EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs) IN ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM AT GUD HOLDINGS (PTY) LTD

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the
degree of Master of Management Sciences
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyse the perceptions of employees of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd does not have a formal Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in place to provide support to employees who may have personal problems. Hence, an EAP might be beneficial to GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd in reducing absenteeism and improving performance. This has resulted in motivation for the study. Furthermore, one of the objectives of this study was to explore the perceived causes of absenteeism at GUD Holdings. The research design adopted a quantitative approach using a questionnaire. Of the 260 questionnaires issued, 251 were returned, 1 of which was not completed, which made the response rate 96.5%. Data was analysed using the computerised Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27 for Windows).

This study concluded with the findings that emerged from the research. The findings revealed that there is a great need for an EAP at GUD Holdings. However, employees' knowledge and awareness of the EAP indicated that they understood the value of the Employee Assistance Programmes. This study revealed that employees at GUD Holdings are struggling with several personal problems, which are causing absenteeism. EAPs have demonstrated the capability to improve various outcome measures. Based on the findings, the implementation of EAP resources was recommended for GUD Holdings. Another recommendation to the management of GUD Holdings highlights the speedy implementation of an EAP based on high absenteeism levels and the findings which revealed that respondents showed interest in the Programme.

DECLARATION

I, Bertha Manvela DaSilva Olumene, declare that this dissertation is my own unassisted work. I have acknowledged all citations and references. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Human Resources in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other University.

_____

Bertha Manvela DaSilva Olumene

_____

Dr Pauline Ngo Henha /Eyono

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my late mother, who passed away just before my submission was due, for being there for me throughout the entire master's programme, offering me words of encouragement, prayer and unwavering support.

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I would like to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to the following people without whom this would not have been possible. They have contributed in different ways to make this research a success:

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- My partner for whom words cannot express his love and care.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The workplace has changed significantly over the past few years. Employee empowerment, technological advancements, increasing competitiveness and professional advancements have all combined to produce a new working reality that is drastically different from the one that existed previously. It is both ethical and a difficult business issue to assist employees in maintaining their health and well-being. Furthermore, challenges and rising productivity demands from companies lead to a slew of issues that employees must deal with. Siddiqui (2016:26) attests that the issues pertaining to work-life and employee job performance have been considered an essential matter to deal with.

The daily challenges confronting employees affect their productivity in the workplace. Likewise, regardless of their job category, gender or years of service and age, employees at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd may be affected by various challenges that not only affect them personally, but that also impact their work output. These challenges and the increasing productivity demand from employers contribute to a variety of problems being faced by employees. Several employers recognise that helping employees to deal with these challenges could lead to productivity enhancements. The workplace is well-positioned to assist individuals with their issues, according to Richmond, Pampel, Wood and Nunes (2017:178); whilst also enhancing employee self-confidence and performance. Siddiqui (2016:26) attests that those issues pertaining to work-life balance and employee job performance have been considered essential matters to consider. The majority of firms offer help through a formal participation technique that recognises and supports employees with a variety of personal and work-related concerns that might lead to absenteeism. Such services are frequently given by larger organisations, but not by small and medium businesses (SMEs), according to Altshuler, Berry, McIninch and Nayeem (2014: 48).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Human resources have long been viewed as a critical component of any business. Furthermore, according to Sands (2020:1), it is widely accepted that for an organisation to excel at what it does, it requires personnel. According to this viewpoint, employees in today's businesses are not just pieces of a system, but they are a driving force behind the company's success or failure (Naser and Mustafa, 2017: 4).

In this changing world, employers are pressed to succeed in a changing and increasingly competitive corporate environment. According to the GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd HR Board report presented in July (HR Board report, 2019), there is a high rate of absenteeism resulting in poor performance. Employee difficulties, according to Stoeber and Damian (2015:225), include (but are not limited to): health, marriage, family, finances, alcohol and/or drug usage, and emotional stress. Consequently, this may adversely affect employee work performance and increase absenteeism. In their research, Berry, Mirabito and Baun (2016:175) describe the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) as a workplace-based Programme that aims to assist businesses in dealing with productivity concerns. In addition to this, EAPs assist employees in identifying and resolving personal concerns. Furthermore, Ajala (2015:3) posits that the EAP will support an organisation in its wellness-related initiatives to ensure that work-related stress and diseases are prevented. GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd reported a 7% increase in its absenteeism rate in 2019. Therefore, this study assesses employee perceptions of the value proposition of EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) have grown rapidly around the world, and the number of medium to big businesses without EAPs is in the minority (Joseph, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2017:14).

1.3 TERMINOLOGY

The following section will define the concept of Employee Assistance Programme and Absenteeism.

1.3.1 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

An Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a work-based service that helps employers handle productivity concerns by assisting them in identifying, coping with and resolving issues that have a negative influence on productivity (Pescud, Teal, Shilton, Slevin, Ledger, Waterworth and Rosenberg, 2015:8). Simpson (2020:2) offers a similar description, stating that the EAP is a one-of-a-kind employee benefit that serves as an intervention Programme. It helps employees identify and overcome difficulties in a variety of areas of their lives, such as professional, financial, legal, emotional, marital or family concerns, substance misuse issues, and other personal issues.

1.3.2 ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is defined as a condition in which a person is unable to work (Vignoli, Guglielmi and Bonfiglioli 2016:23). Absenteeism occurs when an employee is absent from work for a short length of time. It is also the employee's illegal absence from work, and it involves coming late, departing early and taking extended tea or lunch breaks, amongst other things, according to Vignoli, Guglielmi and Bonfiglioli (2016:23). Lateness, absences from an employee's workstation and short-term absences from the workplace are all classified as absenteeism by Lokke (2016:5).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The EAP idea is extensively utilised to identify workplace Programmes that solve employee issues. It is defined by Newton, Hayday and Barkworth (2016:45) as a worksite Programme that assists in identifying and resolving employee problems that affect or may affect work performance. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a Programme meant to assist employees in resolving issues that are interfering with their ability to function at work. GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd does not have a formal EAP in place to provide support to employees who may have personal problems.

Hence, an EAP might be beneficial to GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd in reducing absenteeism and improving performance. For the past few years, absenteeism rates at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd have been above the set target of 4%. According to the GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd human resources records, an absenteeism rate of 6.9% was achieved in 2018 and 7% in 2019, which were both above the GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd set absenteeism target. In 2018, the GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd management team decided to lower absenteeism by introducing an initiative for recognising employees who have not been absent for the entire year by giving them a R1000 monetary voucher (GUD HR July Board Report, 2018). However, this initiative did not reduce the high absenteeism rate at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. Absenteeism, according to McCleary, Goetzel, Roemer, Berko, Kent and Torre (2017:256), can be handled by a targeted intervention Programme that focuses on individual workplace challenges. In addition, Allen and Mowbray (2016:323) believe that incidents such as inflation, divorce, death of a loved one, suicide and alcohol or drug abuse can also be critical to an employee's health, wellbeing and performance. Similarly, Cekiso and Terblanche (2015:160) argue that if an organisation wishes to preserve a competitive advantage, people need more help in the workplace to deal effectively with personal issues. In the same manner, Grobler, Bezuidenhout and Hyra (2014:165) emphasise that EAPs are widely regarded as the most effective tool for developing an integrated strategy to handling all of an employee's personal issues, including absenteeism.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to analyse employee perceptions of the value proposition of EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the concept of EAP and Absenteeism;
- To investigate the causes and prevalence of absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd;
- To understand the impact of absenteeism on employees, as well as on organisations;

- To explore and identify personal and work-related issues affecting GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees;
- To assess whether the EAP can assist GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees to deal with their personal and work-related issues;
- To assess the perceived value of the EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd;
- To investigate whether demographic variables (age, gender, position, etc.) affect employees' perceptions of the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism; and
- To provide recommendations based on the findings to the management of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the employee's understanding of the EAP?
- What are the causes and prevalence of absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd?
- How does absenteeism affect employees and the organisation?
- What are personal and work-related challenges facing employees at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd?
- Can an EAP help employees of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd deal with their personal and work-related problems?
- What are the perceptions of employees of the benefits of the EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd?
- Are the demographic profiles of employees at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd affecting their perceptions of the value proposition of EAP?
- What recommendations can be provided based on the findings to the management of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd?

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

High absenteeism is a major concern for many organisations. GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd has reported a high level of absenteeism over the past few years. Thus, this study endeavors to probe the causes and prevalence of high levels of absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

Moreover, given the effectiveness of EAPs in helping employees overcome personal and work-related issues that usually result in their failure to report to work (Joseph and Walker, 2017: 14; Milot, 2019:160), this study also adds to the body of research by gaining insights into how GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees perceive the value of EAP in addressing absenteeism. Additionally, the study's findings are used to make recommendations to the management of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd on how to reduce absenteeism levels.

1.9 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research study was limited to GUD branches in KwaZulu-Natal, namely Westmead, Prospecton and Pietermaritzburg.

1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section will provide a brief overview of the concept of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Benefits of EAP, Absenteeism, Causes of Absenteeism and Impact of Absenteeism on Organisations.

1.10.1 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP)

As the economic landscape persists in being gradually more competitive, employers are pressured to be successful. Companies are obliged to focus on bringing the most excellent product or service to the marketplace, but must also encourage a healthy and productive workforce. Furthermore, Letsoalo (2016:15) found that the EAP is seen as a workplace Programme aimed at supporting employees with their problems and assisting them to increase productivity and performance, as well as decrease absenteeism.

1.10.2 BENEFITS OF EAP

Both the employee and the employer can benefit from EAP services. There has been some data relating to the usefulness of EAPs in boosting employee and organisational outcomes, according to Singayaphi (2018:20). This will assist in enhancing employee morale and attitude, as well as productivity and work performance.

Benefits of EAP include: (i) decreased absenteeism, (ii) greater employee retention, (iii) improved morale, (iv) increased productivity and (v) a positive work environment.

1.10.3 ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is described as failing to show up for work, regardless of the reason (Evans-Lacko and Knapp, 2016:1525). Employees who are absent from work regularly pose a risk to the company. In their study, Senel and Senel (2015:1144) maintain that absenteeism is the absence of an employee from scheduled work. Badubi (2017:32) believes that absenteeism is every manager's nightmare. As a result, businesses should assess the severity of the problem and its impact on earnings. Furthermore, absence is bad for an organisation, according to Silpa and Masthanamma (2016:3). In other cases, however, failing to show up for work is preferable to having an ill or weary employee execute their duties. Moreover, Lynch and Bryan (2018:120) confirmed that illness and family responsibility are major causes of absenteeism. The above definitions of absenteeism relate to what is happening at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, where an employee will call the supervisor and report that he or she cannot come to work due to personal issues. The supervisor is therefore forced to find a replacement. Sometimes, employees who are off-duty must come and cover the shift of the sick employee, which creates unplanned overtime.

1.10.4 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

Professionals in the field of Human Resources Management agree that organisational factors are the major causes of workplace absenteeism (Cascio and Boudreau, 2016:241). Such organisational factors include job dissatisfaction; work-related stress; a lack of employee motivation; organisational culture and leadership; working conditions; environmental and personal factors such as psychological wellness, illness; and demographic characteristics (Sharma, Singh and Kishor, 2013:105; Joseph, 2015:76). Furthermore, harassment and bullying, stress and burnout, mental health problems, low morale, bereavement and illness are some of the challenges that employees face, which are all listed as additional causes of absence by Collier (2018:1).

1.10.5 IMPACT OF ABSENTEEISM ON ORGANISATIONS

Andrew (2017:84) discovered that employee absenteeism can damage productivity, economics and workplace morale in a study on the negative consequences of employee absenteeism in the workplace. As a result, the impact of absenteeism is a problem that organisations need to understand and address. Furthermore, some organisations may need to replace employees who are absent, thereby increasing costs while simultaneously putting pressure on other employees. According to Cushard (2017:8), the consequences of absenteeism include low morale amongst employees; frustrated employers; the non-achievement of targets; increased costs as well as workloads; loss of productivity and the attrition of skilled employees.

Similarly, according to Terblanche (2018:95), absence in the workplace causes a loss of production; increased labor expenses for replacement workers; increased administrative duties; lost morale; and increased stress amongst the remaining employees. Shabangu (2018:65), in a similar vein, believes that absenteeism is one of the toughest employee issues. Furthermore, Shabangu (2018:65) claims that employee tardiness and absenteeism are two of the costliest and most disruptive staff issues that businesses confront, both of which have a substantial impact on an organisation's productivity. Badubi (2017:35) goes on to say that, as a result of years of isolation and a lack of global competitiveness, South African enterprises are complacent about the importance and expense levels of absenteeism. The influence of absenteeism, according to Senel and Senel (2015:1011), can be seen at different levels in organisations, including organisational productivity, employee productivity and employee unions.

1.10.6 ABSENTEEISM AND THE EAP

EAPs utilise specialists to address employees' personal and work-related problems, thereby benefiting the employee (Hsu, Wang and Lan, 2020:938). Roche, Kostadinov, Cameron, Pidd, McEntee and Duraisingam (2018:169) outline that the aspects of EAPs, namely the identification, assessment and monitoring of employee concerns - including health, marital, family, financial, alcohol, emotional or other issues that may lead to absenteeism- can be beneficial to employees.

According to Connerley and Wu (2016:38), additional benefits of EAPs are the capability to improve employee wellbeing through cognitive, affective and psychomotor behaviour assessments. As a result, with suitable and effective EAPs, an organisation can touch the sentimental spaces of employees and bring out their best performance and reduce absenteeism.

A study conducted by Milot (2019:168) on the impact of a Canadian External Employee Assistance Programme on mental health and workplace functioning found that the value proposition of EAP is to increase job performance, reduce stress levels, resolve personal issues, improve financial situations and reduce absenteeism. Likewise, according to a study by George (2017:61) evaluating an Employee Assistance Programme related to substance abuse, the EAP aids an employee by quickly detecting and resolving difficulties that may be affecting their work performance; assisting the employee in preventing a further decrease in work performance; and re-establishing appropriate work performance levels. Furthermore, according to Joseph and Walker (2017:14), the EAP's value proposition aims to boost productivity; minimise absenteeism, sick leave and accidents; and improve employee morale by offering a structure that allows employees to address their psycho-social lifestyles.

Otenyo and Smith (2017:20) are of the opinion that the broader aim of the EAP is to create a more productive workforce and reduce absenteeism. As a result, EAPs can add value to the organisation by helping employees remain productive at work. Thus, Bophela and Govender (2016:506) affirm that EAPs reduce absenteeism by dealing with stressors associated with work-life, family life, finances, relationships and even drug addiction.

Due to high absenteeism rates, lateness and early absences from work, a disgruntled employee has a negative impact on the company. Regular conflicts with co-workers, a tendency to cause more injuries as a result of negligence, and a tendency to spoil and break equipment as a result of neglect are all common difficulties seen with a disturbed employee in the workplace. The overall work performance of a disturbed employee is low, impacting the organisation's total expense (Van der Linde, 2018:65).

According to Bodin (2018:148), 18 percent of the workforce is affected by personal difficulties that can affect work performance; 12 percent is affected by substance misuse, and 6 percent is affected by emotional problems. In his study, Ladd (2017:231) reveals that the EAP helps employees to identify and resolve personal and work-related concerns that affect performance.

1.11 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale of the research is the reason for conducting the study. GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd has no formal Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in place to provide support to employees who may have personal problems (Richmond, Pampel, Wood and Nunes, 2017:172). Therefore, high levels of stress and pressure prevail in the working environment at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, resulting in high absenteeism. Hence, the findings of this study would assist employees in analysing the value proposition of an EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

1.12 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This section describes how the study is conducted, as well as how the data is collected and analysed. The research design, data collection, measurement device and data analysis are all covered.

1.12.1 PRIMARY DATA

When a researcher is conducting an empirical study or conducting fieldwork, primary data is acquired. Austin and Sutton (2015:226) state that primary data is data which has been collected for the first time, such as surveys, questionnaires and interviews. For this study, primary data was collected from GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees in the form of questionnaires. A self-administered questionnaire is less time consuming and less expensive than other forms of questionnaires (Tetali, Edwards and Murthy, 2015:92). Hence its usage in this study.

1.12.2 SECONDARY DATA

Secondary sources, according to Sekaran (2016:75), are ones that do not have a direct physical tie to the event being investigated.

Secondary data analysis allows the researcher to save time that would otherwise be spent gathering information. The fact that the majority of the background work has already been completed is an obvious benefit of using secondary data. Literature reviews, case studies, published materials, the internet and certified publications are only a few examples (McClendon, 2015:75). For this study, secondary data was sourced from articles, case studies, published texts, the internet and accredited journals.

1.12.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is designed to give an acceptable framework for a study, as well as determine how relevant information for a study will be acquired, according to Sileyew (2019:3). For this study, a quantitative method was applied because it saves time and resources (Daniels and Minot, 2019:32). Eyisi (2016:94) states that quantitative research focuses on figures and numbers in the collection and analysis of data.

1.12.4 TARGET POPULATION

A target population, according to Verma (2019:335), is a collection or set of components that the researcher wants to learn more about. The term 'population' refers to a collection of people or items with similar characteristics that the investigator wants to look into. In this study, the target population (N) is the total number of 1800 GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees working in various branches in KwaZulu-Natal. These employees occupy various position levels within the organisation. This gives broader insight into the perceptions of employees of the value proposition of EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

1.13 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

As mentioned above, a random sampling method was employed in this study. The sample is 317, but due to Covid-19 restrictions and site accessibility restrictions, only 260 questionnaires were distributed to employees from various GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd branches in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher decided with Supervisors and Managers to ascertain the best time for the researcher to go on-site.

Furthermore, the researcher was granted permission to go to separate departments in order to provide an explanation of the study and the ethical considerations prior to distributing questionnaires (see appendix D). Moreover, in order to ensure a high response rate, a cover letter was included with each questionnaire to give participants information on the study and to clarify the purpose of the questionnaire (See appendix E). In addition, a copy of the letter of consent from the DUT research committee was attached to each questionnaire (see appendix B).

1.13.1 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A sampling technique is a process of selecting a smaller group of the population and is used to make interpretations about the population or to make simplifications in relation to existing theory (Taherdoost, 2016:20). Usually, there are two types of sampling, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

- **PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

In probability sampling, each person in a population must have an equal chance of being chosen for a study, according to Pace (2020:2), and the researcher must be informed of this likelihood. On the other hand, according to McEwan (2020:240), probability sampling methods are more time-consuming and expensive than non-probability sampling approaches.

- **NON- PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

According to Nayeem and Huma (2017:3), in non-probability sampling, the researcher does not begin with the entire sampling frame, therefore some people have no chance of being chosen.

As a probability sampling method, random sampling was used in this investigation. Every person in the population has an equal chance of getting chosen as a subject under this procedure. It is appropriate because it reduces unfairness by giving each element an equal chance of being chosen, and it is less expensive, complicated and time-consuming to implement.

1.13.2 SAMPLE SIZE

A sample, according to Oribhabor and Anyanwu (2019:49), is a group of comparatively lower numbers of persons chosen from a population for research reasons. The study was conducted on employees from different branches of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd in KwaZulu-Natal. The sample (n) for this study is 317 out of a total population of 1800 (N). The sample was calculated based on a scientific table for sample selection proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (2016:608), which stipulates that if the target population is 1800, the sample should be 317.

1.14 MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Permission to conduct research was acquired in writing from the CEO of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd (see appendix C). The covering letter (see appendix E) and a closed-ended structured questionnaire (see appendix A) were used to collect data from the selected employees. Additionally, a Five-Point Likert scale format was used to examine how strongly the subjects agree or disagree with the statements (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015:276). The questionnaire comprised five sections.

1.15 PILOT TESTING

The goal of a pilot test, according to Cadete (2017:92), is to assess the feasibility of the items on the questionnaire in order to ensure that there is no doubt or prejudice and that the measurement instrument is accurate and can be adequately changed for data collection. Furthermore, a pilot test is useful in identifying problems before the data is collected. The researcher conducted a pilot test on fifteen randomly selected employees of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd from different sites. However, they were not included in the sample of 260 respondents that were in the study.

1.16 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The underlying vital factor of quality is at the heart of any research. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015:196), research must satisfy the "how do I know" test, which requires that the findings be tested and scrutinized. The findings must be credible and valid in order to withstand testing and inspection.

1.16.1 VALIDITY

Heale and Twycross (2015:66) postulate that validity is the degree to which an instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure. The results will be meaningless if they cannot be used to answer the research question, which is the main aim of the study. In this study, the researcher began by initiating a pilot test that exposed limitations in the questionnaire, which was modified accordingly. To establish the study's validity, Exploratory Factor Analysis using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extraction method and Varimax rotation on statements were used to evaluate the questionnaire's appropriateness.

1.16.2 RELIABILITY

The level of confidence that may be placed in data received via the use of an instrument is known as reliability, and it refers to the degree to which any measuring equipment compensates for random error (Mohajan, 2017:61). Furthermore, reliability is critical because it determines if the study meets its objectives. To ensure the reliability of the study, the items of the questionnaire were clearly phrased and refined. In addition, the questionnaire ensures consistency through pilot testing. In order to maintain the study's neutrality, the researcher made sure that no leading questions were asked. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was also evaluated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha test.

1.17 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Based on the literature reviewed, the researcher created and employed a questionnaire as a data collection tool. Respondents provided information on their own experiences, knowledge and awareness by answering questions on the questionnaire. Questionnaires, checklists and indexes are frequently used in quantitative data gathering procedures (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport, 2015:198). For this study, the researcher used questionnaires to obtain data in order to analyse the perceptions of employees of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing a bsenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

1.18 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Face-to-face, postal, telephone, group and computer-assisted survey technologies can all be used to collect data, according to Maree (2016:48). The data for this study is collected using a standardized closed-ended questionnaire (see appendix A). A survey questionnaire, according to Maree (2016:49), should be developed in such a way that large-scale quantitative data can be traced. Permission to conduct research was acquired in writing from the CEO of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This facilitated the processes of data gathering. Arrangements were also established with the supervisors and managers to determine the optimum time for the researcher to visit the location. Prior to distributing questionnaires, the researcher was permitted to visit each department and discuss the project and ethical considerations. The researcher personally distributed 260 (n) questionnaires to employees (all categories) from three different sites on different days and collected them the following day to accommodate the night shift. Of the 260 questionnaires distributed, 250 questionnaires were correctly filled out, returned, analysed, interpreted and the response rate was 96.5%.

1.19 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data was collected and analysed using statistical techniques and utilising SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 27 for Windows. Statistical approaches, according to Maree (2016:84), can be divided into two categories: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In this study, descriptive statistics summarised the quantitative data and were presented by means of frequency tables, while inferential statistics were used to interpret the sample findings. ANOVA is an inferential statistical test that was used to examine the demographic variables of respondents such as their age, gender, marital status, education level, length of service and job category.

1.20 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The covering letter (see appendix E) was sent to respondents to emphasise that the information gathered in this study would only be used for statistical purposes and that no identities of employees would be disclosed in the final report.

Furthermore, by eliminating the respondents' names from the questionnaire, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Respondents had the right to respond to the questionnaire in their own time, with no force from the researcher. Anonymity was ensured via the covering letter (see appendix E) to the questionnaire, which included clear instructions, rules and a commitment. Furthermore, neither the researcher nor the users of the results can link a specific response to a specific responder. For the researcher, confidentiality is an ethical requirement and any information acquired in conjunction with the study will be kept confidential.

1.21 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study is broken down into five sections, each of which is briefly discussed below. The first chapter introduces the study's context. A summary of the theoretical framework, as well as an appraisal of the literature and its relevance to the study, are presented in chapter two. The technique used in the study is described in chapter three, which includes the selection of the research instrument, sampling, data collection methods, and the study's reliability and validity. The outcomes of the fieldwork, as well as an analysis and interpretation of the data acquired from the interviews, are presented in chapter four. The fifth chapter gives a summary of the previous chapters, as well as the study's conclusions and suggestions.

1.22 SUMMARY

This introductory chapter highlighted the study challenge's main goal and objectives, research questions, justification and background. The second chapter will be a review of the literature in connection with the research goals and questions mentioned earlier. The EAP concept, absenteeism conceptualization, and EAP and absenteeism are all examined in greater depth in the literature study.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Organisations are faced with rapid, considerable and extensive changes, which are determined by factors such as customer demands, changes in technologies and growing competition. As a result, both employees and organisations find themselves pressurised. This pressure leads to unproductive outcomes that affect the entire workplace. Hence, employees will require assistance in dealing with these expectations.

According to Cekiso and Terblanche (2015:155), if an organisation wants to preserve a competitive advantage, individuals need more help in the workplace to cope effectively with personal concerns. As a result, businesses are gradually realising the benefits of EAPs in reducing employee absenteeism through improving life-management knowledge and abilities. As a result, EAPs are the most effective instrument for developing an integrated strategy for dealing with all of an employee's personal issues (Grobler, Joubert and Van Niekerk, 2014:56). Jackson and Fransman (2018:12) agree with Carter Schultz (2017:76) that employee wellness is important when an organisation is trying to reduce absenteeism. Employees today are faced with numerous personal problems, namely family problems, life-changing situations, emotional difficulties, illness, separation and grief, as well as managing work and family life, which are all difficulties that need to be addressed (DeSalvo, O'Carroll, Koo, Auerbach and Monroe, 2016:621).

To fully understand the concept of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), it is necessary to explore their background, objectives, implementation, benefits to the organisation as well as to employees, the models underpinning their service delivery and their value in addressing absenteeism. The above aspects are covered in the subsequent sections.

2.2 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs) DEFINED

An Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a support system for employees that is rooted in the workplace. The EAP, according to Maseko (2018:20), is a professional examination and referral or short-term counselling service for workers who have alcohol, drug or mental health issues that are interfering with their employment, as discovered in a comparative study between Employee Assistance Programmes and Occupational Social Work. EAP is defined by the Employee Assistance Professional Association (EAPA, 2018:5) as services provided by businesses to their employees to aid them in overcoming personal concerns that may have a negative influence on their productivity. According to the Employee Assistance Society of North America, an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is an employer-sponsored programme aimed at relieving and assisting in the removal of a variety of workplace difficulties (EASNA, 2016:7). It offers screening, assessments, brief interventions, referrals and case management for issues arising from personal or work-related situations. Furthermore, an EAP is a work-related participation Programme that employs behavioural science information and methods to address various work-related issues that negatively impact job performance, usually at the individual employee level (Lefakane, 2016:20).

'Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)' is a term used in this study to describe employees who are experiencing work-related challenges.
A = Assistance in the form of counselling, training and referrals; and
P = Programme, which includes intervention activities.

Organisations are becoming more conscious of issues connected to employee health, according to Kenny (2014:86). Therefore, an EAP is both an employee perk and a means of boosting employee productivity by minimising personal difficulties that may negatively affect an employee's job performance. Health and wellness programmes employ a variety of approaches to achieve similar goals, such as lowering expenses associated with employee absenteeism, poor productivity and risky work practices.

As a result, numerous programmes, such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), have been implemented to address workplace wellness issues (Compton and McManus 2015:34). Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) were created in response to the increasing economic, behavioural, mental and social challenges that employees bring to work (Tromp, 2015:15). Employee Assistance Programmes have also been formed in the workplace as a result of the South African Labour Relations Act (No 66 of 1995) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (No 85 of 1993). Employees with substance abuse problems bring a slew of personal issues into the workplace, so there should be a means to manage them instead of terminating their employment. Substance misuse has been on the rise in South Africa, according to Employee Wellness Programmes (Harker 2015:5). As a result, Employee Assistance Programmes in the Workplace are assumed to be processes or involvements that that organisations do to aid employees with substance abuse issues.

2.3 INTRODUCTION TO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (EAPs)

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) were developed in the USA in the 1940s with their focus on the problems of alcohol abuse (Masi and Carlson, 2015:196). In the mid-1970s, the evolution of work-based human services from an intervention approach focusing on troublesome employees progressed (Arthur, 2016:22). According to Maiden, Atridge and Herlihy (2015:35), depression, family troubles, stress and marital problems were detected after referrals were made following a drop-in job performance and an increase in absenteeism. Thus, the Employee Assistance perception was developed to comprise a wider approach.

Occupational Alcohol Programmes (OAPs) were the forerunners of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), which were started as informal programmes by recovering alcoholics who attended Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) seminars and meetings and were able to conquer their drinking issues (Evelyn and Michelle, 2019:4).

Many businesses realised in the 1940s that treating employees with alcohol problems and allowing them to return to work may help them overcome their difficulties. Employers realised that if employees continued to abstain from alcohol, their work productivity and personal life satisfaction would improve (Sandys, 2015:2) The National Council on Alcoholism's (NCA) Labour Management Committee collaborated with many enterprises, unions and government organisations to establish multiple OAPs in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Sandys 2019:2). The programmes were digested and institutionalised over time, and business leaders and managers finally embraced them. In the 1960s, OAPs shifted their attention from recognising the signs and symptoms of alcoholism to finding issues with work performance in general. The majority of individuals applauded the change because poor job performance carries less stigma than drinking. Superiors were growing more adept at detecting performance difficulties and were well-versed in recognising and documenting symptoms (for example, excessive absenteeism). Employees were having more problems and needed help for reasons other than alcohol-related issues, as seen by the shift in focus to job performance. Modern Employee Assistance Programmes were born as a result of this realization (Roche, Kostadinov, Cameron, Pidd, McEntee and Duraisingam, 2018:169).

Senator Harold Hughes, a recovered alcoholic who advocated for alcoholism research, was the driving force behind the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1970, sometimes known as the Hughes Act. The act established a comprehensive federal programme to combat alcohol misuse and alcoholism prevention and treatment. The Act was the next major step forward in the field of employee assistance (EA). In 1971, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) was founded, and many alcohol-related programmes in both private and public organisations were developed. The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) (later renamed the Association of Labor and Management Administrators and Consultants on Alcoholism [ALMACA]) established the EA (Employee Assistance) field in 1974 to enhance knowledge of and access to EAPs, ALMACA published a directory of EAP professionals.

Employee assistance is being provided in a thorough and extended manner. Individual psychological illnesses such as depression and anxiety, marital or family issues, work stress, financial and legal concerns, as well as other difficulties are all treated by EAPs. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are designed to provide a wide range of services to employees/clients and to encourage early participation in the programme (before a person's issues become chronic and potentially less curable). Alcoholism is an issue that is no longer often discussed, yet it does exist.

2.4 A BRIEF HISTORY OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs) IN SOUTH AFRICA

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are a relatively recent concept in South Africa. Social workers and psychologists offered EAPs to South African businesses, which were based on US models (Maseko, 2018:22). In 1992, South Africa published the first notable series of articles on the emergence of EAPs. Employee Wellness Programmes, according to Mojapelo (2018:29), began in South Africa in the 1930s, with roots in the discipline of Occupational Social Work, which grew out of the welfare system and the apartheid government. Thus, EAPs were recognised in South Africa for various motives, including trying to find different ways of reducing absenteeism and supporting migrant employees with social-related problems associated with them being away from home. Therefore, in the South African situation, EAPs arose out of a requirement for organisations to support employees with alcohol difficulties. According to Metsing (2015:17), South African EAPs arose primarily as a result of changing social and regulatory conditions in the workplace.

South Africa, like many other developing countries, is not exempt concerning issues in the workplace and Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) will undoubtedly benefit a country like South Africa, where employees are subjected to several pressures such as the effect of diversity challenges, unemployment and poverty. Thus, the idea and practice of EAPs are vital in tackling workplace issues.

