UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

FACTORS AFFECTING ABSENTEEISM AT ARCELORMITTAL SOUTH AFRICA.

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Commerce in Business Management

College of Business and Economics

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2018

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank ArcelorMittal South Africa for awarding me the bursary to study for this qualification and providing me with all the required support in order to complete this program. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Rose Luke for supporting, being patient and guiding me throughout this research process until its completion. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife Nyaradzo Dundu for being there for me throughout the whole journey and providing me with love and support. To all my friends and family, thank you.

ABSTRACT

ArcelorMittal South Africa (AMSA) is the largest steel producer on the African continent and employs more than 9000 permanent employees. The company's head office is in Vanderbijlpark and it has operations in Vereeniging, Saldanha, Newcastle, and Pretoria. The company is experiencing high levels of absenteeism; within the range of 4% annually. This costs millions of Rands due to hiring replacement labour and existing employees having to work overtime, among other costs and interventions that management implement as they try to maintain continuous productivity and avoid service disruption. The study, therefore, examined the factors that are affecting absenteeism at AMSA. The effect of demographic factors such as age, gender, qualifications, marital status and the number of dependents, organisational tenure and current job level was also assessed. Extensive literature on the subject of absenteeism was outlined and reviewed. The study adopted a cross-sectional study and a total of 321 permanent employees completed the structured questionnaires as part of the survey. The data collected was analysed and the findings revealed that personal issues and supervision factors were the main contributors to absenteeism within the organisation. There were significant differences between variables on aspects such as number of dependents and current job level, amongst others, in relation to absenteeism. Some of the key findings were that sick leave was the most utilised leave type in 2018. In order to try to reduce absenteeism, the study assisted with identifying absenteeism interventions that can be adopted, such as creating a more positive company culture, offering attendance incentives, improving the working conditions and implementing disciplinary actions. Managerial implications for the organisation also included providing flexible working arrangements for the employees, improving remuneration of employees and maintaining discipline through disciplinary actions against to transgressors. Another lesson from the study that companies and other stakeholders can learn from is that the soft approaches to absenteeism management are more preferred than the hard approaches to maintaining absenteeism discipline within the organisation. Overall, the study revealed the causes of absenteeism and also provided a basis for actions for AMSA to adopt in order to reduce absenteeism.

Key words: absenteeism, ArcelorMittal, management practices, management interventions, demographic variables

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

ArcelorMittal is the largest steel producer in the world with an industrial global presence in over 60 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa and employing about 222 000 employees worldwide (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). The ArcelorMittal Group is the leader in all major global markets, including automotive, construction, household appliances, and packaging with leading research and development, technology and outstanding distribution networks (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). ArcelorMittal South Africa is one of the operating units of the ArcelorMittal Group and it is the largest steel producer on the African continent with a production capacity of 7 million tonnes of liquid steel per annum (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). The company supplies over 61% of the steel used in South Africa and exports the rest to sub-Saharan Africa and overseas. ArcelorMittal South Africa employs more than 9 000 permanent employees (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). The company is headquartered in Vanderbijlpark and also has operations in Vereeniging, Pretoria, Newcastle and Saldanha (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). In the 2016 financial period, ArcelorMittal South Africa made a headline loss of R244 million (ArcelorMittal integrated report, 2016). As a result, the company is experiencing financial problems and has indicated liquidity as the number one strategic risk for the company (ArcelorMittal, 2016). Top management has therefore called upon all the departments to explore ways and options to assist in reducing costs.

ArcelorMittal South Africa's absenteeism rate is 4.4% and cost the company about R64 912 298 in 2016 alone (ArcelorMittal HR Report, 2016). In 2017, the absenteeism rate was 3.9% (ArcelorMittal HR Report (a), 2017). The absenteeism rate is defined as the number of working days lost in a specific period divided by the total the total number of working days available in the same period (Martin, 2010), i.e.

$$\text{Absenteeism rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of days lost due to absences in the period}}{\text{Total number of working days available}} \times 100$$

Vanderbijlpark Works (the largest ArcelorMittal business unit in South Africa), with a staff complement of about 4 683 employees, had an average of roughly 917 employees who were absent between January and December 2017 (booking an average of 5.1 days each) due to sick leave alone,

- costing the company about R53 681 042 (average of R4 868 317 per month),
- 39 964 total days lost (average of 3 330 days per month),
- 2 091 FTEs (full time equivalent) lost (average of 175 FTEs per month) that is, 1 FTE is equal to 1 extra person needed outside of the budget (ArcelorMittal HR report, 2018).

The ArcelorMittal South Africa staff composition is predominantly male employees who work in shifts (ArcelorMittal HR report (a), 2017). In 2016 about 2 201 (out of 5 000, i.e. 44%) employees had unplanned absences for at least one day, mainly due to sick leave incidents (took sick leave). Of these, 1 896 (86%) were male employees while 305 (14%) employees were female (ArcelorMittal HR Report (a), 2017). In addition, of the 2 201 employees, 342 (16%) were managerial employees and 1 859 (84%) of the employees were either maintenance or production (operational level) employees who work in the plant (ArcelorMittal HR report (a), 2017). ArcelorMittal South Africa's management team is aware of the high level of absenteeism within the company and the huge financial burden it is imposing on the company in terms of the operating costs, due to high overtime payments within the plants and other administrative costs associated with mitigating the impact of high levels of absenteeism, particularly sick leave that is deemed to be out of control (ArcelorMittal integrated report, 2016). Such high levels of absenteeism is costly and disruptive to the organisation and production processes and addressing issues of absenteeism within the organisational context is a critical business success factor for the organisation (MacLean, 2008).

Absenteeism and sick leave management is a management imperative and a time-consuming function but necessary to maintain continuous productivity and minimises operational instability (Neingo & Tholana, 2016). Gangai et al. (2015) indicated that employee absenteeism is an expensive management problem that always concerns employers. One of the notions of absenteeism is that it is caused by employees avoiding painful or dissatisfying work situations due to lack of motivation (Gangai et al., 2015). Kocakulah et al. (2016)

highlighted that the principal reason for absenteeism was often as a result of personal illness, family issues, personal needs, stress and entitlement mentality. The monitoring of absenteeism is a human resource function that is often neglected within organisations, yet it has employment relations implications if not properly managed (Adegboyega et al., 2015). Therefore, there is value in the ability of an organisation to track absenteeism information and trends across the business unit, because this enables early interventions, e.g. in cases of sick absence, management can facilitate the employees' medical condition to be triaged early, thereby assisting in bringing the employee back to work more quickly and reducing the litigation risks associated with ill health at work (Madden, 2009). Having processes and accurate data regarding absenteeism gives the organisation more confidence in handling grievances based on absenteeism (Madden, 2009). Robert et al (2016) highlighted that management needs to understand the causes and costs of absenteeism to an organisation and once they understand that, they can use a variety of approaches to reduce it, including attendance rewards, paid time off programs, unused leave pay-backs policies, illness verification and disciplinary actions. Absenteeism is not a simple phenomenon because it represents a symptom of social, economic and organisational dysfunction, therefore absenteeism is a sociological phenomenon directly connected to the individual and the company behaviour and to the general work conditions (Cucchiella et al., 2014). While most employers utilise punitive measures to solve the absenteeism problem, others use incentives to reduce absenteeism (Kocakulah et al., 2016).

1.2 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

Employee absenteeism is a worldwide phenomenon that is costly and its consequences are widespread hence it has become an important subject on the international agenda in the human resources field (Viswanathan et al., 2013). At a national level, although the effect of absenteeism on industrial productions cannot be measured easily, the issue has become a crisis for industries, thereby distressing the national economies of countries (Mishra & Verma, 2017). A report that studied Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies such as Australia, China, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and the United States of America and focused on the impact of absenteeism on productivity estimated that the economic cost of absenteeism was in the region of 4-6% of the GDP of those economies (Rasmussen, 2015). As a result of this, absenteeism in the workplace is receiving increasing attention and has become a prominent issue in today's working life, as it leads to both direct

and indirect costs for all the stakeholders of an organisation, such as low productivity and ineffectiveness (Rauf, 2015). Excessive absenteeism involves considerable production loss to the organisation because scheduled work is interrupted and delayed and management has to pay overtime wages to meet the production delivery dates. The overtime rates are normally double that of the normal rates (Adegboyega et al., 2015). The South African economy loses between R12 and R16 billion a year as a result of employee absenteeism and many companies are affected by absenteeism. It has been estimated that there is an average of 15% of staff absent at any given day in South Africa (OCSA, 2017). Absenteeism remains one of the most significant wide spread obstructions to productivity and many companies do not know the size of their absence problem and do not have a clear understanding of their absenteeism factors and rates (Mishar & Verma, 2017; Carofano, 2017). Wananda et al. (2015) stated that absenteeism of employees signals organisational ill-health and it is one of the main sources of financial waste for organisations as some of them continue to pay workers regardless of whether they report to work or not. In South Africa, it is estimated that sick or unhealthy employees take nine times more sick days than healthy employees and personal financial issues distract 20% of the employees at work, thereby affecting their productivity (PWC, 2015). Employers in South Africa also expressed that absenteeism is among the top five most significant factors (which are: wages, transport, worker morale, employee benefits) that affect labour productivity in the economy (CIBD, 2015). However, due to the extent of the absenteeism impact to the economy and companies, the topic is worth researching in order to establish some of the factors that are causing absenteeism, at ArcelorMittal South Africa in particular, with the objective of determining interventions that can mitigate the impact and reduce absenteeism. ArcelorMittal South Africa is currently experiencing high levels of absenteeism and it is affecting the organisation's productivity. The organisation had an absenteeism rate of 4.3% in 2015, 4.4% in 2016 and 3.9% in 2017. It cost the company about R65 million in 2016 and R53 million in 2017 due to hiring extra people as replacement labour and high overtime as employees worked long shifts in order to cover for the absent employees (ArcelorMittal HR Report, 2018). However, since ArcelorMittal South Africa is currently experiencing financial difficulties, it has become imperative to seek ways to reduce some of its unnecessary costs, including human resource costs (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). The research will identify literature on the subject of absenteeism and its effects on organisations and economies. Absenteeism reasons that are affecting ArcelorMittal South Africa will be determined and delineated as an outcome of the research. In addition, recommendations and solutions for possible adoption by the

organisation in order to reduce or save on their human resources costs that are associated with employee absenteeism will be proffered. This will be achieved by investigating and identifying some of the best practices that are used by other organisations to mitigate the typical reasons for absenteeism in ArcelorMittal. In summary, it is important to investigate the causes of absenteeism and determine solutions to empower the organisation, because if management does not pay attention to absenteeism, it can hurt the productivity (Rauf, 2015).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Employee absenteeism is one of the most common workplace problems facing employers and it is detrimental to the company if it incurs organisational costs associated with the high incidence of absenteeism (Aluko, 2015). In South Africa, the impact of absenteeism and presenteeism on the economy in 2015 was estimated to be 4.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Rasmussen et al., 2015). The nominal GDP was estimated at R1 027 billion for the fourth quarter of 2015 (StatsSA, 2015). This indicates that absenteeism has substantial costs to the economy and to organisations in South Africa. Kocakulah et al. (2016) stated that employee absences are both costly and disruptive for business and the trend has been increasing steadily over the years. However, despite the fact that it is known that employee absenteeism is costly, it is still a poorly understood organisational phenomenon (Viswanathan, 2013). At ArcelorMittal South Africa, the company is operating in an environment characterised by low steel productivity and the company has not made profits in the past five years (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). The company is labour intensive with regard to the production of steel and part of the reasons why the organisation is not meeting its production targets is due to employee work attendance problems (ArcelorMittal HR Report (a), 2017). ArcelorMittal South Africa has a high absenteeism rate of 4.4% compared to an industry norm of 2% and management seeks to reduce that number by 2% (ArcelorMittal HR Report (a), 2017). In 2016, the ArcelorMittal Vanderbijlpark business unit alone had an average of 949 out of about 5000 employees that were absent due to various reasons, thereby costing the company an estimated R64 912 298 (i.e. about R5.4 million every month) (ArcelorMittal HR Report (a), 2017). The majority of employees were male (86%) and female employees comprised 14% of the 2 202 employees who booked unplanned leave at least once; mostly sick leave incidences. The majority of the absentees (84%) at that plant are production and maintenance employees and 16% of the absentees are managerial employees (ArcelorMittal HR Report (a), 2017). The organisation is negatively affected because

management has to maintain productivity when employees are absent from work by hiring outside labour, make present employees work excessive overtime, for which they pay a higher hourly rate, etc. This increases the company's operating costs, particularly the total cost of employment (TCOE) figures in relation to the budget. Given this, it has become imperative for management to seek ways to understand the cause of the high level of absenteeism and determine methods of curbing the problem, thereby assisting in reducing human resources costs, increasing productivity and maintaining operational stability.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research seeks to answer the following research questions:

1.4.1 Primary research question.

Q1. What are the causes of high levels of absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa?

1.4.2 Sub-questions.

Q1. Is there a relationship between demographic variables and factors that affect absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa?

Q2. What are some of the best absenteeism management practices that can be established and compared with in relation to ArcelorMittal South Africa absenteeism management practices?

Q3. What are the absenteeism management interventions that can be adopted to reduce absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research objectives are defined as the goals to be achieved by conducting the research and the different types of research objectives that lead to different types of research designs (Zikmund et al., 2013). The research objectives are:

1.5. 1 Primary objective.

O1 To identify the factors that cause high employee absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa.

1.5.2 Secondary objectives.

O1 To assess if there is a relationship between demographic variables (age, gender, education, marital status, tenure and current job level) and factors that affect absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa.

