism at DCT as evidenced by 55% of the participants who disagreed to the statement;
- A caring leadership does not reduce absenteeism at DCT as evidenced 62% of the participants who disagreed to the statement.

5.4 Conclusions

Drawing from the above findings, the study draws under this section in alignment with study objectives.

5.4.1 Conclusions aligned to question 1: What is the effect of employee absenteeism

Based on the findings, the study concludes that absenteeism;

- Lowers productivity, quality of service and quality of product; and
- Increases financial loss and administrative costs.

5.4.2 Conclusions aligned to question 2: what are the causes of absenteeism on productivity

Based on the findings, the study concludes that:

- employee illness and health in general at DCT is cause for concern as it influences absenteeism;
- Organisational culture is central to employee absenteeism at DCT;
- Family responsibilities also play a role in employee absenteeism at DCT;
- Personal needs of employees as well their relations with core workers and managers also play a role in absenteeism at DCT

5.4.3 Conclusions aligned to question 3: what strategies can be used to reduce absenteeism

Based on the findings, the study concludes that;

- Improving conditions of service and the organizational culture would reduce absenteeism;
- Providing child care support would reduce absenteeism;
- Offering employee assistance, disciplinary action and a caring leadership does not reduce absenteeism.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Recommendations aligned to objective 1: effect of employee absenteeism

Taking into account that employees negatively perceived absenteeism as the reason for lower productivity, poor quality of service and product, increase in losses, and the study recommends that;

- DCT should put in programs that minimizes absenteeism

5.5.2 Recommendations aligned to objective 2: The causes of absenteeism at DCT

Mindful of the finding that absenteeism at DCT is caused by several factors that include illness, toxic organizational culture, stress levees, family responsibilities, personal needs and poor relations amongst core workers, the study recommends DCT should provide the following:

- Health care programs within the organisation including clinics and medical aids insurance. The organization should employ dedicated nurses and medical doctors as permanent staff working 24/7 hours;
- Taking into account that organizational culture was found to be toxic, senior managers should undergo some training on how to foster an effective organizational culture that includes a learning organisation where employees are free to be part of the decision making process as through this way, the organizational culture will gradually change. This will also improve the relations amongst core-workers and managers.

5.5.3 Recommendations aligned to objective 3: Strategies to reduce absenteeism

Mindful of the finding that conditions of service, child care support, culture are potential strategies to reduce absenteeism, the study recommends that;

- DCT should re-assess the current conditions of service and move a step forward by improving issues such as salaries, allowances, transport benefit, leave, workload in order to motivate employees
- DCT should also establish its own child care centre close by taking into account the high number of employees employed by the organisation. These will assist employees who need child care support

Also taking account the finding that employee support, disciplinary action and a caring leadership have little help or does not help reducing absenteeism, the study recommends that;

- The employee assistance programs should be improved/enhanced as literature has proved that they are effective and the question that ponders remains why these programs are not effective only at DCT. This needs to be looked into and an upgrade of assistance programs should be done;
- The disciplinary procedure should be re-examined and there is need to remove the harsh stance in the disciplinary process as this may be de-motivational to employees;
- Genuine leadership which has employees at heart is recommended, thus leaders need to re-examine their ways and ensure that they serve their workforce from the bottom of their heart.

5.6 Scope for further research

The study was conducted at DCT and yet Transnet is such a larger organisation across the country. The study could be conducted in other provinces. It is also important to note that the study tapped into perceptions on the effect of absenteeism, the study recommends the need to actually look at actual effects as opposed to perceptions by gathering data on productivity levels

5.7 Chapter and study conclusion

The study sought to investigate the effect of absenteeism on productivity at DCT. This was achieved through the development of objectives and research questions which include establishing the effect and causes of absenteeism on productivity and the strategies to reduce absenteeism. Chapter one of the study introduced the study by presenting the background to contextualise the study, chapter two reviewed literature aligned to the study while chapter three discussed the research design and methodology. Chapter four discusses the results and linked them literature with the final chapter presenting the conclusions and recommendations. Based on the conclusions and recommendations made, it is clear that the study objectives have been achieved. Thus, this chapter concludes the study.

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Questionnaire

APPENDIX B: DRAFT COVERING LETTER

Dear Participant

I am a student of Masters Student at the Durban University of Technology. As part of the prerequisites to the completion of my program, a dissertation on management area must be submitted to the school. . The research title is, the effect of employee absenteeism and effect on productivity at Durban container terminals under the mentorship of Professor A Kader. Let me take this opportunity to inform you that the DCT has gradually experienced increasing employee absenteeism and employees, your contribution in this study plays a key role. The purpose of the study is to investigate the cause of absenteeism and the impact absenteeism has on productivity. Your participation will be very useful and appreciated.

Therefore, I have attached a questionnaire to be completed for the research study. The task will take approximately 20 minutes of your working time to attend to the questionnaires guided below. All the information you provide will be treated with highest order of confidentiality. If you have any enquiries regarding this survey, please contact me on **071 3923913**

Thank you for your participation.

Yours sincerely

Buyane Zondi

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey.

Please be advised that participation in this survey is strictly voluntary on your part and will have no effect on your business in the community. However, your participation will be appreciated. All information will be treated as confidential, no names will appear on the research and the research instruments will be discarded and shredded afterwards. As part of ethical consideration in ensuring that participants have given an informed consent, kindly sign below as a form of consenting and that you have not been forcefully subjected to participate in this research but by your willingness and optimum consent

Name :

Signature:

Thank you for your participation

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: Put an 'X' on the most appropriate answer
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Section A Demographic data					
1. Age					
21-30					
31-40					
41-50					
50+					
2. Gender				M	F
3. What is your race?					
African					
Coloured					
Indian					
White					
Other					
4. How long have you worked for DCT					
1-5 years					
6-10 years					
11-20 years					
20+ years					
Section B: To establish the effect absenteeism at the Durban Container Terminals					
	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)

5	Absenteeism lowers productivity in general.					
6	Absenteeism lowers the quality of service					
7	Absenteeism lowers the quality of product					
8	Absenteeism increases financial cost					
9	Absenteeism increases administrative costs					
10	Absenteeism creates conflict					
Section C: To establish causes of absenteeism on productivity at the Durban Container Terminals						
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
11	absenteeism is caused by employee illness					
12	absenteeism is caused by toxic organisational culture					

13	absenteeism is caused by poor working conditions					
14	absenteeism is caused by employee stress					
15	absenteeism is caused by increasing family responsibilities					
16	absenteeism is caused personal needs					
17	absenteeism is caused by poor relationship amongst co-workers					
18	absenteeism is caused by poor relationship with management					
Section D: Strategies to minimise employee absenteeism at DCT						
		Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
19	Improving conditions of service reduces employee absenteeism					
20	Providing care for children reduces employee absenteeism					

21	Improving organisational culture reduces employee absenteeism					
22	Offering employee assistance reduces absenteeism					
23	Disciplinary action reduces absenteeism					
24	Caring leadership reduces employee absenteeism					