2.5 CONCEPTUAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs)

Every business owes it to its employees to help them with personal concerns. In both the public and commercial sectors, the protection of employee's rights in the workplace is firmly emphasised in South African legislation (Kenny, 2014:17). Employers have realised that their employees' problems have a substantial influence on their productivity and absenteeism, and they believe that introducing EAPs will help to improve employee well-being. An effective EAP can help companies respond to their employees' wants and needs in a proactive and reactive manner (Kenny, 2014:17).

South Africa (SA) currently lacks an EAP Act. Several legislative Acts, on the other hand, constitute the driving force behind EAP implementation in South Africa. These acts will be discussed in the following paragraphs as follows:

- The SA Constitution (Act 108 of 1996);
- The Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993);
- The Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998); and
- The Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995).

2.5.1 THE SA CONSTITUTION (ACT 108 OF 1996)

The Republic of South Africa's Constitution is regarded as the country's supreme law, offering a framework for human rights, employment, labour relations and good practices, as well as a legislative framework. Litigation has become more likely as the EAP industry has grown, and EAP consultants, companies and clients all have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with appropriate regulations to ensure legal compliance.

In addition, everyone has the right to fair labour practices, according to Section 23 of the Constitution. When construed regarding EAPs, this clause can imply that dismissing an employee for poor job performance without first conducting a thorough investigation is unacceptable. As a result, this could be linked to an unjust labour practice.

Furthermore, section 24(a) of the Constitution provides that "everyone has the right to an environment that is not injurious to his or her health or well-being, among other things". Everyone has the right to healthcare, according to section 27(1) (a) of the Constitution. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a division of the Human Resource Directorate that was created at the workplace to ensure that all employees are aware of their rights.

2.5.2 THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT (ACT 85 OF 1993)

This Act mandates that businesses provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment for their employees. Furthermore, the act assures that employees are protected from hazards to their health and safety posed by other employees' actions. EAPs try to follow the legal requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) as they try to support employees and their relatives in dealing with their personal issues. Although most organisations have departments dedicated solely to OHS, incidents of employees getting hurt at work continue to occur. The purpose of the EAP service is to help firms strike a balance between legal obligations and improving or maintaining their value standards.

2.5.3 THE EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT (ACT 55 OF 1998)

"The Employment Equity Act is aimed at addressing the socio-political and economic imbalances of the past through the promotion of equal opportunities; the elimination of unfair discrimination against employees in the workplace; and the implementation of affirmative action measures to redress past inequalities" (Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998). The Code of Good Practice on HIV/AIDS and employment stipulated in Section 54 of the Act supports the implementation of policies that impact this pandemic confronting South Africa (Metsing, 2015:23). The overview of the support programme protects employees from unfair discrimination based on family responsibilities, ethical or social origin, HIV, drug and alcohol testing in the framework of an EAP. The Employment Equity Act's recognition of disabled people's right to work includes the EAP's goals of accommodating individuals with disabilities and ensuring that support programmes are in place (Metsing, 2015:23).

2.5.4 THE LABOUR RELATIONS ACT (ACT 66 OF 1995)

This Act's goal is to promote and regulate workers' fundamental rights to fair labour practices, as provided in the Constitution. The Act also emphasises that personal difficulties should be examined before terminating employees. The employer must show that corrective processes, such as professional counselling and assistance, were provided to employees, were available to them, and were in place for them to correct their behaviour. According to the Act, employees have the right to private and confidential processes if they give informed agreement to the dissemination of information. For this reason, as part of an EAP advisory group, EAP consultants might work with the union to identify instances of unfair labour practices. Managers often assume that employees comprehend the procedures and processes used to meet performance standards, which are usually written in ambiguous terms that employees cannot understand. This undeniably creates poor performance and increases absenteeism which can lead to disciplinary action. To avoid this, an employee with poor performance might be referred to the EAP, where the cause of the problem can be determined and the individual has given appropriate advice (Leornard, 2019:76). Besides the above legislation, it is also important to discuss the objectives of EAP services as currently implemented in the South African context.

2.6 THE OBJECTIVES OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs)

Each organisation implements EAPs with a specific purpose. It is therefore essential to develop the Human Resource Management practices of organisations in order to maximise the individual and group ability to reach these organisational objectives and personal goals. Employers are currently concerned about their employees' well-being because it affects productivity and work effectiveness. In this case, EAPs are created with the goal of assisting employees in resolving issues and reducing absenteeism. Jones, Molitor and Reif (2018:37) contend that the objectives of EAPs include providing a beneficial counselling service for both employees and employers.

Additionally, EAPs assist in retaining valued managers and employees with skills and experience before their personal issues become a matter of disciplinary hearings or discharges. Jones, Molitor and Reif (2018:37) further state that EAPs improve work performance and reduce absenteeism, as well as enhance morale and strengthen the bond between management and employees. As a result, employees are more likely to feel at ease in addressing any challenges or personal difficulties they may be experiencing.

According to Zhang (2015:142), Employee Assistance Programmes are designed to deal with a large variety of topics that may be encountered in the workplace. Relationships, health, trauma, substance misuse, gambling and other addictions, financial troubles, despair, anxiety and psychiatric concerns are some of the problems and issues that people face. Kenny (2014:34) postulates that there are three sets of objectives that employers intend to achieve, namely:

- To conform to the responsibilities and common law duty of care;
- To offer and support the well-being of employees; and
- To retain employees and improve production.

In the same way, in a study on factors promoting in-house EAPs, Mothiba (2018:52) identified five objectives of an EAP, namely:

- To identify causes of absenteeism;
- To identify employees who are experiencing personal, health or work-related issues that are affecting their job performance;
- Encouraging troublesome employees to seek and accept appropriate assistance;
- Assisting managers and staff in increasing productivity; and
- Addressing underlying workplace pressures.

Similarly, as a programme, the EAP is meant to assist both employees and employers in addressing their challenges to reduce absenteeism and improve work performance.

2.7 REASONS FOR IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs) IN ORGANISATIONS

In a world that is becoming more competitive and evolving socially and economically, employers are under pressure to succeed. The private sector, in particular, relies on its employees to be the primary source of service delivery to the general public. Furthermore, not only must employers endeavour to deliver a service of value to the community, but they must also develop a healthy and productive staff. Usually, troubled employees bring their personal problems to the workplace. As a result, employees can appear as tardy, short-tempered, missing targets and appointments, as well as causing accidents. Therefore, most organisations have found that EAPs can benefit employees to overcome personal problems that affect their occupations, as well as their lives and work environment.

There are a variety of reasons why more and more businesses are implementing EAPs. However, the main reasons are high absenteeism and the poor work performance of employees. Thus, workplace concerns that contribute to employee absences should be investigated by employers. Workplace stress can directly affect employee health, given that high levels of sick leave and absenteeism may be indicative of problems that already exist, according to Dipela's (2016:24) study on measuring the effectiveness of an EAP. Furthermore, employers feel that by providing support to employees, they will save money, and as a result, employees will establish trust in such organisations since they would know that the company cares about their well-being, as per Kenny (2014:29). Moreover, EAPs are not only created to assist employees in resolving professional concerns but they are also geared towards assisting employees in overcoming personal issues. Although most EAPs offer a wide range of services, they normally refer employees to other specialists or agencies that can provide further or extended care.

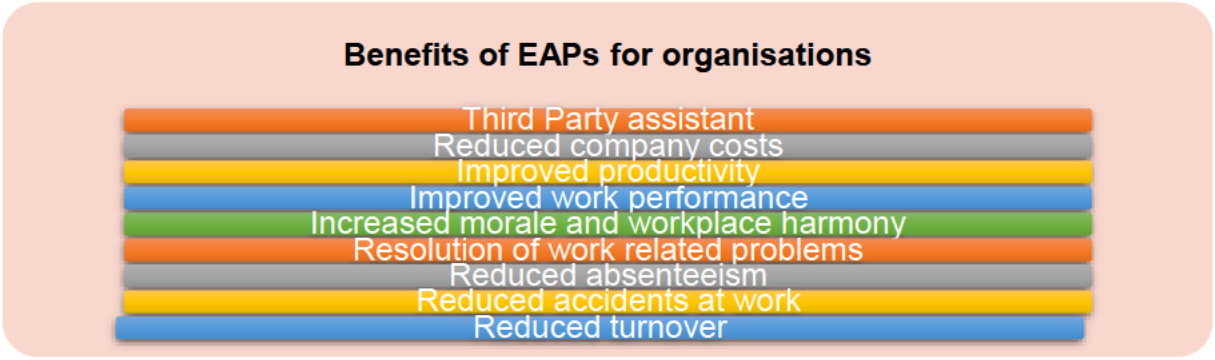
According to Kenny's (2014:30) study on employer and employee perceptions of the necessity for an EAP, EAPs have grown in popularity because they boost profitability by lowering absenteeism, employee turnover, accidents and medical claims.

EAPs, according to Kenny (2014:31), are a valuable resource for both employers and employees, owing to their differing expectations. As a result, it is critical that the employer has a motivated team of employees who contribute to the company's success. The EAP is a structure that a company can utilize to help troublesome employees. Its implementation shows employees that their boss cares about them and is prepared to go above and beyond to help them. Based on the reasons for establishing EAPs listed above, it is clear that organisations are moving towards deploying EAPs for a variety of reasons and causes.

2.8 BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs) FOR ORGANISATIONS

Organisations and employees are the two significant beneficiaries of an EAP. From an organisation's viewpoint, EAPs help to improve performance and reduce absenteeism. Menco, Stidsen and McPherson (2015:7) outline various benefits of implementing EAPs in organisations. These benefits are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 2.1 – BENEFITS OF EAPS FOR ORGANISATIONS



Source: Menco, Stidsen and McPherson (2015:8)

Menco, Stidsen and McPherson (2015:8) state the following as some of the benefits of EAP for organisations:

- ***Reduced absenteeism*** – An EAP encourages employees to deal with problems that are left untreated, as well as problems that can worsen with disastrous consequences, like an employee staying away from work;
- ***Improved work performance*** - Access to an EAP provides a safe, confidential environment to understand and resolve problems that might influence an employee's performance at work; and
- ***Increased morale and workplace harmony*** - Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) can assist problematic employees by providing support as well as a forum to discuss their problems. As a result, the employee's stress levels are reduced, which has a favourable impact on co-workers. Employees become less engaged at work, according to Cantwell (2017:5), when they are preoccupied with personal difficulties. Employees may also start to use more sick days to cope. These absences can have serious consequences for an organisation. Therefore, EAPs assist in decreasing absenteeism. Likewise, Rabha (2020:3) attests that to lessen absenteeism, organisations can implement EAPs where employees can raise their fears and concerns. The implementation of EAPs will not only help automate the process, but it will also help the organisation in problem-solving every employee's issue, thereby helping employees in every step, whenever needed, and maintaining their well-being.

Bajorek and Kinder (2017:3) assert that when employees are facing personal issues, it is expected that their work will suffer, and the consequence is often a drop-in productivity at work, as well as financial losses to organisations. Therefore, EAPs are intended to reduce the influence that social and psychological problems have on employees to decrease absenteeism and improve employee performance. Moreover, employers can provide assistance to resolve personal issues before they have serious consequences for employees' health, family or jobs (Cantwell, 2017:7). Joseph and Walker (2017:13) state that EAPs are external services that focus on connecting employees with suitable services according to their needs. As a result, an effective EAP improves employee morale at the workplace, at the same time confirming that employees can perform at a required standard set by employers.

Furthermore, EAPs analyse individual employee needs, direct employees to appropriate resources, and give employees and their families confidential access to professional health care, according to Joseph and Walker (2017:14). Richmond, Pampel, Wood and Nunes (2017:152) indicate that absenteeism costs company's money yearly. In due course, persistent absenteeism can bring the business down. For this reason, EAPs intend to offer a variety of prevention and cure options for employees and their families. These covers decrease the number of times employees take off work. Jones, Molitor and Reif (2019:1750) agree that a high staff turnover rate may be highly costly to an organisation. As a result, by addressing work-related and personal stress, EAPs are able to reduce employee absenteeism. Employee Assistance Programmes can also increase morale and business support, ensuring that employees are cared for and retained. Attridge (2019:628) concludes that work performance is frequently affected by stress and personal problems. EAPs deal with employees' personal issues and assist in resolving them. Therefore, this means fewer faults at work, a decrease in absenteeism and an overall increase in work performance. Attridge (2019:629) further attests that those employees who often have trouble with concentration and physical function can be very risky in any situation. Hence, EAPs are established to avoid personal issues from recurring. For this reason, Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) look after employees' mental health and abilities, ensuring that they can perform at their best.

2.9 BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs) FOR EMPLOYEES

The primary motivation for implementing an EAP in the workplace is to support employees who are coping with personal and work-related issues and to aid them in resolving those issues. Employees frequently find it difficult to admit that they require assistance. Most cultural stereotypes think that people manage their own problems without the assistance of others, and these beliefs cause problematic employees to be hesitant to seek help. When an employer recommends an employee to an EAP for help, the person feels more comfortable opening up to strangers.

The EAP's goal is to provide confidential support to workers and their immediate families who are experiencing or may be experiencing major personal or work-related challenges. This assistance is provided by identifying and resolving productivity concerns caused by individuals dealing with personal problems. Menco, Stidsen and McPherson (2015:42) posit the following as some benefits of EAPs for employees, as highlighted in Figure 2:

- ***Workplace personality conflicts*** - EAPs can connect employees with specialists to offer recommendations and advice on how to cope with difficult co-workers and resolve difficult situations;
- ***Mental health issues*** - An EAP can connect employees with the right resources to seek help; and
- ***Grief assistance*** - An EAP can rapidly offer employees the right resources to get them on the path to healing.

FIGURE 2.2 – BENEFITS OF EAPS FOR EMPLOYEES

Source: Menco, Stidsen and McPherson (2015:42)

Handrick (2018:3) believes that through the EAP, employees can seek advice and recommendations on how to deal with a challenging boss or co-workers, wherever there seem to be workplace personality conflicts. A study by Manganyi (2015:41) on the utilisation of EAP services by employees reported a higher absence from work among smokers. Contrarily, according to a study conducted by George (2017:54) on an evaluation of the EAP connected to substance misuse, about 10% of the working population suffers from alcoholism.

Likewise, Bophela and Govender (2015:509) contend that the EAP advises on how to deal with employees suffering from drug addiction. According to Handrick (2018:4), the EAP assists employees with affective disorders including depression, anxiety and anger management, as well as any other needs that an employee or their family members may have. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) can also help employees who have recently lost a loved one, as well as those who have lost a co-worker or have been through a traumatic event at work, such as a robbery or shooting (Kreider, 2019:3). Furthermore, many employees who go through a divorce, child custody, marriage and financial issues benefit from EAPs in dealing with all these issues (Pradhan and Jena, 2016:15).

2.10 PRINCIPLES OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs)

According to the Employee Assistance Programme Association (EAPA) (2018:9), professional standards and rules must be followed to provide a workable programme. The extent to which management, employee organisations and employees sustain, support, and promote the installation and maintenance of EAP values and principles determines the EAP's performance. The goal of these principles is to help all involved parties create high-quality EAPs that adhere to the EPA's Employee Assistance Programme Standards. Furthermore, each organisation should use rules and principles built on its own distinct culture and business model, as well as what should work for that organisation, while creating, implementing or evaluating an EAP. The Lephalale Employee EAP Policy (2018:486), in line with the Employee Assistance Programmes Association of South Africa (EAPA-SA), states that an EAP should include the following principles:

- **RECORD-KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Masson and Terblanche (2018:6) state that the principle of confidentiality means assuring ethical behaviour and EAPA-SA members have an ethical obligation to protect the information of clients with whom they have a professional relationship.

This includes the responsibility to protect data from unintentional access, disclosure, alteration, loss or theft. Employees must be assured that their privacy will be respected throughout the programme. This means that any information received from employees during consultations will be kept private and will only be utilised to assist the employees.

- **VOLUNTEERISM**

Employees should be encouraged to use the EAP because it is completely optional. Employers will also not force anyone to consult or use EAP services if they do not want to.

- **FAIRNESS AND NEUTRALITY**

Organisations shall ensure that employees receive unbiased and fair services that are free of bias or favouritism. As a result, during times of dispute between management and the employee, there will be no interference with the employee's private and social life. When it comes to management or labour difficulties, the necessary systems and procedures must be followed. Furthermore, EAPs do not replace disciplinary procedures in the management of incapacity cases, but rather provide supportive interventions.

- **ACCESSIBILITY**

Employees should be aware of the office's physical location, as well as the EAP's availability so that they are aware of it and have easy access to it. Furthermore, regardless of position or occupational level, all employees must have reasonable access to the EAP, either through voluntary self-referral or through supervisory referral.

2.11 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME (EAP) MODELS

The Employee Assistance Programme Association (EAPA) (2018:16) stipulates that Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) must operate in an environment where employees can feel sure that they will be helped.

An EAP model is a structure that a company employs to plan, manage and address the needs of troublesome employees (Leonard, 2019:59). As a result, there are a variety of EAP models that employers can use, and a model should be carefully chosen to match the needs of the organisation. Four models of EAP have been identified (the In-house model; the Off-site model; the Union Support and Involvement model; and the Combined model). Brief explanations of each EAP model follow:

- **THE IN-HOUSE MODEL**

The in-house model is a sort of EAP in which the EAP is run by personnel who work for the company. A manager oversees the programme, establishes policies and creates all procedures. When employing an in-house strategy, EAPs are housed within the organisation and in certain cases, the offices are located away from the worksite. According to the EAPA (2015:22), organisations have established the In-house model to demonstrate their thoughtful concern for their employees and to ensure that specialists deal with employees' problems. According to Byars and Rue (2016:174), the advantage of an in-house approach is that internal specialists have a greater grasp of the organisation than external specialists, allowing for the delivery of a high-quality service tailored to a given organisation. Byars and Rue (2016:174) believe that having an In-house EAP model is an advantage as internal specialists know and understand the organisation better than outside consultants. Thus, a high-quality service designed for a specific organisation may be delivered. Furthermore, Joseph and Walker (2017:179) contend that employees' personal or work-related concerns that interfere with their performance may be used against them in terms of their career routes, so familiarity may be coupled with a lack of secrecy.

- **THE OUT-OF-SITE MODEL**

Employers hire external EAP service providers to provide employee support services which can be delivered at the service provider's location or the employer's (Pompe, Jacobson-Fray, Shara, Imboden and Bloom, 2017:8). According to EAPA (2015), because the Off-site approach is an outsourced service engaged by the employer, it ensures confidentiality, objectivity and impartiality.

Organisations prefer a contractual approach, according to Enns (2018:2), since they believe that an external provider can adopt an employee's secrecy in the Programme. Pompe, Jacobson-Fray, Shara, Imboden and Bloom (2017:6) state that the advantage of the out-of-house strategy is that it improves accountability, reduces legal liability and streamlines the programme's launch and implementation. When compared to in-house EAP models, confidentiality is generally preserved when using out-of-house models. Pompe, Jacobsen, Sharar, Imboden and Bloom (2017:5), on the other hand, believe that external vendors may have little expertise in the organisation, which can be detrimental because it slows down intervention processes. Likewise, Lennox and Sharar (2016:10) add that external vendors' implementation processes can be hampered by a lack of expertise about the organisation.

- **THE UNION SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT MODEL**

This model uses employees to deliver EAP services and is often pre-arranged by labour unions. Masi and Carlso (2015:195) argue that labour union involvement and support boost the EAP's effectiveness. When labour unions and management work together informally, the EAP's success may be enhanced. If labour unions are involved, the Programme will be supported because it will provide an additional advantage for their members (Sonnenstuhl and Trice, 2018:62). As a result, coordination between management and labour unions is essential in order to avert a labour conflict. The disadvantage found by Servizio, Mollenhauer and Shjerven (2017:54) is that the union-based model does not assist non-union employees.

- **CONSORTIUM MODEL**

A Consortium model is a non-profit organisation that encounters the requirements of small employers because it is set up to assist several organisations, and often the public as well (Bruce and Hamp, 2015:69). According to Masi (2015:195), consortiums are most appropriate for organisations with less than 2000 employees. The benefit of this approach is that it allows small businesses to benefit from the cost savings of providing employee support, which they could not afford on their own, making it cost-effective.

This technique has the disadvantage that some employees find it difficult to open up to strangers or feel uncomfortable addressing their difficulties openly. In summary, several factors guide the choice of an EAP model in an organisation. The different types of EAP models must be presented to the organisation and discussed and the choice of which one to implement depends on an organisation's needs and budget.

2.12 THEORIES IN THE CONTEXT OF EAP

Since the 1960s, Systems Theory has inspired and procreated theory and research development in organisational studies, according to Chih-Hui and Sapphire (2017:1). Furthermore, Organisational linkages and interdependence amongst system components, as well as organisation–environment relationships, are given equal weight in Systems Theory. A system's structure, patterns and relationships emerge from connections between its components. As a result, each system is unique (Cornell and Jude, 2015:1).

o THE SYSTEMS THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EAP

Systems Theory was established by Ludwig von Bertalanffy and created on the view of an organisation as a system (Drack and Pouvreau, 2015:524). A system comprises diverse parts that join to form a complex whole. Moreover, an organisation also functions as a system having parts where employees, products, assets, resources and information constitute the various systems. Likewise, GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd is a system with different departments and diverse cultures. According to Chikere and Nwoka (2015:6), as organisations grow, they develop more complex sub-systems that must manage changing inputs into outputs. As a result, EAPs are being used by an increasing number of companies to increase employee productivity, welfare benefits and morale, as well as to improve the company's image, boost retention and productivity, and reduce absenteeism.

The Systems Theory can also be interpreted in the context of collaborative work inside an organisation. If every department in a firm worked independently, the total output would be less than what the organisation produces when departments collaborate.

Open and closed systems are the two sorts of systems. An open system receives contributions from the environment, such as raw resources, capital, labour and technological skills, and provides people with ready-to-use goods and services. Kenny (2014:15) discovered that the EAP concept is predicated on an open systems framework, which recognizes employees who are unable to separate themselves from personal difficulties while at work, in a study on the Perceptions of Employers and Employees on the Need for an Employee Assistance Programme. In the same way, Monbec (2018:89) points out that "the Systems theory views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment".

Additionally, the Systems Theory is used to articulate theories about individual interactions, actions or responses to a situation that improves vision and understanding, and offers a guide for action (Sandys, 2015:3). As can be shown, an EAP can be used as a thoughtful instrument in the development and retention of employees, therefore lowering absenteeism in the workplace. Furthermore, an EAP is recognized as a valuable tool to a company or sector in terms of minimising absenteeism. All systems, according to this idea, are interconnected elements that make up a well-organised whole, and each sub-system has an impact on other parts of the total. The interdependence of the system's components also means that a change in one area affects the entire system and has ramifications for other parts (Hammond, Channa Harvey, Barron and Osher) (2020:101). Likewise, if employees are affected due to personal issues at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, the whole organisation gets affected. As a result, when one facet of the system changes, the rest of the components are hampered in some way. Similarly, when an employee's well-being is harmed, absenteeism is harmed as well. As a result, change and development are said to occur as a result of this mutual influence process (Leornard, 2019:6). In addition, in social work practice, the notion of Systems Theory is applied to a wide range of social organisations, including families, social groups, corporations and communities (Leornard, 2019:6). Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) also assist employees and their immediate families with work-related issues (e.g., marital and personal problems, and reducing absenteeism).

The theory employs a systems approach to understanding complex problems and phenomena (Khubeka, 2015:10). Moreover, in a study on Employee Assistance Programmes, Leornard (2019:6) saw social systems as purposeful, goal-directed and in constant exchange with their surroundings, rather than as static. This is a crucial consideration for choosing intervention and change options, such as the creation and implementation of the EAP. Furthermore, the quick change in business necessitates new structures and models in order to raise and improve company quality, as well as assist in responding to issues. This emphasises the importance of establishing an EAP for GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. As a result, systems theory is applied to a wide range of social organisations in social work practice, wherein families, social groupings, companies and communities are all included (Leornard, 2019:6). Systems Theory's values and ethics are also useful as a theoretical framework for studying human behaviour since it emphasises the need for looking at the various systems in which humans' function (Leornard 2019:6). Furthermore, Systems Theory is employed for dealing with employees and referring them to specialists for treatment or connecting them with resources or organisations that can assist them in their position. Wellness is typically seen in the context of the Human Resources (HR) department, according to the PWC Wellness at Work Survey (2015:9). Finance, Employee benefits and Occupational health and safety are just a few of the functions or departments that are frequently interested, involved or accountable for parts of wellness. These are just some of the functions that work together to form a system within an organisation and are influenced directly by the wellness of employees and therefore the EAP (Naidoo 2017:59).

The Systems Theory discusses how different aspects of a system can impact each other and emphasise integration and wholeness (Teece, 2018:361). Workplace behaviour is regarded from a systems perspective as the result of dynamic interaction and relational links amongst the people that make up the workplace system (Hammond, Channa Harvey, Barron and Osher, 2020:102). It emphasises a person's relationship with their social environment, which in this context refers to an employee's relationship with his or her employer and co-workers, as well as other important social ties.

Employee issues are seen as the result of dynamic agreements and relationships between the people and processes that make up a working system, and vice versa (Naidoo 2017:59). As a result, it is safe to assume that employees' personal and/or work-related problems come from their interactions with co-workers, family members and community members. In order to have a better understanding of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees' viewpoints on the value proposition of EAP in resolving absenteeism, it was important for this research study to analyse Systems Theory. Since a workplace is a part of the system, management's primary goal is to foster collaboration and synergy amongst the many groups and individuals inside it in order to achieve organisational goals (Aagaard 2016:128). The EAP could be a useful tool for management in this situation.

- **THE GESTALT THEORY IN THE CONTEXT OF EAPS**

The Gestalt approach to transformation, according to O'Regan (2016:60), began in a clinical rather than an organisational setting. People with problems are not understood, taken or viewed as sick under Gestalt theory. In addition, Gestalt theory encourages people with problems to choose a course of action that will help them address their problems, as well as to support people in making better choices for themselves and accepting full responsibility for their actions. In a similar way, Gestalt theory would be of great assistance to GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, where employees are facing the challenging issue of high absenteeism. Similarly, the EAP recognizes that short- and long-term personal and psychological issues can negatively impact an employee's well-being and ability to work. As a result, it tries to promote and maintain a healthy lifestyle for employees.

In addition, Melnick and Nevis (2019:204) contend that the basic principles of Gestalt theory recommend that the employee pays attention to the immediate current situation. In a similar way, Employee strengths, weaknesses, issues and requirements are identified and valued through EAP assessment. However, according to Safonova (2018:110), assessment is the process of gathering detailed information on a person's social situation as well as their physical, mental and psychological functions.

Gestalt therapists consider that this dissimilarity already exists within the client who wishes to change as one part is fighting to change the other. Hence, the therapist should avoid getting involved and take care to not get locked into one of these roles. To avoid this trick, the therapist attempts to make the client mindful of this contrast and attempts to put him on the track of overseeing his change, not by concentrating on what he desires to be, but to emphasise that the patient can be where and what he is. Individuals can also benefit from EAPs in a variety of ways, developing a system of values that makes life more meaningful; participating in social activities that increase the quality of human connections, and working to overcome any difficulties that impede people from having more satisfying lives are just some of the things that individuals may do.

The Gestalt therapist interprets transformation as an opportunity when the opposite happens, that is, when structures are converted into processes. When this happens, one is open to participant exchange with` his environment. For example, Freud changed the structure of disagreeing into the process of denial, making it more accessible for the participant to be aware of his environment and how to deal with it. In the same manner, the study by Dipela (2016:23) found that the use of EAPs assisted employees in reducing sick leave and absenteeism. This can also be reflected in many other procedures in Gestalt therapy where the structure of, for example, a block, is turned into a process. The therapist intends to give a voice to this obstruction and permits communication between the client and the blockage. This gives the client the chance to capitalise himself fully in the block. In doing so, the client is classifying with his reserved fragments and thus incorporation can occur. Likewise, GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees can seek help from the EAP, where they can have private discussions without involving employers. In the light of the EAP, counselling is defined as a procedure in which a person with a problem receives one-on-one assistance through a confidential dialogue. Moreover, it covers procedures such as interviewing, controlling and counselling. The Gestalt therapist questions the patient to detect each self-contradictory position and join with the feelings at each stage. When the patient is aware of two roles, the mixing methods are applied to go beyond the contrast.

The therapist can work on building a foundation to shape essential support and agree with the issues at hand. While alertness and accepting oneself are vital to change, the therapist's role is to form a bond of working together with the client, accepting the person's spirit and possibilities, and guiding the client to reach his target. Employee assistance practitioners, according to Masi (2016:192), should provide employees with written information outlining the EAP's confidentiality policy and have them sign a declaration expressing their understanding of confidentiality, rights and constraints. Employees will feel more at ease and willing to share more information with the practitioner if they are assured of confidentiality (Dipela, 2016:26).

As a result, according to Gestalt theory, employees express their emotions by using their imagination. The main purpose of imaginative expression is to help individuals become more aware of themselves and their place in their worlds. Helping employees share their experiences and thoughts about activities is one of the actions in Gestalt theory. As a result, by asking employees to expound on their own difficulties, Gestalt theory can inspire self-discovery.

2.13 AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DEMOGRAPHICS FACTORS AFFECTING THE USE OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs)

Employees face a variety of problems and obstacles throughout their careers. In an ever-changing climate, it might be difficult to avoid the challenges, stresses, struggles and work expectations that come with it. They frequently attempt to fix these problems on their own or with the assistance of family and friends. In the workplace, however, it is beneficial to seek professional assistance. Although most organisations provide free Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), some employees choose to take advantage of these programmes, while others do not. Several demographic factors may affect the use of offered Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs). The discussion of these demographic factors is as follows:

- **AGE GROUP AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES**

According to Milot (2019:2), age is one of the most researched demographic characteristics in the EAP. When compared to the periods of sick leave taken by older employees, young employees tend to take shorter periods of sick absence (Moletsane, 2018:31). As a result, they are more inclined to employ EAPs. This could be due to the fact that older employees are more likely to be in management positions, have a stronger work ethic, and are more dedicated and loyal to their jobs. As a result, they are less likely to seek out EAP services. As younger employees are more likely to have family responsibilities, they may need to use EAP services more frequently. A study by George (2017:48) on the assessment of EAPs found that EAP utilisation amongst respondents between the ages of 18 and 30 years is less than those who are in the age categories of 31–40 and 41–50. This can be because they are still young and therefore have not yet encountered many challenges in their lives. Dipela (2016:79), on the other hand, concluded that young employees are more highly disposed to workplace challenges and burnout as compared to their older colleagues because of their anxiety with their work and their prospects on the job compared to the reality they face on the job. On the other hand, a study on factors affecting the utilisation of EAPs by Mundalambo (2015:57) found that the EAP utilisation rate is seen to rise between the age of 31 and 50 years. The postulation is that most of the respondents at this age are married with children, which brings about added accountabilities that may affect the individual's usual functioning at times.