O2 To establish some of the best practices of absenteeism management and compare them to ArcelorMittal South Africa absenteeism management practices.

O3 To recommend possible interventions that might be adopted by management to reduce absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

A conceptual model or theoretical framework is a model of how logical sense is made of the relationships among several factors that have been identified as important to the problem (Sekaran, 2010).

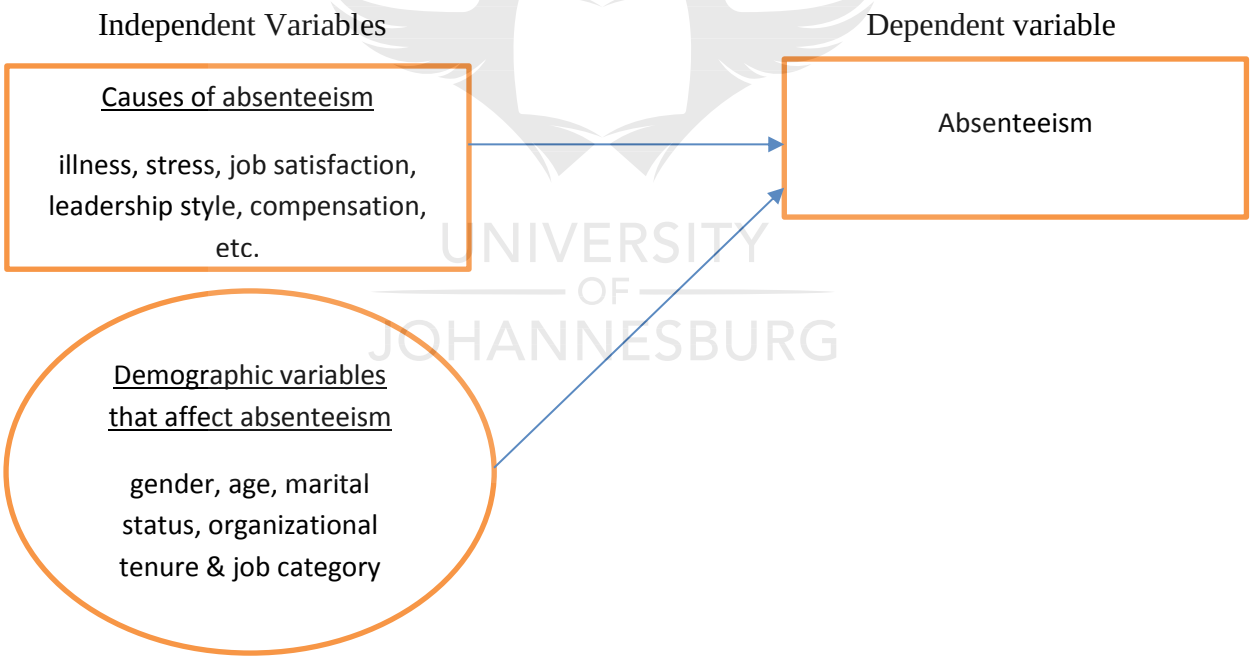

Figure 1.1: The conceptual model indicating the causes of absenteeism within an organization and the influencing demographic variables.

In this research, the causes of absenteeism were identified as independent variables and absenteeism was also established as the dependent variable. Independent variable has been

defined by Saunders et al. (2015) as a variable that causes changes to a dependent variable and a dependent variable is a variable that changes in response to changes in other variables. However, developing a conceptual framework helps the researcher to postulate or hypothesise and test certain relationships and thus assist in improving our understanding of the dynamics of the situation (Sekaran, 2010). However, after establishing the independent variables (such as illness, stress, leadership style) including demographic variables (such as age, gender, job category) and how it affects absenteeism, interventions to mitigate the impact of absenteeism will also be established, for example, absence notification procedures, disciplinary hearings, employee assistance programs, company medical facilities, positives reinforcements/ incentives and flexible working arrangements among other initiatives that can be adopted by the organization. The interventions will be compared by benchmarking with the best practices from other companies and the literature review on absenteeism management.

1.7 HYPOTHESIS

H1. There are a number of factors that cause absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa.

H2. There is a relationship between demographic variables and absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa.

H3. Absenteeism can be reduced by adopting and implementing various remedial employee attendance management interventions

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Virtually all research studies have limitations and although the study's limitations are recognised weaknesses in the research that distract from the overall rigor, they nonetheless must be stated (Salazar et al., 2015). The limitations of the study are as follows:

- The research may not necessarily be able to identify all the factors that might cause employees to be absent from work at ArcelorMittal South Africa.
- Due to the time and financial constraints to conduct the research, a cross-sectional study was adopted with a small but acceptable sample size. The cross-sectional study has a limitation because the study won't explain why correlations exist and a small

sample size can make the drawing of inferences for the larger population difficult and inappropriate (Neelankavil, 2015).

- The study only focused and was limited to ArcelorMittal South Africa (and particularly the Vanderbijlpark Works). This makes the results and findings difficult to generalise to the broader population.
- The research only focused on ArcelorMittal South Africa employees who are permanently employed. The scope could have been expanded to include temporary labour and contractors, who constitute a significant number of the population or people who work within the company premises. However, the majority of the employees are permanent employees and their responses will still provide a good general picture of the factors that are affecting absenteeism within the organisation. Despite these limitations, the shortcomings do not significantly and negatively affect the value of the research results which is to identify the factors that affect absenteeism at ArcelorMittal. Possible solutions to remedy the absence problems within the organisation will be provided in an attempt to mitigate absenteeism and will ultimately assist the company towards saving labour and other related costs and improving productivity in general.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research process was governed by ethical considerations at its various stages particularly with regards to data collection and analysis in order to obtain data that is valid and useful. Ethics in research are referred to as the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of the research process or who will be affected by it (Saunders et al, 2015). The research process was conducted responsibly and the information obtained was treated as confidential whilst respecting the participation of all the contributors in their various capacities. The participation of employees was voluntary and the nature of the research was explained to them. When the data was analysed, the information obtained was not misrepresented but rather accurately summarised and presented. Essentially, the research endeavoured and complied with the research ethics governance rules and procedures of the Faculty of Management at University of Johannesburg.

1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The structure of the study will be as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction and background of the study

The chapter outlines the introduction and background of the study, that is, it acknowledges that absenteeism is a global phenomenon that is disruptive and costly to businesses because it generates direct and indirect costs in the form of overtime costs, hired labour, work disruptions among other factors. At national level, absenteeism has a big effect on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the South African economy. As a result, ArcelorMittal South Africa is also experiencing high levels of absenteeism and it is affecting the operations of the company, thereby translating into negative economic effects. Therefore, ArcelorMittal South Africa was investigated in order to establish the factors that are causing high levels of absenteeism within its organisation. The absenteeism problems that the company is experiencing form the motivation behind why the research was conducted and assisted in formulating the problem statement. The purpose and objectives of the study are also outlined in the chapter. The conceptual framework and hypothesis are also developed in order to assist in articulating the direction the research will follow and the questions it seeks to answer.

Chapter 2 – Literature review on factors affecting organisations

Literature review on the factors that cause absenteeism within the organisation and business in general are outlined. Absenteeism has an economic impact on companies, nationally and globally and examples of the cost impact of absenteeism are provided. The South African legislative framework with regard to absenteeism is briefly explained in order to indicate the laws and rights of employees that govern absenteeism in South Africa and to also help draw similarities and differences on absenteeism factors in other countries. The chapter ends by investigation of some of the remedies that can be adopted by companies to reduce absenteeism. The remedies for absenteeism are important because they form part of the solutions that a company can adopt to mitigate and reduce absenteeism, save costs and improve productivity.

Chapter 3 – Research methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology that was followed in order to complete the research and achieve the purpose and research objectives outlined in chapter 1. The chapter looked at the research method, research format, research technique, data collection method, population, sampling procedure, time horizon and ethical considerations among other critical elements of the research methodology.

Research method – the research follows the quantitative research methodology because statistical analysis and tables were used in order to outline and summarise the research findings.

Research format – The descriptive study format was adopted in order to describe the dependent and independent variables that are under study and how they relate to each other and if there are patterns formed in a bid to answer the research questions and fulfil the objectives of the study.

Research technique – The survey technique was utilised to gather primary data from the respondents in a standardised way in order to answer the research questions.

Data collection method – Data was collected by making use of a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to the respondents in order to get their perceptions on absenteeism.

Population – The population that was under study is ArcelorMittal South Africa's permanent employees at the Vanderbijlpark Works. That population is composed of maintenance, production and managerial employees within the works.

Sampling procedure – The research made use of sampling in relation to the population that was under study. Probability sampling was utilised taking into consideration that the population is working in a predominantly similar environment and has the same characteristics. With regard to the sampling frame, a list of all the current permanent employees within the company was obtained from the HR SAP 05 document that has a list of all permanent employees from the Human Resource department that can be accessed from the SAP integrated computer system. Stratified-random sampling was then be used as the sampling technique in relation to the studied population.

Time Horizon – Due to the time and financial constraints, a cross-sectional study time horizon was utilised whereby data was collected at a specific point in time. It is also the time zone that is normally associated with surveys in which the samples happen to be representative of the population (Bajpai, 2011).

However, the research methodology process took note of all the related ethical considerations and governance rules of the University of Johannesburg with regard to research.

Chapter 4 – Data presentation and analysis

This chapter presents the results that transpired during the data collection process. The presentation of the results includes describing the characteristics of the data or sample using descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics will also be utilised such as correlations, factor analysis, T-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests among other tests. The chapter also includes the summary of the findings. The results from the data analysis process were discussed. It discusses the factors that are affecting or causing employees to be absent from work at ArcelorMittal South Africa and establish facts and relationships between and among the variables under study in more detail. Comparison to best practices in relation to absenteeism interventions in other companies and current literature are discussed in the chapter.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter provides the concluding remarks of the research. It also provides possible recommendations or remedies that ArcelorMittal South Africa can adopt in order to reduce absenteeism and mitigate the impact thereof from a financial and productivity perspective.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter seeks to review the literature on absenteeism i.e. defining and explaining the concept of absenteeism, absenteeism models, types of absenteeism etc. The impact of absenteeism on economies is also highlighted at a macro level. However high levels of absenteeism at a micro level also negatively affects companies operationally and from a cost perspective thereby underscoring the need to monitor and manage absenteeism (Gangai et al., 2015). Absenteeism disrupts business processes and is symptomatic of other underlying problems hence its causes are important to investigate (Allisey et al., 2016). This chapter will look at those causes of absenteeism within organizations and also review literature on how demographic variables influence absenteeism. The legal frame work of South African labour legislation on absenteeism with regard to individual and collective rights of employees will be reviewed. Lastly the chapter will look at remedies that can be adopted by organizations in order to reduce absenteeism and minimise its negative effects.

2.2 DEFINING ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is probably one of the biggest problems that an organisation has to handle on an on-going basis within an organisation (Joseph, 2015). Employees who are absent from their work and job responsibilities create major issues in the relationship between the employer and the employee (Robert et al., 2016). Absent employees also negatively impact on the costs and sustainability of the company and affect the broader economy (Akgeyik, 2014). Thirulogasundaram and Sahu (2014) acknowledged that absenteeism has long been considered to be a significant and pervasive problem in industries and, in simple terms, it relates to the frequent and habitual absence from work or voluntary non-attendance at work by employees. Absenteeism is defined as the failure to report for work as scheduled (Johns, 2008). Banks et al. (2012) indicated that although there is no standard definition of absenteeism, it is extensively used to describe non-attendance of employees for scheduled work within an organisation. This definition distinguishes absenteeism from other forms of non-attendance such as public holidays and annual leave that are arranged in advance within an organisation between management and employees (Gangai et al., 2015). Absenteeism, therefore, reflects something essential about the relationship between the worker and the

organisation, therefore, absenteeism as a behaviour is variously viewed as a manifestation of worker deviance, as a result of labour-leisure trade-off, a product of labour strife, an indicator of stress, an implied contract violation or a reaction to illness (Johns, 2008). Baker-McClearn et al. (2010) described absenteeism as a behaviour that, on occasion, emanates from inept and poor management, as employees feel they don't get the support they need from managers.

Absenteeism can be practised as an alternative to quitting work because it provides employees with a mechanism to express their objections to unfavourable conditions or circumstances within the organisation (De Reuver & Van Welkom, 2010). This notion emanates from the view that absenteeism is sometimes termed withdrawal behaviour because it is an action that allows employees to physically or psychologically escape from the work environment for a short or long period as they start to dislike their jobs due to various organisational factors within their working environments (Erdemli, 2015). Tiwari (2014) defined absenteeism as the absence of employees from regular work without obtaining prior permission. Cucchiella et al. (2014) described absenteeism as a habitual absence from work for one or more days usually justified by a medical certificate but actually due to personal interests and a poor sense of duty. Absenteeism has many different expressions such as:

- Vacations – a time of respite from work and he/she has permission or authorisation from the superior to be absent.
- Short breaks (also referred as internal absenteeism) – 5 or 10 minutes long such as cigarette or coffee breaks.
- Day off – absence from employment for a period of time planned before by the employer
- Un-excused absenteeism – refers to absence as a habit rather than a necessity.
- Strikes – collective absenteeism from work by the employees in order to protect their economic, political, union interests.
- Leave – work suspension to reconcile the employer's position with his public commitments or the occurrence of personal and family problems.
- On the job injury – work accidents which cause the temporary impossibility to continue the activity.
- Sick leave – a pathological condition that causes inability to do work usually done by the worker. The employee will be absent due to reasons beyond his/her control.

- Makeup hours – work suspension to recover the hours of overtime prematurely done (Grogan, 2015; Cucchiella et al., 2014; Barbosa & de Sousa Alves, 2015; Mishra & Verma, 2017).