- **GENDER AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES**

According to Barton (2019:3), men are the most in need of focused outreach, with equal levels of need but lower rates of requesting help than women. It is vital to distinguish between males and females in the workplace due to biological distinctions as well as socio-cultural expectations. One out of every five Canadians, male or female, is stressed in their personal lives, and one out of every three federal government officials is stressed at work (Malakieh, 2018:3). Men are 2.5 times more likely to have drug use problems; three times more likely to die by suicide; and just half as likely to seek professional help through EAPs, despite the fact that women are 1.5 times more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety (Navaneelan, 2017:3).

As a result, relatively low rates of mental health help-seeking are common among both men and women and have been connected to stigma and financial barriers, with the lower rates for men being tied to masculine gender roles (Ogrodniczuk, Oliffe, Kuhl and Gross, 2016:463). In a study on Employee Assistance Programmes and Quality of Work-Life, Bophela and Govender (2015:246) found that men and women enjoy similar levels of well-being. Moreover, women tend to have far more strenuous domestic and workplace roles, which predictably leads to higher absence rates when compared to males (Milot, 2019:9).

Furthermore, because women are more in touch with their subconscious, they react more quickly to a lack of passion in the workplace. Women take time off to heal, de-stress from stressful work environments, and avoid conflicts. Another element that should not be overlooked is the reality of woman-headed single-parent homes and the impact that children, particularly smaller ones, have on women's capacity to be at work all of the time. As a result, females are more likely to utilise the EAP than their male colleagues.

- **EDUCATION LEVEL AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES**

Employees' professionalism may develop as a result of their educational achievements, as well as their degree of responsibility and devotion to attendance. For example, an assumed over-qualification for one's position may lead one to believe that one does not need to collaborate with others and should instead be given more autonomy. When such personnel are not given the chance to demonstrate their worth, they will engage in more withdrawal behaviours, such as absenteeism. Furthermore, one of the factors that contribute to workplace absenteeism is an employee's degree of education. Workers with lesser levels of education are more likely to undertake basic operative tasks that require their constant presence at work, reducing absenteeism (Tadesse, Ebrahim and Gizaw, 2015:8). Employees with higher education levels, on the other hand, are promoted to senior positions where their effectiveness is measured through evaluations rather than their presence at work.

Furthermore, lower levels of education are associated with greater employment insecurity. As a result, those with lower levels of education are more likely to use EAP services on a regular basis.

Employee Assistance Programmes must be proposed by the EAP consultant in order to inspire and boost employee confidence. As a result, some participants may see themselves as informed and perceive no need to seek help, particularly in an atmosphere where they are known, thus resulting in an under-utilisation of EAP services. This is reinforced by Milot (2019:2), who identified union membership and educational attainment as the most important determinants of EAP use. This could be one of the reasons why some employees in many firms do not fully utilize EAP services, since their status or level of education may prevent them from being seen visiting EAP services. They may not want their co-workers to know that they are having trouble, so they consult in offices where they are not recognized (Mundalambo, 2015:57).

On the contrary, Mundalamo (2015:59) found that employees with post-secondary qualifications, or at least a secondary level of education, are less likely to be absent than those with less education. According to Dashtestani (2017:130), educated employees are more engaged in their employment and have higher job satisfaction. Employees with greater education, on the other hand, are more likely to experience work discontent, according to a study by Letsoalo (2016:59) on the effectiveness of EAPs. They have higher expectations of compensation, incentives and recognition. According to Okemwa, Atambo and Muturi (2019:161), a person with a degree earns more money throughout the course of their career because of post-secondary qualifications, which mould people into being more ambitious, motivated and self-confident than their peers. Employees with higher education levels are more likely to be absent from work than those with lower levels. Furthermore, the higher the levels of education, the more employees are prone to be ill because of the stress that arises from the responsibility and liability of their positions (Moletsane, 2018:32).

- **JOB CATEGORIES AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES**

According to Kenny (2014:87), blue-collar workers or those in lower-level professions are the primary users of EAPs. This could be because these workers are not frightened of losing their jobs if others find out that they have utilised the services, according to research. Instead, it is possible that this group of people will face increased hurdles or issues as a result of their positions, necessitating a larger need for assistance. In a similar way, Mundalambo (2015:57) argued that employees in low-paying jobs are more likely to use EAP services than those in high-paying jobs, because people in high-paying jobs are typically more educated than those in low-paying ones. On the contrary, according to the Standard Committee of EAP SA (2015: 18), employees with more education have a greater utilisation rate than those with less education. Furthermore, Dipela (2016:79) concluded that employees in high positions may have difficulty utilising the service within organisations as they may consider that their subordinates would think that they are not coping with their positions, which may have an undesirable impact on the effectiveness of the programme.

It is therefore apparent that general workers utilise EAP services more than managers and supervisors, which explains the fact that the level of job category affects the utilisation of EAPs. Absenteeism management in the workplace refers to actions that an organisation establishes to reduce absence (Moletsane, 2018:36). It is to such actions that the study now turns to the next section.

2.14 ABSENTEEISM MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Absenteeism is a term used to describe when employees intentionally miss work. Cloete (2015:32) defines absenteeism as being absent from a workstation or working in a research study on the influence of an Employee Wellness Programme on return on investment in terms of absenteeism. This could include being absent without leave, having extended tea/lunch breaks, going shopping during work hours or being off sick. Similarly, Mgonja's (2017:89) study on ‘Responding to Workplace Absenteeism in Tanzania’ found that absenteeism is defined as an employee leaving work sooner than anticipated.

Furthermore, absenteeism is a challenge faced by various organisations globally. Organisations are required to function at their best level while decreasing expenditure and ensuring sustainability in an ever-increasing competitive environment. In addition, Mudaly and Nkosi (2015:625) believe that over the years, organisations have required the means of improving HRM, with an interest in reducing absenteeism, a phenomenon that reached alarmingly high levels, both locally and internationally.

Employee absenteeism is a complex and challenging event that reflects an individual's decision to not show up for work, and it is recognized as one of the most serious calculated hazards for businesses. Monitoring and managing employee absenteeism is a difficulty for businesses, mostly because it is costly. On the other hand, although organisations are affected by work absence rates for a variety of causes, Bankert, Coberley, Pope and Wells (2015:50) feel that the impact of high absenteeism levels can be costly and disruptive, with corporate managers unable to develop appropriate methods to mitigate the problem. Obiero, Mwebi and Nyang'ara (2017:122) define absenteeism as "the absence of physical presence at a given location and time when there is a social expectation for the employee to be there". Drawing from the above, absenteeism can be described as an employee's incapacity or failure to physically report for duty at a specific location and time when expected to do so by the employer, based on the preceding criteria and for the purposes of this study. In conclusion, absenteeism has different meanings for different people at different times (Garcia and Weiss, 2018:4). This makes absenteeism occurrences special to everybody.

2.14.1 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

There is a varied range of reasons that can cause employees to be absent from work. These concrete reasons may be complex and based on numerous facts that employers can find hard to comprehend.

The following factors have been found to contribute to absenteeism:

- **ILL-HEALTH**

In most organisations, medical costs and reduced input resulting from a reduced labour force, ill health and absenteeism are costing both employees and employers a lot of money. Gangai (2014:1260) states that lower-back pain and migraine are often the cause of absenteeism in most organisations. Badubi, Akhunjonov and Obrenovic (2017:35) attest that a critical risk analysis of absenteeism in the workplace has shown that migraines affect women more frequently than men, and they are more likely to miss work as a result of their symptoms. Moreover, Weiner and Greene (2017:325) testify that migraine pain and the ensuing despair are largely to blame for women's increased absenteeism. A report published by Pierce (2015:18) for the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) reveals that personal circumstances, particularly those related to illness, appear to be the major cause of absenteeism. HIV/AIDS patients have a three-fold higher absenteeism rate than those who are not infected, according to a study done by AIC Insurance in 2018. HIV/AIDS is one of the most common socio-economic concerns that have an impact on absenteeism. According to the South African Actuarial Society, the average HIV infection rate in the workforce was 18.8% in 2015, costing the industry close to R2 billion (Doki, Sasahara and Suzuki, 2015:9). Furthermore, illnesses such as colds, flu and headaches may distress employees to such a degree that they select to miss work to try to find medical attention.

- **WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT**

Job-family conflict is a type of inter-role conflict that happens when the energy, time or behavioural demands of the work role collide with those of the family or personal life. According to Kossek and Lee (2017:14), work-family conflict is of increasing importance in how it pertains to society significances for work, and personal outcomes such as absenteeism and family well-being. Matysiak, Mencarini and Vignoli (2016:370) explore the association between work-family conflict and absenteeism. It is not easy to detect work-family conflicts that exist among employees because most of them do not share their personal information with anyone.

If they could tell someone they are facing some problems at home before they start working, the manager will be informed not to put more workload on the employee as he/she is already experiencing personal issues. Employees suffering from family responsibilities may find it hard to make it to work on time or provide advanced notice when they need to take time off. As a result, introducing a flexible work model that allows these individuals to work from home or arrive early in the morning to make up time and complete their tasks could be a viable option. Employers must also implement a mechanism that allows these employees to quickly communicate their schedules to HR management and keep everyone informed.

- **STRESS**

Stress is emotional or physical tension. It can arise from any incident or thought that makes one feel upset, angry or anxious. Depression, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure are just a few of the issues that stress can cause. As a result, employees who are experiencing life-threatening stress due to job or personal reasons are more likely to become ill, have low morale and depart without notice (Casarella, 2019:2021). While employers cannot ease all the stress that employees might have, they can put support systems in place. The EAP helps HR teams identify employees who may be exhibiting excessive overtime or other stressful behaviours. This allows employers to change working hours and provide advice before things get out of hand. Simultaneously, organisations that are understaffed may have a higher number of stressed employees (Kocakulah, Kelley, Mitchell and Ruggieri, 2016:89).

- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

It can be difficult to spot an alcoholic or someone who is using drugs at work. Early signs of drug usage, such as persistent tardiness, can be difficult to detect because they are typically linked to other issues, such as absenteeism. Employees who abuse or are addicted to drugs may often suffer from debilitating hangovers, preventing them from returning to work and avoiding detection of their problem. Alcohol and drug addiction are serious problems and organisations need to develop comprehensive substance abuse policies and EAPs to manage them properly (Diestel, Wegge and Schmidt, 2014:360).

- **LOW WORKPLACE MORALE**

No one wants to work in a place where there is a lot of strife. The importance of maintaining positive employee morale in the workplace cannot be overstated. A good working environment is based on treating each individual with respect and allowing them to make their own decisions (Halbesleben, Whitman and Crawford, 2014:181).

- **WAGES**

Wages are the family's primary source of income, and a wage shortfall will force workers to leave their jobs in order to compensate for the wage shortfall by engaging in parallel activities to make ends meet, as wages in the country do not rise in lockstep with the country's cost of living, which rises inexorably. This brings restraint to their purchasing power (Joseph, 2015:66). Workers have less absenteeism if they have a higher absolute income, a higher relative wage and are employed at a higher hierarchical level, according to an econometric analysis of monthly absenteeism at a German company (Whitman, Crawford and Pfeifer, 2014:179).

- **WORKING ENVIRONMENT**

Every tough working condition discourages employees from doing their work appropriately. Therefore, employees cannot be productive since the lack of infrastructure for them to do their jobs is pertinent to the employees' lack of inspiration, which will lead to absenteeism from the workstation. Moreover, employees need to be working in a good atmosphere that is healthful and safe (Abdelrahman and Abdelkader, 2017:65). The influencing factors of absenteeism amongst nursing students attest that employees working night shifts will have on average of 32% less absenteeism than those working day shifts (Magobolo, 2019:8) According to Joseph (2015:68), the absence of good working environments can affect employee morale and prevent them from reporting to their workplace. Various factors may cause absenteeism in the workplace, and they may differ from organisation to organisation.

2.14.2 THEORIES AND MODELS OF ABSENTEEISM

Over the years, much research and surveys have been done to determine the cause of absenteeism. Consequently, theories and models of absenteeism have been established. Although there has been a massive amount of diverse research on absenteeism, there have been few theories linked with it. According to Kipangule (2017:21), absenteeism is appropriately named a 'social fact in need of theory'. The most recognised models and theories established are Steers and Rhodes' (1978) 'Process Model' and Nicholson's (1977) 'Attachment Theory'. In the framework of this study, these theories and models of absenteeism are discussed below.

- **NICHOLSON'S ATTACHMENT THEORY ON ABSENTEEISM**

Despite the growing body of studies on absenteeism, Nicholson (1977) concluded that there was a fundamental dearth of theory on the subject. He argued that this was the reason for the "fragmented" structure of the absenteeism research (Nicholson, 1977). As a result of his review of absenteeism research, studies and theories, Nicholson (1977) established the Attachment Theory. The Theory of Attachment was created to aid in the prediction of employee absenteeism. Nicholson (1977) developed his theory by discovering the nature of absence whilst also taking into consideration methodological and measurement problems. He chose to emphasise absence as a measured variable rather than concentrating it on attendance, which several other studies on absenteeism have done. Additionally, Nicholson (1977) developed the 'A-B' field as part of his theory, characterising absence events by their availability. Furthermore, based on the influence of the attendance motive, Nicholson (1977) noticed how these absence actions differ from one person to the next. As a technique of gauging attendance motivation, Nicholson (1977) proposed an attachment theory on absenteeism. An organisation typically categorizes absences based on research related to absenteeism, according to Nicholson (1977). Voluntary, involuntary, disease, sanctioned and unsanctioned are the most common categories. "Though it may be maintained that it would be inadvisably negative to so judge all attempts at meaningful absence classification," Nicholson (1977) writes, "there is not entirely a way of evaluating voluntary absence" (Nicholson, 1977).

Nicholson's (1977) 'A-B' continuum is stated in terms of attendance limitations/barriers. The 'A-B' continuum was created by Nicholson (1977) to allow absences to be seen on a scale, depending on how much individual choice favours an absence occurrence or non-occurrence. Absences which fall at the 'A' end of the continuum are those for which individual choice would not count, and those that fall at the 'B' end are those that are entirely controlled by individual choice. Thus, those at the 'A' end are unavoidable and those at 'B' are avoidable. Additionally, Nicholson (1977) defined 'attachment' in the context in which an employee is dependent upon the structure and regulations of organisational life. Furthermore, Nicholson (1977) argued that there are four sets of stimuli that constitute attachment, namely personal traits, work orientation, job involvement the and employment relationship.

- **PERSONALITY TRAITS**

In terms of personality qualities, Nicholson (1977) argued that as people become older, they become more stable and persistent and that their effect on attendance motivation is a primary predictor of the age-absentee link. Kipangule (2020:23) found that males have a greater work attachment than females in a comparable research study. Furthermore, according to Nicholson (1977), despite the lack of study, additional attachments outside of work, such as hobbies, may impair job attachment.

- **WORK ORIENTATION**

Sociologists have paid close attention to the extent to which employee expectations and needs impact the quality of their work experience, according to Nicholson (1977). Stress, attendance and unhappiness are all linked to a disconnect between job direction and experience, according to research (Kipangule, 2017:23).

- **JOB INVOLVEMENT**

This refers to how an employee fits in with the characteristics and demands of their job. In many cases, the relationship is viewed as the employee simply being an unnecessary factor, whilst in other cases, it views the employee as a person (Kipangule, 2017:23). Having the right person for the job is a significant determining factor of attendance.

- **EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP**

High attachment may be gained by control mechanisms such as reward systems or enforced through punishment systems, according to Nicholson (1977), and rewards and consequences are a part of high attachment among employees. When compared to reward systems, the latter has been found to have limits and is ineffectual. Attachment and attendance will be strong, according to Nicholson, if a reward system is in place and there is a level of trust between the employee and the employer.

From the above, Nicholson's model (1977) has a valuable influence on the understanding of absence behaviour by offering an integrative framework for investigating individual inspiration to come to work. The researcher was able to explore what motivates employees to come to work using the Attachment model. According to the literature reviewed above, characteristics such as employee morale, job satisfaction and motivation are all variables that contribute to an employee's connection to their company, resulting in high or low levels of absenteeism on their record. It has however been suggested by Rhodes and Steers (1978) that the model has a shortcoming in that it focuses mainly on the work domain, and that the model is difficult to test. The Steers and Rhodes model (1978) will now be discussed.

- **STEERS AND RHODES' (1978) PROCESS MODEL**

According to Magee, Caputi and Lee (2016:24), the attendance process model has made a significant contribution to workplace absenteeism research. Two elements influence the model: attendance motive (voluntary absenteeism) and attendance ability (involuntary absenteeism). However, according to Schaumberg and Flynn (2017:984), attendance motivation is influenced by employee satisfaction with their working environment. Internal and external influences such as job scope, manager leadership style, job level, role stress and development possibilities are among them. The ability to attend is influenced by personal characteristics such as age, sex, education and tenure (Mudaly and Nkosi, 2015:3). Moreover, individual characteristics can affect the ability to participate through issues such as illness, family problems and difficulty commuting.

If employees can attend, attendance motivation is an essential aspect, according to Magee, Caputi and Lee (2016:25). Both attendance inspiration and the ability to attend interact with each other and produce the outcome of actual attendance. Steers and Rhodes' (1978) Process Model has been called one of the most influential and often-cited models in the absenteeism literature (Van Jaarsveld and Keyser, 2018:222).
Since Steers and Rhodes' (1978) Process Model was established, there has been limited further research on motivation and ability to attend, and occasional studies that were carried out created various outcomes. Having reviewed the literature on Steers and Rhodes' (1978) Process Model, I the model has come under criticism in the past. Several characteristics of the model, according to Magee, Caputi and Lee (2016:34), are causes of difficulties in its implementation. These are summarised as follows:

- There are most certainly concerns with the construct validity of the model's core components. "Ability to attend", "pressures to attend" and "motivation to attend" are not defined as separate entities by Steers and Rhodes.

- Steers and Rhodes' Process Model believes that attendance and absence are diametrically opposed. They employ "imprecise variable labels" (e.g., Job Scope) and do not clarify their dependent variable (Kuo, 2018:17).

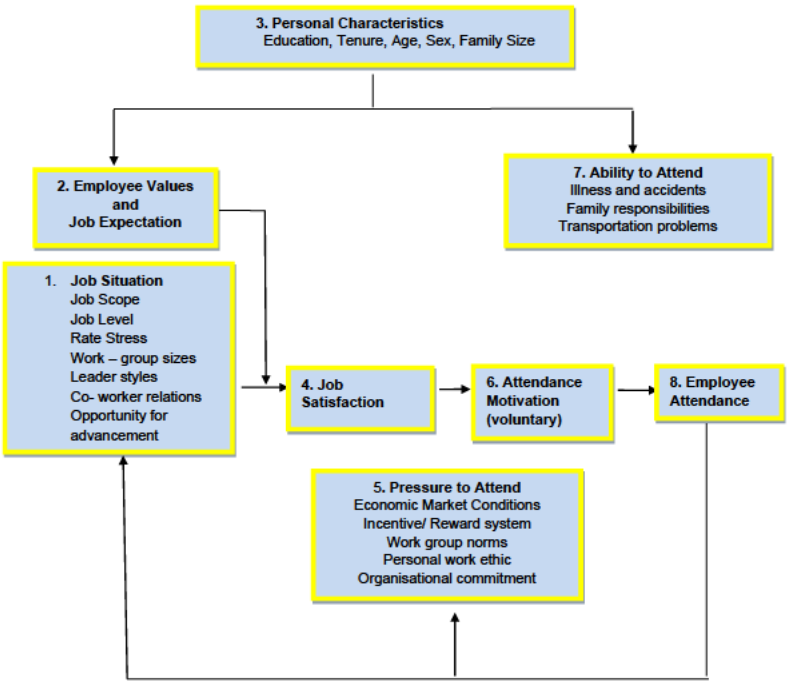
- The variables and theoretical concepts connected to absenteeism are brought together by Steers and Rhodes (1978), which presents a third challenge. Personal traits are cited by Steers and Rhodes (1978) as causes of both attendance abilities and standards/opportunities. Steers and Rhodes (1978) add to the uncertainty by combining the variables, making it difficult to grasp why they are related to each other (Kou, 2018:18).

- Another issue raised by Edwards (2017:294) is the absence of serious consideration of potentially crucial factors. It might be claimed that Steers and Rhodes' (1978) model is flawed since it lacks theory.

Depending on the sort of situation that caused an employee's absence, the predictiveness of different components of the Steers and Rhodes (1978) model may vary. Regardless of how strong the urge to attend work is, if a member of an employee's family gets ill, the employee may need to stay at home. If, on the other hand, the absence is due to a lack of motivation to attend, the organisation may be able to make efforts to improve his or her attendance (Kou, 2018:18). Absenteeism due to family difficulties, such as a sick child, should be credited to one's alleged ability to attend, not motivation to go when taken as a whole.

The early years of Absence theory development were defined by efforts to build a complete Absence theory. The Steers and Rhodes (1978) model of absenteeism epitomizes this era's comprehensive, broad-scope approach. The framework of Steers and Rhodes (1978) is depicted in Figure 3. In this paradigm, the Job Situation (Box 1), Personal Characteristics (Box 3) and Attendance Pressures (Box 5) are characterized as a collection of external elements that incline people to attend or miss work (i.e., absenteeism). Job satisfaction (Box 4) and its immediate antecedents (Employee Values and Job Expectations, Box 2) serve as mediators between triggering elements (Job Situation and Personal Characteristics) and motivating agents. Employee Attendance (Box 8) is ultimately determined by two endogenous predictors: Attendance Motivation (Box 6) and Attendance Ability (Box 7).

Figure 2.3: THE STEERS AND RHODES' MODEL OF EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM (1978)



Source: Edwards (2017:52)

According to Magee, Caputi and Lee (2016:35), the voluntary end of the continuum illustrates situations in which the employee must choose between work and non-work substitutes. This type of absence is usually only for a brief time. The involuntary endpoint refers to situations where there is little or no control over the absence event, such as one's own illness or the illness of a family member. Job satisfaction is defined by Caputi and Lee (2016:35) as the degree to which an individual enjoys his or her work. Job satisfaction is an important but indirect intervening variable in the proposed model, facilitating the effects of its causes on the other endogenous variables. Steers and Rhodes discuss health status in terms of physical and emotional well-being under the heading "sickness and accidents" (1978). Illness is commonly acknowledged as the leading cause of employee absenteeism.

The implications of employee absenteeism due to alcohol abuse are the subject of this concept. This idea focuses on the impacts of employee absenteeism due to alcohol abuse.

Alcohol involvement is the degree to which individuals use alcohol as a coping method, and this concept focuses on the effects of employee absenteeism due to alcohol misuse (Steers and Rhodes, 1978). Job participation is a cognitive assumption that characterizes the degree to which an individual mentally perceives his or her job and is connected to Steers and Rhodes' (1978) attendance motive. Organisational commitment, on the other hand, is described as a person's dedication to the organisation (Steers and Rhodes, 1978). One reason why the limited research on motivation to attend and ability to attend has reported mixed results is that absenteeism is multi-dimensional rather than one-dimensional (Saksvik, Grodal and Murray, 2017:128). Hence, separating and predicting different types of absenteeism might be useful. Although empirical evidence is inconsistent, most evidence indicates that family variables relate to absenteeism (Saksvik, Grodal and Murray, 2017:128).

The Steers and Rhodes Process Model, on the other hand, is commonly utilised in programmes designed to minimise absenteeism since it addresses concerns such as motivation to work and capacity to attend work. Geydar, Arumugam, Kuppusamy and Singh's study on Factors Affecting Employee Absenteeism in an Airline Industry (2020:806) found that conflict between one's work and family roles relate to the increased regularity of absenteeism. Furthermore, larger families are not always associated with higher absenteeism, according to Caputi and Lee (2016:24), but the link between job satisfaction and absenteeism appears to be stronger for employees with smaller families. As a result, probably, a person's attitude towards their employment or motivation to attend will become less helpful in predicting absenteeism as their family duties grow.

Absenteeism linked to family difficulties should be viewed as a reflection of one's projected ability to attend, rather than inspiration to attend. The same can be said for transportation concerns. No matter how motivated a person is to go, if he or she has transportation problems, it is doubtful that they will show up for work (Magee, Caputi and Lee, 2016:26). Absence due to illness, on the other hand, is more likely to be linked to the incentive to attend than the ability to attend.

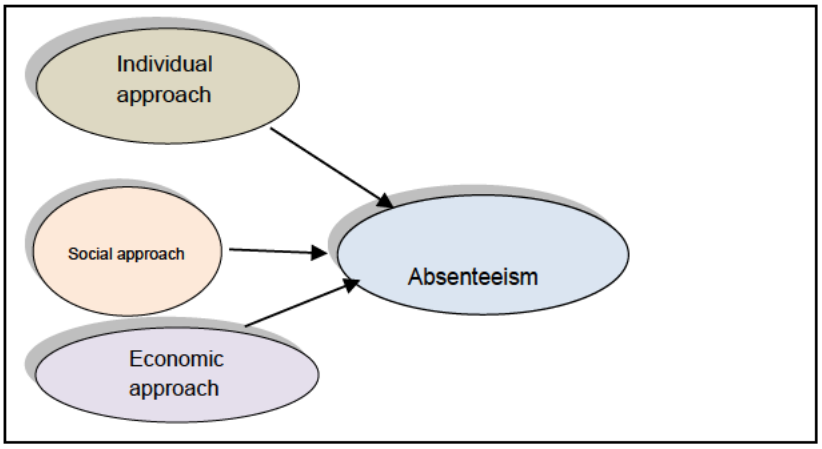
It is widely assumed that absences due to sickness imply involuntary absences and, as a result, should be linked to one's ability to attend. Some theoretical and empirical evidence suggests, however, that absence due to illness may not be absolutely involuntary absenteeism, but rather voluntary absenteeism.

To summarise, those variables within the control of the employee can be related to voluntary absence. In contrast, those variables reflected to be out of the control of the employee, i.e., a sick child and an accident at home, are linked to involuntary absence. Steers and Rhodes (1978) suggested that absence from work is the consequence of employee job dissatisfaction, i.e., people who dislike their jobs will be more likely to miss work than people who like their jobs. Job satisfaction has thus in recent years been perceived by many organisations as important because of its alleged effects on the variables that affect employee absenteeism. This then has improved consideration of its relationship to absenteeism.

2.14.3 AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF ABSENTEEISM

Models of absenteeism are diverse and have different explanations. For this study, discussions will be based on the one highlighted by Magee, Gordon, Robinson, Caputi and Oades. (2017:230). In the following, the Individual approach, the Social Psychological approach and the Economic approach are presented and combined into an Integrative model of Absenteeism. Magee *et al*. (2017:230) outline an integrative model of absenteeism as depicted in Figure 3 and discussed below.

FIGURE 2.4: AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF ABSENTEEISM



Source: Magee *et al*. (2015:30)

According to the study by Shabangu (2018:14) investigating the causes of absenteeism, the assumption of the individual approach study is based on the idea that motivation to be absent from work is defined internally by the individual and is influenced by personal characteristics (e.g., demographics) or individual responses to stimuli in the work or non-work environment. Shabangu (2018:14) continues, "In the Social Psychological method, absence is thought to be a social phenomenon, but in the Economic approach, time away from work is assumed to have a positive value for the person."

- **INDIVIDUAL APPROACH:**

The first level, according to Daouk-yry, Zeinoun and van de Vijver (2016:27), is collective individual-level variables, which are likely to symbolise or be experienced by personnel within the firm. These are four groups of micro-level variables: demographics, personal characteristics, work attitudes, and health and wellbeing. The Individual approach research holds the notion that an individual's motivation to be absent from work is determined internally and influenced by personal attributes such as age, sex or socio-economic status (Magee, 2018:14). Individual characteristics influence individual values and expectations of work, which in turn increases work satisfaction. Work satisfaction directly affects attendance motivation. Willingness to attend is also the result of an individual assessment of the situation in the workplace. Work conditions affect work satisfaction and work satisfaction influences attendance motivation (Daouk-O¨yry, 2016:97).

- **THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH:**

The Sociological Theory of absenteeism emphasises the variables within a culture that affect an employee's behaviour and decision-making concerning work. In any organisation, there are various values, rules, resolutions, customs and morals, all of which have a direct influence on employee behaviour in relation to presence or absence at the workplace (Shabangu, 2018:15). This theory assumes that people do not live on their own as they are surrounded and influenced by the environment, including society, family and culture, etc.

Magee *et al*. (2015:27) contended that absence cultures at work can directly influence absenteeism for a given group of workers through shared models. Duff, Podolsky, Biron and Chan (2014:206) mentioned that the employer and group absence have particularly each been supposed to influence absenteeism. This means that when an employee chooses to be absent from work, it is a result of his or her observations from the department team or the manager in his or her department.

Duff, Podolsky, Biron and Chan (2015:62) demonstrate that absenteeism is influenced by the employer's or supervisor's usage of a variety of human resources techniques such as coaching, attendance management and wellness. This shows that absenteeism will continue to be a problem in the workplace unless the human resources department takes numerous steps to solve it. Furthermore, Adegboyega (2015:61) asserts that organisational culture and procedures play a critical role in addressing workplace absenteeism. Furthermore, if a systemic culture of absence consideration develops within an organisation, employees will perceive sick leave as a perk that must be utilised or it would be lost (Adegboyega, 2015:61). Due to the inconsiderate culture, this will result in an increase in the absence rate at work. As a result, in order to effectively manage and reduce absenteeism, the company's management must develop a culture and processes that prevent absenteeism in the workplace.

Whilst Duff, Podolsky, Biron and Chan (2015:63) reflected on studies on the impact of either manager absence behaviour or team absence behaviour on individual employee absenteeism, Ronchetti, Tecco, Russo, Castaldi, Vitali, Autieri, Valenti, Persechino and Iavicoli (2015:314) conducted a study on the role of self-efficacy on absences and found that the combined impacts of team and manager absence on employee absenteeism are inadequate. The weakness of this theory is that not only do values, guidelines, resolutions, customs and morals have an impact on employee absenteeism, but other factors such as culture cannot be ignored.

- **THE ECONOMIC APPROACH:**

According to Oni-Ojo, Salau, Dirisu and Waribo (2015:74), using monetary incentives to boost employee performance has become critical. High salaries and bonuses have proven to be effective in motivating and retaining staff (Osibanjo, Adeniji, Falola and Hiersmac, 2014:68). Employees are motivated to labour freely without the use of force when wages are provided often, according to Oni-Ojo, Salau, Dirisu and Waribo (2015:74). Absenteeism, labour turnover, low commitment and low morale all result from the lack of these incentives. Financial incentives are commonly used to motivate qualified individuals to join and stay with a company, as well as to motivate them to attain high levels of performance (Osibanjo, Adeniji, Falola and Hiersmac, 2014:68). The Economic approach is being used in GUD Holdings' Manufacturing department, where operators are compensated (rewarded with an allowance for working shifts) with extra money termed a 'shift allowance' for working shifts. Although encouraging, this Shift allowance has led to employee exhaustion and eventually to sickness, especially amongst female operators who work endlessly. Moreover, this leads to exhaustion for female operators as they work endlessly and eventually book off sick because of fatigue. In the Economic approach, the individual makes the choice of being absent based on a rational decision aimed at accomplishing certain values. By being absent, the individual thus tries redressing a fair exchange relationship towards the employer as an attempt to cope with an unsatisfactory emotional state, like in the Individual approach.

In summary, based on the literature review, absence behaviour can be viewed from different viewpoints. However, it is barely practicable to synthesise knowledge from the different fields and theoretical perspectives, i.e., medical, psychological and sociological, etc., into a combined theory on the causes of absenteeism.

2.15 IMPACT OF ABSENTEEISM IN ORGANISATIONS

In a study on the detrimental effects of employee absenteeism in the workplace, Andrew (2017:3) found that employee absenteeism can affect productivity, finances and workplace morale.

As a result, the influence of absenteeism is a problem that organisations need to comprehend and address. Furthermore, some organisations may need to replace employees who are absent and in doing so, increase costs while simultaneously putting pressure on other employees (Jensen, Flachs, Skakon, Rod and Bonde, 2018:55). According to Cushard (2017:2), the consequences of absenteeism include low morale in employees, frustrated employers, the non-achievement of targets, increased costs as well as workloads, loss of productivity and attrition of skilled employees.

Similarly, Cekiso and Terblanche (2018:158) claim that absence in the workplace causes a loss of production; increased labour expenses for replacement workers; greater administrative issues; lower morale; and increased stress amongst the remaining employees. Shabangu (2018:14) holds the same opinion, claiming that absenteeism is one of the most challenging difficulties that employers face. Furthermore, Shabangu (2018:14) claims that employee tardiness and absence are two of the most common and disruptive employee issues that organisations confront, as they have a substantial impact on an organisation's productivity. Due to years of isolation and a lack of global competition, Badubi (2017:34) proposes that South African enterprises have a content attitude toward the importance and expense levels of absenteeism. The impact of absenteeism, according to Alexander and Hicks (2016:13), may be seen at all levels of an organisation, including organisational productivity, individual employees and labour unions. The cost effect of absenteeism in organisations is the most obvious and tangible negative consequence. The level of the cost depends on the absenteeism policies in organisations (Zhang, Sun, Woodcock and Anis (2017:3). Some organisations may incur administrative expenses to keep attendance records on the costs of absenteeism. Other organisations may hire additional employees to replace those employees who are absent. This results in higher payroll costs to the organisation due to absenteeism.

As noted by Kenny (2014:27) in a study on the perceptions of employers and employees on the need for an EAP in a financial services organisation in the Western Cape, absenteeism can lead to the following negative consequences in organisations:

- **LOW MORALE AMONG EMPLOYEES**

When employees are not appreciated or acknowledged for taking on more responsibilities due to absent team members, their self-confidence, engagement and retention suffer. As a result of the increased demands on staff time as a result of work overload and overtime, employee confidence suffers (Kocakulah, Kelley, Mitchell and Ruggieri, 2016:90).

- **FRUSTRATED EMPLOYERS**

Generally, when an employee is absent, an employer's main worry is productivity and when the employee is due to return to work. In most countries and depending on the law of a particular country, arbitrators and the courts have permitted employers to terminate the employment relationship when an employee's absenteeism is extreme and there is no reasonable view of return in the foreseeable future.

- **NON-ACHIEVEMENT OF TARGETS**

Employees observe each other's performance, and if management fails to address absence on the part of some colleagues, employees lose trust amongst their peers, leading to staff turnover due to dissatisfaction. In a nutshell, anything that affects employee job satisfaction might affect an employee's motivation and, as a result, whether or not they would use absence to avoid an unpleasant work scenario (Moshokwa, 2016:35).

- **LOSS OF PRODUCTIVITY**

When an employee is absent from work and his or her job is vital to daily work functions, others take on the additional obligation. Furthermore, because the additional employee is still learning, he or she will require training while being put under increased strain. Additionally, employees who are at work must shoulder the workload, which has the potential to impact their overall productivity and outputs (Moshokwa, 2016:37).

- **INCREASED COSTS AND WORKLOADS**

According to Forte (2017:94), these increased costs and overloads are because by lost productivity, overtime, temporary staff and increased overall company expenses primarily not planned for. Thus, these additional financial costs are most likely to be felt in the wage costs associated with any staff replacements. The researcher is of the view that the absence of a few employees affects the organisation. Most employees' work is deadline-driven, and their respective departments must adhere, according to the letters of appointment. As a result, when one individual decides to take an unplanned absence, productivity is sometimes disrupted since the team or department is short on personnel. This means that team members must automatically assume additional responsibility in order for the work to be completed. Anger is common, especially when management takes for granted the effort employees put in to ensure that productivity is not harmed. Those who have been influenced by this terrible event express themselves in a variety of ways. Some employees in the company, for example, may choose to express their rage by taking an unplanned leave of absence. Since employees are relaxing after a long day of work, this absence could be considered voluntary or avoidable.

According to Carver (2019:2), workplace absenteeism leads to a loss of production, greater labour costs for new workers, increased administrative hassles, lower morale and increased stress amongst the remaining employees. Absenteeism, according to Ramchander (2017:3), is one of the most challenging employee issues. According to the author, employee tardiness and absenteeism are two of the costliest and most disruptive staff issues that businesses confront, and they have a substantial impact on an organisation's productivity. The impact of absenteeism can be seen at numerous levels in organisations, as well as amongst employees themselves, according to Ramchander (2017:4).

Employee absenteeism can impact negatively on an organisation's ability to meet its organisational strategic goals and purposes (Grace-Isaks, 2018:28). Furthermore, absenteeism effects are mostly not felt instantly, and the absence period can always determine various outcomes.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that absenteeism is frequently scrutinised and managed successfully. Changes or developments in a pattern of absenteeism can also be identified more precisely by supervisors and managers compared to some of those indirect factors, which may not be as measurable as absenteeism, i.e., lowered productivity or lowered motivation. Based on the foregoing, it is clear that employee absenteeism has a variety of effects on the organisation's employees and employers. Employee absenteeism may be reduced with a variety of methods, but it cannot be totally eliminated, according to the evidence.

2.16 MEASURES TO CONTROL WORKPLACE ABSENTEEISM

Numerous diverse methods can be utilised to lessen absenteeism and improve the causes. The solution depends on how an organisation wants to direct their resources. According to Richmond, Pampel, Wood and Nunes (2017:170), proper absenteeism management involves developing programmes with rules that are perfect and reliable, including legal requirements, so that they can be recognised across the whole organisation. Therefore, a programme for managing absenteeism could comprise the following components:

- **PROPOSING EAP INITIATIVES**

According to research, EAP-provided treatment has resulted in cost savings, as seen by lower absence expenses (Joseph, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2018:12). Once there is a hint of high absenteeism amongst employees, it is critical to continue with official counselling methods. Positive strategies can be used by dealing with the problem as soon as there are signs of a pattern of absenteeism, rather than waiting until all sick leave credits have been used up. Access to flu injections to reduce the number of sick leave days due to this form, according to Frank-Miller, Despard, Grinstein-Weiss and Covington (2019:244), are instances of excellent wellness efforts. A wellness programme can assist in alleviating health-related absences, while concurrently lessening healthcare expenses and lowering employee stress.

Moreover, a wellness Programme can assist in improving morale and workplace culture, and even increase productivity.

- **ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Employees that are disengaged typically hunt for reasons to avoid coming to work. As a result, empowering workers and improving their job happiness is critical not just for reducing absenteeism, but also for a company's long-term success. Employers should explore giving employees more autonomy over their schedules and responsibilities to enhance employee engagement.

- **ENFORCING RULES AND STANDARDS**

When employees are gone from work, a programme should include guidelines and ideals that they must follow. It is crucial to highlight that management should apply these guidelines with some consistency and fairness (Huhman, 2015:3). According to Elder and Paul (2016:15), avoiding inconsistencies in the implementation of regulations is beneficial in the long run to avoid charges of unlawful termination, discrimination or retribution from a dismissed employee. Examining medical certificates in the case of irregular absences, according to Levy (2017:25), could help in the early detection of work-related and social problems that could be mitigated before they become troublesome. This could also lead to more prompt access to appropriate health treatment, lowering the likelihood of developing a medical condition that causes incapacity or handicap (Muthwa, 2019:11).

- **INTRODUCING SPECIFIC PREVENTIONS**

These may include offering information on a regular basis to all employees about the absenteeism tendency in the organisation and its influence on the organisation. This action may discourage those who intended to be absent following observations of their colleagues, and even normal voluntary unscheduled absentees (Newman, 2020:2)

- **IMPROVING WORKPLACE MORALE**

Employee absenteeism may be aggravated if employees are dissatisfied with their jobs and co-workers.

It is vital to give opportunities for employees to communicate with one another while also feeling proud and supported by their team in order to minimise employee absenteeism. If an employee feels valued and recognized by co-workers, he or she will be more motivated to come to work. A pleasant, welcoming and productive atmosphere, according to Karman (2020:50), can assist in minimising employee absenteeism by establishing a setting where employees desire to spend their time.

- **MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Work context, organisational structure, management hierarchy and organisational commitment, according to Cucchiella, Federica and Gastaldi (2014:1160), may all contribute to employee absenteeism, either by encouraging illness by putting too much pressure on employees or by contributing to low levels of employee motivation. Furthermore, Cucchiella, Federica and Gastaldi (2014:1160) attest that commitment to the organisation is found to be positively related to organisational outcomes such as motivation and attendance**.**

- **REWARDING GOOD ATTENDANCE RECORDS**

According to Miller, Riccio, Verma, Nuez, Dechausay and Yang (2015:2), maintaining a consistent attendance record is one of the excellent actions that should be rewarded generously. An attendance bonus and increased yearly leave could be offered as incentives. This demonstrates that monetary rewards are not always necessary. Employees who have an excellent attendance records are seeking some kind of recognition to encourage them to keep up their good work habits. Attendance bonuses may also serve as a kind of positive reinforcement for employees that go above and beyond to avoid missing work (Levy, Tseng, Rosen and Lueke, 2017:3).

- **ENSURING PROPER RECORD-KEEPING OF ABSENCES**

The duration of absence, trends in terms of the most popular days for people taking sick leave, and the type of illness can all be recorded. The line manager can do this by looking into attendance records and sick leave absence records. The number of absences that will be accommodated during a certain period can be determined and even brought to the employee's attention with effective record-keeping.

According to Huhman (2016:2), records of absences will help identify whether there is a trend developing among absent employees. Moreover, Miller, Riccio, Verma, Nuñez, Dechausay and Yang (2015:2) highlight the importance of having an attendance or absenteeism policy to monitor the extent of the problem in the organisation.

- **CONDUCTING BACK-TO-WORK INTERVIEWS**

Another important component of a programme is to perform a consultation when an employee has been away for an extended period of time. Managers should respond as though the employee is telling the truth about the reasons for his or her absences, according to Levy, Tseng, Rosen and Lueke (2017:3). As a result, the manager will be able to behave impartially, consistently and with an open mind. Each time an employee returns from sick leave, a line manager could be assigned the responsibility of implementing a consultation.

- **TAKING EARLY ACTION AGAINST EMPLOYEES WHO CONTRAVENE SET RULES**

This could include enacting a rule requiring employees to notify their immediate line manager of any absences, or to provide a reasonable explanation if they fail to do so (Levy, Tseng, Rosen and Lueke, 2017:3). Even if an employee produces a medical certificate to justify his absence, failing to report is a disciplinary infraction that can result in progressive punishments such as verbal, written and final warnings, as well as dismissal. Falcone (2017:4) believes that if employees are given advance notice of the company's expectations, they should be held accountable if they fail to fulfil those standards in the future.

Absenteeism is a persistent issue in several companies. Numerous sources have indicated that employers have been trying to fight this tendency amongst some employees, but due to the non-existence of dependable systems, the rate of absenteeism has continuously risen. On a positive note, there are now programmes that exist which may be utilised across numerous internal departments.

Additionally, there are several methods one can use to reduce absenteeism and improve the root cause. This includes EAP.

2.17 THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF EAP

EAPs are applied in organisations with a definite purpose and objective in mind. According to Attridge (2019:625)**,** an emphasis on work performance is one of the components that guide the EAP profession. Attridge (2019:625) additionally asserts that employees who use EAPs often experience positive changes in their work performance, such as having fewer days late or absent; higher levels of work productivity; and improved work team relationships. Furthermore, Employee Assistance Programmes within the workplace has been designed in growing response to the South African Labour Relations Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Pompe, Sharar and Ratcliff (2015:7) emphasise that EAPs offer value by improving productivity and reducing absenteeism. Moreover, George's (2017:19) study has shown that EAPs allow employees in the workplace to foster a culture of well-being and general happiness by providing tools to assist in employee social issues. Furthermore, George (2017:19) postulates that Employee Assistance Programmes are action-orientated programmes designed to recognise the symptoms of problem employees.

In the study conducted by Milot (2019:168), the value proposition of the EAP includes the following points: Increased job performance, reduced stress levels, resolve personal issues, improved financial situations and locates legal services.

- **INCREASES JOB PERFORMANCE**

Since they are preoccupied or fail to prioritize their activities, many people are unaware of how much time they squander at work. An EAP, according to Yildirim, Abukan and Oztas (2017:68), can assist employees overcome time management issues and allow them to be more focused on their daily responsibilities.

- **RESOLVES PERSONAL ISSUES**

Employees' personal and professional lives can suffer when a loved one dies, they are abused, or they are impacted by a natural disaster. Employees should not have to deal with these types of trials on their own because they are difficult and painful. According to Milot (2019:170), an EAP provider can connect employees with a trained expert who can help them cope with their grief and loss.

- **IMPROVES FINANCIAL SITUATION**

Even employees earning huge salaries can have financial problems. If they need help getting out of debt, creating a budget or planning for retirement, EAP providers are available to give financial advice (Milot, 2019:170).

- **LOCATES LEGAL SERVICES**

Employees who are going through a divorce, executing a will, or dealing with a lawsuit are sometimes unaware that EAP services can help them find the legal assistance they need. They lose focus and are less productive on the job when their attention is diverted to concerns outside of work. Knowing that a professional is looking out for them can help them focus on their work (Moshokwa, 2016:48). In another study conducted by Moshokwa (2016:55) on 'Managing Absenteeism', it was discovered that Employee Assistance Programmes offer value by improving employee engagement and improving employee and dependents' skills for magnificently responding to life's trials. In addition, EAPs are vital long-term tools that organisations can use to fight absenteeism. Most importantly, successful EAPs allow individuals to make positive changes in their work and normal lives. When individuals are healthy, they are likely to improve their workplace performance and productivity, whilst reducing healthcare costs and absenteeism. Moreover, EAPs add value in developing employee and employer abilities in dealing with workplace stress and improving work team performance.

Lefakane's (2015:20) study attests that EAPs improve organisations by helping manage the costs of doing business by reducing absenteeism, unintentional absenteeism, work-related injuries, employee turnover and replacement costs.

Likewise, EAPs alleviate business risks by reducing the possibility of workplace violence or other safety risks by encouraging and supporting companies' drug and alcohol-free workplace policies and programmes (Letsoala, 2016:27). As a result, the efficient use of healthcare through early identification, care management and recovery efforts are improved.

2.17. THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF EAPs IN ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM

An EAP must be pre-planned to provide organisational benefits measurable by outcomes through a system-led approach to people management in order to be effective in reducing absenteeism in the workplace. It must contain a system for providing employees with counselling and other forms of support in a consistent and systematic manner, in accordance with established criteria.

Wambua's (2015:42) study on factors influencing teachers' absenteeism confirmed that absenteeism has many underlying causes, and the health condition of the country's working population may be one of these. EAPs are employer-sponsored programmes designed to alleviate a range of workplace problems using core technologies such as screening, assessment, brief intervention and referral to service providers, case management and follow-up services for mental health and substance-abuse problems (Attridge, 2015:2).

Due to misunderstandings and a lack of knowledge, Kenny (2014:87) agrees that the EAP is underutilised in organisations. This is especially true in organisations where the EAP does not have top-level support (Maiden and Sharar, 2015:3). Many issues facing employees have been recognized, including the following: intimate partner violence; HIV and AIDS and other chronic conditions; re-deployment, right-sizing and job overload; and diminished parental engagement (Sharar and Hobart, 2015:4). All of these issues present themselves in a variety of emotional, behavioural and physiological illnesses, ranging from acute stress to suicide attempts, excessive absenteeism to absconding, hypertension to renal failure.

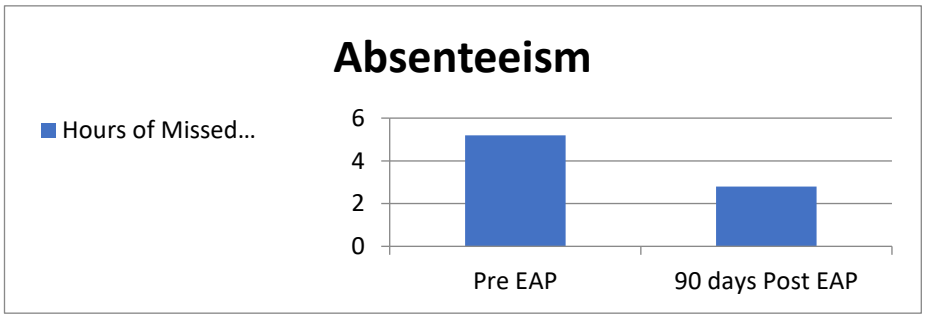
Manganyi (2015:82) investigated the utilisation of EAP services by employees and concluded that at least 59% of the respondents indicated that the EAP within the Polokwane Tertiary hospital was addressing their personal problems, reducing absenteeism, which attests in a large measure to its adequacy. In a study on an evaluation of EAP services, Metsing (2015:115) found that an EAP service rating shows how EAPs have productively addressed absenteeism issues and other organisational issues that affect productivity. The results of the survey show that employees have reduced organisational costs associated with sick leave and absenteeism by using an EAP.

Employees and management can benefit from an EAP when it is properly developed, implemented and managed, according to Lefakane (2015:82). For supervisors, an effective EAP can be a valuable tool. Some of the advantages include tools for assisting employees in times of crisis; assisting supervisors with employees who have absenteeism difficulties; and assisting employees who may have exploited work time to deal with personal or family concerns.

Attridge, Sharar, DeLapp and Veder (2018:10) conducted a study to determine whether a relationship exists between EAP counselling and improved workplace effectiveness and found that the relationship does exist. The Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) is a psychometrically tested and validated tool designed for EAPs. The tool contains five-item measures and five scales that lie at the heart of understanding EAP effectiveness, namely absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, life satisfaction and workplace distress. This tool was used as a pre- and post-measure on the sample of 197 participants. The post-assessment took place 90 days after the EAP sessions. Sharar *et al*. (2016:13) reported that the results of the studies support the use of the WOS to evaluate the workplace effects of EAPs. The results below depict and support the statement that EAP clinical service delivery results in a positive impact on the workplace through the evaluation of the Workplace Outcome Suite.

As illustrated in Figure 5, before EAP services, participants missed 5.2 hours of work over a 30-day period. Ninety days after EAP services, participants only missed 2.8 hours of work, which shows an improvement of 46.4%.

FIGURE 2.5: COMPARISON OF PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST MEANS ON ABSENTEEISM



Source: Attridge *et al*. (2018:14)

Employee Assistance Programmes, according to Cekiso and Terblanche (2015:170), are successful in bringing value to most organisations, with good outcomes such as reduced absenteeism. According to Jensen and Solheim (2020:370), there has been drop-in absenteeism, worker's compensation claims, labour disputes and expenditure linked with substance misuse and mental health difficulties. Furthermore, the advantages of EAP-provided alcohol education serve to increase well-being and reduce absenteeism (Cvenkel, 2021:440).

Epstein and Maratea (2019:2) performed a three-year study of unplanned absence in a cohort of nurse anaesthetists and discovered that the average cost of absenteeism per employee is R 9 240, with some bigger organisations losing more than R14 million per year (Epstein and Maratea, 2019:3). Furthermore, personal sickness accounted for just 35% of unplanned absences, with the remaining 65% owing to other factors such as family concerns (21%), personal requirements (18%), entitlement mindset (14%) and stress (12%) (Epstein and Maratea, 2019:2). Employers are generally worried about employees who take sick time to deal with personal matters.

As a result, if a manager knows the causes of absence and uses the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) as a resource to help employees, the manager may play a significant role in reducing absenteeism (Lennox and Sharar, 2016:13). Fernandez (2019:3) claims that divorce or a breakup, bereavement, family problems, stress, anxiety, interpersonal problems and financial problems are the most common causes of absenteeism in many organisations. Many problems can affect employees to the point of triggering them to be less effective and even likely to take time off work. As a result, when employees are dealing with difficult situations in their personal or professional lives, they realise that their motivation is slipping away. Others continue to show up for work but are incapable of carrying out their duties normally. Furthermore, employees see their problems increasing and may even feel guilty about it. Thus, EAPs can become a good lever that supports organisations in managing absenteeism.

According to Nunes, Richmond and Pampel (2018:699), employees' personal and work-related pressures can result in large costs to firms in the form of employee absenteeism. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), according to Nunes, Richmond and Pampel (2018:699), are an important avenue for boosting employees with behavioural health issues, personal problems and work-related obstacles that affect employee absenteeism. This research looked at the impact of EAPs on reducing employee absenteeism using a well-matched control group and human resource time-card data. To recruit workers from 20 different departments of state government, the study used a prospective, quasi-experimental technique with propensity score matching. EAP (n = 145) users were matched to non-EAP (n = 145) users based on baseline demographic, psychological and work-related characteristics that separate the groups. The hours of sick time that were documented were submitted by human resource offices. A mixed model repeated measures method was also used to look at differences in sick leave usage. The results indicated that EAP employees took fewer sick days than non-EAP employees, with 4.8 to 6.5 percent fewer hours lost each month due to sickness.

Further research revealed that EAP services were most helpful in assisting clients in transitioning from moderate to low levels of sickness absence, rather than in lowering sick leave for those who were away often. As a result, employing an objective measure of missed work time, this study provides empirical evidence that EAP users reduce their absenteeism at a quicker rate than non-EAP users who face identical productivity issues.

According to Joseph, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2018:13), EAPs allow companies to assess employees as a whole, taking into account all of their motives and influences. According to studies, presenteeism (being present at work with reduced mental and/or physical functioning, where functioning refers to the ability to deal with day-to-day tasks) accounts for up to 80% of the economic burden of illness for businesses, with absenteeism (being absent from work for any reason) accounting for the remaining 20% (Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, Joseph and Walker, 2018:13). As a result, EAPs may help employees discuss, analyse and work through personal and professional issues. Therefore, employees are less likely to need time off to deal with their problems or recuperate from physical or mental health problems caused by or emerging from them.

Emotional and personal problems have been linked to increases in absenteeism, tardiness, sick leave use, workplace injuries and medical claims, according to a study (Shantz and Alfes, 2015:238). Many businesses and EAP providers assert that EAP services are successful in lowering employees' emotional and personal problems, implying that EAPs reduce absenteeism and disability indirectly. Despite these assertions, few empirically solid studies have looked into whether EAPs have a positive impact on organisational-level outcome metrics (Compton and McManus, 2015:35). Despite the fact that the examined studies did not reveal beneficial organisational results as a result of EAP services, other more recent studies have shown favourable organisational outcomes as a result of EAP services (Shantz and Alfes, 2015:540).

Joseph, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2018:14) had EAP clients self-report absenteeism, amongst other organisational outcome indicators, and suggested that employees estimated that they would have missed, on average, an additional 1.86 and 2.60 days of work had they not been helped through the EAP treatment. By detecting and treating mental health problems early, Nogues and Finucan (2018: 28) state that the EAP assists in reducing absenteeism, increasing employee retention and dramatically lowering health-care expenditures. According to a 2010 systematic analysis of the MacLeod research, workplace counselling interventions can lower sickness absence rates by up to 50% (Hughes, 2015: 18). This fact alone defines consulting's cost-effectiveness and the good influence it may have on an organisation's productivity.

The EAP rating is critical in judging the service's usefulness and efficiency (EAPA, 2015). Utilisation, which comprises an employee's assessment of service appropriateness and dependability claims, reflects the influence of EAP. Organisational use, on the other hand, stresses the EAP's cost-effectiveness, as seen by lower absenteeism and higher production. High EAP utilisation rates can indicate the programme's success, but low EAP utilisation rates might lead to businesses asking whether the EAP is worth the money (Compton and McManus, 2015:35). Employees' opinions regarding EAPs, such as the service's confidentiality, tend to be reflected in utilisation rates, thus it seems logical to assume that they will utilize an effective and well-respected EAP. However, methodological issues surround the validity of utilisation rates.

A study on the impact of EAPs and the return on investment in terms of absenteeism by Cloete (2015:552) concluded that organisations lose between 28% and 35 % of an employee’s income due to the impact of psycho-social problems on productivity. Furthermore, Cloete (2015:553) attested that the number of sick days can be reduced, as assistance can be provided to employees to understand how to take better care of themselves, and an increase in attendance days of regularly absent employees can be incurred as employees understand how to manage their illness.

There are many reasons why organisations may want to offer employees an EAP as they are associated with a variety of positive workplace outcomes and may reduce costs by directly addressing obstacles to low absenteeism. As such, it is becoming commonplace in benefits packages and employees increasingly expect organisations to offer this benefit. The application and use of EAPs differ considerably and can lead to both benefits and legal implications for organisations and EAP professionals. Even when an employer is not found at fault or charges are dismissed, the protection of a lawsuit can amount to significant costs and a potential negative mark on an organisation's reputation. Thus, when implemented properly, EAPs can assist as one important component of a complete Human Resource Management system. This review highlights possible areas for organisations to be acquainted with as they create EAPs to improve employee productivity, and organisational performance and to reduce absenteeism.

2.18 SUMMARY

In summary, in this chapter, the researcher has studied literature that highlights the history of EAPs and the importance of EAPs in an organisation. EAP systems are put in place to address problems effectively, such as ill health, work-family conflict, stress, substance abuse, low workplace morale, wages, etc. Furthermore, investigations and discussions on the concept of absenteeism and EAPs are articulated. Absenteeism was defined, and its causes were also investigated in order to comprehend the reasons for an employee to take a decision not to come to work. Moreover, it has been evidently indicated that EAP is important in organisations because it encourages a healthy working environment and decreases absenteeism. However, absenteeism is still a challenge in many organisations. Chapter three, which follows, illustrates the research methods employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how the research was conducted, as well as how the data was gathered and analysed. The research design, data collection, measurement device and data analysis are all covered. Furthermore, the relevance of establishing the population and sample, as well as the importance of validity and reliability in scientific research, are discussed in this chapter, which is followed by empirical findings.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design entails the collection, planning, evaluation and interpretation of the obtained data. In general, it is an extensive map of the way in which various study questions might be responded to in the study. A study design, according to Avella (2016:308), is a collection of modest, well-tested equations from which researchers select one (or extra) appropriate to their studies' desires and goals. In other words, a study design specifies what data is required, what data collection and analysis methods will be employed, and how all of these procedures will answer to the research questions. Furthermore, it indicates certain approaches or the plan that the researcher will comply with to conduct the study.

A Quantitative method was adopted in this study as it is cost-effective and faster to examine (Upton, 2015: 55). Hammarberg, Kirkman, Junyong and Dongguk (2017:601) state that Quantitative research collects numerical data and analyses it using mathematically based methodologies to understand experiences. Quantitative research, according to Antwi and Hamza (2015:220), is a method of investigation that is widely used in empirical research to test ideas, collect descriptive data, or investigate correlations between variables. The variables are measured and translated to numeric data, which is then statistically analysed to establish cause-and-effect linkages. Quantitative data can thus provide measurable evidence; demonstrate likely cause and effect links; allow for replication and population generalization; and facilitate group comparison (Friesike, Flath, Wirth and Thiesse, 2019:740).

In this present study, the researcher considered the most suitable research design to be exploratory research. Exploratory research studies what has not previously been studied and tries to find new information, new understandings, new considerations, new meanings and discovers issues connected to the study topic (Swedberg, 2018:2). The researcher deemed this approach to be suitable for gaining a better understanding on the perceptions of employees on the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. Moreover, exploratory research studies the appropriate aspects in detail to reach a suitable description of the reality of the existing condition (Ndoka, 2020:24).

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

A target population, according to McLeod (2014:183), is the whole group of people from which a sample could be obtained. A researcher's population can also refer to the complete group of individuals, events or regions of interest that they aim to investigate. The target population (N) of this study comprises a total number of 1800 GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees working in various branches in KwaZulu-Natal. These employees occupy various positions and levels within the organisation. This gave a broader insight into analysing the perceptions of employees on the value proposition of the EAP in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

3.4 SAMPLING METHOD

A sampling method is an identification of the approach by which the items of the sample have been chosen and influences the study to take a particular direction (Sharma, 2017:749). In general, probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two forms of sampling.

- **PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:32), in probability sampling, each member of the population has an equal or known chance of being picked. Probability sampling finds a considerable aptitude for representativeness and generalisability because every member of the population has a chance to represent the complete population (Creswell, 2014:158). Probability sampling procedures, on the other hand, are more time-consuming and expensive than non-probability sampling methods, according to Saunders (2015:560). Probability sampling includes simple random sampling, stratified random sampling and systematic random sampling.

(i) Simple random sampling produces samples that are remarkably typical of the population, but producing big samples can be time-consuming and tiresome (Etikan and Bala, 2017:149);
(ii) In stratified random sampling, the topics are initially grouped into different classifications such as gender, level of education, departments or socio-economic status. Moreover, there is an equal chance (probability) of choosing each unit from within a selected stratum (group) of the population while developing the sample (Etikan and Bala, 2017:149);
(iii) Researchers can create samples without using a random number generator via systematic random sampling. The impacts, on the other hand, are not as random as they might be if a software programme were utilised instead (Shantikumar, 2018:6).

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015:554), the researcher does not start with the entire sampling frame when using non-probability sampling. Therefore a few people have no chance of being chosen. This indicates that non-probability sampling does not rely on random selection and instead relies on the researcher's personal discretion (Wisniowski, 2020:121). Non-probability samples include (i) convenience or accessibility sampling, (ii) purposive sampling and (iii) snowball sampling:

(i) CONVENIENCE OR ACCESSIBILITY SAMPLING

Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:2) describe this as a type of non- probability or non-random sampling where members of the target population meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time or the willingness to participate, are included for the purpose of the study. According to Card, Bornstein, Davis-Kean, Davoudzadeh, Gorrall, Grimm, Hofer, Jager, Little, Lo and Putnick (2017:13), it is a more suitable method as the population is more easily accessible to participate and it is cheap, efficient and easy to implement.

(ii) PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Ames, Glenton and Lewin (2017:5) define purposive sampling as the approach where individual decisions are used to decisively select groups that the researcher believes will represent the population.

(iii) SNOWBALL SAMPLING

This is used by identifying and selecting a set of initial possible respondents, who then contribute to selecting more prospective fellow respondents, as explained by Dusek, Yurova and Ruppel (2015:281).

As a probability sampling method, simple random sampling was used in this investigation. Under this process, everyone in the population has an equal chance of being picked as a subject. Random sampling was appropriate since it reduced unfairness by giving each piece an equal chance of being chosen. The sampling units are straightforward to reach and measure, which is a considerable advantage. Thus, the population for the topic under study was all GUD Holdings employees from all job categories and different departments.

- **SAMPLE SIZE**

A sample, according to Kothari, Sekaran and Bougie (2016:320), is a group of respondents chosen from a broad population for the purpose of gathering data. Krejcie and Morgan (1970), according to Bukhari (2020:2), devised a table for estimating the sample size for a particular population, as is highlighted in Table 3.1 below:

TABLE 3.1: KREJCIE AND MORGAN'S SCIENTIFIC TABLE FOR SAMPLE SELECTION

Table for determining Sample Size of a Known Population							
N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
160	113	280	191	1200	291	6000	361
170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381

Note: "N" is the population size and "S" is the is sample size

Source: Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

The sample was calculated based on the scientific table for sample selection proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which stipulates that if the target population is 1800, the sample should be 317. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions and time constraints, less questionnaires were distributed (260), and 251 questionnaires were returned.