In conclusion, absenteeism is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty/obligation or as an indicator of psychological, medical or social adjustment to work that is indicative of poor morale, workplace hazards, among employees within an organisation (Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014).

2.3 ABSENTEEISM MODELS

There are several conceptual frameworks and models that provide insights into a range of factors that influence or determine absenteeism behaviour within organisations, particularly in relation to voluntary and involuntary absences (Magee et al., 2016). Despite a comparatively long history of study on absenteeism, the foremost causal factors and mechanism of absenteeism are still open for further investigation (Satpathy & Rath, 2015). The causes of absenteeism are complex and interrelated, however, some of the most widely quoted models of absenteeism are the Steers and Rhodes (1978) employee attendance model and the Nicholson (1977) absence behaviour and attendance motivation model (Torrington et al., 2014; Gosselin et al., 2013; Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014).

2.3.1 Nicholson Model (1977) – Absence behaviour and attendance motivation model

The primary assumption of the model is that attendance is normal behaviour in most forms of employment even in those where absence levels are high (Nicholson, 1977). In other words, people attend work regularly without any conscious decision making until proximal events impel absence or force the person to make a decision about it (Nicholson, 1977). In this regard, most of the time people are on auto-pilot to attend work regularly and the search for the causes of absenteeism is a search for those factors that disturb the regularity of attendance (Nicholson, 1977). The theory classifies types of absences in what is termed the A-B continuum of absence types and absences are not defined in terms of whether the absentee has or has not actually made a decision about attendance or non-attendance, but whether he could have (Nicholson, 1977). Therefore, according to the theory, absences at the "A" end of the continuum are those to which any exercise of individual choice would be irrelevant and those at "B" end are those that are entirely under the potential control of the individual

(Nicholson, 1977). Type A absences are primarily unavoidable and type B are absences that are avoidable. The theory focuses on the forces that constrain and impose upon the individual to attend or not to attend work (Nicholson, 1977). The theory also referred to what is termed the attachment and attendance motivation whereby, for an employee to be absent, the pressure to leave or go absent has to exceed the threshold of inertia to stay or attend (Nicholson, 1977). This means that the attendance motivation is largely a result of the way the employee needs to balance or map out the properties of work and non-work environment (Nicholson, 1977). The model outlined that contextual factors such as personality traits, orientation of the work, work involvement and employment relationship all influence the employee's level of attachment to the work which in turn affect how well motivated the employee becomes to attend work (Nicholson, 1977). It is important that the Nicholson's attendance motivation model managed to conceptualise absenteeism behaviour and provided a framework to explain voluntary and involuntary absenteeism (Magee et al., 2016).

2.3.2 Steers and Rhodes Model (1978) of Employee Attendance

Steers and Rhodes (1978) postulated that the attendance of employees is directly influenced by two primary factors which are (a) attendance motivation and (b) the ability to come to work. They added that attendance motivation is predominantly influenced by satisfaction with the job situation and various internal and external pressures to attend. Steers and Rhodes stated that, other things being equal, when an employee enjoys the work environment and the tasks that characterises his/her job situation, it is expected for the employee to have a strong desire to come to work and the work experience would be pleasurable (Steers & Rhodes, 1978). The job situation includes variables such as job scope, job level, role stress, work group size, leadership style, co-worker relations and opportunities for advancements (Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Steers & Rhodes (1978) also explained that the "pressure to attend" variables include economic and market conditions, incentive/reward systems, workgroup norms, personal work ethic, and organizational commitment. However, the causes of absenteeism are complex and interrelated and a process approach is generally agreed to be the most useful way of understanding absence behaviour (Torrington et al., 2014). Much of the management literature on absenteeism has been guided by the Steers and Rhodes employee attendance model that was published in 1978 (Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014; Melson 2015; Nguyen et al., 2016; Ingelsrud, 2014). Steers & Rhodes presented as a chart indicating the linkages between various possible influences on the decision to attend (see Fig 2.1 below)

(Treble & Barmby, 2011). The Steers & Rhodes model sought to identify the major sets of variables that influence absence behaviour and their interrelationships, by attempting to fit together the array of piecemeal findings on the absenteeism subject from a review of over 100 previous studies on absenteeism (Hutchinson, 2013). The model is based on the fundamental argument that an employee's motivation to attend represents the primary influence for the employee to attend if he/she has the ability to do so (Lyons, 2011).

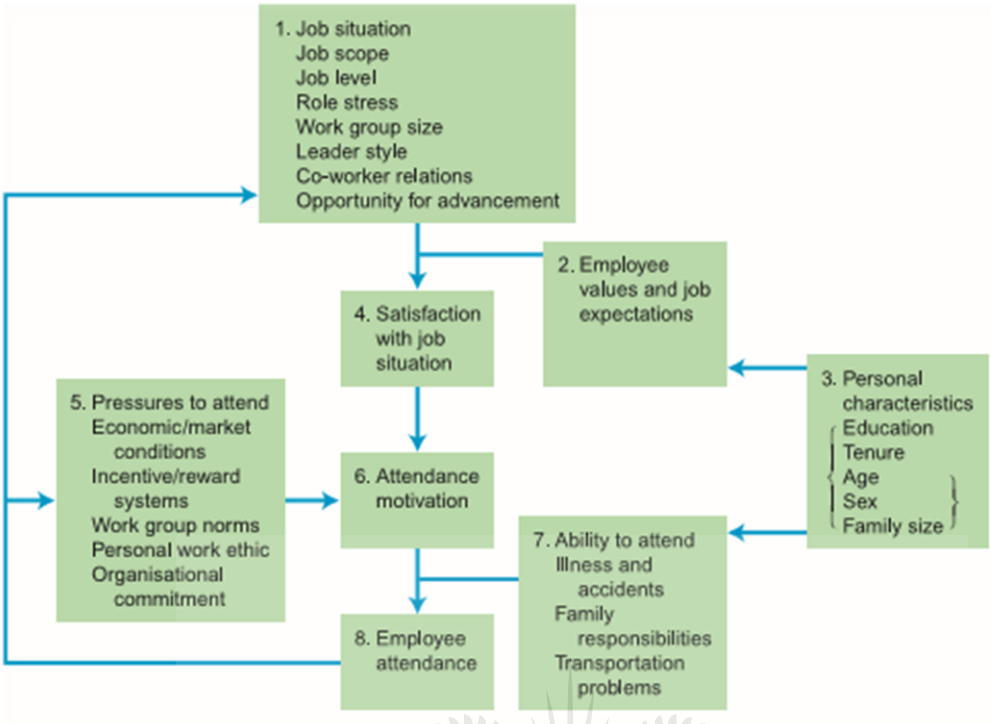

Figure 2.1: The Steers & Rhodes Model (1978) (Torrington et al., 2014)

Grossbard-Schechtman & Clague (2016) explained that the ability to attend is driven by an individual's personal characteristics (education, tenure, age, sex, family size) and the state of the person's health on that particular day, while motivation to attend is a function of job satisfaction, which is determined by the extent to which the job they work meets the expectations that the person has from the employment, that is also referred to as the job situation. Treble & Barmby (2011) said although the Rhodes & Steers (1978) model is widely recognised for its efforts to explain the causes of absenteeism within organisations and providing a solid foundation for the subject of absenteeism, the model has its own criticisms. Treble & Barmby (2011) indicated that though the model has stood the test of time as an integrative framework for absenteeism literature, few attempts have been made to test it comprehensively and check if it can systematically produce the same validation outcomes. Grossbard-Schechtman & Clague (2016) argued that the Steers & Rhodes model tries to incorporate virtually every hypothesis ever directed towards employee attendance, produce a model that lacks rigour to make the findings sufficiently robust, that is, the model uses simple bivariate correlations which may not stand up to more sophisticated statistical analysis.

Grossbard-Schechtman (2016) also added that many of the factors that are included in the models such as measures on organisational commitment and work ethics, health, individual expectations on the job situation are very difficult to quantify. However, despite the criticism, the Steers and Rhodes (1978) model of absenteeism has been called one of the most influential and often cited models in absenteeism literature (Satpathy & Rath, 2015). The Steers and Rhodes model provides an insight into voluntary and involuntary absenteeism by looking at the direct and indirect influences of absenteeism such as the employee's motivation to attend and the ability by the employee to attend work (Magee et al., 2016). The Steers and Rhodes model still provides the basis for predicting voluntary absenteeism because the model outlines some of the factors that influence or play a role in employee's decisions regarding future absenteeism behaviour. Also, the Steers and Rhodes (1978) model has been highly influential and provided the platform for analysts to test the theoretical components of the model and expand the study of absenteeism further (Satpathy & Rath, 2015).

2.3.3 Summary of similarities between the Steers & Rhodes model (1978) and Nicholson model (1977)

The Steers and Rhodes (1978) and the Nicholson (1977) have similarities and differences that can be summarised below.

Table 2.1: Summary of similarities between the Steers & Rhodes model (1978) and Nicholson model (1977). (Nicholson, 1977; Steers & Rhodes, 1978; Gaustello, 2015; Mandleni, 2011)

Similarities	**Differences**
Both models postulate that there are two types of absences (i.e. voluntary and involuntary absenteeism (Nicholson, 1977) vs attendance motivation and ability to attend (Steers & Rhodes, 1978)	Steers & Rhodes model (1978) added other factors that affected absenteeism such as job situation factors and pressure to attend, job satisfaction
Both models focuses highlight that work internal factors affect employee absenteeism (e.g. properties of work (Nicholson, 1977) vs	Nicholson model (1977) dispels that job satisfaction causes absenteeism, as in the Steers & Rhodes model (1978).

job situation (Steers & Rhodes, 1978)	
Both models acknowledge that external factors affect absenteeism(e.g. non work environment (Nicholson, 1977) vs economic and market conditions etc. (Steers & Rhodes, 1978)	Nicholson (1977) assumes absenteeism is normal behaviour whilst Steers & Rhodes (1978) assumes attendance is influenced and emanates from the characteristics of the job
	Steers & Rhodes model (1978) emphasis that personal characteristics influence attendance yet Nicholson's model (1977) emphasis contextual factors that influence attendance

2.4 TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM

Nel (2013) postulated that there are two types of absenteeism, that is, innocent absenteeism and culpable absenteeism. He explained that innocent absenteeism refers to employees who are absent from work due to a reason beyond their control such as sickness and injury. Culpable absenteeism refers to employees who are absent from work without authorisation, for reasons which are within their control, for example when an employee is on sick leave when he/she is not actually sick and it can be proven that the employee was in fact not sick on that particular occasion or that the reasons for absence are not genuine (Nel 2013; Dubey & Dasgupta, 2015). The employee was therefore guilty of culpable absenteeism. Absenteeism can be authorised or unauthorised, depending on whether employees have the approval from their supervisors or managers and it can also be voluntary or involuntary, depending whether if employees have a legitimate illness (Frooman et al., 2012). Legitimate absenteeism has therefore been defined as involving taking sick leave when the employee is truly ill and illegitimate absenteeism involves taking sick leave when the employee is healthy (Frooman et al., 2012). Allisey et al. (2016) postulated that frequent absences are a reflection and measure of voluntary absenteeism whereas longer durations of absences typically reflect involuntary absences. It is important to recognise that many employees will, on occasions, take a few days off as a result of illness and other personal problems but when the absence becomes more frequent or long-term and reaches unacceptable levels, management has to intervene and take action to try and curb the absenteeism problem (Dubey & Dasgupta, 2015). It is,

therefore, important for management to monitor and analyse absenteeism patterns because it will assist to:

- identify the cause or causes of an individual's poor level of attendance, allowing the manager to deal with the matter effectively;
- provide support to the employee, where appropriate, thus potentially increasing his or her motivation and loyalty;
- deter casual absences;
- establish whether or not an employee's level of attendance is likely to improve within a reasonable time frame;
- identify whether or not there are any problems inherent in the workplace that are contributing to employee absenteeism generally and, if there are, ensure that they are addressed;
- establish areas of high absences and the most common reasons for absence within the organisation and come up with a strategy to address the problems;
- better predict seasonal absences and enable better planning, for example, winter season induced absences (Hchr, 2014; Torrington et al., 2014; Kisakye et al., 2016)

However, some of the determinants of absenteeism are out of the management's control and one of the questions for managers has always been how to distinguish legitimate absenteeism from illegitimate absenteeism (Frooman et al., 2012). Employers have sick leave policies that allow employees a certain number of paid leave days each year for involuntary absences, but much of absenteeism is avoidable and voluntary (Robert et al., 2016). From a managerial perspective, the voluntary form of absence might be considered more important as it is this form of non-attendance, which is determined by factors that often lie within management's control and management can intervene and influence on the causes of such absenteeism (Gangai et al., 2015).

2.5 IMPACT OF ABSENTEEISM ON THE ECONOMY

Statistics reflect that employee absenteeism produces dramatic costs to national economies in terms of low productivity (Akgeyik, 2014). In 2008, Canada's absenteeism in their economy translated to a loss of over $16 billion in salary expenses which represented about 15-20 percent of the total payroll and included direct and indirect costs (Kocakulah et al., 2016). In the USA, the average employee is absent from work 1.6% of the working time, amounting to

more than 400 million days lost per year, and in Britain, about 750 million working days are lost due to absenteeism, thereby costing the economy approximately €32.8 billion per year and costing individual employers about €841 per employee per year (Frooman et al., 2012). In the Netherlands, the cost of absenteeism per employee is said to be estimated at about €1 268 per employee per year (Edwards & Greasley, 2010). In South Africa, the economy loses between R12 to R16 billion a year as a result of absenteeism, where it is estimated that an average of 15% of the workforce is absent on any given day and that only one in three people who are absent from work are actually physically ill (StatsSA, 2014). Skosana (2014) went on to highlight that what is concerning with regard to absenteeism is that Occupational Care South Africa (OCSA) data indicate that the high percentage of sick notes appear to be falsified illnesses and this points to a deeper problem of employees being unhappy at work or just not coping with the work. It is therefore evident that absenteeism costs economies a lot of money, but is particularly high in South Africa. According to Rasmussen et al. (2015) it is estimated that the average economic costs of absenteeism for most countries will range from 3.5 % to 5.5% of the GDP by 2030. They maintained that the impact of absenteeism on the South Africa economy was 4.7% of the GDP in 2015 and will be 4.9% of the GDP in 2030.