3.5 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Before administering the questionnaire, the CEO of GUD Holdings Pty Ltd was asked for a letter granting permission to conduct the research (Ltd).

Following that, the researcher attached a cover letter to the questionnaire and asked the respondents to take part in the research. A total of 260 questionnaires were personally distributed by the researcher to various GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd branches in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher then asked all respondents to return the completed questionnaires within 24 hours. Moreover, the researcher personally collected questionnaires from the participants. All Covid-19 protocols were observed, including social distancing and sanitising. Of the 260 questionnaires issued, 251 were returned, 1 of which was not completed, making the response rate 96.5%. According to Lindemann, a high response rate (>80%) from a small random sample is preferable to a low response rate from a large sample (2019:2).

3.6 MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect data for this study. Questionnaires are data collection instruments that allow the researcher to pose questions to topics in his/her search for responses to the research questions. Gardner and Trueman (2021:6) define a questionnaire as "a document consisting of a set of standardised questions with a fixed format, which specifies the exact wording and order of the questions for gathering information from respondents". According to Debois (2019:2), the advantages of a questionnaire are that they are inexpensive, practical, provide quick answers, and allows for easy analysis. Furthermore, according to Debois (2019:2), the downsides of a questionnaire include dishonest replies, unanswered questions and difficulty in expressing sentiments and emotions. A questionnaire was the most appropriate way for data collection for this study because a large population was used, and it is inexpensive.

On a five-point Likert scale, the participants were asked to assess how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the assertions. The Five-Point Likert scale approach, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015:276), makes robust statistical analysis easier. Respondents were asked to score these statements using one of five options, namely: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree.

In addition, there was a brief portion (Section 2) of the questionnaire that prompted respondents to give a rating by selecting one of the options (Yes or No). The researcher was able to collect solid data using both types of claims. The questionnaire comprised five sections to address the themes that emanated from the literature review, which were tested, namely:

- **SECTION 1 - DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

This section assessed the demographic profiles of employees of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, which provided data regarding the research respondents. This is essential for allowing the researcher to better understand certain background characteristics of the respondents.

- **SECTION 2 - USE OF EAP**

The researcher developed this section in order to gain a better understanding of how many employees have used, or have not used, the EAP previously.

- **SECTION 3 - RELEVANT REASONS FOR EMPLOYEES VISITING THE EAP**

This section analysed the reasons that employees would want to visit EAPs. The researcher adapted the questionnaire by George (2017:99). The wording of the questions was refined and changed to accommodate this study.

- **SECTION 4 - PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF EAP**

The goal of this part was to examine employees' comprehension of the value of Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs). This section was created using information from a literature review as well as other instruments used in similar studies. It modified the Myeza (2015:107) questionnaire on the Construction Industry's Value Added by Occupational Health and Wellness (OH&W) programmes. The researcher altered the questions to fit the needs of this study.

- **SECTION 5 EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM**

This section assessed the perceived value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism. This study employed a modified version of Employee Assistance Programmes in Higher Education (EAPHE): A case study of a Namibian Higher Education institution by Kamati (2020:150). The original EAPHE was used to determine how EAPs can be utilised strategically to relieve high absenteeism in a higher education institution. The original EAPHE included seven items that were scored on a four-point Likert scale, from Strongly Agree to Agree (AG), Disagree (DA) and Strongly Disagree (SD) (SD). The researcher then modified the original EAPHE to accommodate the sample in this study and increased the number of response categories from four to five.

3.7 PILOT TESTING

According to Junyong and Sangseok (2017:267), the goal of a pilot test is to enhance the items on the questionnaire so that there is no doubt or bias and the measuring equipment may be updated adequately for data collection. Furthermore, a pilot test is useful in identifying problems before the data is collected. The researcher conducted a pilot test on fifteen randomly selected employees of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd from different sites. The pilot test respondents were excluded from the main study. In addition, the services of a statistician were engaged to test the consistency of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the statistician ran the Cronbach's coefficient alpha test on 15 questionnaires, the results of which are shown in Table 3.2 below.

TABLE 3.2: CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR THE PILOT TEST

Aspect	Cronbach's alpha for the relevant reasons for employees visiting EAP.	Cronbach's alpha for the perceived usefulness of an EAP	Cronbach's alpha for the employee perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism
Alpha	.962	.898	.887

Source: Taber (2018:1278)

The alpha coefficient for the three aspects is .962, .898 and .887, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. According to Taber (2018:1278), the least acceptable Cronbach's alpha value is 0.70, which implies a high level of reliability. The feedback received from the statistician was mainly on the grammar and that questions 8.2, 9.4 and 9.12 had a degree of ambiguity. Hence, they were corrected by the researcher.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaires, checklists and indexes are frequently used in quantitative data gathering procedures (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport, 2015:198). Before contemplating measuring tools, it is critical to understand some concepts and principles that are vital to measurement. This method was chosen because it is easier and cheaper to collect than other options (Denscombe, 2017:41). For the aim of this study, data was gathered through a literature review and empirical investigation. Hence, it is critical to distinguish between primary and secondary data while using this type of data collection.

PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

Austin and Sutton (2015:226) state that primary data is data that has been collected for the first time and that has not been changed, such as surveys, questionnaires and interviews. For this study, questionnaires were used as the primary data collection tool to gather input from GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees.

SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION

Secondary sources, according to Sekaran (2016:75), are ones that do not have a direct physical connection to the event being investigated. Secondary data analysis allows the researcher to save time that would otherwise be spent gathering information. The fact that most of the underlying work has already been done, such as literature reviews, case studies, published texts, the internet and certified publications, is an obvious advantage of using secondary data (McClendon, 2015:75). Secondary data was gathered for this study via publications, case studies, published texts, the internet and peer-reviewed journals.

The best way to choose a data collection method is to understand the advantages and disadvantages of each method. According to Fluet (2021:3), there are different data collection methods, namely (i) Questionnaires, (ii) Observation and (iii) Interviews.

(i) ***Questionnaires*** are used to ask respondents a series of questions and are an excellent choice when quick and basic input is required that can be quickly

(ii) translated into statistics for analysis (Denscombe, 2017:2). The advantage is that questionnaires are user-friendly and are quick to complete. However, no spontaneous answers are allowed;

(iii) ***Observation*** encompasses a person who observes events, people and interactions surrounding a topic in order to offer a detailed account of them (Conroy, 2017:3). The advantage is that observation allows for detailed behaviours and events, while the disadvantage is that there is an inability to understand the reasons behind the observed behaviour; and

(iv) ***Interviews*** involve questions and answers being read to respondents by an interviewer who records responses. The advantage of interviews is that there is a clear understanding, and the drawback is that it is expensive because this approach necessitates the use of a team of individuals to conduct the interviews (Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015:2).

For this study, the researcher used questionnaires to obtain data and they were used to determine employee perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Written permission to conduct research was obtained from the CEO of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. As a result, the data collection procedure was made easier. Arrangements were also established with the supervisors and managers to determine the optimum time for the researcher to visit the location.

Prior to distributing questionnaires, the researcher was given permission to visit each department and discuss the project and ethical considerations. The researcher personally distributed 260 (n) questionnaires to employees (all categories) from three different sites on different days and collected them the following day to accommodate the night shift. Of the 260 questionnaires distributed, 250 Questionnaires were correctly filled out, returned, then analysed and interpreted.

3.10 DELIMITATIONS

This study was limited to one company, which is GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, at three different branches in KwaZulu-Natal.

3.10.1 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The most crucial part of every study is the aspect of quality. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015:196), research must satisfy the "how do I know" test, which requires that the findings be tested and scrutinized. The findings must be credible and valid in order to withstand testing and inspection.

- **VALIDITY**

Heale and Twycross (2015:67) state that validity is the extent to which the measuring instrument accurately measures the object to be measured. The results will be worthless if they cannot be used to answer the research question, which is the main aim of the study. Validity was ensured through professional consultation and audit trails. In addition, factor analysis was run on SPSS version 27 to validate that each item loaded in the same construct. Thereafter, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was computed to validate the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The sections below present the Exploratory Factor Analysis of each construct as well as its statistics.

Factor analysis, according to Knekta, Runyon and Eddy (2019:6), can reduce the obtained elements into smaller and more relevant components or factors. Thus, the EFA, making use of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) extraction method and Varimax rotation on each of the 15 statements measuring the perception on the value proposition of EAP in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings, were conducted.

The Kaiser-Meyer values for each construct, as portrayed in Table 3.3 below, exceeded the recommended value of 0.5 (Ayuni and Sari 2018:5). Therefore, the correlation matrix passed Bartlett's Test of Sphericity with a statistically significant result, indicating its appropriateness.

TABLE 3.3: KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Constructs	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
Perceived causes of absenteeism at work	.972	.000
Perceived usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme	.968	.000
Employee perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism	0.961	.000

- **Validation of the perceived causes of absenteeism at work**

Using the eigenvalues greater than one, the PCA for the extracted items for perceived causes of absenteeism at work revealed a clear dimension, explaining 69.9% of the total variance (Table 3.4). This suggests that the respondents perceive each of the underlying items as the cause of absenteeism at work.

TABLE 3:4: FACTOR LOADING FOR PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM AT WORK

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.486	69.904	69.904	10.486	69.904	69.904

	Component
	1
They are going through interpersonal problems.	.833
They experience stress and anxiety at work due to work overload.	.836
They work long hours which result in fatigue	.841
They have substance abuse problems.	.845
Their manager does not manage and control them well.	.832
They have a chronic sickness.	.860
They are going through a divorce.	.837
They are emotional most of the time.	.847
They do not have maintenance and child support for their children.	.837
They are dissatisfied with their role at work.	.835
They have financial problems (transport money, money spending, and excessive spending).	.846
They experience work-family conflicts.	.838
They have diseases illnesses, sickness, and health problems.	.860
They are not treated fairly at work.	.824
They have performance issues.	.768
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.	
a. 1 components extracted.	

- **Confirmatory factor analysis perceived causes of absenteeism at work**

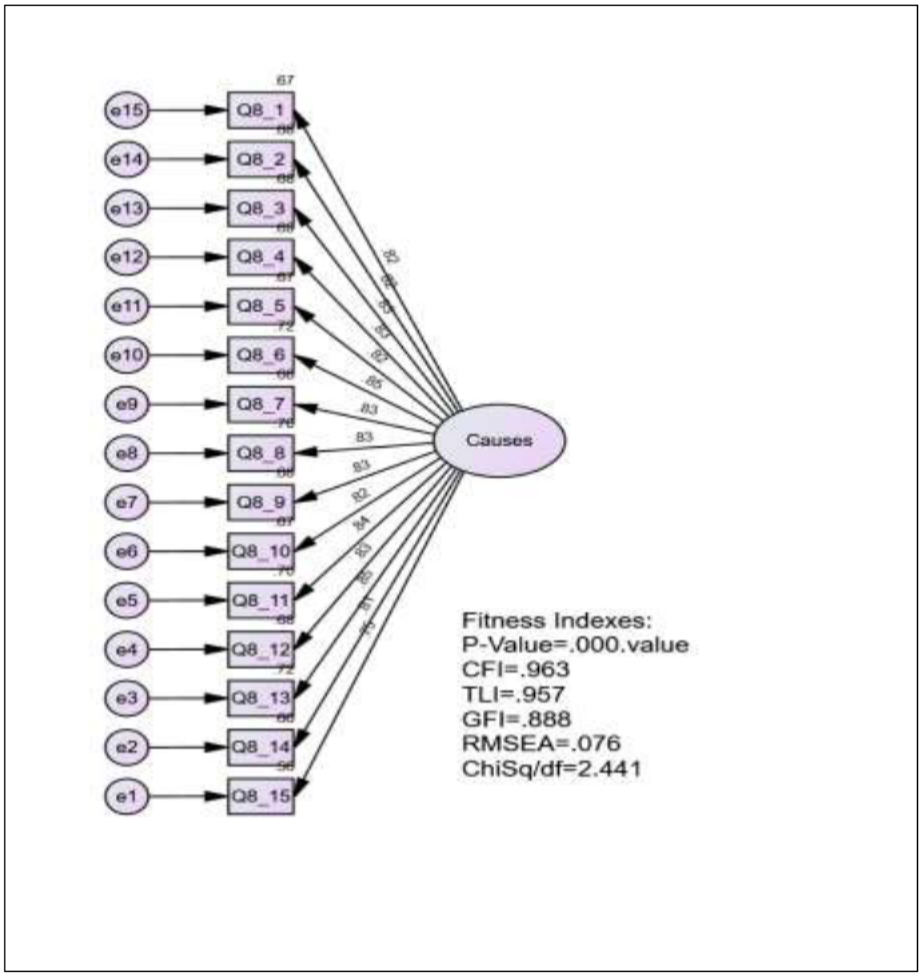
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was computed to validate the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). All items loaded significantly on their hypothesised latent constructs. The CFA for perceived causes of absenteeism at work shows a good fit (Chi Square= 219.665; df=90; p< 0.001; cmindf= 2.441; RMSEA=0.076; GFI= 0.851; CFI=0.963; TLI =0.957).

According to Knekta, Runyon and Eddy (2019:10), a standardised factor loading with a value of 0.50 or higher provides strong evidence of convergent validity. As seen in the model (Figure 3.2), nearly all the items had significant factor loadings, which suggests adequate convergent validity.

FIGURE 3.1: CONVERGENT VALIDITY FOR THE CAUSES OF EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM

	AVE
Causes of absenteeism	0.847

FIGURE 3.2: CFA ANALYSIS VALIDATING THE PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM AT GUD HOLDINGS



- **Validation of the perceived usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme**

Using the eigenvalues-greater than one, the PCA for the extracted items on the perceived usefulness of an EAP revealed a clear dimension explaining 60.9% of the total variance (Table 3.5). This suggests that the respondents perceive each of the underlying items as the usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme.

TABLE 3.5: FACTOR LOADING FOR PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.134	60.893	60.893	9.134	60.893	60.893

	Component
	1
EAP assists employees with their financial or legal issues (debts, retirement savings, Social Security, lack of savings, criminal law, civil law, and family law and).	.747
EAP assists employees with their emotional problems (stress, anxiety, depression etc.).	.787
EAP assists employees with their relationship difficulties (infidelity, sexual problems, conflict, and communication etc.).	.806
EAP assists employees with their job stress (long hours, workload, changes within the organisation, tight deadlines, job insecurity, lack of autonomy etc.).	.775
EAP assists employees with their family problems (divorce, children, bereavement, violence etc.).	.775
EAP assists employees with their balancing work and family.	.754
EAP assists employees with their eldercare, childcare, and parenting difficulties.	.805
EAP assists employees with their separation and loss (Understanding, separation, relationship breakup, loss, and grief etc.).	.833
EAP assists employees with their substance abuse (drug types, alcohol, tobacco and more).	.752
EAP assists employees with their harassment (discriminatory, personal, physical, power, psychological, sexual, verbal etc.).	.768
EAP assists employees with their health problems (illnesses, disabilities, wellness etc.).	.766
EAP will enhance my knowledge of employee health and wellbeing.	.788
Employees have the perception that their problems can be handled professionally and confidentially by the EAP.	.807
EAP is useful in promoting employee health and wellbeing.	.761
EAP services encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring.	.776
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.	
a. 1 components extracted.	

- **Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the perceived usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme**

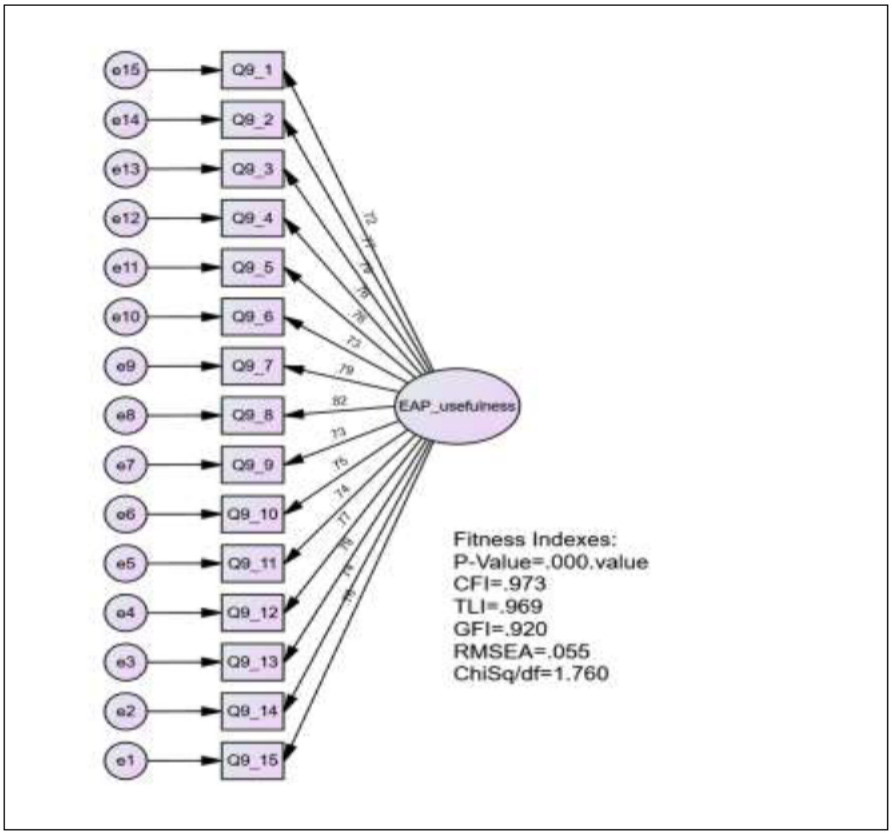
Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was computed to validate the EFA analysis. All items loaded significantly on their hypothesised latent constructs. The CFA for perceived usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme at work shows a good fit

(Chi Square= 158.403; df=90; p< 0.001; cmindf=1.760; RMSEA=0.055; GFI= 0.973; CFI=0.973; TLI =0.969). According to Knekta, Runyon and Eddy (2019:10), a standardised factor loading with a value of 0.50 or higher provides strong evidence of convergent validity. As seen in the model (Figure 3.4), all the items had significant factor loadings, which suggests adequate convergent validity. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) revealed a value higher than the recommended value of 0.50. Thus, it provides strong evidence of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010).

FIGURE 3.3: CONVERGENT VALIDITY FOR THE USEFULNESS OF AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

	AVE
Usefulness of Employee Assistance Programme	0.581

FIGURE 3.4: CFA ANALYSIS VALIDATING THE PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF AN EAP AT GUD HOLDINGS



- **The validation of employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism**

Using the eigenvalues greater than one, the PCA for the extracted items for employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism at GUD Holdings revealed a clear dimension explaining 59.1% of the total variance (Table 3.6). This suggests that the respondents perceive each of the underlying items of EAPs in reducing absenteeism in the organisation.

TABLE 3.6: FACTOR LOADING FOR EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF EAP IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.867	59.115	59.115	8.867	59.115	59.115

	Component
	1
The use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities.	.755
EAP services can decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters.	.788
Absenteeism can be reduced by using EAP services in instances where employees do not report to work because of minor illnesses.	.730
Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of acute medical conditions.	.794
Making use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries.	.776
Absenteeism can be reduced by using EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of stress.	.769
EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situation where employees do not report to work because of burnout and fatigue.	.781
The use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related conditions.	.805
Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees may not report to work because of workplace abuse.	.796
The utilisation of EAP services can decrease absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse.	.790
Making use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture.	.770
The use of EAP services can assist employees who get absent because of not coping with the workload.	.771
Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in instances where expectations of the workplace are not met, and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in form of staying away from work.	.724
In instances where employee performance is in question, utilisation of EAP services can assist in decreasing absenteeism and avoiding problems that could affect job satisfaction.	.752
The utilisation of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees are disengaged and are not committed to their jobs and tend to find excuses not to come to work.	.727

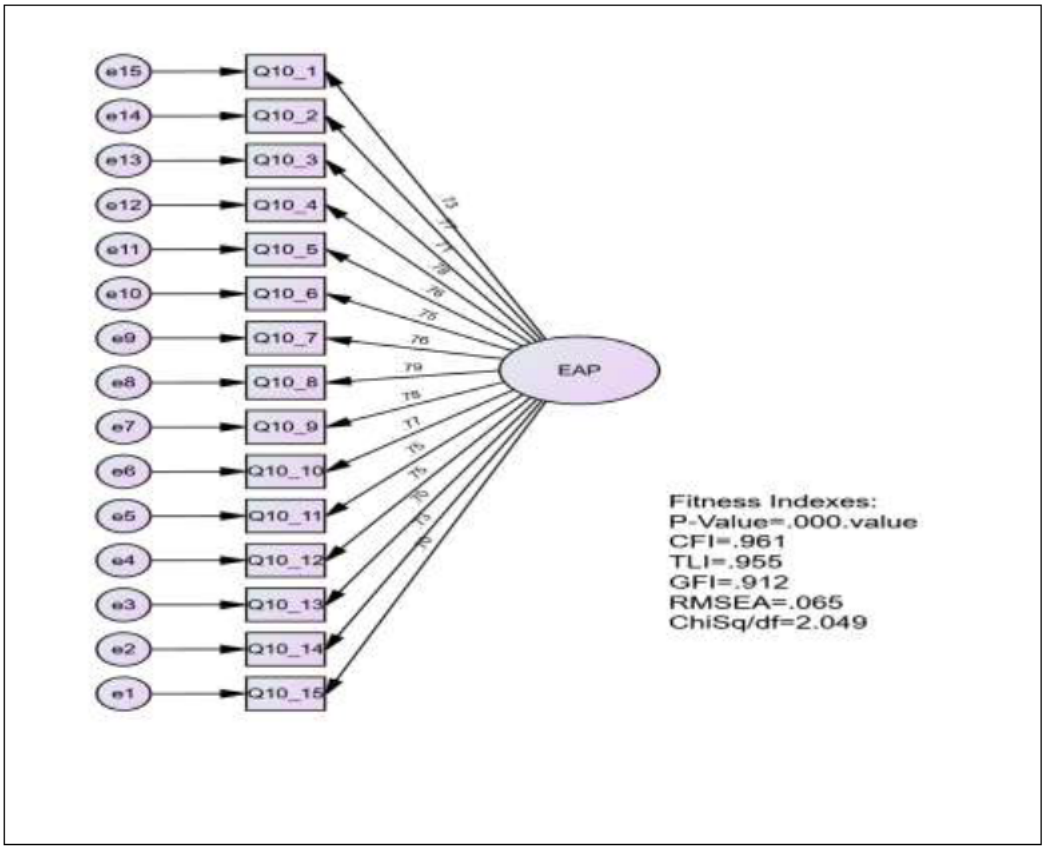
- **The Confirmatory Factor Analysis of employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was computed to validate the EFA analysis. All items loaded significantly on their hypothesised latent constructs. The CFA for employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism at work shows a good fit (Chi Square= 184.419; df=90; p< 0.001; cmindf=2.049; RMSEA=0.065; GFI= 0.912; CFI=0.961; TLI =0.955). According to Prudon (2015:1), a standardised factor loading with a value of 0.50 or higher provides strong evidence of convergent validity. As seen in the model (Figure 3.6), nearly all the items had significant factor loadings, which suggests adequate convergent validity.

FIGURE 3.5: CONVERGENT VALIDITY FOR EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM

	AVE
Employee perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism	0.562

FIGURE 3.6: CFA ANALYSIS VALIDATING EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM AT GUD HOLDINGS



- **Reliability**

Test-retest reliability, according to Dikko (2016:521), is established by administering the same test to the same respondents at different periods in order to acquire the same findings. Moreover, reliability is important because it tests if the study achieves its set purposes. To ensure the reliability of the study, the items of the questionnaire were clearly phrased and refined. In addition, the questionnaire ensured consistency through pilot testing. The researcher also ensured that leading questions were not asked in order to promote the objectivity of the study.

Before discussing the findings gathered on the respondents' perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings, this section focuses on the research instrument's reliability on purpose. The research instrument's reliability was determined by taking many measurements on the same people. Taber (2018:1278) proposed that a reliability coefficient with a Cronbach's α of 0.70 or higher was considered as "acceptable". For this study, Cronbach's α is presented in Table 3.6.

TABLE 3.7: RELIABILITY OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Section	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived causes of absenteeism at work	15	0.969
Perceived usefulness of an EAP	15	0.954
Employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism	15	0.950

The Cronbach's α (Table 3.6) for the 15 items measuring respondents' perceived causes of absenteeism (α= 0.960), perceived usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (α=0.954) and employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism (α=0.950) were above the acceptable value of 0.70. This suggests that there is a degree of consistency in the respondents' answering of the questions measuring perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The covering letter (Annexure A) stated that participants would be protected from any bodily or mental injury to participate in the research. Respondents have the option of declining to take part or withdrawing from the study at any time. Furthermore, by omitting their names from the questionnaire, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. The researcher has an ethical obligation to maintain confidentiality. Any information gathered in the course of the research had to be kept private. Therefore, this study ensured that the identities of respondents were not revealed. Sharing information about a respondent with others for purposes other than research is unethical (Kumar, 2019:225). It was vital therefore that no personal information about the employee was revealed without the employee's written consent. According to Allen and Willes (2016:152), anonymity refers to removing or obscuring participant information. The covering letter (Annexure A) stated that participants would be protected from any bodily or mental injury by participating in the research. Respondents have the option of refusing to take part or withdrawing from the study at any time. Furthermore, by deleting their names from the questionnaire, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Any information gathered in the course of the research had to be kept private.

3.12 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Chiloane (2017:38), data analysis encompasses organising raw data in a way whereby valuable information can be obtained. The purpose of data analysis is to find valuable perceptions that allow knowledgeable decision-making. In this study, the data collected was imported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27 for Windows) software for analysis. SPSS is often recommended because it is user-friendly, has a wide variety of statistical models and extensive tools for data management (Phikiso and Tengeh, 2017:38). According to Pietersen and Maree (2016:252), statistical techniques could be classified under two broad headings: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Descriptive statistics, according to Sutanapong and Louangrath (2015:30), are the most effective way of summarising the properties of huge data sets. In addition, descriptive statistics define the characteristics of a sample. In this study, descriptive statistics summarised the quantitative data and were presented by means of frequency tables, while inferential statistics were used to interpret the sample findings.

A mean and standard deviation are determined to define the samples. The mean is the most commonly used average. Tables were used to present the frequency distributions, with mean values and standard deviations indicating the data distribution.

3.13 SUMMARY

This chapter explained the research methodology employed in the study. The research design, target population, sampling methods, measuring devices, data collecting, data collection procedure, validity and reliability, pilot study and ethical issues were also covered in this chapter. The findings of the questionnaires will be presented and discussed in the following chapter in order to determine the relevant reasons for employees visiting EAPs and the perceived usefulness of EAPs.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the study's findings. Data was obtained from the self-administered structured questionnaire (Annexure B) disseminated to employees at GUD Holdings. The research design for the study adopted the quantitative method. The researcher personally distributed 260 (n) questionnaires to employees (all categories) from three different sites on different days and collected them the following day to accommodate the night shift. Of the 260 questionnaires distributed, 251 were returned. However, 1 was discarded as many questions were not answered and 250 were used for analysis and interpretation. The data obtained from the replies in relation to the objectives outlined in chapter one was analysed using SPSS (version 27®), as well as the study questions outlined below. To investigate the results and interpret the conclusions, descriptive and inferential statistics were used.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to analyse the perceptions of employees of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. The objectives of the study were:

- To explore the concept of EAP and Absenteeism;
- To investigate the causes and prevalence of absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd;
- To understand the impact of absenteeism on employees, as well as on organisations;
- To explore and identify personal and work-related issues affecting GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees;
- To assess whether the EAP can assist GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees to deal with their personal and work-related issues;
- To assess the perceived value of the EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd;

- To investigate whether demographic variables (age, gender, position, etc.) affect employees' perceptions of the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism; and
- To provide recommendations based on the findings to the management of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

Data analysis involves using statistical methods to arrange and review the data obtained to answer the research questions, as well as to make conclusions about the population (Anupama, 2017:3). Thus, in analysing the data of this research study, two statistical procedures were used, namely descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, according to Ali and Bhaskar (2016:663), provide a numerical summary of data. A descriptive statistical method was used to analyse the perceptions of employees of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. Tables, pie charts and bar charts are also used to illustrate the descriptive data in this study. A frequency distribution is a summary table in which data is organised into categories. The gender, age group, marital status, qualification, job category and length of service of respondents were presented in this study using frequencies. Inferential statistics make use of a random sample of data from a population to characterize and infer information about the entire population, assisting the researcher in determining the relationship between variables, group differences, and how independent factors may explain the dependent variable (Ali and Bhaskar, 2016: 663).

For the purpose of this study, the inferential statistics used were the T-test (Table 4.5), ANOVA and Chi-square. The Chi-Square was mainly utilised to test the hypotheses**.** The computed statistical results are shown in annexure D. The association between the respondents' demographic variables and their views on the perceived causes of absenteeism was found to be significant ($p<0.05$) at a 95 % confidence interval, as reflected in annexure D.

Moreover, the ANOVA test determined the difference between the means of the samples, which saw significant differences in the respondents' gender, age group, marital status, job category and length of service and their perceived views on the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism.

4.4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (FREQUENCIES)

Descriptive statistics help to describe, show and summarise data in a meaningful way by using numerical calculations or graphs or tables. Frequencies, means, variances and standard deviations are used to provide information on the data.

4.4.1 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION

A frequency distribution, according to Rawat (2021:1), is a method of organising data that depicts how individual observations are dispersed across the measurement scale. The biographical information is described in the next section.

4.4.1.1 GENDER

As depicted in Table 4.1 below, of the 250 f respondents, 53.6% were males while females constituted 44.8% and other 1.6%. This is the employee gender representation at GUD Holdings. The number of establishments and departments in GUD Holdings has more male workers than females. These results show that male respondents outnumbered females. Men are 2.5 times more likely than women to struggle with substance misuse, and three times more likely to commit suicide, yet just half as likely to seek treatment from EAPs (Navaneelan, 2017:3). Therefore, females will tend to use EAPs more than males.