2.6 EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM ON ORGANISATIONS

Work absenteeism is one of the major problems of human resources management in most organisations (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Ishan, 2013). Absenteeism has received increasing attention in recent years mainly due to the growing awareness that workplace absence is costly for the individual, the firm and the society (Pfeifer, 2017). Within organisations, absenteeism is recorded in various formats such as absenteeism frequency (e.g. count of absences) and as well as duration of absenteeism (e.g. days lost) (Allisey et al., 2016). From a business perspective, when the employee is absent and is simply not available to perform his or her duty, this means that absenteeism will cost money (Adegboyega et al., 2015). The cost of absenteeism can be a significant drain to the organisation's budget (Gangai et al., 2015). It remains a costly and disruptive problem because absenteeism results in the disruption of scheduled work processes and managers have to modify production schedules and programmes (Nguyen et al., 2016). Thirulogasundaram & Sahu (2014) highlighted that organisations often excuse absenteeism due to medical reasons if the employee provides a doctor's note or other form of documentation, but sometimes employees choose not to show up for work and do not call in advance, which businesses may find to be unprofessional and

inconsiderate. When an employee does not come to work, his or her work does not get done or a substitute must be hired to do it (Griffin, 2012). The costs of absenteeism are huge in most organisations and it is one of the contributory factors in the failure of those organisations to meet their performance goals (Adegboyega et al., 2015). This occurs because absence from work will result in the organisation incurring costs which include:

- cost of replacing the employee and overtime pay for the replaced workers or other staff to cover the absence,
- poor quality of service provision,
- inability to provide services or achieve section and departmental objectives,
- low morale among staff who cover those who are absent (Nguyen et al., 2016; Dubey & Dasgupta, 2015; Jensen et al., 2017; Kocakulah, 2016).

Absenteeism impacts productivity negatively as employees who are at work often have to carry an extra workload and may be required to spend extra time training new, temporary replacements, which can result in service delivery and productivity being compromised (Singh & Chetty, 2016). Gajda (2015) said that employers are often unaware of how big their indirect costs are as a result of absenteeism. These include administrative costs of dismissal, costs arising from delays in production, related to issues with contracts, low quality and efficiency of work carried out by inexperienced workers or working overtime while substituting employees on sick leave. As a result, controlling employee absenteeism is critical and has become a business imperative to organisations who want to survive the increasingly competitive business environment, particularly taking into consideration that the ability of an organisation to decrease absenteeism by a small margin can easily translate into huge financial savings for the business (Frooman et al., 2012). Allisey et al. (2016) added that the reduction of absenteeism within companies offers significant organisational benefits. These include reduced unnecessary overtime costs and costs of paying for replacement labour for absent employees, fewer work interruptions, better production stability, reduced costs of managing any other related costs that are linked to managing absenteeism (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011). Allisey et al. (2016) highlighted that short, frequent and unplanned absences are more disruptive than longer absences.

Allisey et al. (2016) maintained the notion that frequent absenteeism from work by employees can be highly disruptive but also has the potential to highlight the existence of problematic or poor working conditions that exist within an organisation. Thus, the

occurrence of high levels of absenteeism indicates symptoms of problems within the organisation. The effect of absenteeism on organisations can be described as follows:

- It forces the organisation to oversize the workforce;
- Increased workload and conflict between employees and management;
- It penalises the planning of the working activities especially in relation to the necessity of rotations and availability;
- It stops the company's processes in the case of employers who have critical competencies and knowledge;
- Decline in company reputation when customer agreements and expectations are not met
- It has a big economic effect and leads to financial losses (Cucchiella et al., 2014, Aluko, 2015).

Adegboyega et al. (2015) in their study concluded that there was a significant relationship between absenteeism and corporate performance. The effects of absenteeism within an organisation can be summarised as follows:

Table 2.2: Effects of absenteeism on organizations (Adegboyega et al., 2015; Kocakulah et al., 2016; Jansen et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2016; Cascio & Boudreau, 2011).

Effect	Description
Economic effect/costs	Direct costs • lost production days and cost of reduced quantity (productivity) • poor or reduced service provision • oversized workforce due to hiring of replacement labour Indirect costs • administrative costs, that is, recruitment and training of new employees • overtime costs • low quality and inefficient work caused by the inexperienced

	replacement employees • difficulty of replacing absent labour • cost of managing any other absenteeism related problems
Work disruptions	• production delays • modification of production schedules and programmes • work stoppages on work that requires critical competences and knowledge
Staff morale & work pressure	• low staff morale among employees who cover for those who are absent • Increased work pressure due to increased burden of work on present employees as they cover up for the absent employee.

In conclusion, when an employee is absent, he/she is not available to perform the scheduled work as expected, therefore it tends to be disruptive and costly for the organisation (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011). Absenteeism results in organisations facing impeded productivity, inefficient service delivery, reduced performance resulting in negatively affecting the sustainability of the organisation (Singh & Chetty, 2016). In addition, the impact of excessive absenteeism can be direct or indirect to organisational performance (Mohd et al., 2016). The economic impact associated with absenteeism is staggering (Nguyen et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it has been established that the phenomenon of absenteeism is global, therefore, it does not only affect companies but ultimately the economies of the world and the only difference being in terms the magnitude of the impact of absenteeism (Frooman et al., 2012).

2.7 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

There are a number of reasons why people need to take time off from work, of which the majority are genuine reasons and these absences need to be handled sensitively and fairly through carefully managed company procedures, but if the absences are found not to be genuine, it can be demoralising to other employees who attend work regularly and see their

co-workers getting away with it (Gangai et al., 2015). In order to understand absenteeism, it is useful to consider employee attendance decisions in a more general sense because their ability and the desire to attend work determines employees' attendance levels (Steve & Britt, 2014). Mishar & Verma (2017) pointed out that absence is one of the most wide spread obstructions to productivity and the causes are varied, for example, absenteeism can be due to sickness, personal struggles, sickness of relatives, transport problems, bad working conditions, or any other reason.

2.7.1 Illness & family issues

The principal reason for unscheduled absences within organisations is usually due to personal illness and family issues because if a person is ill and has serious problems, that employee is unable to perform his/her job or to come to work (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Health problems and particularly physical illnesses are regarded as some of the most cited reasons for non-attendance within organisations (Dunn et al., 2016). With regard to physical health, the most prevalent medical conditions among the working population or employees within an organisation are allergies, chronic back/neck pain, headaches, hypertension, arthritis, and depression and the amount of absenteeism will depend on the nature and severity of the medical condition (Marzec et al., 2015). Thirulogasundaram & Sahu (2014) also drew attention to the fact that many employees feel obliged to come to work while ill and end up transmitting communicable diseases to their co-workers and this leads to even greater absenteeism and reduced productivity among other employees who try to work while ill. Kocakulah et al. (2016) stated that long-term physical illnesses are most significant among employees who do a lot of manual work while recurring illnesses were common among non-manual employees. Torrington et al. (2014) also reiterated the point by highlighting that the most frequently stated cause of absence is minor illness for short-term absence and for long term illness, the most frequent causes for absence among manual workers are back pain and musculoskeletal injuries and for non-manual workers, stress remains the greatest cause of absenteeism (Torrington et al., 2014). Absenteeism has been identified as one of the root causes of losses in productivity and company performance for many organisations and some of the primary reasons for absenteeism or unplanned absences are family issues, where childcare is usually the major issue while adult employees' responsibilities to take care of their elderly parents also causes them to be absent from work (Kocakulah et al., 2016). The relationship between high absenteeism levels and home circumstances have been identified

particularly amongst younger women where family obligations produce split loyalties for employees who exhibit robust attachments to their jobs and a strong work ethic (Richbell & Minchin., 2011). In conclusion, personal illness and family issues are cited as the primary reasons for a lot of unplanned or unscheduled absences within organisations (Kocakulah et al., 2016).

2.7.2 Stress

Several studies have indicated that emotional health is linked to absenteeism and stress in particular has been implicated as a determinant of increased absenteeism (Marzec et al., 2015). Stress, stressful life events at home such as financial and marital problems, personal circumstances and other family related problems have also been identified as factors that impact productivity and absenteeism within organisations as employees tend to carry their stress to work (Netshidzati, 2012). A lot of absences can also be caused by the stress experienced by the workers as a result of a tense atmosphere at work, for example, the presence of stress in the workplace will be enhanced by factors resulting from an improperly designed workstation and improper organisation (Gajda, 2015). The causes of stress or the stressors are numerous and can be found anywhere in the workplace and can include dangerous working conditions, long working hours, job security worries, among other factors. These can lead to poor mental health, heart diseases, back pain and gastrointestinal disturbances, and a lot of other stress related medical conditions (Kocakulah, 2016). Roncalli & Byrne (2016) reiterated that within an organisation there are high stressors such as excessive workload, changing jobs, lack of resources, and conflict with other workplace professionals, dealing with hierarchy, isolated and unsupportive workplace environments and organisational politics. These stressors all contribute to employees having high levels of burnout, thereby resulting in turnover and absenteeism as observable outcomes of employee stress levels (Roncalli & Byrne., 2016). Stress can also lead to unaccommodating behaviours such as drinking too much alcohol and smoking and all these lead to low morale and low resistance to illness, thereby resulting in lower productivity as a result of poor performance and absenteeism (Kocakulah, 2016). In addition, stress can negatively affect the employee's immune system and also exacerbate existing medical conditions such as high blood pressure, heart conditions and diabetes resulting in increased absenteeism due to deleterious effects on physical health (Marzec et al., 2015). In conclusion, high levels of stress on employees as a

result of personal issues, working conditions and other organisational factors within the organisation can result in employees being absent from work.

2.7.3 Job satisfaction

Past research has shown that job satisfaction impacts absenteeism (Yousef, 2016). Increased job satisfaction leads to reduced unplanned or unscheduled absence (Torrington et al., 2014). Thirulogasundaram & Sahu (2014) indicated that although absenteeism may be caused by the employee's inability to come to work, motivation to attend work is assumed to be a major factor in determining how often an employee becomes absent, for example, high levels of absenteeism are caused by low levels of job motivation. High job satisfaction leads to lower absenteeism because satisfied employees come to work (Frooman et al., 2012). Wright & Pandey (2011) said that, given the prevalence of absenteeism unrelated to illness, employee attendance can be viewed as a function of both an employee's ability and motivation to attend work. This also suggests that organisations are partly responsible for these costs because absenteeism becomes a strategy employed by employees to avoid stressful work environments or as a way to get back at the organisation for a poor working environment, low pay or other attributes of the job with which employees are dissatisfied (Wright & Pandey, 2011). As a result, absenteeism represents an employee's withdrawal from dissatisfying working conditions (Thirulogasundaram & Sahu, 2014). Yousef (2016) maintained that a number of advantages could be achieved as a result of high and moderate satisfaction amongst employees with regard to various facets of their job and the advantages are low absenteeism and low employee turnover amongst other benefits. Banks et al. (2012) also opined that it is reasonable to expect that employees who have positive feelings about their jobs will be less likely to stay away than those with negative attitudes.

Elshout et al. (2013) outlined that there are several studies that show that organisational activities such as downsizing or restructuring can lead to decreased job satisfaction, lowered organisational commitment, a higher turnover rate, and increased absenteeism. Gangai et al. (2015) also reiterated the point by highlighting that absenteeism is caused by employees avoiding a painful or dissatisfying work situation. Elshout et al. (2013) concluded that the relationship between organisational commitment and job satisfaction is strongly related to the aggregate duration of voluntary absenteeism. This means that employees who are strongly

committed to the organisation or are highly satisfied with their jobs show up more often at work than those with low commitment and low satisfaction, therefore, the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism can be presumed (Elshout et al., 2013). It can therefore be established that there is a significant correlation between absenteeism and overall job satisfaction (Kehinde, 2011). In conclusion, job satisfaction is regarded as one of the predictors of absenteeism because employees who are not satisfied with their work or organisation due to various reasons, are most likely to be involved in absence incidents as a reaction or as a way of dealing with their low job satisfaction.

2.7.4 Leadership style

The concept of leadership style can be looked at by examining the existing categories of leadership, that is, between transactional and transformational leadership (Elshout et al., 2013). Leadership style has been linked with absenteeism within organisations, but the relationship between leadership style and absenteeism is not very clear (Frooman et al., 2012). When a leader employs the transactional leadership style, the leader gives rewards in exchange for effort and good performance (Elshout et al., 2013). With transformational leadership style, it is a personal style involving charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration and extensive delegation, that is, the leader motivates people to participate in the process of change and encourages the foundation of collective identity and efficacy (Elshout et al., 2013). Frooman et al. (2012) postulated that when immediate supervisors are perceived to be transformational, the employees report greater satisfaction and illegitimate absenteeism decreases. When employees perceive their leaders as passive avoidant (transactional), job satisfaction decreases and illegitimate absenteeism increases, that is, the abuse of sick leave is related to the perceived style of the supervisor. Elshout et al. (2013) pointed out that leadership style can reduce absenteeism and if an employee receives support from the supervisor, this can provide an environment in which the employee is more likely to attend work. On the other hand, no direct relationship has been established between transformational leadership and legitimate absenteeism, however, when employees perceive their supervisors to be passive avoidant, legitimate absenteeism decreases and illegitimate absenteeism increases (Frooman et al., 2012). When employees are satisfied with their job and their supervisor, it results in them calling in sick less often (Elshout et al., 2013). Hassan & Wright (2014) also referred to the concept of ethical leadership, whereby they argued that ethical leadership may influence both voluntary and involuntary absenteeism in many ways,

that is, unscheduled absences from work are caused by illness or family emergencies but these absences may also be caused by mistreatment at work, low morale, etc. Therefore, if an organisation has ethical leaders, they help to reduce the use of improper sick leave due to positive interactions between managers and subordinates that lead to positive reciprocity as opposed to unethical leadership such as manipulation, abusive treatment, breach of trust, and unfair treatment of employees that may encourage counterproductive behaviour such as lateness and absenteeism (Hassan & Wright, 2014). In summary, leadership style or the perceptions of how employees view their leaders and their style can influence their absenteeism behaviour, for instance, if the employees don't appreciate the leadership style, they can react by being more absent compared to if they appreciate the existing leadership style within the organisation.

2.7.5 Prior absenteeism & entitlement

The organisational culture plays a key role in the propensity of employees to be absent from work, including their sense of responsibility and motivation (Cucchiella et al., 2014). Prior absenteeism levels tend to be a determinant of absenteeism and can be used to predict future absence. The concept is such that past absenteeism is considered to be a predictor of future absenteeism, particularly in an organisation where absenteeism is an acceptable part of the organisational culture and normal working conditions whilst the penalties are minimum in cases where employees have excessive absenteeism (Adegboyega et al., 2015). In this regard, absenteeism can be viewed as a behaviour that might have a stable pattern of occurrence, for example, a person with a high rate of absenteeism at time one will likely have a high rate at times two, three and four. It can be highlighted that many employees see no real concern about being absent or late for work because they feel that they are entitled to some absenteeism and, in many firms, a small number of individuals are responsible for a large share of the organisation's total absenteeism (Mathis et al., 2016). The culture of absenteeism entitlement is concerning because employees perceive, for example, sick leave as a guaranteed entitlement that should be exploited when it accrues rather than a benefit that must be used when the employee is really sick and thereby avoid unpaid leave days (Hrassured, 2016). Adegboyega et al. (2015) outlined that the organisational culture and systems play a vital role in the management of absenteeism within an organisation, for example, if a permissive culture in the system exists within an organisation regarding absence, employees will consider sick-leave as a benefit that needs to be utilised, or it will be

lost. In addition, absenteeism frequency and the types of absences within a particular organisation tend to follow or occur within the limits set by the dominant absence culture (Duff et al., 2015). Also, organisations that provide liberal sick leave benefits are unwittingly encouraging all their employees, including those who are satisfied, to take days off (Adegboyega et al., 2015). Furthermore, some employees will utilize sick leave in order to avoid work and extend their vacations by often engaging in the act of deceit and dishonesty to request or explain their absence, in other words, the employees will use sick leave when they are actually not sick (Hassan & Wright, 2014). Absenteeism entitlement becomes a culture when there is a lack of management knowledge, time attendance approach and interventions with regard to the employees' perceptions and feelings in relation to factors of absenteeism (Kocakulah et al., 2016). In conclusion, if a culture of being absent exists within an organisation and if it is accepted as normal, employees will continue to take absences because they feel they are entitled to it and regard absence as a benefit that must be utilised.

2.7.6 Demographic factors

There are a lot of studies that have investigated how demographic variables such as tenure, marital status and number of dependents, level of education, age and gender, etc. influence absenteeism (Akgeyik, 2014). Individual personal characteristics influence the absence rate, duration and reasons for absenteeism among employees in an organisation (Belita et al., 2013). As a result, sometimes it is important to analyse or verify if demographic variables influence absenteeism in order to consider them when determining solutions to mitigate the negative impact of absenteeism within the organisation.

(i) Gender

Demographic variables such as gender are strongly related to employees' behaviour towards taking leave or being absent (Wang & Reid, 2015). Steve & Britt (2014) indicated that female employees are probably more likely than men to be in situations that constrain their ability to attend work, for example, it has been shown that even in dual-career situations, women tend to assume primary responsibility for child care and household chores. Aletraris (2010) said that women tend to be absent from work more often than men because they tend to combine job and child caring responsibilities. The different gender roles that men and women occupy

in society, both in the private and professional domains, seem to be a major explanation for differences in relation to absenteeism (Casini et al., 2013). Women have many family or social responsibilities and other gender-centric reasons that drive female absenteeism (Fox & Lituchy, 2012). In addition the absence culture in organisations and the society legitimises absenteeism from work for domestic reasons when it comes to female employees (Fox & Lituchy, 2012). In addition, women tended to have higher paid absenteeism than male employees, which is compatible with many other studies (Akgeyik, 2014; Duff, 2015; Aluko, 2015; Barbosa & de Sousa Alves, 2015). From an absence perspective, it is important to note the health differences or morbidity based on gender considerations, because women are subject to many health issues and visit the doctors more often than men and all these factors can be linked to increased absence from work (Fox & Lituchy, 2012).

(ii) Age

Age is one of the demographic factors that can be studied in relation to absenteeism. Health deteriorates with age and as a result, as employees get older, it can be expected that they will be absent from work more often than younger employees (Possenriede, 2011). Magee et al. (2016) highlighted that age has been found to predict the levels of absenteeism, for example, age is inversely associated with absenteeism. Belita et al. (2013) supported this notion by indicating that unplanned sickness leave rates were the highest among older employees though the relationship between increases in absenteeism and increases in age is not always found. Aluko (2015) stated that involuntary absenteeism was higher among older employees compared to younger employees, for example, after the age of 40, absenteeism rates increase and even more after the age of 50. It has also been found that young employees tend to take short periods of sick leave compared to sick periods taken by older employees, but at the same time older employees are normally in responsible positions and have greater work ethic and commitment to their work resulting in them being less likely to be absent from work (Singh & Chetty, 2016). In addition, older employees will exhibit lower levels of absenteeism because of a higher job commitment and a better person-organisation fit that emerges over time (Senel & Senel, 2012). In summary, there are conflicting views regarding the relationship between age and absenteeism where one view outlines that older employees are more absent from work than younger employees due to illness while another view says that younger employees are more absent than older employees due to less commitment to their

work as they occupy lower-level positions within the organisation. However, what can clearly be established is that despite the reasons for absenteeism, there is a relationship between age and absenteeism.

(iii) Family/Marital Status

The marital status or household context of an employee is likely to influence absenteeism within organisations, for example, single employees without children are more likely to be at work compared to married or employees living with partners or/and with children (Possenriede, 2011). Whether married women are more absent than unmarried ones depends on the type of absenteeism, for example, the number of children a female employee has negatively affects short-term absences (Karlsson, 2013). Aluko (2015) mentioned that the number of children and marital status are variables that represent kinship responsibilities and are considered to be a major contributor to absenteeism. Family responsibilities increased the probability of female employees being absent from absent while work-family conflict among married female employees increased the odds of one resigning or being on long sickness absence (Belita et al., 2013). Kocakulah et al. (2016) also added that divorce can play a huge role in terms of time needed from work and sometimes divorce proceedings can take years to finalise thereby requiring multiple court appearances. In addition, because divorces take a toll on the family, the knock-on effects are often emotional issues that may cause the individual employee to need additional time off from work (Kocakulah et al., 2016).

(iv) Education

There is a negative relationship between education and absenteeism and this implies that employees with less education have more absences than those with a higher level of education (Aluko, 2015). Also, higher educated employees are expected to have better job quality with lower health risks and working conditions and salaries resulting in those employees being less absent from work than those employees who are less educated although they may have higher stress levels (Possenriede, 2011). The level of education is usually associated with the hierarchical level within the organisation whereby higher educated employees occupy higher positions within the organisation and, as a result, the higher up in the hierarchy, the less absent the employee is going to be compared to other employees in

junior positions (Belita et al., 2013). Singh & Chetty (2016) argued that better-educated employees are more involved in their jobs and often experience more job satisfaction that will result in less absence cases. However, it is not always the case when those better-educated employees become dissatisfied when their higher expectations are not met by the organisation they joined in terms of working conditions, compensation among other factors.

(v) Tenure

Length of service may be one of the contributing factors that influence absenteeism (Singh & Chetty, 2016). The level of absenteeism is significantly related to tenure of work (Lattouf et al., 2014). Satpath and Rath (2015) outlined that employees with more tenure or service with the organisation are less likely to be absent. However, contrary to that view, there are indications that show that short-tenured employees tend to have a lower rate or levels of absenteeism than those employees that have been long with the organisation because they still do not feel that their jobs are secure and they still have a positive working attitude (Magee et al., 2016; Singh & Chetty, 2016). In addition, in some organisations, absenteeism is low among employees who are still new and have only worked for a few years, but with time there is a gradual increase in their absenteeism that is consistent with those with a longer tenure. Such results suggest that employees eventually conform to the dominant norm of the organisation in relation to absenteeism (Dello Russo et al., 2013). This shows that employees follow the organisational norms of absenteeism as they relate to tenure or years of experience with that organisation. It is however clear that tenure in the organisation can be linked to absenteeism, but the results of such investigations differ depending on various organisational settings and dynamics.

2.7.7 Compensation

Torre et al. (2015) opined that the design of compensation systems within an organisation influences company-level absenteeism, that is, pay differentials tend to affect absenteeism and depend on how the individual employee perceives the equity of the compensation system. There is evidence that workers are less absent if they enjoy a higher absolute wage, a higher relative wage and are employed at a higher hierarchical level, that is, an unequal wage structure has the benefit that relatively well-paid workers are less absent, while the costs of

higher absenteeism of workers at the lower tail of the wage distribution are rather low (Pfeifer, 2010). Financial incentives are found to have a significant impact on reducing absenteeism (Chepkemoi, 2018). Dale-Olsen (2012) postulated that performance pay may influence absenteeism through two mechanisms, that is, when employers provide performance pay, they share the cost of absenteeism with the employees, thereby making the employee's absence behaviour dependent on these rewards and, secondly, performance pay will effectively act as a motivational device in excess of any pecuniary reward. Generally, performance pay reduces the incidence rate of and the total number of absenteeism days but not because of employees becoming healthier but rather partly because underperforming workers and firms will have to share the costs of the absenteeism (Dale-Olsen, 2012). It is the psychological impact caused by performance-based pay or financial incentives that alters the absence behaviour or causes employees to behave in a certain way and reduce absenteeism (Chepkemoi, 2018).

The influence of compensation is also viewed from the model of Adam's equity theory whereby the ratio of inputs to outcomes becomes the process of social comparison in which each employee compares his or her inputs and outcomes to those of another employee and when an employee perceives that there is no equity (fairness) with regard to compensation within the organisation, he or she will "leave the organisation" and that includes withdrawing from that organisation through absenteeism (Banks et al., 2012). Khalifa and Truong (2010) also added that withdrawal reactions in relation to absenteeism include unauthorised absence, leaving work early and poor work involvement. Joseph (2015) alluded to the view that the concept of absenteeism becomes one of deviation and a means to solve the perceived inequality, in that the probabilities of absence would increase with the level of inequality if other means to reduce the inequality are not available. In summary, employee absenteeism is linked to the employees perceptions of how equitable and fair is the compensation system or packages within an organisation in relation to his/her inputs, for example, if an employee perceives him/herself to be under-compensated in relation to his/her input, absenteeism will increase as a reaction to that compensation imbalance.

2.7.8 Team Work

Firms who organise their workforce into teams for production purposes effectively enable the increase of the importance of the presence of a specific employee towards the attainment of team goals or targets (Dale-Olsen, 2012). As a result, organisations whose employees are organised into teams tend to monitor absenteeism more intensely than those who do not, thereby leading to less absence than in no-team firms (Dale-Olsen, 2012). However, if a team is overworked as a result of increasing job demands, the team will experience team-level burnout which has been proven to significantly predict team absenteeism (Consiglio et al., 2013). Johns (2008) highlighted that there is growing evidence that absenteeism is highest when social integration is low and social control has broken down in the workplace and also, work groups have the highest absence rates when group cohesiveness is low. Johns (2008) mentioned that absenteeism was the highest in teams where the procedural justice climate was low, that is, generally unfair procedures, coupled with diverse perceptions, resulted in the greatest absence. There is evidence that absence behaviours among team members are strongly interrelated since individuals adjust their behaviours according to the norms, attitudes and behaviours that prevail in their work teams, that is, if a team has a high absence rate as a result of the deliberate culture to be absent on occasions, then a new team member is likely to adjust to that practice within the team (Consiglio et al., 2013). In conclusion, the way the team and its team members are structured within an organisation plus the prevailing culture within that team have a bearing on how employees become absent from work, that is, if the team respects each individual's contribution and presence whilst there is also no culture of being absent and being unreliable within that team, then absenteeism among the team members will be low as team members feel the need to be present at work and not overburden their team members with extra work due to their absence.

2.7.9. Summary

Absenteeism is probably one of the biggest problems that managerial employees have to handle on an on-going basis (Joseph, 2015). South African managers consider absenteeism to be one of the most serious discipline problems and if not managed and controlled, it can spread like an endemic, thereby creating a host of other disciplinary problems for the organisation (Tiwari, 2014). Absenteeism significantly affects corporate performance (Adegboyega et al., 2015). There are many reasons that cause employees to be absent from work but personal illness and family issues are generally cited as the primary reasons for

unplanned absences (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Joseph (2015) also highlighted the lack of motivation (dissatisfaction), leadership style, working environment, insufficient pay (compensation) among other organisational factors that cause workers to be absent from work.