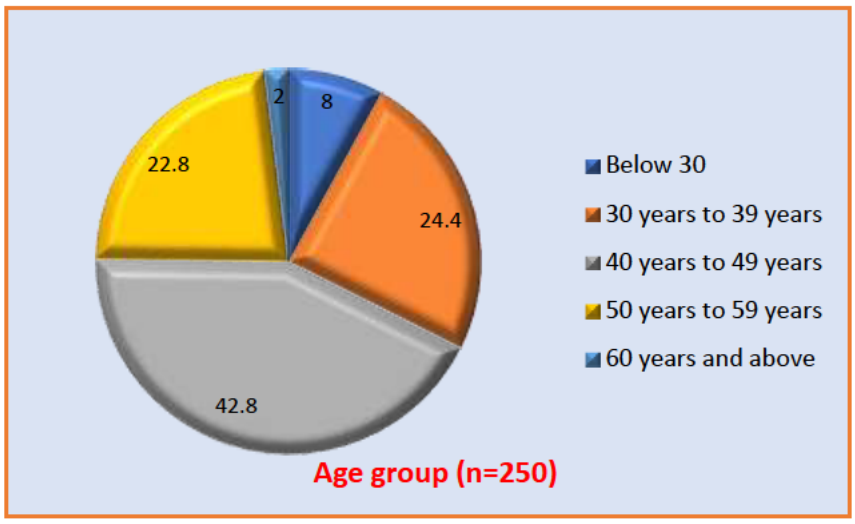
TABLE 4.1: GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Gender	Frequency (n=250	Percentage (%)
Male	134	53.6
Female	112	44.8
Other	4	1.6

4.4.1.2 AGE GROUP

Figure 4.1 below indicates that 42.8% of the respondents were within 40-49 years of age, 24.4% were within 30-39 years, 22.8% were within 50-59 years of age, 8% were below 30 years old and 2% were within 60 and above years. Overall, the analysis of the age group suggests that the majority of 67.2% (30 to 49 years) were middle-aged adults. Mundalambo (2015:57) discovered that between the ages of 31 and 50, the use of EAPs increases. The assumption is that the majority of respondents at this age are married with children, which adds additional responsibilities, personal concerns and stress to the individual's normal functioning. Kenny (2014:87), on the other hand, showed no significant difference in the use of EAPs between men and women.

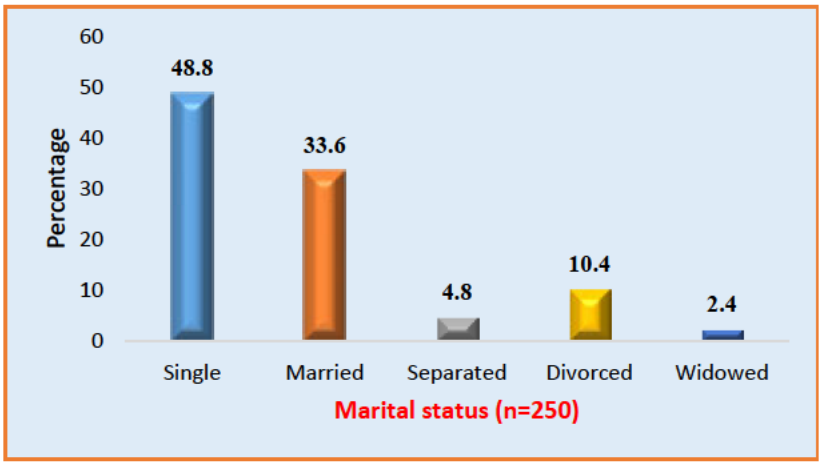
FIGURE 4.1: AGE GROUP OF RESPONDENTS



4.4.1.3 MARITAL STATUS

Figure 4.2 below indicates that 48.8% of the respondents were single, 33.6% were married, 4% divorced, 4.8% separated and 2.4% were widowed. The fact that the majority of respondents were single suggests that they may not recognize the need for EAP assistance with work-family issues, as families and marriages frequently face difficulties. Relationship issues are the second most common EAP caseload, according to Manganyi (2015:16). As a result, researchers expected that married employees would use EAP services more frequently than single employees. Individual traits may also influence the likelihood of using an EAP.

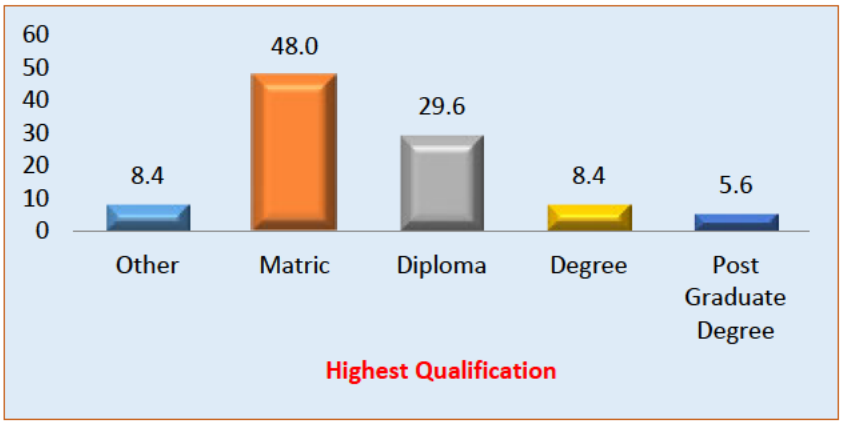
FIGURE 4.2: RESPONDENTS' MARITAL STATUS



4.4.1.4 HIGHEST QUALIFICATIONS

As depicted in Figure 4.3 below, 48% of the respondents hold a Matric (Grade 12 National Certificate); 29.6% had a Diploma level qualification; 8.4% hold a degree and other qualification; and 5.6% had a Post-graduate degree. Employees with little educational credentials, at a junior level with low compensation scales, and doing more labor work are most affected by a variety of problems, including substance addiction and absenteeism, according to Letsoale's (2016: 98) study. These findings contradict Moletsane's (2018:32) conclusion that the higher the degree of education, the more likely employees are to become unwell as a result of the stress that comes with the duty and liability of their jobs.

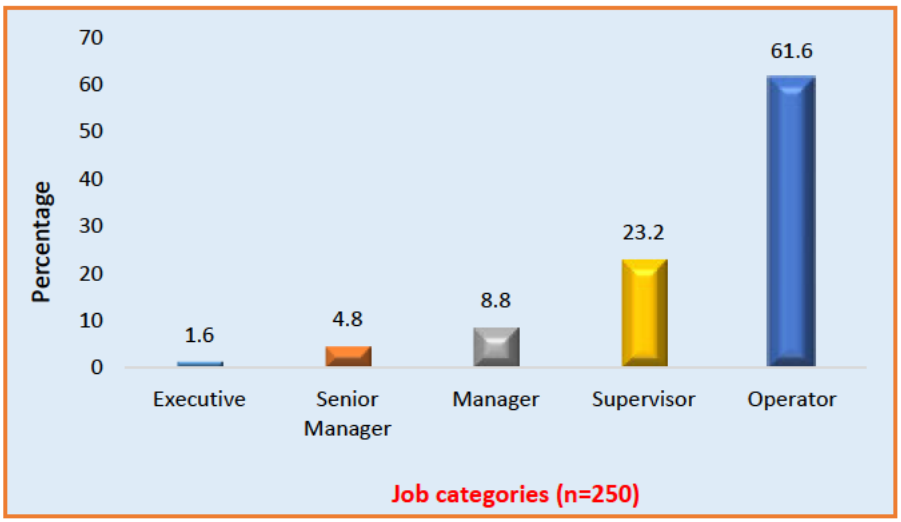
FIGURE 4.3: RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF QUALIFICATIONS



4.4.1.5 JOB CATEGORY

The bar chart presented in Figure 4.4 below shows that a majority (61.6%) of the respondents indicated being in operations, 23.2% were supervisors, 8.8% managers, 4.8% were senior managers and executives accounted for 1.6%. EAPs are primarily used by blue-collar workers or those in lower-level employment, according to Kenny (2014:87). This could be because these workers are not afraid of losing their jobs if others find out that they have utilised the services, according to research. Instead, it is possible that this group of people will face additional obstacles or issues as a result of their employment. As a result, individuals are more prone to seek assistance.

FIGURE 4.4: RESPONDENTS' JOB CATEGORIES



4.4.1.6 LENGTH OF SERVICE

Table 4.2 below shows that 31.6% of the respondents had spent between 6-9 years; 26% had spent 1-5 years; 25.5% had spent 10-14 years; 11.2% had spent 15 years and more; and 6% had less than 1 year in service. Employees who have worked for the organisation for a long time have a good understanding of the culture and the job. As a result, they see no need to take leave without permission. New hires, on the other hand, are more likely to take impromptu breaks to unwind (Jadhav and Ganpate, 2016:51). In contrast, Kamati (2020:79) concluded that longer tenure influences high absenteeism rates because it creates a false sense of job security. Employees feel comfortable because of long service and tend to ignore the possibility of dismissal and retrenchment.

TABLE 4.2: RESPONDENTS' LENGTH OF SERVICE

Length of Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	15	6
1-5 years	65	26
6-9 years	79	31.6
10-14 years	63	25.2
15 years and more	28	11.2
Total	250	100

The respondents were required to respond to six socio-demographic factors, namely: gender, age, marital status, highest qualifications, job category and length of service. These questions were used to analyse the perceptions of the employee of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. The findings demonstrated that there was no statistically significant difference in the gender, age group, marital status or income of the respondents, job category and length of service and their perceived views on the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism. This suggested that regardless of the aforementioned demographic variables, their views on the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd are more or less the same.

4.5 INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

According to Bhandari (2020:1), inferential statistics define the data of a larger population by taking a small portion of that population and drawing a conclusion and making predictions based on that data. Inferential statistics (correlations, multiple regressions, ANOVA and T-test, Chi-square) used in the study helped the researcher in establishing the relationships between variables, differences amongst groups, as well as establish how independent variables may clarify the dependent variable. For the purpose of this study, the inferential statistics used were the T-test, ANOVA and Chi-square.

T-test

The T-test or significant mean differences between two groups is designed to allow the researcher to assess whether or not two means differ (Gronau, Ly and Wagenmakers, 2020:138). T-tests were performed to determine if employees in the study differed in their perceptions of the causes of absenteeism at work related to the EAP.

ANOVA (analysis of variance)

ANOVA is a statistical test to determine if differences exist in the means of three or more groups (Kim, 2017:23). Murray (2017:2) further claims that ANOVA can be used to look for a significant mean difference between more than two groups on an interval or ratio-scaled dependent variable. ANOVA was used in this study to determine whether respondents differed in their views on the value of EAP in addressing absenteeism.

Chi-Square

Chi-Square is a hypothesis testing method used to show a relationship between two categorical variables (Turhan, 2020:576). The Chi-Square was mainly utilised in this study to test the association between the respondents' demographic variables and their views on the perceived causes of absenteeism related to EAP**.**

4.5.1 RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Before the findings gathered on the respondents**'** perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings, this section deliberately focuses on the reliability of the research instrument. To ensure the reliability of the study, pilot testing was conducted, whereby the items of the questionnaire were clearly phrased and refined. In addition, the researcher ensured that leading questions were not asked in order to be able to get correct and truthful responses. Furthermore, Cronbach's coefficient alpha test was administered to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Taber (2018:1274) proposes that a reliability coefficient with a Cronbach's α of 0.70 or higher was considered as "acceptable".

As depicted in Table 4.3 below, The Cronbach α for the 15 items measuring respondents' perceived causes of absenteeism (α= 0.960); perceived usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (α=0.954); and employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism (α=0.950) were above the acceptable value of 0.70. This suggests a degree of consistency in the respondents' answering of the questions measuring perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings

TABLE 4.3: RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Section	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived causes of absenteeism at work	15	0.969
Perceived usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme	15	0.954
Employee perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism	15	0.950

4.5.1.1 RESPONSE RATE

The response rate is the proportion of persons who agreed to participate in a study to the number of people who were asked to do so. A small random sample with a high response rate (>80%) is preferred to a big sample with a low response rate (Lindemann, 2021:1). Of the 260 questionnaires distributed, a total of 251 were returned and 1 (One) of the returned questionnaires was incomplete. Therefore, it could not be used. Thus, a total of 250 questionnaires were usable. The response rate was calculated as follows:

Response Rate= (251/ (260-1)) x100= 96.90

251 represent the number of respondents

260 represent the number of questionnaires distributed

1 represents the number of non-usable questionnaires

Therefore, the total response rate obtained for the study was 96.9%. According to Smith, Witte and Rocha (2019:230), the sample was representative because of its high response rate.

4.5.2 T-TEST (PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM AT WORK)

To assess the perceived causes of absenteeism, a one-sample t-test was performed, as shown in Table 4.4. The section sought to address the research question, which states: "What are the causes and prevalence of absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd?". The mean (*M*) values in all the statements were above 3.5. This suggests that most of the respondents agreed that all the items portrayed in Table 4.4 cause absenteeism at work.

The one-sample t-test below determines if employees in the study differed in their perceptions on the causes of absenteeism at work. The findings are shown in Table 4.4.

TABLE 4.4: RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM AT WORK

	Perceived causes of absenteeism at work (n=250)								*P*-value
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	t	SD	
They are going through interpersonal problems	0 8%	4 4%	32 8%	38%	24%	3 80	68 069	0 883	0 000***
They experience stress and anxiety at work due to work overload	0 8%	3 2%	37 2%	33 6%	25 2%	3 79	67 720	0 885	0 000***
They work long hours which result in fatigue	0 8%	3 6%	10 8%	54 8%	30%	4 10	82 432	0 786	0 000***
They have substance abuse problems	0 8%	1 6%	18 4%	49 6%	29 6%	4 06	81 755	0 784	0 000***
Their manager does not manage and control them well	0 8%	2%	20 4%	44%	32 8%	4 06	77 668	0 827	0 000***
They have a chronic sickness	1 2%	1 6%	26%	42 4%	28 8%	3 96	73 724	0 849	0 000***
They are going through a divorce	0 8%	2%	26%	40%	31 2%	3 99	73 965	0 853	0 000***
They are emotional most of the time	1 2%	1 6%	20%	43 2%	34%	4 07	76 428	0 842	0 000***
They do not have maintenance and child support for their children	0 8%	2 8%	21 2%	41 2%	34%	4 05	74 573	0 858	0 000***
They are dissatisfied with their role at work	0 8%	2%	22 8%	39 6%	34 8%	4 06	75 174	0 853	0 000***
They have financial problems (transport money, money spending, and excessive spending)	1 6%	1 2%	21 2%	42 8%	33 2%	4 05	74 573	0 858	0 000***
They experience work-family conflicts	1 2%	1 2%	18 8%	44 8%	34%	4 09	78 562	0 824	0 000***
They have diseases illnesses, sickness, and health problems	0 8%	2 4%	20 8%	43 2%	32 8%	4 05	76 255	0 839	0 000***
They are not treated fairly at work	1 2%	2 8%	19 6%	40 8%	35 6%	4 07	73 278	0 878	0 000***
They have performance issues	0 4%	3 2%	29 2%	45 6%	21 6%	3 85	75 378	0 807	0 000***

As depicted in Table 4.4 above, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived employees going through interpersonal problems causes absenteeism at work. The results indicated a mean value of *M*=3.80, a standard deviation (*SD*=0.883), a *t* value (*t*=68.069) and was significant at P<0.001. This is evident in research conducted by Quain (2019:1), who revealed that interpersonal conflict can not only affect morale, but also impacts the efficiency and productivity of the workplace, which leads to strained relationships, grievances, litigation, absenteeism and employee turnover. Equally, there was significant agreement that respondents perceived those employees experiencing stress and anxiety at work due to work overload as causes of absenteeism at work. The results indicated a mean value of *M*=3.79, a standard deviation (*SD*=0.885), a *t* value (*t*=67.720) and significance at P<0.001.

There was major correlation that working long hours which resulted in fatigue caused absenteeism, with a mean value of *M*=4.10, a standard deviation (*SD*=0.786), a *t* value (*t*=82.432) and significance at P<0.001. Similar results were reported in a study by Karimbil (2019:275), which found that stress is on the rise in today's work environment because of deadlines and endless pressure from management. As employees fail to address the issue, they tend to absent themselves so that they do not have to deal with stress at the workplace. Salih (2018:10) however contradicted this when highlighting that stress also has positive effects on workers based on the extent of causes of the strain.

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

According to Roche, Pidd and Kostadinov (2015:237), alcohol and drug-related absenteeism is a large and preventable burden on Australian firms. Furthermore, their research discovered evidence that legal drug abuse raises the rate of workplace absenteeism, as measured by both skipping and missing work due to illness or injury.

Moreover, there is significant agreement that respondents perceived chronic sickness as a cause of absenteeism at work, which yielded results as a mean value of *M*=3.96, standard deviation (*SD*=0.849), *t* value (*t*=73.724) and significance at P<0.001. It also emerged that a significant number of respondents consider employees going through divorce as a cause of absenteeism at work, with a mean value of *M*=3.99, standard deviation (*SD*=0.853), *t* value (*t*=73.965) and significance at P<0.001. Fernandez (2019:3) claimed that a divorce or breakup, bereavement, family problems, stress, anxiety, interpersonal problems and financial problems are the most common causes of absenteeism in organisations.

Furthermore, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceive employees without maintenance and child support as a cause of absenteeism at work, with a mean value of *M*=4.05, standard deviation (*SD*=0.858), *t* value (*t*=74.573) and significance at P<0.001. There is also significant agreement that the respondents perceived employees' dissatisfaction with their role at work as the cause of absenteeism at work, which yielded results as a mean value of *M*=4.06, standard deviation (*SD*=0.853), *t* value (*t*=75.174) and significance at P<0.001. According to recent research by Canada Life Group Insurance, one out of every six employees who falsely took sick leave did so because they were weary. These findings are backed up by Kocak, Bryan and Lynch (2018:118), who claim that poor personal accomplishment, as well as a drop-in emotion of competence and burnout, lead to absenteeism. Epstein, Marler and Taber (2015: 35) discovered that managers who demonstrate empathy for their employees by providing family-friendly behaviours like flexible working hours have a positive impact. Equally, there is significant agreement that respondents perceived financial problems such as transport money and excessive spending as causes of employee absenteeism at work, with a mean value of *M*=4.05, standard deviation (*SD*=0.858), *t* value (*t*=74.573) and significance at P<0.001.

Moreover, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived work-family conflicts as the cause of employee absenteeism, with a mean value of *M*=4.09, standard deviation (*SD*=0.824), *t* value (*t*=78.562) and significance at P<0.001. Work-family conflict is becoming more prevalent in society, according to Kossek and Lee (2017:14), and it has a significant impact on work and personal outcomes such as absenteeism and family well-being. Furthermore, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived employees without maintenance and child support as a cause of absenteeism at work.

Equally important, there is significant agreement that the respondents perceived employees who are absent from work to have diseases, illness, sickness and health problems, which yielded results as a mean value of *M*=4.05, standard deviation (*SD*=0.839), with the *t* value (*t*=76.255) and significance at P<0.001. There is also significant agreement that not treating employees fairly at work causes absenteeism, with a mean value of *M*=4.07, standard deviation (*SD*=0.878), t value (*t*=73.278) and significance at P<0.001. Furthermore, with a mean value of *M*=3.85, there is strong agreement that employees who were away from work had performance concerns, with a standard deviation (*SD*=0.807), *t* value (*t*=75.378) and significance at P<0.001. According to Joseph (2015:68), the absence of a good working environment can affect employees' morale and prevent them from reporting to their workplace. Employees with a greater absolute salary, a higher relative wage, and who work at a higher hierarchical level are less absent, according to an econometric analysis of monthly absenteeism at a German firm (Whitman, Crawford and Pfeifer, 2018:282).

4.5.2.1 PERSONAL AND WORK-RELATED ISSUES AFFECTING GUD HOLDINGS (PTY) LTD EMPLOYEES

To address the research objective: to explore and identify personal and work-related issues affecting GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees, the perceived causes of absenteeism with a large portion were plotted using the mean scores (Table 4.5). Based on the mean scores, the highest was long working hours which result in fatigue, with a mean score of *M*=4.1, which indicated that most respondents perceived it as the main cause of absenteeism at work, followed by work-family conflicts (*M*=4.09).

Additionally, the findings show that the least respondents perceived that employees are rarely absent from work because of anxiety at work due to work overload, based on the lowest mean score of *M*=3.79.

4.5.3 CHI-SQUARE TEST (X2) (DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND THE PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM IN RELATION TO EAPS)

The link between the respondents' demographic factors and the perceived causes of absenteeism in relation to EAPs was tested using a Chi-Square (2) test, as shown in Table 4.5.

FIGURE 4.5: RESPONDENTS' PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM AT GUD HOLDINGS

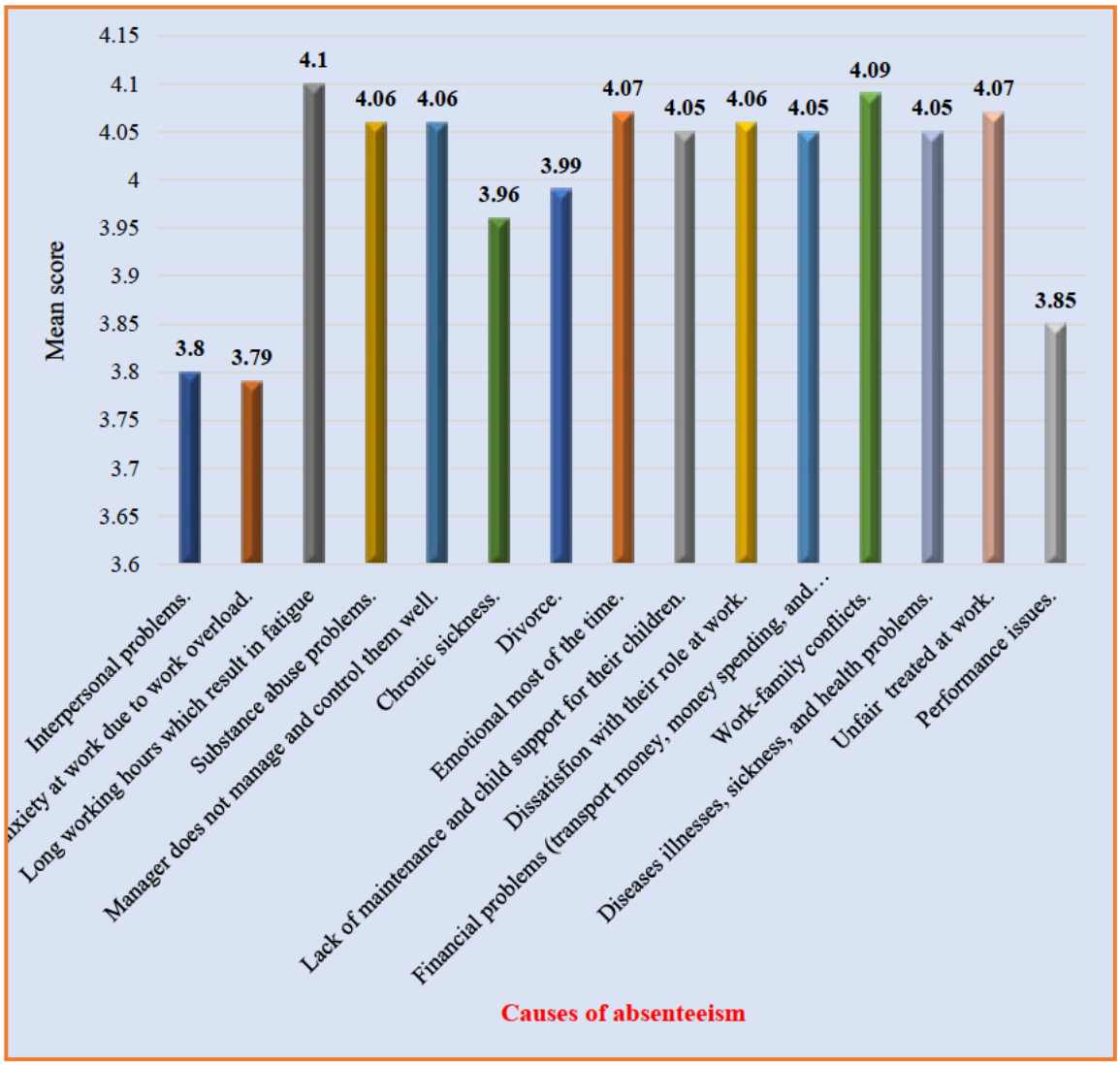


TABLE 4.5: CHI-SQUARE TEST OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND THE PERCEIVED CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

Dimension		Gender	Marital status	Age	Length of service	Job category	Highest qualification
They are going through interpersonal problems.	P-value	0.770	0.098	0.018	0.061	0.007	0.000
	Chi-square	4.887	23.644	29.957	25.533	33.339	46.169
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They experience stress and anxiety at work due to work overload.	P-value	0 145	0.000	0.014	0.010	0.015	0.000
	Chi-square	12.147	47.724	30.766	32.096	30.728	44.586
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They work long hours which result in fatigue	P-value	0 283	0.047	0.004	0.001	0.028	0.042
	Ch-square	9.746	26.515	35.015	40.211	28.466	26.953
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have substance abuse problems.	P-value	0 940	0.075	0.077	0.147	0.053	0.000
	Ch-square	2 901	24.708	24.601	21.869	26.097	52.421
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
Their manager does not manage and control them well.	P-value	0 965	0.163	0.045	0.075	0.027	0.000
	Chi-square	2.433	21.415	26.658	24.733	28.625	44.723
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have a chronic sickness.	P-value	0 950	0.020	0.295	0.331	0.003	0.001
	Ch-square	2.736	29.708	18.503	17.884	36.268	39.850
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are going through a divorce.	P-value	0 967	0.009	0.128	0.223	0.272	0.009
	Ch-square	2 388	32.304	22.499	19.932	18.943	32.364
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are emotional most of the time.	P-value	0909	0.006	0.181	0.225	0.172	0.000
	Chi-square	3 364	33.725	20.938	19.888	21.169	44.292
	Df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They do not have maintenance and child support for their children.	P-value	0.759	0.035	0.022	0.009	0.122	0.002
	Chi-square	4 987	27.603	29.258	32.420	22.703	37.871
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are dissatisfied with their role at work.	P-value	0.877	0.032	0.118	0.039	0.235	0.068
	Chi-square	3.771	28.005	22.846	27.186	19.687	25.130
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
	P-value	0 984	0.123	0.099	0.177	0.420	0.010

They have financial problems (transport money, money spending, and excessive spending).	Chi-square	1 903	22.680	23.596	21.034	16.477	32.165
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They experience work-family conflicts.	P-value	0.463	0.021	0.230	0.213	0.120	0.046
	Chi-square	7.703	29.439	19.784	20.163	22.775	26.620
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have diseases illnesses, sickness, and health problems.	P-value	0.444	0.001	0.060	0.142	0.033	0.001
	Chi-square	7.891	39.761	25.586	22.050	27.819	40.740
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They are not treated fairly at work.	P-value	0.688	0.165	0.224	0.598	0.078	0.001
	Chi-square	5.632	21.358	19.913	14.011	24.579	40.167
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16
They have performance issues.	P-value	0 955	0.137	0.007	0.002	0.449	0.006
	Chi-square	2.641	22.185	33.215	37.338	16.056	33.827
	df	8	16	16	16	16	16

Regarding the statement "Employees will visit the EAP when they are going through interpersonal problems", the Chi-square Test showed a significant difference ($p<0.007$) in the scoring patterns of the respondents by age ($\chi 2=29.987$; df=16). The summary of the analysis is illustrated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 shows that no differences were found between gender and their perceived causes of absenteeism. The Chi-square Test showed a significant difference ($P>0.05$). Gender disparities influence the ability to cope with professional obstacles, according to Dipela (2016: 76). Women are more susceptible to job insecurity and are more likely to engage in physically demanding jobs. These findings contradict a study by Singayaphi (2018:46), which found that males are more likely than females to have personal issues such as absenteeism, alcohol and drug misuse, and other male-related issues.

In terms of interpersonal difficulties, drug addiction problems, supervisors not managing and regulating employees properly, money problems, employees not being treated fairly at work, and employee performance concerns, there was no variation in replies based on marital status. A significant difference was found using the Chi-square Test ($P>0.05$). The findings contradict Cekiso and Terblanche's (2015: 65) findings, which revealed that marriage problems and family difficulties can always affect job performance and absenteeism. As a result, EAPs focus on relationship issues the most. In terms of stress and anxiety at work due to work overload, there were statistically significant variations, significant at $p<0.001$; working hours which result in fatigue was significant at $P=0.047$; chronic sickness was significant at $P=0.020$; going through a divorce was significant at $P=0.009$; maintenance and child support for their children was significant at $P=0.035$; work-family conflicts was significant at $P=0.021$; and having diseases illness, sickness and health problems was significant at $P<0.01$.

There were no differences in terms of substance abuse problems, chronic illness, divorce, dissatisfaction with their role at work, work-family conflicts, having diseases, illnesses, sickness and health problems, and not being treated fairly at work, regardless of the respondents' age. A significant difference was found using the Chi-square Test ($P>0.05$). In contrast to the previous findings, Mundalo (2015:57) discovered that older workers are more sensitive to specific hazards such as infectious diseases, musculoskeletal problems, accidents and injuries as a result of a loss of strength and endurance, which could result in them missing work. There were statistical differences in terms of interpersonal problems, significant at $P=0.018$; experiencing stress and anxiety at work due to work overload, significant at $P=0.014$; work long hours which results in fatigue, significant at $P=0.004$; their manager does not manage and control them well, significant at $P=0.045$; do not have maintenance and child support for their children, significant at $P=0.022$; and have performance issues, significant at $P=0.007$.

Interpersonal problems, substance abuse problems, having chronic sickness, going through divorce, emotional most of the time, financial problems, experiencing work-family conflicts, having diseases illness, sickness and health problems, and not being treated fairly at work were not found to be significant at ($P>0.05$).

There were statistical differences in terms of experiencing stress and anxiety at work due to work overload, significant at P=0.010; work long hours which results in fatigue (P=0.001); maintenance and child support for their children, significant at P=0.009; dissatisfied with their role at work, significant at P=0.039; and performance issues (P=0.002). These findings are reinforced by Mundalo's study (2015: 61), which stipulates that there is no evidence that supports that the length of employment affects the utilisation of EAPs.

Blue-collar workers or those in lower-level professions, according to a study by Kenny (2014: 87), are the most frequent consumers of EAP. This could be because these workers are not worried about losing their jobs if others find out they have used the EAP services, according to research. As an alternative, it could be expected that these individuals would have more challenges or problems because of their positions and consequently would tend to use EAPs often because of psycho-social stressors in the workplace. Substance abuse problems, going through a divorce, emotional most of the time, do not have maintenance and child support for children, dissatisfied with their role at work, have financial problems, experience work-family conflicts, are not treated fairly at work, and have performance issues were not found to be significant at (P>0.05).Differences were found in terms of going through interpersonal problems, significant at P=0.007; experience stress and anxiety at work due to work overload (P=0.015); work long hours which results in fatigue, significant at P=0.028; their manager does not manage and control them well, significant at P=0.027; have a chronic sickness, significant at P=0.003; and have diseases illnesses, sickness and health problems, significant at P=0.033.

Regarding the respondents' highest qualifications and their perceived view of the causes of absenteeism, no difference was found for the statement 'dissatisfied with their role at work', significant at P>0.05. However, and as indicated by the level of significance in Table 4.5, there were statistically significant differences in terms of the respondents' qualifications and the highlighted perceived causes of absenteeism, significant at P<0.05. According to Augostino (2017: 48), high absenteeism has been demonstrated to be a primary source of low morale in many businesses.

However, education has been found to be negatively associated with absenteeism, meaning that the more educated people are, the less likely they are to be absent in organisations. Employees with little educational credentials, at junior levels with low compensation scales, and doing more labor work are most affected by a variety of difficulties, including substance abuse and absenteeism, according to a study by Letsoala (2016: 98).

Overall, it was found that respondents 60 years and above have worked in the organisation 15 years and above, are separated, are executives and hold a Post-graduate degree, and they tend to agree more that the highlighted statements in Table 4.5 causes absenteeism in the organisation.