2.8 LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF ABSENTEEISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.8.1 Individual absenteeism

Although absenteeism is recognised by the law in South Africa, labour courts generally recognise the employee's duty to render service to the employer and the failure by the employee to discharge that duty can lead to a disciplinary hearing within a company (Grogan, 2015). According to the South African Labour Guide (2017) absenteeism does not only mean not being at work, but also means:

- Arriving late (or poor timekeeping, it is still absent as long as the employee is not at work.)
- Leaving early (again, poor timekeeping. It is still absent if employee is not at work)
- Extended tea or lunch breaks - the employee is not at the workstation, and therefore absent.
- Attending to private business during working hours – the employee is at work but is not attending to his/her duties in terms of the employment contract – and is therefore absent.
- Extended toilet breaks - same as extended lunch or tea breaks.
- Feigned illness - thus giving rise to unnecessary visits to the on-site clinic or take time off to "visit the doctor" - which they never do, because they don't need a medical certificate for less than 2 days off.
- Undue length of time in fetching or carrying (tools from the tool room, for example, or drawings from the drawing office, etc.)
- Other unexplained absences from the workstation or from the premises.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) No. 75 of 1997, chapter 6, makes provisions for authorised absenteeism in the form of annual leave, sick leave, incapacity, maternity leave and family responsibility leave (BCEA, 1997). Employees are entitled to firstly, annual leave of at least 21 consecutive (not working) days a year or secondly, one day

of leave for every 17 days during which the employee worked or was entitled to be paid or thirdly, one hour of leave for every 17 hours worked or was entitled to be paid (BCEA, 1997). With regard to sick leave, the employee is entitled to six weeks paid leave for every 36 months of continuous employment but before paying for sick leave the employer may require a medical certificate from the employee who regularly is not at work for more than two consecutive days (Nel et al., 2012). The employer may not dismiss an employee for absenteeism at first instance, unless the period of absence is unreasonable or frequent enough to disrupt work and, in such circumstances, the employee can be dismissed and the onus rests on the employee to provide a reasonable explanation for the absence (Grogan, 2015). Absenteeism is viewed in a more serious light if the employee who was absent and disciplined or dismissed when the supervisor or manager of the employee gives a clear and specific instruction for him/her to report for duty at the time but the subordinate ignores the instruction and cannot offer an excuse, such as illness, to justify the failure to report for duty (Grogan, 2015). In summary, the South African legislation recognises individual absenteeism through the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 75 of 1997 chapter 6. The South African Labour Guide (2017) also provides a wider definition of what constitutes absenteeism, that is, absenteeism is not only viewed in the stricter sense of being physically absent from the work premises but includes other commissions such as late arrival, leaving the premises early, extended lunch breaks, unexplained absences from the work station, etc. The definition of absenteeism looks at the time that the employee is not being productive at work even if the employee might be on the work premises.

2.8.2 Collective absenteeism

The South African legislation recognises that employees can collectively decide to be absent from work by embarking on a strike as described by section 213 of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (Nel et al., 2012). A strike is defined as "the partial or complete concerted refusal to work, or the retardation or obstruction of work, by persons who are or have been employed by the same employer or by different employers, for the purpose of remedying a grievance or resolving a dispute in respect of any matter of mutual interest between employer and employee, and every reference to "work" in this definition includes overtime work, whether its voluntary or compulsory" (Labour Relations Act, 1996). The right to strike is enshrined in the South African Constitution, section 23 (2) (c) of the Bill of Rights, which states that "every worker has the right to strike" therefore it is regarded as one of the employee's

fundamental rights (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). Section 64(1) of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 provides that every employee in South Africa has a right to strike and every employer has recourse to lock out the employees from the work premises in the event of a disagreement or dispute between them and the employees (Labour Relations Act, 1996). The South African legislation also acknowledges that employers in the country are confronted with collective work stay-away by the whole or a significant percentage of the workforce when trade unions or political parties call for stay-aways aimed at protesting some issue(s) not related to employment or commemorating some past event of emotional significance (Grogan, 2015). As a result, the strikes and those protest actions are a form of absenteeism for which employees are accorded the protection of the law against dismissal if they comply with the statutory provisions (Grogan, 2015). The South African courts also consider as mitigation or valid legal excuses for employees who are absent from work during stay-aways and are victims of intimidation resulting in them not coming to work, when considering the collective dismissal of employees for participating in an illegal stay-away or protest action (Grogan, 2015). In conclusion, the South African legislation gives rights or protection to employees to be collectively absent from work and not be penalised for their absenteeism or actions through strike and protest actions, etc. if they comply with the legislative requirements

2.9 REMEDIES TO REDUCE ABSENTEEISM

Effective absence management involves striking a balance between supporting employees who are legitimately unable to work and meeting operational needs. If managers understand the causes and associated costs of voluntary absenteeism, this enables them to use a variety of approaches to reduce it, including attendance rewards, paid time-off programmes, unused leave buy back policies, illness verification and disciplinary actions (Mathis et al., 2016). The measures to reduce absenteeism can range from proactive methods intended to reduce the risk of ill health to measures intended to reduce spells of absence and those to reduce the length of absence. Typically there should be a mix of absence processes and interventions within an organisation in order to both discourage absence and positively encourage attendance (Torrington et al., 2014). Cucchiella et al. (2014) also reiterated that the concept of absenteeism is connected to motivational factors and its decrease cannot be reached by the company's unilateral actions which could actually worsen the situation, but rather it has to be

approached within the spirit of collaboration with workers to try to address the triggering causes of absenteeism.

Organisations should work on absence management which is a continuous process intended on reducing the level of absenteeism (Gajda, 2015). There are various methods that can be used to combat the problem and causes of absenteeism within organisations and what determines which solution is the best depends on how the company wants to direct their resources and energy (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Though employee absenteeism has a large effect on the bottom line of public and private organisations, realising that there is a problem and actively striving to develop a solution may have a large upfront cost but will ultimately save the organisation a great deal of money in the long run (Amakiri & Luke, 2015). However, for an organisation to be able to tackle absenteeism it must be in a position to analyse employee absence and this means they must have full information and data on employee absence, that is, the number of days the employee has been absent and the rate of absenteeism and how it affects the company from a cost point of view (Gajda, 2015). However, whatever approach the organisation decides to adopt, there is great need for consistency in the construction and implementation of absence management policies, procedures and interventions, not only in terms of ensuring organisational justice or fairness and as a support for disciplinary action, but also in terms of providing employees with clear expectations about how absenteeism will be tackled and promoting an attendance culture (Torrington et al., 2014).

2.9.1 Absence Notification Procedure

Some organisations emphasise that when employees are absent, they must phone personally rather than asking someone to phone on their behalf and they must speak to their direct line manager or a chosen representative thereby ensuring that such a telephone conversation becomes the first stage of the absence management process (Torrington et al., 2014). In addition, absences must be recorded and measured so that the managers or the chosen representatives will be able to monitor their employee absenteeism in line with the set targets (Armstrong, 2010). However, as part of the notification procedure, when the employee who is sick or absent and calls in, his/her supervisor or manager should try to encourage the employee to come in, where appropriate, and carry out other tasks in an effort to offer

alternative work arrangements. Such telephone conversations have proven to be an important tool towards reducing the length of absence of the employee (Torrington et al., 2014). The absence notification procedure helps managers who may need to arrange replacement labour for the absent employee (Gilmore & Williams, 2012). In addition, it is also the obligation of the employee to communicate directly with the manager about why they are unfit to come and work or attend work and this has the effect of deterring them from claiming unwarranted sickness absence (Gilmore & Williams, 2012).

2.9.2 Absence Management

Management can determine absence management policies that take into consideration the causes of absenteeism, which may be identified by patterns of absence and by enabling employees to be open about why they are not at work (Torrington et al., 2014). The companies can utilise absence management programs whereby employees are required to complete forms and provide evidence from a doctor to qualify for sick days and, if the reasons are not sufficient to qualify for a sick day, then wages are either reduced or personal days are forfeited (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Companies can also establish initiatives oriented towards communication of absenteeism since communication can assist in modifying the resource behaviour, that is, it is important to communicate to the best and worst performers the data concerning their absenteeism and give notice to all the respective supervisors (Cucchiella et al., 2014). The absence management measures can range from methods intended to reduce the risk of ill health, measures intended to reduce spells of absence and those intended to reduce the length of absence (Torrington et al., 2014). Cucchiella et al. (2014) also suggested that organisations can implement return to work programmes, especially when employees have been absent from work for a long time (for example, after maternity leave or long illness), as a business procedure in order to understand the possible new necessities of the employee and provide the necessary psychological support and minimise the next absences. On other less serious or short term absences, companies can practise absence management on a per employee basis whereby an employee can be questioned to determine why that employee was absent (Kocakulah et al., 2016). This has the advantage of giving employees a perception that they are being monitored and the company tracks their absence. However what is critical is that lack of consistency in the implementation of the absence management programs weakens the policies and procedures and can negatively affect the employment environment and employee morale when

employees perceive that certain sections or managers are more stringent on absence procedures than others (Torrington et al., 2014).

2.9.3 Employee assistance programs

When tackling the absenteeism problem, companies often need to focus their energies on non-work-related issues and employee assistance programs (EAPs) that can be implemented to help employees deal with issues outside of work that employees bring to the workplace (Kocakulah et al., 2016). EAPs provide counselling and other forms of assistance to employees who are having emotional, physical or other personal problems whereby an employer typically contracts with a counselling agency for a service and employees who have problems may then contact the agency either voluntarily or by employer referral, for assistance with a broad range of problems (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). Gajda (2015) also highlighted that EAPs act as a tool that relieves managers from dealing with personal problems of employees by allowing employees to rely on the professional support of the consultant from which the employee and the company benefits, thereby enabling employees to return to work faster, cost of absence to be reduced, rotation of employees reduced which is directly linked to the reduction in expenditure of recruitment and training. Employers give employees the names and contact details of outside service providers that can be contacted in order to assist employees with their personal issues and this gives a perception among employees that the company cares for their wellbeing (Kocakulah et al., 2016). EAPs usually provide assistance with troubled employees with issues such as depression and anxiety, marital and relationship problems, legal difficulties, family and child concerns, substance abuse, financial counselling and career advice (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). Price (2009) pointed out that in work context, victims of nervousness and depression have difficulties in concentrating on their jobs and this ultimately affects their productivity and increases the likelihood of absenteeism and management interventions through EAPs to assist employees to be well again and reduce absenteeism. However, despite the positive EAP outcomes, employers have been criticised for sometimes using these EAPs as punitive measures and to justify the dismissal of employees within organisations thereby engendering an associated stigma among employees (Bowen et al., 2011). Therefore, employees, particularly men, generally become more reluctant to access the organisational support provided due to concerns of stigma, masculinity, self-reliance, stoicism and perceptions of weakness by their colleagues leading to a less voluntary likelihood of the employees seeking help, and that will

negatively affect absenteeism in the future (Vojnovic et al., 2014). Over all, EAPs remain an important management intervention that provides both practical and emotional support for employees during difficult times of need (Torrington et al., 2014).

2.9.4 Company medical assistance & wellness programs

Health problems are a major cause of absenteeism among workers within an organisation particularly due to seasonal and climatic changes and as a result an organisation can minimize health problems by providing medical check-ups and other forms of medical assistance on regular intervals (Bhosale & Biswas, 2015). Cucchiella et al. (2014) maintained that companies should take initiatives towards the health protection of their employees whereby they can provide support at the company such as a medical doctor and launch medical activities that involve the analysis, check-ups and other related campaigns aimed at improving the health of the employees. Such activities will have the aim of reducing the short time sickness (e.g. free anti-flu vaccines). Implementing wellness programmes create win-win situations between the employer and the employees whereby employers win in terms of reduced tangible costs in the spheres of health care, disability, and absenteeism while employees will benefit by learning how to lead a healthy lifestyle and how to be safe on the job (Abdullah & Lee, 2012). However, with company wellness programmes, besides increasing employees' morale and retaining employees, they create a perception among employees whereby they think that their company is concerned about their health and wellness, therefore indirectly increasing their loyalty, satisfaction and ultimately reduce employee absenteeism (Abdullah & Lee, 2012). However organisations that have wellness programmes might experience low participation from employees due to concerns about confidentiality and the wellness programmes can become costly because wellness requires substantial staffing requirements and training (Govender, 2010).

2.9.5 Creation of positive company culture

Many employers believe absenteeism can be reduced before it begins by making the workplace a positive and welcoming environment because a positive culture helps to promote job satisfaction which is one of the most important factors that reduces employee absenteeism (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Organisations can reduce absenteeism by creating an organisational climate that emphasises a genuine interest in the welfare of others (both inside and outside

the organisation (Hassan & Wright, 2014). Wellness programs have been shown to help employee morale and a good workplace causes employees to want to be there if the company culture is positive and employees are happy (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Kangas et al. (2015) also postulated that absenteeism can be reduced by developing an ethical organisational culture within an organisation that is, one that involves the use of organisational resources such as adequate time and social resources such as support from the organisation and supervisors in acting ethically. Therefore, it is possible that high standards of ethical conduct set by the organisation could eventually appear to its employees as a demand, such as encouraging over committed employees to come to work when ill (Kangas et al., 2015).

On the other hand, when organisations recruit new employees, it is important that there is congruence between the values of the individual and culture of the organisation because if there is a good culture fit, it helps to reduce absenteeism and employee-turnover. In addition, assessing for an organisational culture fit among prospective employees helps increase employee satisfaction and morale when they join the company, which ultimately assists in having reduced absenteeism among the new employees (Adewale & Anthonia, 2013). Absence cultures within organisations operate at a collective level and account for variance in individual attendance, e.g. if an organisation has a strong attendance culture, employees end up attending work even though they might be sick or not fit to work if the company has a strong culture of presenteeism (Jones, 2010). This is particularly true because employee absence is usually a factor of the dominant absence behaviour, that is, absence culture shapes absence behaviour and this has the implication that employee absence culture is not only determined by the employee's disposition or his personal situation but it is controlled by absence related beliefs and shared values at the group level (Ahn, 2014). In addition, there is also the sanctuary culture whereby there is little management pressure for employees to attend work but there is a strong team work ethos and sense of loyalty to co-workers that motivates attendance in the face of various circumstances that must cause employees to be absent from work (Jones, 2010). In summary, if there is a strong culture of attendance in the organisation, then it influences that psychological contract and the extent to which employees take attendance cues from each other, and if the attendance culture is weak, then the opposite is true (Jones, 2010).

Other initiatives such as team building and closer managerial contact or interactions with employees can assist with creating or improving the company culture. Company quarterly meetings between management and various teams or employees can also be established where employees are allowed to ask candid and upfront questions to executives about company goals, policies and direction (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Organisations should initiate team building exercises and interact with employees more often as a way of fostering teamwork and create and control a homogeneous positive organisational culture that will ultimately improve commitment and reduce absenteeism (Gavric et al., 2016). In summary, a positive organisational culture provides a working environment that can diminish absenteeism (Wang & Reid, 2015).

2.9.6 Positive reinforcements/ incentives

An effective way to reduce absenteeism is through the use of incentive programs where the goal is to increase job satisfaction and thus increase the efficiency of employees (Gajda, 2015). Positive reinforcements include actions such as giving employee cash, recognition, time off, and other rewards for meeting specific attendance standards, for example, offering rewards for consistent attendance, giving bonuses for missing fewer than a certain number of days, and "buying back" unused sick leave are all positive reinforcements methods of reducing absenteeism (Mathis et al., 2016). Employee incentive programs are utilised in order to assist with reducing absenteeism within organisations and they are termed the "carrot approach" rather than the "stick approach", for example employees are paid for sick leave and personal days that they don't take (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Organisations should avoid the use of penalties for absence in favour of rewards for attendance and they do not always have to be in the form of a bonus but it is important that the employee feels that he is appreciated (Gajda, 2015). Cucchiella et al. (2014) also emphasised that proposals focused on motivating employees, starting with the assumption that absenteeism can compromise employee performance, especially if the employees holds a position of authority, should be adopted by organisations. Mathis et al. (2016) also proposed that organisations can make use of paid time off (PTO) programs whereby vacation time, holiday and sick leave for each employee are combined into a paid time off account, that is, employees use days from their accounts at their discretion for illness, personal time or vacation and if they run out of their days in their accounts, then they are not paid for any additional days missed. These programs generally result in decreased absenteeism, particularly the short-term ones such as a day off,

but increases the overall time away from work because employees will usually strive to utilise all their unused days as time off in the form of vacation leave before it expires (Mathis et al., 2016).

2.9.7 Flexible working arrangements

Employers can offer arrangements whereby employees can work from home and this can make significant improvements in their productivity, job satisfaction, personal budget and overall quality of life thereby ultimately increasing efficiency and productivity (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Gajda (2015) suggested that to avoid an increase of unplanned absences, organisations should appreciate the possibility of introducing flexible working hours, which enable employees to work remotely from home. Celik & Oz (2011) also highlighted that employers should work towards improving the work-life balance of their employees in order to increase productivity and reduce absenteeism within organisations, that is, there is a significant relationship between increased quality of life and high employee commitment, increased job satisfaction and decreased absenteeism and employee-turnover intention rates. Organisations can utilise the concept of flexitime to curb high levels of unscheduled absences. Flexitime is a plan whereby employees' flexible workdays are built around a core of midday hours such as 11 am to 2 pm, therefore enabling employees to determine their own flexible starting and stopping time, for example, employees can opt to work from7 am to 3 pm or from 11 am to 7 am (Maket et al., 2015). Flexible working time gives employees some control over their work schedules and enables employees to adjust the weekly duration of the work (Possenriede et al., 2014).

When employees have flexible work schedules in an organisation, it enables them to deal with their work and family responsibilities issues and creates a sense of security among employees that the organisation cares about them and such policies and practices result in employees having a positive attitude, increased participation and a feeling of going an extra mile in exchange for such benefits, thereby reducing unscheduled absenteeism within the organisation (Michel et al., 2013). However there is an argument that absenteeism is higher when there is a mismatch between preferred and actual working hours and that absenteeism serves as a coping mechanism against bad working conditions (Possenriede et al., 2014). This results in increased control over working time and place and may not only change the way in

which employees reconcile emergencies and non-work activities with their responsibilities, but also how they deal with minor sickness and sickness absenteeism because employees who are sick and have the opportunity to flexibly reschedule their work or to work at home may not report sick or return to work more quickly than employees without these opportunities (Possenriede et al., 2014). In addition, organisations can make use of a compressed week whereby employees extend their hours of a working day, so that they still work the same number of hours that they were supposed to work but on fewer days (Maket et al., 2015). The shorter week (compressed week) increases enthusiasm and moral and reduces employee-turnover and absenteeism because employees have opportunities to balance their work-life commitments and responsibilities (Maket et al., 2015). However, these types of arrangements are not always possible because the compressed week increases employee fatigue and risk of work incidents, accidents and eventually lowers productivity, hence there is need for management to strike a balance between flexibility and productivity (Titopoulou et al., 2017)

2.9.8 Improving the working environment

Factors of the working environment in which employees work play an important role and can create positive or negative outcomes among employees, for example, a good positive working environment makes employees have a physically and emotionally desire to work, thereby increasing their performance outcomes and assists in reducing absenteeism but if the working environment is poor, it creates negative outcomes that lead to increased absenteeism (Naharuddin & Sadegi, 2013). Singh & Chetty (2016) also said that employers must strive to ensure that the working conditions of employees are satisfactory so that the physical and mental health of the employees are guaranteed because poor health at the workplace can lead to absenteeism, low productivity, labour turnover etc. Employees who constantly work under inconvenient working conditions may end up with low performance and face occupational health diseases causing high absenteeism, therefore, it becomes important for organisations to focus on symptoms of disengagement among employees such as distraction, lack of interest, poor decisions and high absenteeism, rather than the root cause (Leblebici, 2012). In conclusion, management can protect the company's productivity and reduce absenteeism caused by poor or unhealthy working conditions by regularly investigating the wellbeing of their employees and continuously improving the working conditions and environment as a whole (Singh & Chetty, 2016).The working conditions of employees can be improved by enhancing the salaries and paying well over minimum wage, physical safe working

environment such as proper lighting and ventilation, improved medical benefits, leave entitlements, working hours, among other factors (Singh & Chetty, 2016; Basariya, 2015).

2.9.9 Disciplinary proceedings

Companies have the power to move forward with disciplinary proceedings if absenteeism becomes a problem within their companies (Kocakulah et al., 2016). In other words, management must invoke disciplinary procedures when the absence levels become unacceptably high in terms of the company targets or measures (Armstrong, 2010). Sichani et al. (2011) said that disciplinary action should be taken against employees who have excessive numbers of unapproved absences and the disciplinary actions will include warnings, followed by suspension and can culminate in dismissal of the employee. Sichani et al. (2011) maintained that these disciplinary actions are intended to enhance attendance by increasing the risk of job loss among employees. Bakar & Muhammad (2013) highlighted that disciplinary action seems to be the easier way to curb the problem of absenteeism within organisation. However, the action may lead to more harm than good because it might drive the wrong behaviour among employees. In a strong economic environment with high employment rates, employees are confident of finding another job with ease and hence are not afraid of losing their job (Sichani et al., 2011). However, with the decreased anxiety related to job loss, the disciplinary policies become less effective in motivating employees to show up for work. It also has been found that punishing employees for absenteeism cannot be established to be frequently linked to increased attendance (Bakar & Muhammed, 2013). The initial approach should be that employees must be allowed to manage their own attendance unless they abuse that freedom and once absenteeism exceeds normal limits as determined by the company policy, then disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment can occur (Mathis et al., 2016).

3.0 CONCLUSION

There are a number of reasons why people need to be absent from work and the majority of reasons are genuine or legitimate reasons but these absences need to be handled with sensitivity and through a fairly managed processes because the absences generate huge losses of productivity and also financial loses for organisations (Gangai et al., 2015). Rauf (2015) highlighted that absence is a prominent issue that is affecting organisations in terms of low

productivity and effectiveness and as a result the issue of absenteeism is a multi-facetted one and a phenomenon which requires a multi-pronged approach because the causes of absenteeism are varied. Organisations need to create conducive environments for the employees to be motivated enough to work and restrained from unnecessary absenteeism by having proper leave management policies and procedures, good compensation and incentive policies, traditional disciplinary programs and measures and by implementing wellness programs (Gangai et al., 2015).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology process that was followed in order to understand the factors that are affecting absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa. The chapter followed the following guidelines whereby it started with the research design, research methodology, research format, research techniques, data collection methods, population, sampling procedures, time horizon. A conclusion of the chapter is also provided at the end of the chapter where the main themes and research methodology discussion points are summarised.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is regarded as the general plan that guides how the research questions will be answered, i.e. it will contain clear objectives, derived from the research questions, specific sources from which the data is intended to be collected from, ethical issues and other necessary considerations/constraints to the research (Saunders et al., 2015). Sreejesh et al. (2014) described a research design as an actual framework of a research that provides specific details regarding the process to be followed in conducting a research and it is based on the objectives formulated during the initial phase of the research. Issues relating to decisions regarding the purpose of the study, its location, the type it should conform to (type of investigation), the extent to which it is manipulated and controlled by the researcher (extent of researcher interference), its temporal aspects (time horizon), and the level of at which the data will be analysed (unit of analysis), are integral to the research design (Sekaran, 2010).

3.3 RESEARCH METHOD

There are two common types of researches, i.e. quantitative and qualitative researches but there is also the mixed methods which is a term used when both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and procedures are used in the research design (Saunders et al., 2015). The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on a process and meaning that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms

of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Wilson, 2014). On the other hand, quantitative studies emphasise the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes leading to the main difference between the two types of studies being that quantitative research is usually associated with numerical analysis while qualitative is not or examines data that are narrative (Wilson, 2014). Quantitative research is designed to empirically identify the presence and magnitude of differences between individuals and groups of individuals, for example, it is typically designed to test predetermined hyphotheses that are formed based on existing theory while qualitative research often functions to develop theory from the data that are collected (Weathington et al., 2012). Quantitative research was adopted in this study because it will enable the research to be finalised by making use of statistical analyses as well as diagrams and charts in order to ascertain the factors affecting absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa. Quantitative research was also used because it emphasises the quantification in the collection and analyses of data and this makes it easier and likely to generalise the results to the whole population or subpopulation because it involves a larger sample which was randomly selected (Rahman, 2017). Quantitative research was also used because data are easy to measure and can enable factors affecting absenteeism at the organisation to be distinguished between the most dominant or frequent and the less dominant or infrequent ones. Sreejesh et al. (2014) highlighted that quantitative research method makes it easier when there is an attempt to bring to the fore any pattern within the organisation in relation to a particular problem by making use of charts, graphs and tables. Another reason why quantitative research was used is due to the fact that it is less time consuming and saves resources because the SPSS software was used for data analysis and assisted in the description of the results (Rahman, 2017).

3.4 RESEARCH FORMAT

The research was a descriptive study. A descriptive study is undertaken in order to ascertain and be able to describe the characteristics of the variables of interest in a particular situation and includes descriptions of frequencies, race, tenure, age, etc. (Sekaran, 2010). The purpose of descriptive research is to provide an accurate description or picture of the status or characteristics of a situation or phenomenon and the focus is not on ferreting out cause-and-effect relationships but rather on describing the variables that exist in a given situation and sometimes on describing the relationship that exists among those variables (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). A descriptive study will be appropriate because ArcelorMittal South

Africa is experiencing relatively high levels of absenteeism and the research sought to establish the factors that are affecting absenteeism in that organisation and also to establish if demographic variables influence absenteeism. Descriptive studies tend to provide accurate information and help to form the basis of simple decision making by setting out to provide answers to what, how, when, or where questions within the context of causes of absenteeism (Wilson, 2014). The study tried to establish if there are any absenteeism patterns that emerged from the collected results of the study. In descriptive studies, data collection usually involves some type of structured process, for example, obtaining data through structured questionnaires (Hair et al., 2015). Sekaran (2010) highlighted that the goal of a descriptive study is to offer to the researcher a profile or to describe relevant aspects of the phenomena of interest to the individual, organisation, industry or other perspective and the information may be vital before considering corrective steps. As a result, a descriptive approach was adopted because it assists in answering the research question whereby the research seeks to produce an accurate representation of factors affecting absenteeism among the permanent employees at ArcelorMittal South Africa and describe the main characteristics of those factors. Lastly, descriptive studies are often confirmatory in nature, that is, they are used to test hypotheses (Hair et al., 2015). The descriptive study therefore is relevant because the researcher formulated hypotheses that needed to be tested and verified in the study and also as part of addressing the research questions and objectives.