4.5.4 PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

This section assesses perceptions of the usefulness of EAPs (Employee Assistance Programme) in assisting employees. The section sought to address the research objective: to assess if EAPs can assist GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees to deal with their personal and work-related issues. The researcher used the one sample t-test to see if there was a significant difference between the means of two groups that were connected in some ways (Hayes, 2021:1). A One-sample t-test was performed to assess if EAPs can assist GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees deal with their personal and work-related issues.

4.5.4.1 EAPS ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH FINANCIAL OR LEGAL ISSUES

Table 4.6 indicates that there was significant agreement that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their financial or legal issues, such as debts, retirement, savings, social security, lack of savings, criminal law, civil law and family land, with a mean value of M=3.77, standard deviation (SD=0.783), t value (t=76.117) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.6: PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH FINANCIAL OR LEGAL ISSUES

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	P-value
	SD	D		A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their financial or legal issues (debts, retirement savings, Social Security, lack of savings, criminal law, civil law, and family law and).	0.4%	3.6%	0.783	47.6%	16.8%	3.77	76.117	0.783	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

Handrick (2018:2) concurred with the findings that EAPs can help employees suffering from family issues, financial problems, drug addictions or relationship problems. It can therefore be assumed that EAPs will assist employees with financial or legal issues at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who agreed that EAPs will assist employees with financial or legal issues. As depicted in Table 4.6 above, a majority of the respondents (64.4%) were in agreement (agree=47.6%, strongly agree=16.8%) that EAPs assist employees with legal issues; while 31.6% were neutral and very few were in disagreement (disagree=3.6%, strongly disagree=0.4%).

4.5.4.2 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Based on Table 4.7 below, there was significant agreement in that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with emotional issues, with a mean value of M=3.98, standard deviation (SD=0.776), t value (t=81.036) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.7: PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their emotional problems (stress, anxiety, depression etc.).	0.8%	2.8%	18%	54.8%	23.6%	3.98	81.036	0.776	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

This is backed by Milot and Borkenhagen's (2018:153) research, which indicated that EAPs are meant to assist workers with a range of personal challenges, including emotional ones, in order to preserve or enhance their health and productivity at work. It can therefore be presumed that EAPs will assist employees with emotional issues at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. It is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will assist employees with emotional issues. The results indicated that a majority of the respondents 78.4 % (agree = 54.8%, strongly agree = 23.6%) were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with emotional problems such as stress, anxiety, savings and depression; while 18% were neutral and very few were in disagreement (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 2.8%) with EAPs assisting employees with emotional problems such as stress, anxiety, savings and depression.

4.5.4.3 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES

Table 4.8 below shows that there was significant agreement in that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their relationship difficulties, with a mean value of M=4.07, standard deviation (SD=0.786), t value (t=81.830) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.8: PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their relationship difficulties (infidelity, sexual problems, conflict, and communication etc.).	1.6%	1 2%	14.4%	54.4%	28.4%	4.07	81.830	0.786	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The study by Richmond, Pampel, Wood and Nunes (2017:173) affirmed that EAPs can help employees suffering from relationship difficulties. Therefore, an assumption can be made that EAPs will assist employees with relationship difficulties at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will assist employees with relationship difficulties. Most of the respondents, 82.8 % (agree = 54.4%, strongly agree = 28.4%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with relationship difficulties; 14.4% were neutral and a few (strongly disagree = 1.6%, disagree = 1.2%) were in disagreement with EAPs assisting employees with relationship difficulties (Table 4.8).

4.5.4.4 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH JOB STRESS

With a mean value of M=3.91, standard deviation (SD=0.833), t value (t=74.156) and significance at P<0.001, the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their job stress, such as long hours, workload, changes within the organisation, tight deadlines, job insecurity and lack of autonomy (Table 4.9).

TABLE 4.9: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH JOB STRESS

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their job stress (long hours, workload, changes within the organisation, tight deadlines, job insecurity, lack of autonomy etc.).	0.4%	2.8%	28.8%	41.6%	26.4%	3.91	74.156	0.833	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

Similar results were reported in a study by Richmond, Pampel, Wood and Nunes (2017:175), who state that the EAP impacts on improved work outcomes and helps employees address personal and work-related concerns that are affecting job performance. It can therefore be assumed that EAPs will assist employees with job stress at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will assist employees with job stress. The majority of the respondents, 68 % (agree = 41.6%, strongly agree = 26.4%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with job stress; while 28.8% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 2.8%) were in disagreement that EAPs could assist employees with job stress (Table 4.9).

4.5.4.5 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH FAMILY PROBLEMS

Table 4.10 below shows that there was significant agreement that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their family problems, such as divorce, children, bereavement and violence, with a mean value of M=3.88, a standard deviation (SD=0.827), t value (t=74.159) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.10: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH FAMILY PROBLEMS

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their family problems (divorce, children, bereavement, violence etc.).	1.2%	2.4%	26.4%	47.2%	22.8%	3.88	74.159	0.827	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The results affirm the study by Handrick (2018:2) that anything that can cause an employee stress at work or at home, including family issues, can be managed with a fast-discrete phone call to the EAP. Therefore, it can be that EAPs will assist employees with family problems at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will assist employees with family problems. Many of the respondents, 70 % (agree = 47.2%, strongly agree = 22.8%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with legal issues, while 26.4% were neutral and a few (strongly disagree = 1.2%, disagree = 2.4%) were in disagreement with EAPs assisting employees with their family problems such as divorce, children, bereavement and violence (Table 4.10).

4.5.4.6 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

Table 4.11 illustrates that there was significant agreement that EAPs could assist employees with balancing their work and family, with a mean value of M=3.89, standard deviation (SD=0.817), t value (t=75.349) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.11: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their balancing work and family.	0.8%	3.6%	23.6%	49.6%	22.4%	3.89	75.349	0.817	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The finding was supported by Visagie (2020:1), who stated that EAPs can be used to address a broad range of topics which may be encountered in the workplace, as well as family issues. Therefore, it can be that an EAP will assist employees with balancing work and family at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who agreed that an EAP will assist employees with balancing work and family. The majority of respondents, 72 % (agree = 49.6%, strongly agree = 22.4%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with legal issues, while 23.6% were neutral and a few (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 3.6%) were in disagreement that EAPs assist employees with balancing their work and family (Table 4.11).

Based on the data above, it is clear that respondents believe EAPs will help employees balance work and family life.

4.5.4.7 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH ELDERCARE, CHILDCARE AND PARENTING DIFFICULTIES

Table 4.12 reflects significant agreement that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their eldercare, childcare and parenting difficulties, with a mean value of M=4.06, standard deviation (SD=0.774), t value (t=82.844) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.12: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH ELDERCARE, CHILDCARE AND PARENTING DIFFICULTIES

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their eldercare, childcare, and parenting difficulties	0.8%	2%	16.4%	52.4%	28.4%	4.06	82.844	0.774	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

A survey conducted by Chair (2020:1) showed that EAPs are designed to help people understand or overcome eldercare, childcare and parenting difficulties. Therefore, the results highlighted that a number of respondents were in agreement that EAPs could assist employees with their eldercare, childcare and parenting difficulties at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who agreed that an EAP will assist employees with their eldercare, childcare and parenting difficulties. The majority of respondents, 80.8% (agree = 52.4%, strongly agree = 28.4%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with their eldercare, childcare and parenting difficulties, while 16.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 2%) were in disagreement with EAPs assisting employees with their eldercare, childcare and parenting difficulties (Table 4.12).

4.5.4.8 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH SEPARATION AND LOSS

Table 4.13 reveals that there was significant agreement in that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their separation and loss by helping them understand separation, relationship breakup, loss and grief, with a mean value of M=3.96, standard deviation (SD=0.842), t value (t=74.407) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.13: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH SEPARATION AND LOSS

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their separation and loss (Understanding, separation, relationship breakup, loss, and grief etc.).	1.2%	2.4%	22.8%	46%	27.6%	3.96	74.407	0.842	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The results supported Baynton's (2021:1) statement that the EAP is a facilitator of evidence-based online digital programmes for mental health, designed to help employees identify, understand and improve psychological difficulties like depression, as well as wellbeing issues like grief, separation, relationship breakups and pain management. Hence, it can be assumed that EAPs will assist employees with their separation and loss by helping them understand separation, relationship breakups, loss and grief at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will assist employees by helping them understand separation, relationship breakup, loss and grief. The majority of the respondents, 73.6% (agree = 46%, strongly agree = 27.6%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with legal issues, while 22.8% were neutral and a few (strongly disagree = 1.2%, disagree = 2.4%) were in disagreement with EAPs assisting employees with separation and loss (Table 4.13).

4.5.4.9 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Table 4.14 below reflects that there was significant agreement in that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their substance abuse, such as drug types, alcohol, tobacco and more, with a mean value of M=3.67, standard deviation (SD=0.731), t value (t=79.410) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.14: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their substance abuse (drug types, alcohol, tobacco and more).	0.8%	1.6%	38.8%	47.2%	11.6%	3.67	79.410	0.731	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

According to a study conducted by Richards (2018: 2), the primary goal of EAPs is to assist employees in re-adjusting to their jobs without the use of medication and to maintain them drug-free. Furthermore, the job may not be the best setting for overcoming addiction. There may, however, be an aggravation that triggers cravings, hostility from co-workers, and temptation from other harmful substances. According to Richards (2018:2), an EAP can help improve working conditions and provide a more therapeutic environment for the individual. As a result, the odds of relapse are reduced, which can cause further problems for both the individual and their company. It can therefore be assumed that EAPs will assist employees with their substance abuse, such as drug types, alcohol, tobacco and more at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will assist employees with their substance abuse such as drug types, alcohol, tobacco and more. The majority of the respondents, 58.8 % (agree = 47.2%, strongly agree = 11.6%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with legal issues, while 38.8% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 1.6%) were in disagreement that EAPs will assist employees with their substance abuse, such as drug types, alcohol, tobacco and more (Table 4.14).

4.5.4.10 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH HARASSMENT

Table 4.15 indicates significant agreement that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with harassment, such as discriminatory, personal, physical, power, psychological, sexual and verbal harassment, with a mean value of M=4.04, standard deviation (SD=0.667), t value (t=95.718) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.15: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH HARASSMENT

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their harassment (discriminatory, personal, physical, power, psychological, sexual, verbal etc.).	0.4%	1.2%	14.4%	62.4%	21.6%	4.04	95.718	0.667	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

Donaldson (2018:522) found that the EAP gives employees access to harassment training to aid in prevention, as well as counselling referrals for victims. It can therefore be assumed that EAPs will assist employees with their harassment, such as discriminatory, personal, physical, power, psychological, sexual and verbal issues at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will assist employees with their harassment, such as discriminatory, personal, physical, power, psychological, sexual and verbal issues. The majority of the respondents, 84 % (agree = 62.4%, strongly agree = 21.6%), were in agreement that the EAP assists employees with harassment, while 14.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 1.2%) were in disagreement with EAPs assisting employees with their harassment, such as discriminatory, personal, physical, power, psychological, sexual and verbal harassment (Table 4.15).

4.5.4.11 ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH HEALTH PROBLEMS

Table 4.16 below shows that there was significant agreement that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist employees with their health problems, such as illnesses, disabilities and wellness, with a mean value of M=4.04, standard deviation (SD=0.667), t value (t=84.694) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.16: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH HEALTH PROBLEMS

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP assists employees with their health problems (illnesses, disabilities, wellness etc.).	0.4%	1.6%	19.6%	51.6%	26.8%	4.03	84.694	0.752	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

These results are aligned to the findings of Calvello (2021: 121), that an EAP would assist employees as they deal with depression, crisis intervention anxiety, stress, job burnout, grief counselling and behavioural health issues like eating disorders. It can therefore be assumed that an EAP will assist employees with their health problems, such as illnesses, disabilities and wellness issues at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that an EAP will assist employees with their health problems, such as illnesses, disabilities and wellness issues. The majority of respondents, 78.4 % (agree = 51.6%, strongly agree = 26.8%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with health issues, while 19.6% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 1.6%) were in disagreement with EAPs assisting employees with health problems (Table 4.16).

4.5.4.12 ASSISTS IN ENHANCING EMPLOYEES' KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Table 4.17 presents significant agreement that the respondents perceived that EAPs could assist in enhancing employees' knowledge of their health and wellbeing, with a mean value of *M*=4.01, standard deviation (*SD*=0.755), t value (*t*=83.922) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.17: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ENHANCING EMPLOYEES' KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP will enhance my knowledge of employee health and well being	0.8%	1.2%	19.6%	53.2%	25.2%	4.01	83.922	0.755	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

Kreider (2019:1) found that telling employees about EAPs is not a one-time task but rather an ongoing process. Sharing EAP details continually and communicating the large variety of services available through the Programme is important because employees might think that an EAP is only for mental health challenges, not realising that it can also help with things such as navigating workplace conflicts (Kreider 2019:1). It can therefore be assumed that an EAP could assist in enhancing employees' knowledge of their health and wellbeing at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that an EAP could assist in enhancing employees' knowledge of their health and wellbeing. The majority of respondents, 78.4 % (agree = 53.2%, strongly agree = 25.2%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with health issues, while 19.6% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 1.2%) were in disagreement that EAPs could assist in enhancing employees' knowledge of their health and wellbeing (Table 4.17).

4.5.4.13HANDLING OF EMPLOYEES' PROBLEMS PROFESSIONALLY AND CONFIDENTIALLY

Table 4.18 depicts significant agreement that the respondents perceived that EAPs could handle employees' problems professionally and confidentially, with a mean value of *M*=4.03, standard deviation (*SD*=0.736), *t* value (*t*=86.558) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.18: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN HANDLING EMPLOYEES' PROBLEMS PROFESSIONALLY AND CONFIDENTIALLY

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Employees have the perception that their problems can be handled professionally and confidentially by the EAP.	0.4%	2%	17.2%	55.2%	25.2%	4.03	86.558	0.736	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The majority of employees are concerned that their personal troubles will be revealed to HR and co-workers. Clausnitzer (2019:1), on the other hand, stated that all interactions with employees are kept strictly confidential, and that no information can be disclosed unless the employee signs a written release of information. Most EAPs adhere to NHIA (National Health Insurance Act) regulations, and confidentiality is limited to risks of harm to oneself or others. Employers frequently have no idea who uses the EAP services. The majority of respondents, 80.4 % (agree = 55.2%, strongly agree = 25.2%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with health issues, while 17.2% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 2%) were in disagreement that EAPs could handle employees' problems professionally and confidentially (Table 4.18).

It can therefore be assumed that EAPs could handle employees' problems professionally and confidentially at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs could handle employees' problems professionally and confidentially.

4.5.4.14 EAP'S USEFULNESS IN PROMOTING EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Table 4.19 below illustrates that there was significant agreement that the respondents perceived that the EAP is useful in promoting employee health and wellbeing, with a mean value of M=3.95, standard deviation (SD=0.790), t value (t=79.091) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.19: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS BEING USEFUL IN PROMOTING EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP is useful in promoting employee health and wellbeing.	0.4%	1.6%	26.4%	45.6%	26%	3.95	79.091	0.790	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

According to Siyangaphi (2018:20), self-acceptance, personal progress, purpose of life, acquisition of environment, autonomy and pleasant interactions with others are examples of psychological well-being, whereas social well-being includes social acceptance, social fulfilment, social contribution and social integration. In a similar vein, Sandys (2015:1) stated that EAPs are an investment in employees' well-being, and that increasing awareness of the Programme is critical to getting the best return on that investment. It can therefore be assumed that EAPs will be useful in promoting employee health and wellbeing at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs will be useful in promoting employee health and wellbeing.

The majority of respondents, 71.6 % (agree = 45.6%, strongly agree = 26%), were in agreement that EAPs assist employees with health issues, while 26.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 1.6%) were in disagreement that an EAP is useful in promoting employee health and wellbeing (Table 4.19).

4.5.4.15 EAP SERVICES ENCOURAGE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Table 4.20 points out that there is considerable consensus that the respondents perceived EAP services to encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring, with a mean value of M=4.03, standard deviation (SD=0.781), t value (t=81.665) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.20: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES ENCOURAGING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Focus Area Question	Usefulness of an Employee Assistance Programme (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP services encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring.	0.4%	2.4%	19.2%	49.6%	28.4%	4.03	81.665	0.781	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The results confirm the affirmation by Davoren (2018:1) that the organisational culture promotes employee wellbeing and that employees are encouraged by their managers to make use of the Employee Assistance Programme. According to Davoren, EAP experts also provide guidance, strategic analysis and consulting to organisations in order to improve organisational culture, performance, and business success (2018:1). It can therefore be assumed that EAP services encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring.

The majority of the respondents, 78 % (agree = 49.6%, strongly agree = 28.4%), were in agreement that EAP services encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring, while 19.2% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 2.4%) were in disagreement that EAP services encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring (Table 4.20).

4.6 EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SEVICES IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM

This section assesses the perception of EAPs in reducing absenteeism. It sought to address the research objective, which is to assess the perceived value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. A One-sample t-test was performed to assess the perceived value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

4.6.1 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM DUE TO FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Table 4.21 shows significant agreement that the respondents perceived that the use of EAP services could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.59, standard deviation (SD=0.719), t value (t=78.95) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.21: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Focus Area	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
Question	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
The use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities.	0.4%	3.6%	41.6%	45.6%	8.8%	3.59	78.952	0.719	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

These findings are consistent with Baydoun, Dumit and Daouk-Oyry's (2016:100) findings that family-life balance factors into work absenteeism, such as childcare and caring for an old parent or sick relative. Similarly, the findings are consistent with those of Avis (2016: 23), who discovered that having a family increases the likelihood of an employee missing work. According to Avis (2016:23), EAP therapies were more effective in supporting clients in transitioning from moderate to low levels of sick leave than in reducing sick leave for individuals with chronic absenteeism. Hence, it can be assumed that respondents perceived that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This was also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAPs could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities. The majority (54.4% of the respondents) (agree = 45.6%, strongly agree = 8.8%), were in agreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities, while 41.6% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 3.6%) were in disagreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities (Table 4.21).

4.6.2 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN DECREASING PREGNANCY-RELATED ABSENTEEISM

Table 4.22 indicates significant agreement that the respondents perceived that the use of EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.95, standard deviation (SD=0.785), t value (t=79.605) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.22: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN DECREASING EMPLOYEES' PREGNANCY-RELATED ABSENTEEISM

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP services can decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters.	0.8%	2%	22.4%	50.8%	24%	3.95	79.605	0.785	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

Pregnancy is a sensitive topic for working women and their employers in most workplaces. Previously, women were frequently misperceived as being less capable or dedicated than their male counterparts, and discriminatory actions against them were prevalent (Parker, 2018:3). As a result, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 was enacted to address this issue by forbidding employers from discriminating against or dismissing female employees due to pregnancy, delivery or any other medical condition related to pregnancy. An EAP can provide information about services that can support a healthy pregnancy, such as referral services to maternal medicine in high-risk pregnancies (Slay, 2019:1). Hence, EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters. The majority of respondents, 74.8 % (agree = 50.8%, strongly agree = 24%), were in agreement that EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters, while 22.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree= 0.8%, disagree = 2%) were in disagreement that EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters (Table 4.22).

4.6.3 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO MINOR ILLNESS

Table 4.23 indicates that significant agreement in that the respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAPs in instances where employees do not report to work because of minor illness, with results yielding a mean value of *M*=3.72, standard deviation (*SD*=0.688), *t* value (*t*=85.550) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.23: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO MINOR ILLNESS

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Absenteeism can be reduced by using EAP services in instances where employees do not report to work because of minor illnesses.	0.8%	1.2%	32.8%	55.2%	10%	3.72	85.550	0.688	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

Colds, headaches and stomach problems are just a few of the symptoms that might accompany minor illnesses (CIPD, 2016). The sick leave cycle is computed under section 22 of the BCEA (Basic Conditions of Employment Act) based on 36 months of continuous employment with the same employer. As a result, employees who are ill have the right to take sick leave (Karanja, 2013: 16). EAPs are considered beneficial approaches to reducing absenteeism where employees do not report to work because of minor illness (Joseph, 2017:1). Furthermore, an employee taking a few days off now and again has a direct impact on the workload of other employees (IDS HR, 2019). Thus, it can be assumed that EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work due to minor illness at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work due to minor illness.

The majority of respondents, 65.2 % (agree = 55.2%, strongly agree = 10%), were in agreement that EAP services reduced employee absenteeism due to minor illness, while 32.8% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 1.2%) were in disagreement with EAP services reducing employee absenteeism due to minor illness (Table 4.23).

4.6.4 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO ACUTE MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Table 4.24 indicates significant agreement in that the respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAPs in cases where employees do not report to work because of acute medical conditions, with results yielding a mean value of M=4.02, standard deviation (SD=0.630), t value (t=100.855) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.24: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO ACUTE MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of acute medical conditions.	0.4%	1.6%	11.6%	68.4%	18%	4.02	100.855	0.630	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

Acute medical disorders, according to Roche, Pidd and Kostadinov (2015: 236), can have a negative impact on individuals, enterprises and the wider community by lowering industrial competitiveness and productivity. Other researchers have found that employee absenteeism due to acute medical issues can have a negative impact on workplace productivity (Buvik, Moan and Halkjelsvik, 2018: 71).

It can therefore be posited that EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work due to acute medical conditions at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work due to acute medical conditions. The majority of respondents, 86.4 % (agree = 68.4%, strongly agree = 18%), were in agreement with EAP services reducing employee absenteeism due to acute medical conditions, while 11.6% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 1.6%) were in disagreement with EAP services reducing employee absenteeism due to acute medical conditions (Table 4.24).

4.6.5 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO INJURIES

Table 4.25 reveals significant agreement in that respondents perceived that making use of EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.99, standard deviation (SD=0.747), t value (t=84.406) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.25: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO INJURIES

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Making use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries.	0.8%	2.4%	16.4%	58%	22.4%	3.99	84.406	0.747	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

This finding supported the view of Middlesworth (2021:1) that EAPs can improve injury statistics.

Hence, it can be assumed that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries. The majority of respondents, 80.4 % (agree = 58%, strongly agree = 22.4%), were in agreement that the use of EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries, while 16.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 2.4%) were in disagreement that the use of EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries (Table 4.25).

4.6.6 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO STRESS

Table 4.26 indicates significant agreement in that respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of stress, with results yielding a mean value of *M*=3.98, standard deviation (*SD*=0.719), *t* value (*t*=87.463) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.26: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO STRESS

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Absenteeism can be reduced by using EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of stress.	0.4%	2%	18.4%	57.6%	21.6%	3.98	87.463	0.719	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

There is some evidence that EAPs reduce employee stress and time away from work due to personal and work-related issues (EASNA-EAP, 2017-37).

It can therefore be assumed that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report because of stress. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of stress. The majority of respondents, 79.2 % (agree = 57.6%, strongly agree = 21.6%), perceive that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of stress, while 18.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 2%) were in disagreement that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of stress (Table 4.26).

4.6.7 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO BURNOUT AND FATIGUE

Table 4.27 points out considerable consensus that respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of burnout and fatigue, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.91, standard deviation (SD=0.784), t value (t=78.858) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.27: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO BURNOUT AND FATIGUE

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situation where employees do not report to work because of burnout and fatigue.	1.2%	1.6%	23.6%	52.4%	21.2%	3.91	78.858	0.784	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The most common causes of absenteeism in the workplace are illness, burnout, fatigue, childcare issues, family situations and tardiness. Another study conducted by Strydom (2019:2) affirmed that it is important to know when employees may be dealing with issues such as burnout and fatigue and refer them to the EAP for assistance. Thus, it can be assumed that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work due to burnout and fatigue. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work due to burnout and fatigue. The majority of respondents, 73.6% (agree = 52.4%, strongly agree = 21.2%), perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of burnout and fatigue, while 23.6% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 1.2%, disagree = 1.6%) were in disagreement that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of burnout and fatigue (Table 4.27).

4.6.8 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM IN CASES WHERE EMPLOYEES DO NOT REPORT TO WORK BECAUSE OF ALCOHOL- OR DRUG-RELATED CONDITIONS

Table 4.28 shows that there was significant agreement that the respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related conditions, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.87, t value (t=74.759), standard deviation (SD=0.818) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.28: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM IN CASES WHERE EMPLOYEES DO NOT REPORT TO WORK BECAUSE OF ALCOHOL- OR DRUG-RELATED CONDITIONS

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
The use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related conditions.	1.6%	2.4%	24%	51.6%	20.4%	3.87	74.59	0.818	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

It has been proven that as a tool for preventing and addressing employee alcohol or drug-related addiction, EAPs create a positive work environment and reduce the absenteeism impact of employee drug use on the workplace (Carmona, 2020:1). As a result, it can be assumed that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related conditions. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related conditions. The majority of respondents, 72% (agree = 51.6%, strongly agree = 20.4%), were in agreement that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related issues, while 24% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 1.6%, disagree = 2.4%) were in disagreement that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related conditions (Table 4.28).

4.6.9 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO WORKPLACE ABUSE

Table 4.29 reveals significant agreement that the respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.86, standard deviation (SD=0.761), t value (t=80.228) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.29: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO WORKPLACE ABUSE

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees may not report to work because of workplace abuse.	0.8%	2.4%	24.8%	54%	18%	3.86	80.228	0.761	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

EAPs in the workplace are still one of the most popular strategies of minimising psychological trauma caused by workplace violence, according to Safe Work Australia (2019:1). In addition, Kamati (2020:83) found that workplace abuse may result in high absenteeism. Consequently, it can be assumed that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse.

The majority of respondents, 72% (agree = 54%, strongly agree = 18%), were in agreement that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse, while 24.8% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 2.4%) were in disagreement that absenteeism could be reduced by using EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse (Table 4.29).

4.6.10 PERCEPTIONS OF UTILISING EAP SERVICES IN DECREASING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO WORKPLACE ABUSE

Table 4.30 illustrates significant agreement that the respondents perceived that absenteeism could decrease by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.89, standard deviation (SD=0.736), t value (t=83.531) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.30: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF UTILISING EAP SERVICES IN DECREASING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO WORKPLACE ABUSE

Focus Area	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
Question	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
The utilisation of EAP services can decrease absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse.	0.4%	2.8%	22.4%	56.4%	18%	3.89	83.531	0.736	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

EAPs make sense for employees who are struggling with workplace abuse that may be caused by managers, colleagues and a toxic work environment (Stephens, 2018). Therefore, it can be assumed that utilising EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse.

This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that utilising EAP services could reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse. The majority of respondents, 74.4 % (agree = 56.4%, strongly agree = 18%), were in agreement that absenteeism could decrease by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse, while 22.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 2.8%) were in disagreement that absenteeism could decrease by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse (Table 4.30).

4.6.11 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO A HOSTILE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Table 4.31 indicates significant agreement that the respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by making use of EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.80, standard deviation (SD=0.733), t value (t=80.970) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.31: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO A HOSTILE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Making use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture.	0.4%	2.8%	28.4%	52.8%	15.6%	3.80	80.970	0.743	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

Moabelo's study (2018:53) found that in cases where employees are experiencing an organisational culture which is symptomatic of signs of employees' declining work performance, the EAP's role will be two-fold. On one hand, an EAP would intervene at a level of putting remedial mechanisms in place to deal with the damage if indicated to be caused by a negative organisational culture. On the other hand, the Programme should take advantage of the EAP's preventative nature to tap into areas that may be perceived as potential breeders of a destructive organisational culture. Moabelo (2018:53) further stated that the implementation of EAPs in organisations is therefore part of an organisation's way of creating this caring organisational culture. Hence, it can be assumed that absenteeism could be reduced by making use of EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that absenteeism could be reduced by making use of EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture. The majority of respondents, 68.4 % (agree = 52.8%, strongly agree = 15.6%), were in agreement that absenteeism could be reduced by making use of EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture, while 28.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 2.8%) were in disagreement that absenteeism could be reduced by making use of EAP services in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture (Table 4.31).

4.6.12 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO WORKLOAD DIFFICULTIES

Table 4.32 reveals that there was significant agreement in that the respondents perceived that EAP services could assist employees who get absent because of not coping with the workload, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.93, standard deviation (SD=0.773), t value (t=80.367) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.32: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO WORKLOAD DIFFICULTIES

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
The use of EAP services can assist employees who get absent because of not coping with the workload.	0.4%	1.2%	27.6%	46.8%	24%	3.93	80.367	0.773	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

Badumi (2017:35) highlighted challenges such as workload and how these challenges could lead to job dissatisfaction, hinder organisational productivity and increase absenteeism at work. As a result of the EAP concept, employees can dissipate their feelings about the cause of anger, depression, not coping with work, etc. (Vandayar, 2018:15). Hence, it can be assumed that EAP services could assist employees who are absent because of not coping with the workload at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could assist employees who are absent because of not coping with the workload. The majority of respondents, 70.8 % (agree = 46.8%, strongly agree = 24%), were in agreement that EAP services could assist employees who are absent because of not coping with the workload, while 27.6% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 1.2%) were in disagreement that EAP services could assist employees who are absent because of not coping with the workload (Table 4.32).

4.6.13 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO JOB WORKPLACE DISSATISFACTION

Table 4.33 illustrates significant agreement that the respondents perceived that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAP services where expectations of the workplace are not met and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in the form of staying away from work, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.55, standard deviation (SD=0.682), t value (t=82.346) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.33: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO WORKPLACE DISSATISFACTION

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in instances where expectations of the workplace are not met, and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in form of staying away from work.	0.4%	1.6%	48.4%	41.6%	8%	3.55	82.346	0.682	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

The biggest problem leading to absenteeism is being at work for longer hours but not finishing the minimum tasks due to disturbances from various problems. HopeQure (2021:2) stated that the EAP helps to reduce absenteeism by increasing better health outcomes amongst employees and at the workplace, organisations can implement EAPs that will systemise this process. It can therefore be assumed that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAP services where expectations of the workplace are not met, and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in the form of staying away from work at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAP services where expectations of the workplace are not met, and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in the form of staying away from work.

The majority of respondents, 49.6 % (agree = 41.6%, strongly agree = 8%), were in agreement that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAP services where expectations of the workplace are not met and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in the form of staying away from work, while 48.4% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 1.6%) were in disagreement that absenteeism could be reduced by utilising EAP services where expectations of the workplace is not met and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in the form of staying away from work (Table 4.33).

4.6.14 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN ASSISTING IN DECREASING EMPLOYEES' ABSENTEEISM DUE TO JOB DISSATISFACTION

Table 4.34 indicates significant agreement that the respondents perceive that in situations where employees' performance is in question, EAP services could assist in decreasing absenteeism, which in turn could help avoid problems that affect job satisfaction, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.79, standard deviation (SD=0.670), t value (t=89.398) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.34: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN DECREASING EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM DUE TO JOB SATISFACTION

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
In instances where employee performance is in question, utilisation of EAP services can assist in decreasing absenteeism and avoiding problems that could affect job satisfaction.	0.4%	2.4%	25.6%	61.2%	10.4%	3.79	89.398	0.670	0.000
	Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%								

Job satisfaction is defined by Rahman, Akhter and Khan (2017:5) as "any combination of mental, physiological and natural circumstances that leads a person to honestly state 'I am satisfied by my job'". The majority of respondents (71.6%) perceived that EAP services assist in decreasing employees' absenteeism due to job satisfaction. It can therefore be assumed that in instances where employees' performance is in question, EAP services could assist in decreasing absenteeism, which in turn could help avoid problems that could affect job satisfaction at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that in instances where employees' performance is in question, EAP services could assist. The majority of respondents, 71.6 % (agree = 61.2%, strongly agree = 10.4%), were in agreement that in instances where employees' performance is in question, EAP services could assist in decreasing absenteeism, which in turn could help avoid problems that could affect job satisfaction, while 25.6% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.4%, disagree = 2.4%) were in disagreement that in instances where employees' performance is in question, EAP services could assist in decreasing absenteeism, which in turn could help avoid problems that affect job satisfaction (Table 4.34).

4.6.15 PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM RELATED TO EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT

Table 4.35 indicates significant agreement that the respondents perceived that utilising EAP services could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees are disengaged and are not committed to their jobs, with results yielding a mean value of M=3.88, standard deviation (SD=0.762), t value (t=80.560) and significance at P<0.001.

TABLE 4.35: RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EAP SERVICES IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM RELATED TO EMPLOYEE DISENGAGEMENT

Focus Area Question	Perception of EAP in reducing absenteeism (n = 250)					Mean	T-test	Std.	*P*-value
	SD	D	Neutral	A	SA				
The utilisation of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees are disengaged and are not committed to their jobs and tend to find excuses not to come to work.	0.8%	3.2%	21.2%	56.8%	18%	3.88	80.560	0.762	0.000
Likert scale= Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA) P <1%									

Engaged employees, according to Forte (2017:83), adopt behaviours that reduce absenteeism. Companies with disengaged staff are also at risk of more absenteeism. Wushe and Shenje (2019:4) found that by investing in EAPs, employers are offering employees a support system that they can access when experiencing problems in their personal or professional lives. For that reason, it can be assumed that EAP services could reduce absenteeism related to employee disengagement. This is also supported by the number of respondents who were in agreement that EAP services could reduce absenteeism related to employee disengagement. The majority of respondents, 74.8 % (agree = 56.8%, strongly agree = 18%), were in agreement that utilising EAP services could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees are disengaged and are not committed to their jobs, while 21.2% were neutral and some (strongly disagree = 0.8%, disagree = 3.2%) were in disagreement that utilising EAP services could reduce absenteeism in cases where employees are disengaged and are not committed to their jobs (Table 4.35).

4.7 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES AND EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF EAPS IN ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM

Employee demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, marital status, education level, length of service and job type, influenced workers' opinions of the effectiveness of EAPs in managing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, according to the research. As such, this section answers the objective that investigates the demographic profiles of employees of GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd affecting their perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs.

To ascertain if respondents' opinions on the value of EAPs in resolving absenteeism differed, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. Table 4.36 shows a summary of the findings.

TABLE 4.36 ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF EAPS IN ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM

Socio-demographic characteristics		N (250)	Mean	Std. Deviation	P value
Gender	Male	134	3.8900	.54506	
	Female	112	3.7946	.59191	0.385*
	Other	4	3 9667	.38297	
Age group	Below 30	20	3.6033	.75996	
	30 years to 39 years	61	3.8481	.41188	
	40 years to 49 years	107	3.8536	.54565	0.088*
	50 years to 59 years	57	3.8807	.63355	
	60 years and above	5	4 3600	.65081	
Marital status	Single	122	3.7885	.54124	
	Married	84	3 9698	.52160	
	Separated	12	3.7889	.44932	0.202*
	Divorced	26	3.7641	.71136	
	Widowed	6	3.8556	.96463	
Highest qualification	Post-Graduate Degree	14	4 2286	.45571	
	Degree	21	4.0381	.52348	
	Diploma	74	3.8324	.54454	0.017**
	Metric	120	3.8172	.48194	
	Other	21	3.6413	.95323	
Job Category	Executive	4	3.8833	.38249	
	Senior Manager	12	4 2722	.49682	
	Manager	22	3 9455	.36552	0.083*
	Supervisor	58	3.8126	.56437	
	Operator	154	3.8143	.58700	
	Less than 1 year	15	3 5156	.77806	
	1-5 years	65	3 9138	.52740	
	6-9 years	79	3.8270	.48458	0.120*
	10-14 years	63	3.8381	.59997	
	15 years and more	28	3 9595	.61513	
P* >5%					
P** <5%					

The ANOVA value reveals no statistically significant differences in the respondents' gender, age group, marital status, job category and length of service and their perceived views on the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism (P>0.05). This suggests that regardless of the aforementioned demographic variables, their views on the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd are more or less the same. On the other hand, the ANOVA value indicates that there is significant difference in terms of the respondents' qualifications and their views on the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism (P=0.017). Respondents with post-graduate degrees had the highest mean value (M=4.22) and standard deviation (SD=0.456) supporting the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism, whilst those with other degrees had the lowest mean value (M=3.64) and standard deviation (SD=0.953) supporting the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism.

The first objective that became crucial to obtain was to analyse the perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings. The above chapter has thoroughly analysed the perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings. The results guided the researcher in addressing the research objective, which was to explore and identify personal and work-related issues affecting GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd employees. The perceived causes of absenteeism with most support were long working hours which resulted in fatigue as the cause of absenteeism at work, followed by work-family conflicts and unfair treatment at work.

Furthermore, there appeared to be no statistically significant difference between the respondents' reported opinions on the utility of EAPs in managing absenteeism and their gender, age group, marital status, job type and length of service. This implies that their opinions on the efficacy of EAPs in resolving absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd are consistent independent of demographic characteristics.

However, there was a considerable disparity in terms of respondents' credentials and opinions on the effectiveness of EAPs in reducing absenteeism. It was found that respondents with post-graduate qualifications had the highest support for the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism, while those with other qualifications showed the lowest support. The objectives of the study were therefore reached, and the research questions were answered.

4.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Obtaining personnel who had never used the EAP was a minor limitation, and it was also a difficult process due to the EAP's confidential nature. In order for employees to engage freely and willingly in this study, they needed to be assured of their confidentiality.

- In addition, quantitative research does not give the researcher the option to review answers with respondents. Hence, there are few opportunities to ask for clarity. The results are thus based on the assumption that everyone is honest in each situation.

- Another constraint of the study was that the sample should have been 317. However, due to Covid-19 restrictions at GUD Holdings and time constraints, fewer questionnaires were distributed (260), and 251 questionnaires were returned.

- An additional limitation was that the researcher contracted the Covid-19 disease and became sick, which made it impossible to complete the research within the allocated time.

4.9 SUMMARY

The main aim of the study was to assess the perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings. This chapter statistically analysed and interpreted the data collected through questionnaires. Data collected from the

responses were analysed using SPSS version 27 for Windows. The results were presented in the form of tables and graphs. The reliability of the questions was established through Cronbach's alpha method. Furthermore, the results guided the researcher in addressing the research objectives. The results showed that the perceived causes of absenteeism with most support were long working hours which resulted in fatigue followed by work-family conflicts and unfair treatment at work. Moreover, there was no statistically significant difference between the respondents' reported opinions on the utility of EAPs in managing absenteeism and their gender, age group, marital status, job type and length of service. The next chapter will provide the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings, as well as the suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the study's conclusion and suggestions based on the findings presented in chapter four, which might be useful in dealing with employees' perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings Ltd.

EAPs have been introduced into businesses to help employees with their health and well-being, whilst also enhancing employee performance and lowering absenteeism. EAPs are thus intended to improve employee performance by proactively assisting them in resolving personal concerns whilst also lowering absenteeism (Cantwell, 2017:2).

5.2 CONCLUSION

The study contributed towards understanding the perceptions of the value of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd and how it should address absenteeism. Furthermore, the Programme will appear to be effective and will be perceived as a valuable and important service. This signifies that the study laid the groundwork for more in-depth research on the subject. Depicting the findings, the study revealed that the perceived main cause of absenteeism at work for most respondents was long working hours which result in fatigue. In addition, the findings show that the least respondents perceived that employees are rarely absent from work because of anxiety at work due to work overload. Based on the findings on the role of employees' personal problems in absenteeism, the study also highlighted that employees' personal problems contribute to high absenteeism. The study further found that work-family conflicts have a strong influence on absenteeism in the workplace. It was found that in terms of experiencing stress, having diseases, illness, sickness and health problems cause absenteeism, but employees' long working hours continue to be the greatest contributing factor to absenteeism.

Furthermore, the study indicated that the perceived usefulness of EAPs could assist employees with financial or legal issues such as debts, retirement, savings, social security, lack of savings, criminal law, etc. The results had a significant contribution, which in turn leads to a decrease in absenteeism. It was significantly established that EAPs could assist employees with their family problems such as divorce, children, bereavement and violence, which had an influence on the high absenteeism rate. Overall, the study stipulated that EAPs could assist employees with personal problems.

Moreover, the study demonstrated that the implementation of an EAP would motivate and satisfy the employees. EAPs will increase employee satisfaction and are likely to decrease absenteeism at GUD Holdings. The study therefore concluded that there was a very strong positive significance between a lack of EAPs at GUD Holdings Ltd and high absenteeism. The objectives of the study were therefore reached, and the research questions were answered. Based on the results of this study, the next section provides recommendations that can be valuable in the implementation of an EAP.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made to the management of GUD Holdings Ltd for the implementation of an EAP, based on the study's findings:

5.3.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF MATERIALS AROUND EAP

The conclusions drawn from the findings of the study were that a significant number of the employees affirmed that the EAP service was needed, and it should be rendered to all employees in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings. Based on the findings, the implementation of EAP materials was recommended at GUD Holdings.

5.3.2 A SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EAP BASED ON HIGH ABSENTEEISM LEVELS AND RESPONDENTS' INTEREST IN THE PROGRAMME

The perceived causes of absenteeism with the most support were long working hours which resulted in fatigue as a cause of absenteeism at work, followed by work-family conflicts and unfair treatment at work. It is proposed that there is a need for additional studies regarding the best strategies for educating employees on absenteeism and the management of personal issues.

5.3.3 INVESTIGATING HOW EAPS CAN BE ADAPTED

The study revealed that 48.8% of the respondents were single; 33.6% were married; 4% divorced; 4.8% separated and 2.4% others were widowed. The fact that the majority of the respondents were single suggests that they may not recognize the need for EAP support with work-family issues. Problems and obstacles are common in families and relationships. Therefore, the management of GUD Holdings Ltd should find out how EAPs have been adapted and continue to evolve in similar organisations, which needs to be identified when implementing the EAP.

5.3.4 FOCUS ON EMPLOYEES OCCUPYING LOWER-LEVEL POSITIONS

Furthermore, the results showed that 48% of the respondents hold a Matric (Grade 12 National Certificate); 29.6% had a Diploma-level qualification; 8.4% hold a degree and other qualification; and 5.6% had a post-graduate degree. The study revealed that employees with limited educational qualifications who work at a junior level, have poor pay scales and undertake more manual labour are more likely to suffer from a number of issues, such as substance addiction and absenteeism. It is therefore recommended that EAP service providers focus on employees occupying lower-level positions when the EAP Programme is being implemented at GUD Holdings.

5.3.5 COMMUNICATING THE BENEFITS OF EAPS TO ALL EMPLOYEES

Additionally, the results presented that the majority, 61.6%, of respondents indicated being in operations; 23.2% were supervisors; 8.8% managers; 4.8% were senior managers and executives accounted for 1.6%. It is recommended that HR management communicates the benefits of EAPs to all employees. Thereafter, posters, notices and informal discussions could be used, more specifically for uneducated employees and employees occupying lower-level positions.

5.3.6 MANDATORY EAP REFERRALS FOR PEOPLE WHO PRESENT WITH ABSENTEEISM ARE ENCOURAGED

Moreover, the study revealed that 31.6% of the respondents had spent between 6-9 years, 26% had spent 1-5 years, 25.5% had spent 10-14 years, 11.2% had spent 15 years and more and 6% had less than 1 year in service. Mandatory EAP referrals for people who present with absenteeism are encouraged, regardless of their years of service, for additional help and support.

5.3.7 ADDRESSING ISSUES SUCH AS MID-LIFE CRISES

The analysis of the age group suggested that the majority (67.2% who were30 to 49 years old) were middle-aged adults. It is therefore recommended that when implementing an EAP at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd, Programmes must address issues such as mid-life crises, retirement, wills as well as a healthy lifestyle.

5.3.8 DOING A RETURN-TO-WORK INTERVIEW FOLLOWING A TIME OF ABSENCE

The findings revealed that the most support for the cause of absenteeism at work was long working hours, which results in fatigue and work-family conflicts. Moreover, employees' personal challenges add to the high absenteeism. Most companies have attempted a variety of strategies to reduce absenteeism, and the EAP has proven to be an effective tool for managing absence.

Employers must also allow employees to take time off when needed in order for them to manage their well-being and perform efficiently, as working non-stop can lead to burnout, poor performance and eventually absenteeism. Furthermore, if the EAP is adopted, performing a return-to-work interview after a period of absenteeism should be a mandatory responsibility for managers and supervisors.

5.3.9 DEVELOPING AN EAP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR EVERY PROBLEM CATEGORY

An overwhelming majority of respondents had a positive perception of the usefulness of EAP services at GUD Holdings Ltd. Thus, a majority of GUD Holdings employees perceived the usefulness of EAP services as encouraging, valuable and essential to all employees and an enhancer to reduce absenteeism. As a result, the management of GUD Holdings should develop an EAP implementation plan for every problem category, monitoring and evaluation tool.

It is therefore recommended that once GUD management has developed an implementation plan, more preventative measures for absenteeism should be put in place to reduce new absenteeism problems, offering more support to the employees, and developing an after-care Programme.

Employee perceptions of EAPs in reducing absenteeism at GUD Holdings Ltd revealed that there is great need for an EAP at the organisation. Employees' knowledge and awareness of the EAP, on the other hand, demonstrated that they recognized the usefulness of such Programmes. This study has confirmed that employees at GUD Holdings Ltd are struggling with several personal problems which are causing absenteeism. EAPs have demonstrated the capability to improve various outcome measures. As a result, when considering the implementation of an EAP, there needs to be increased clarity in the message that EAPs are not only focussed on assisting work-stress, but include a large range of services, including legal, debt and personal advice, as well as counselling.

5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this study dealt with the employees' perceptions of the value proposition of EAPs in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings Ltd in KwaZulu-Natal, a similar study could be done at GUD Holdings in other provinces and departments having issues with absenteeism. This study found that a significant number of the employees affirmed that the EAP service was needed, and that it should be rendered to all employees in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings. As a result, more research into the EAP as an effective absenteeism solution is required. Furthermore, statistical analyses should be conducted for education on the specific demographics as well as reasons for absenteeism.

The following research areas could be considered:

- The importance of management support to the implementation of EAPs in a workplace.
- A comparative study between government organisations and private ones, like GUD Holdings, on the impact of EAPs in addressing absenteeism.
- A comparative study on marital status and the use of EAPs in addressing absenteeism is also recommended.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Employee Questionnaires

TOPIC: Employee perceptions of the value proposition of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

Instructions to Respondents

(All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence)

1. Place one tick (√) for each question/statement.
2. Answer all questions/statements.
3. Please do not leave questions or statements blank.
4. The questions/ statements are rated in the Likert scale below, ranging from strongly disagree **1** to strongly agree **5**. Select and tick one response only.

1= Strongly disagree **(SD)**
2= Disagree **(D)**
3= Neutral **(N)**
4= Agree **(A)**
5= Strongly agree **(SA)**

SECTION 1: Demographic Information.

Instruction: Please place a tick (√) in the appropriate block

	Gender	Tick
1.1	Male	1☐
1.2	Female	2☐
1.3	Other	3☐

	Marital Status	Tick
2.1	Single	1☐
2.2	Married	2☐
2.3	Separated	3☐
2.4	Divorced	4☐
2.5	Widowed	5☐

	Age Category	Tick
3.1	Below 30	1☐
3.2	30 years to 39 years	2☐
3.3	40 years to 49 years	3☐
3.4	50 years to 59 years	4☐
3.5	60 years and above	5☐

	Length of Service	Tick
4.1	Less than 1 year	1☐
4.2	1-5 years	2☐
4.3.	6-9 years	3☐
4.4	10-14 years	4☐
4.5	15 years and more	5☐

	Job category	Tick
5.1	Executive	1☐
5.2	Senior Manager	2☐
5.3.	Manager	3☐
5.4	Supervisor	4☐
5.5	Operator	5☐

	Highest Qualification	Tick
6.1	Post-Graduate Degree	1☐
6.2	Degree	2☐
6.3	Diploma	3☐
6.4	Metric	4☐
6.5	Other	5☐

SECTION 2: THE USE OF EAP

		Tick	
		Yes	No
7.1	Have you ever used EAP before?	☐	☐
7.2	In the future, would you want to use EAP?	☐	☐

SECTION 3: RELEVANT REASONS FOR EMPLOYEES VISITING EAP

Please select the most relevant reason for visiting EAP

Employees will visit EAP when:

8.1	Going through interpersonal problems.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.2	Experiencing stress and anxiety at work due to work overload.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.3	Working long hours which result in fatigue.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.4	Experiencing substance abuse problems.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.5	The manager does not manage and control well.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.6	Suffering a chronic sickness.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.7	Going through a divorce.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.8	Emotional most of the time.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.9	Maintenance and child support for children is not being received	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.10	Dissatisfied with the role at work.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.11	Experiencing financial problems (transport money, money spending, and excessive spending).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.12	Experiencing work-family conflicts.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.13	Suffering from diseases, illnesses, sickness, and health problems.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.14	Not being treated fairly at work.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

8.15	Work performance is an issue.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

SECTION 4: PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The following statements assess your perception of the usefulness of EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) in assisting employees. Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements below.

9.1	EAP assists employees with their financial or legal issues (debts, retirement savings, Social Security, lack of savings, criminal law, civil law, and family law and).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.2	EAP assists employees with their emotional problems (stress, anxiety, depression etc.).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.3	EAP assists employees with their relationship difficulties (infidelity, sexual problems, conflict, and communication etc.).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.4	EAP assists employees with their job stress (long hours, workload, changes within the organisation, tight deadlines, job insecurity, lack of autonomy etc.).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.5	EAP assists employees with their family problems (divorce, children, bereavement, violence etc.).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.6	EAP assists employees with their balancing work and family.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.7	EAP assists employees with their eldercare, childcare, and parenting difficulties.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.8	EAP assists employees with their separation and loss (Understanding, separation, relationship breakup, loss, and grief etc.).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.9	EAP assists employees with their substance abuse (drug types, alcohol, tobacco and more).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.10	EAP assists employees with their harassment (discriminatory, personal, physical, power, psychological, sexual, verbal etc.).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.11	EAP assists employees with their health problems (illnesses, disabilities, wellness etc.).	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.12	EAP will enhance my knowledge of employee health and well being.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.13	Employees have the perception that their problems can be handled professionally and confidentially by the EAP.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.14	EAP is useful in promoting employee health and well being.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

9.15	EAP services encourage an organisational culture that is both task-orientated and caring.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

SECTION 5: EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF EAP IN REDUCING ABSENTEEISM

This section assesses the perceived value of EAP in addressing absenteeism. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements below.

10.1	The use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of their family responsibilities.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.2	EAP services can decrease absenteeism in events where employees do not report to work because of pregnancy-related matters.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.3	Absenteeism can be reduced by using EAP services in instances where employees do not report to work because of minor illnesses.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.4	Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of acute medical conditions.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.5	Making use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of sustained injuries.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.6	Absenteeism can be reduced by using EAP services in cases where employees do not report to work because of stress.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.7	EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situation where employees do not report to work because of burnout and fatigue.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.8	The use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of alcohol- or drug-related conditions.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.9	Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in cases where employees may not report to work because of workplace abuse.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.10	The utilisation of EAP services can decrease absenteeism in cases where employees do not report to work because of workplace abuse.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.11	Making use of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in situations where employees do not report to work because of a hostile organisational culture.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.12	The use of EAP services can assist employees who get absent because of not coping with the workload.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.13	Absenteeism can be reduced by utilising EAP services in instances where expectations of the workplace are not met and employees are expressing their disapproval of management in form of staying away from work.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.14	In instances where employee performance is in question, utilisation of EAP services can assist in decreasing absenteeism and avoiding problems that could affect job satisfaction.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

10.15	The utilisation of EAP services can reduce absenteeism in cases where employees are disengaged and are not committed to their jobs and tend to find excuses not to come to work.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

Appendix B – Ethics

MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (FREC)

7 October 2020

Student Name: **Ms B. Olumene**
Student No: 19955468

Dear Ms B. Olumene

MASTER OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: HUMAN RESOURCES

TITLE: Employee perceptions of the value proposition of EAP in addressing absenteeism at GUD holdings (Pty) Ltd.

Please be advised that the FREC Committee has reviewed your proposal and the following decision was made: **Approved – Ethics Level 2**

Date of FRC Approval: 7 October 2020

Approval has been granted for a period of two years from the above FRC date, after which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the form located at the Faculty. This form must be submitted to the FREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the FREC according to the FREC SOP's.
Please note that ANY amendments in the approved proposal require the approval of the FREC as outlined in the FREC SOP's.

Yours sincerely

Prof JP Govender
Chairperson: Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Appendix C – Letter requesting permission for the study from GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd

46 Victory Dirve
3 Ashley Downs
Ashley
Pinetown
3610
17 June 2019

The Human Resources Director
GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd
1 Prospecton Road
Isipingo Beach,
4111
Durban
South Africa

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a student at the Durban University of Technology, currently studying towards my Master's Degree in Human Resource Management. I am conducting research entitled: Employee Perception of the Impact of EAP on absenteeism and work performance: A review of GUD Holdings. To achieve the objectives of my study, I am kindly requesting your permission to administer a structured questionnaire to selected employees at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

In addition, participation will be voluntary and no participant will be forced or coerced to be part of the research study. The completion of the questionnaire will take approximately 15 – 20 minutes. The researcher will personally distribute, email and collect the questionnaires within ten working days. It is predicted that the findings of the study may assist GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd in implementing Employee Assistance Programme for all employees.

You can contact me at bolumene@gmail.com, +27 83 589 9138 or contact my supervisor

……

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.
Yours faithfully

_____
Ms Bertha Olumene

Appendix D – Letter granting permission for the study from GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd

G.U.D. Holdings
LEADERS IN AUTOMOTIVE PRODUCTS

12 February 2020

LETTER OF AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

Dear Sir/ Madam

On behalf of G.U.D. Holdings (Pty) Ltd, I am writing to formally indicate my awareness of the research proposed by Bertha Olumene, a student at Durban University of Technology (DUT). I am aware that Bertha intends to conduct her research on the topic "Employee perception on the value proposition of EAP in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings." by administering a written survey to our employees.

This letter serves as an authorisation for Bertha to conduct her research at our organisation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me

Yours Sincerely,

G.V. HAWORTH
CEO

Email: haworthc@gud.co.za
Direct Line: +27 (31) 910 3151
www.gud.co.za

FRAM GUD Holts Prestone SAFEWAY

Appendix E – Covering letter to participants

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Employee perceptions of the value proposition of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in addressing absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

Researcher: Bertha Olumene
Supervisor/s: Dr Pauline Ngo Henha /Eyono

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: This study focuses on absenteeism, and Employee Assistance Programmes. In this changing world, employers are pressurised to be successful in an increasingly competitive and changing environment. The purpose of this study is to assess the Employee perceptions of the value proposition of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in addressing Absenteeism at GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd.

Outline of Procedures: The researcher will email and personally deliver the questionnaires to the respondents. Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 15 – 20 minutes and the questionnaires will be personally collected or emailed back. In addition, participation is voluntary and respondents are expected to be honest and objective when completing the questionnaire.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: This study has no foreseeable risks or discomfort for the respondents.

Benefits: The researcher will benefit through publications.

In addition, the findings will be made available to GUD Holdings (Pty) Ltd. This will assist management in determining the appropriate Employee Assistance Programme for employees to reduce absenteeism.

Reason/s why the Participant May Withdraw from the Study: Respondents may voluntarily withdraw from participating at any time. However, there are no specific reasons why a respondent may be withdrawn from the study apart from personal reasons. In addition, there are no adverse consequences if respondents voluntarily decide not to participate in the study.

Remuneration: There is no remuneration for respondents.

Costs of the Study: Respondents are not expected to cover any costs related to the study.

Confidentiality: The researcher will ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times. Names and any personal details are not included in the questionnaire. The covering letter has a section where the researcher undertakes to uphold confidentiality and anonymity at all times during the study.

Research-related Injury: No known injuries are expected from this study and no compensation will be made for any injury or harm that may result due to participation in this study.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:
Supervisors:

Researcher: Bertha Olumene, 083 589 9138 or olumeneb@gmail.com

Appendix F – Consent form

Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) administrator on 031 373 2900

Complaints can be reported to the DVC: TIP, Prof F. Otieno on 031 373 2382 or dvctip@dut.ac.za

CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Bertha Olumene, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant	**Date**	**Time**	**Signature/Right Thumbprint**

I, Bertha Olumene, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.
Bertha Olumene

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	**Date**	**Signature**

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	**Date**	**Signature**

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	**Date**	**Signature**

Please note the following:

Research details must be provided in a clear, simple and culturally appropriate manner and prospective participants should be helped to arrive at an informed decision by use of appropriate language (grade 10 level - use Flesch Reading Ease Scores on Microsoft Word), selecting of a non-threatening environment for interaction and the availability of peer counseling (Department of Health, 2004)

If the potential participant is unable to read/illiterate, then a right thumb print is required and an impartial witness, who is literate and knows the participant e.g. parent, sibling, friend, pastor, etc. should verify in writing, duly signed that informed verbal consent was obtained (Department of Health, 2004).

If anyone makes a mistake completing this document e.g. wrong date or spelling mistake a new document has to be completed. The incomplete original document has

to be kept in the participant file and not thrown away and copies thereof must be issued to the participant.

References:

Department of Health: 2004. *Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes* http://www.doh.gov.za/docs/factsheets/guidelines/ethnics/

Department of Health. 2006. *South African Good Clinical Practice Guidelines*. 2nd Ed. Available at: http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page_id=14

Appendix G – IREC letter

Professor Fulu G. Netswera
Executive Dean
Faculty of Management Sciences
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, 4000,
South Africa

Tel: +27 31 373 5154/5130
Fax: +27 31 373 5130
Email: fulufhelon@dut.ac.za

www.dut.ac.za

7th October 2020

Student number: 19955468

Dear Ms B. Olumene

MASTER OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: HUMAN RESOURCES

This serves to confirm the approval of your research proposal by the Faculty Research Committee, at its meeting on **7th October 2020**, as follows:

1. Research proposal and provisional dissertation title:
   Employee perceptions of the value proposition of EAP in addressing absenteeism at GUD holdings (Pty) Ltd.

   Supervisor: **Dr P. Eyono**

   Co-supervisor: **N/A**

   Please note that any proposed changes in the thesis/dissertation title require the approval of your supervisor/s, the Faculty Research Committee, as well as ratification thereof by the Higher Degrees Committee.

2. Research budget to the amount of **R10 000.00**
   Please note that this funding is not a scholarship or bursary and is therefore not paid directly to you, but is controlled by the Faculty. Any proposed changes to the use of this funding allocation requires the approval of your supervisor and the Dean. Please note that funding will be reimbursed to you after the provision of receipts.

The Institutional Research Committee has stipulated that:

(a) This University retains the ownership of any Intellectual Property (patent, design, etc.) registered in respect of the results of your Masters/Doctors Degree in Technology studies as a result of the award and the provisions of the above Act;

(b) Should you find any of the terms above not acceptable then you are given the option to decline the Research budget award to your project in writing.

DUT
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

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May we remind you that in terms of Rule G25(2)(b), if you fail to obtain the Masters/Doctors degree within the maximum time period allowed after first registering for the qualification, Senate may refuse to renew your registration or may impose any conditions it deems fit. You may apply to the Faculty Research Committee for an extension.
Please note that you are required to convert your registration from the informal to the formal course and re-register each year.

Please note that the following must be adhered to:

Registration:

1. Ensure formal registration has taken place ***(the onus is on the student and the supervisor to ensure registration takes places at the beginning of each year whilst the student is currently engaged with his/her Masters or PhD qualification)***
2. Ensure that application for Conferment of Status has been made in the event of your undergraduate qualification being different to this application. ***Your attention is drawn to the fact that Conferment of Status is required for registration.***
3. Ensure that your supervisor has submitted your proposal to the Faculty Research Officer (FRO) for IREC clearance (institutional research ethics committee). This is in the case of Ethics level 2 IREC and level 3 IREC (in the case of a study dealing with vulnerable populations). See guideline attached. ***It is the researcher's responsibility to check the Ethics requirements and submit to the relevant bodies irrespective of the reviewer's recommendation.***

Dissertation submission for examination:

1. Ensure that you submit the intention to submit form **(PG 5)**, signed by the HOD and Supervisor
2. Ensure that the signed checklist is submitted with the **PG 5**
3. Once your dissertation is submitted to the supervisor for examination purposes, communication from here on will only be with you supervisor and not with the faculty.
4. Your supervisor MUST nominate the examiners three months prior to submission of the dissertation/thesis for examination.
5. On submission for examination, please note that three ring bound signed copies must be submitted to your supervisor along with the completed and signed **PG 7** form, **FMS Checklist** and **Turn it in report**.
6. Feedback will be provided to your supervisor regarding the examination result after the result is ratified by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC).
7. In the event of a resubmission the reports will be submitted to the supervisor who will communicate with you for revision. Once revision has taken place your supervisor will submit to the FRO for resubmission to the examiners.

Professor Fulu G. Netswera
Executive Dean
Faculty of Management Sciences
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8. In the case where there is a discrepancy in examiners results, an Arbiter will be nominated via the HOD and supervisor and tabled at FRC and ratified at HDC. On completion of this process, the Arbiters report will be tabled at FRC and ratified at HDC.
9. Results of the Arbitration process will be communicated to your supervisor

Graduation requirements:

1. Ensure that you submit a completed signed PG10 form
2. one hard bound dissertation/thesis with a pdf version on CD
3. response to post graduate examination form
4. completion of study form (IREC form)

Should you experience any problems relating to your research, your supervisor must be informed of the matter as soon as possible. If the difficulties persist, you should then approach your Head of Department and thereafter the Faculty Research Coordinator.
Please refer to the 2020 General Rule Book and the Postgraduate Students' Guide 2020 concerning the rules relating to postgraduate studies, which include *inter alia* acceptable minimum and maximum timeframes, submission of thesis/dissertations, etc. Please do not hesitate to contact this office for any assistance. We wish you success in your studies.

Kind regards,

Professor FG Netswera

Faculty of Management Sciences

Appendix H – Turnitin Results

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APPENDIX I – EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

EDITING LETTER

696 Clare Road
Clare Estate
Durban
4091
13 May 2022

To: Whom it may concern

Editing of Masters thesis: Bertha Olumene

EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES (EAPs) IN ADDRESSING ABSENTEEISM AT GUD HOLDINGS (PTY) LTD

This letter serves as confirmation that the aforementioned thesis has been language edited.

Any queries may be directed to the author of this letter.

Regards

MP MATHEWS
Lecturer and Language Editor
Mercimathews4@gmail.com
083 676 4778

APPENDIX J - ETHICS CERTIFICATE