3.5 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES & DATA COLLECTION

The research technique that was utilised to gather primary data for the purpose of answering the research questions and objectives is a survey. Sreejesh et al. (2014) defined a survey as a research technique which is used to gather information or primary data from a sample of respondents. A survey is a means of gathering information through respondents for any pre-established research objective and the information gathered pertains demographic characteristics, attitudinal aspects, intentions, and awareness of the respondents participating in that survey (Bajpai, 2011). Saunders et al. (2015) also defined a survey as a research technique that involves the structured collection of data using questionnaires and include other techniques such as structured observation and structured interviews. The survey technique was used because it provides the following advantages that are important for this research:

- The survey allows one to collect quantitative data which can be analysed, quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics, that is, it enables inferences and generalisations to be made,
- It is both comparatively easy to explain and to understand,
- The survey gives more control over the research process,
- The survey allows the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way. The technique gives the opportunity to the researcher to collect data at one time (Saunders et al., 2015).

In addition, the survey technique was used because of its ability to generate some standardised information, as the same questionnaire is administered to different respondents more often at the same time (Bajpai, 2011). Lastly, due to time and other related resource constraints, the time horizon of the study was a cross-sectional one. As a result, the survey technique is the best technique to administer when conducting a cross-sectional study (Hair et al., 2015).

Data collection is the process of collecting information from the respondents for the purpose of answering the research objectives (Hair et al., 2015). Data collection is an integral part of research design and there are several data collection methods (i.e. interviews, observation, questionnaires, etc.) and each with its own advantages and disadvantages (Sekaran, 2010). The main purpose of data collection is to enhance the decision-making ability of the decision maker or researcher (Bajpai, 2011). Primary data is defined as data that are gathered first hand to answer the research question being investigated (Sreejesh et al., 2014). Nevertheless, secondary data are data that already exist which have been collected by some other person or organisation for their use and are generally made available to other researchers freely or at a concessional rate (Sreejesh et al., 2014). Primary data was collected using a self-administered paper-based questionnaire that was distributed to the participants with the main objective being to collect data on the factors affecting absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa. Collecting primary data is expensive, time consuming and difficult (Hair et al., 2015). However, primary data is preferred because it is time specific, population specific and the subject matter or information gathered is specific to the organisation or problem definition (Zikmund et al., 2013). In other words, the data or information that is obtained is very specific for the purposes of the research.

A questionnaire is defined as a pre-formulated written set of questions to which respondents record their answers, usually within rather closely defined alternatives (Sekaran, 2010). In a self-administered questionnaire, no interviewer is involved, that is, a series of questions are presented to the respondents without the intervention of the interviewer (Bajpai, 2011). The questionnaire was utilised because it is one of the most widely used data collection techniques within the survey technique and because each person (respondent) is asked to respond to the same set of questions, it provides an efficient way of collecting responses from a large sample prior to a quantitative analysis (Saunders et al., 2015). A questionnaire was also used because it has the advantage of obtaining data more efficiently in terms of the researcher's time, energy and costs (Sekaran, 2010). The self-administered questionnaire is devoid of the personal clarification to some of the questions of the survey by the interviewer on some difficult-to-understand questions but the same absence of intervention of the interviewer makes the data collection technique bias-free from the interviewer's angle (Bajpai, 2011). The questionnaire does not require the respondents to give out personal identification details and maintains their anonymity thereby assisting in reducing bias. All ethical issues were taken into account in order to produce a research project that is considered as an ethical piece of research.

Data were collected during on-site training sessions within the various training venues or during the commencement of meetings such as in the morning and afternoon within the organisation. To ensure that the required responses were obtained, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to introduce the research topic and the purpose of the research at the beginning of the training sessions or meetings, and motivated the respondents to provide honest answers and to participate in the survey (Sekaran, 2010). The completed questionnaires were completed after three or four days. Follow ups on the questionnaire responses that were still outstanding were made in the next training sessions or meetings after one or two weeks whereby the researcher would come during the beginning of the meeting or training sessions and requested the questionnaires. This assisted in getting a lot of completed questionnaires back.

3.5.1 Questionnaire development

Questionnaire development is a process that involves identifying an objective(s), identifying the sample, determining the questionnaire format and item development, accessing the sample and collecting and analysing process (Mathews & Kostelis, 2011). The questionnaire development was centred on the overall framework of the study and also the research objectives. The literature review played a very critical role in identifying some of the common factors that affect absenteeism. The questionnaire was adapted from the dissertation by Sichani et al. (2011) on their "Workplace Satisfaction Survey" in which the objective was to identify the primary causes of absence. Factors of absenteeism from the Steers and Rhodes (1978) model of employee attendance were also incorporated in the questionnaire. Permission to utilise and adapt parts of the questionnaire was obtained from the developers of the questionnaire. The questionnaire includes;

Section A: this section seeks biographical data. Introductory information is provided to guide the respondents on the purpose of the study and also gives instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. The biographical data is composed of six questions that must be completed by ticking the boxes by the respondents, that is, the questions ask the age, gender, education, marital status, tenure, and current job level. This is aligned with the findings in the literature which describe the demographic factors that impact absenteeism as such as gender, marital status, level of education, age , job category, organisational tenure, and number of dependents of the employee (Akgeyik, 2014; Belita et al., 2013; Aluko, 2015). The section also has a question that seeks to ask or collect information from respondents regarding the number of times they have taken a specific type of leave within the organisation in that particular year.

Section B: is composed of five broad subsections on the causes of absenteeism, that is, personal issues, works/job conditions, management/supervision, interpersonal relationships, and external issues. The respondents were required to tick/select their answers on a Likert scale thereby indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement of the causes of absenteeism. The composition of the questionnaire includes the following factors/causes of absenteeism:

Personal issues: Eleven items on personal related issues that cause absenteeism are provided for respondents to tick in the appropriate box.

Work/job conditions: This subsection is composed of job or work-related factors that cause employees to be absent from work for respondents to choose from.

Management & supervision: twelve items that are related to management and supervision as the broader category of why employees absent themselves from work is provided for respondents to choose from.

Interpersonal relationships: this is the smallest subsection on the questionnaire and it focuses on how the relationship between the employee and his/her supervisor or co-worker affects their decision to come to work and it has only two items/questions to choose from.

External issues: this is the last subsection on the questionnaire with five items or questions to choose from. This subsection includes factors that are outside of the business working environment but still influence employees not to come to work or become absent.

The questionnaire also has four open ended questions. The first question requests respondents to suggest three main reasons that they think cause absenteeism within the organisation. The second and third question prompts the respondents to suggest three reasons that might cause absenteeism by co-workers and also by managers/subordinates respectively. The fourth question asks for the respondent's opinion on any other factors that might contribute to absenteeism within the organisation.

Section C: is composed of suggested interventions that can be adopted by the organisation in order to reduce the levels of absenteeism. It has nine suggestion solutions to reduce absenteeism which the participants can tick a box on a Likert-type scale indicating their level of agreement or disagreement with the suggested interventions. The section also has an open ended question that requests respondents to add extra interventions/actions they can suggest to management in order to reduce or mitigate the negative effects of absenteeism.

The questionnaire has a sum total of fifty absence related questions. Each question is numbered and presented in a logical manner and is classified in the relevant subsection.

Instructions on how to select a particular question are available with the wording "tick X in the boxes provided". However, the questionnaire was distributed to both non-managerial employees and managerial employees and as a result the questionnaire had two different headings to guide its distribution to the respondents. Though the questionnaire was self-administered, it took about 30 minutes to complete. Therefore, it was not very time consuming. The questionnaire is also well structured and compiled in easy-to-understand English. This was meant to ensure that the respondents would not struggle with completing the questionnaire and it is not too cumbersome to discourage them from completing it, thereby causing respondent fatigue.

3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability is defined as the extent to which data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings (Saunders et al., 2015). Sekaran (2010) described reliability as the extent to which the measure is without bias (error free) and hence ensures the consistent measurement across time and various items in the instrument. The questionnaire was tested and it had a Cronbach's Alpha reading of 0.95 which is considered as reliable (Sekaran, 2010). The questionnaire was also previously administered anonymously to identify causes of absenteeism several times and several trials were conducted and produced successful results (Sichani et al., 2011). As a result, the questionnaire was adopted because it is considered to be reliable. In addition, Sichani et al. (2011) highlighted that the research process is repeatable and can be applied to other industrial projects or organisations. This gave the confidence to utilise the questionnaire as a data collection tool for the study.

3.5.3 Validity

Validity tests how well an instrument that is developed measures the particular concept it is intended to measure (Sekaran, 2010). Validity is the strength of our conclusions, inferences or propositions and involves the degree to which you are measuring what you are supposed to (Adams et al, 2014). Saunders et al. (2015) described validity as concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about. The questionnaire adopted was tested for validity using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity and the results proved the instrument to be valid. In addition to the results of the developers of the questionnaire it was evident that the instrument was valid and enabled

an in-depth understanding of absenteeism (Sichani et al., 2011).Due to the fact that the questionnaire was tested and proved to be valid, it offers an impetus and reassurance that the measuring instrument was correctly utilised for the purpose of the study.

3.5.4 Ethical considerations during data collection

Ethics refer to the appropriateness of the behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of the researcher's work or are affected by it (Saunders et al., 2015). There should be a good fit between the ethical and legal concerns and the data collection choices that are made (Daniel, 2011). There are a number of ethical principles that were adhered to during the conduction of the research irrespective of the data collection technique that was used and related to:

- privacy of possible and actual participants;
- voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process;
- consent and possible deception of participants;
- maintenance of the confidentiality of data provided by individuals or identifiable participants and their anonymity;
- reactions of participants to the way in which you seek to collect data, including embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain, and harm;
- effects on participants of the way, in which you use, analyse and report your data, in particular the avoidance of embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain, and harm; behaviour and objectivity of you as the researcher. (Saunders et al., 2015).

In order for the study or investigation to receive honest answers from the respondents and comply with university's ethics protocols when conducting research, particularly surveys, the purpose of the questionnaire was clearly stated on the questionnaire and the researcher would also explain it before or during the distribution of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered anonymously, voluntarily and no compensation was paid to the respondents. Therefore, the respondents were not requested to put their names or anything that can enable them to be identified, on the questionnaire. The information obtained was treated as confidential and was used only to answer research questions or for the purpose of the study

and not to do any harm to the respondents or society. Respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and that they should indicate their answers on the questionnaire with an "X" in the boxes that were provided.

3.6 POPULATION

Sampling begins with precisely defining the target population and the target population must be defined in terms of elements, geographical boundaries and time in the light of the research objectives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Population is defined as the full set of cases from which a sample is taken from (Saunders et al., 2015). Bajpai (2011) defined population as the collection of objectives, which possess the information that is required by the researcher and about which an inference is to be made. ArcelorMittal South Africa has about 9 000 permanent employees across its business units in South Africa. Vanderbijlpark Works is where the head office is located and it is the biggest business unit (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). The research was conducted comprising of production operators, administration, maintenance artisans and engineers, management, marketing, human resources and other support services functions. The population considered was the production, maintenance employees and management employees who are permanently employed at Vanderbijlpark Works. Vanderbijlpark Works had an estimated total staff complement of 4 736 permanent employees in 2017, broken down as follows: 2 361 production employees, 1 637 maintenance employees and 738 managerial employees. The combined number of production and maintenance employees in non-managerial roles was 3 998 (approximately 84% of the staff complement) while 738 managerial employees constitute approximately 16% of the staff complement (ArcelorMittal (b), 2017). The unit of analysis is referred to as the level of aggregation of the data collected during the subsequent data analysis stage (Sekaran, 2010). In this study, the unit of analysis was the individual permanent employees at Vanderbijlpark Works although various demographic variables in relationship to absenteeism were also analysed.

These numbers indicate that naturally, the high absenteeism levels that the company is experiencing emanate from the production and maintenance employees as a result of the high staff complement in this category of employees. They are the employees that are directly responsible for the production of steel for the company hence they are very central to the

investigation. Management employees were considered because they directly or indirectly manage the production and maintenance employees including their absence in the organization. Permanent employees from other business units were not considered because the plants and working environments are similar and there is no significant variability in the ArcelorMittal South Africa population across the different business units, i.e. generally there is homogeneity of the population or employees with regard to the variable (absenteeism) that is being studied. In addition, there are no major differences in absenteeism levels or patterns across the different business units. Therefore, the Vanderbijlpark Works study made the results truly generalisable to ArcelorMittal South Africa as a whole.

3.7 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Daniel (2011) defined sampling as the selection of a subset of a population for inclusion in a study and if done properly, it can save money, time and effort while providing valid, reliable and useful results but on the other hand, if done poorly, the findings of the study may have little scientific and practical value. Sekaran (2010) explained sampling as a process of selecting the right individuals, objects or events for study and it involves selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population so that a study of the sample and an understanding of its properties or characteristics would make it possible for generalisations about that population to be made. However, a sampling procedure is defined as a rule of selecting a proper subset, named sample, from a well-defined finite basic set of objects (population, universe) (Rasch & Schott, 2018). This implies that a sample is extracted from a population by means of a sampling procedure (Jolibert et al., 2012). Sampling was adopted because the population that was investigated is essentially working in a similar environment and absenteeism is affecting the whole organisation. The population that was sampled is easily accessible and sample estimates can be generated from them hence there was no need to get perceptions from every employee. In addition, given the constraints of time, financial and human resources, it was difficult to collect data from all the permanent employees at ArcelorMittal South Africa. As a result, simple random sampling was adopted to obtain information from the population.

The study or sampling procedure was conducted at Vanderbijlpark Works, which is the biggest works area in ArcelorMittal South Africa. The works has several plants which are

closely related and interlinked in terms of production processes and operations. The plants are Coke and Iron Making, Steel Making, Hot Rolling, Cold Rolling and Engineering Services. The plants are essentially designed on the same organisational management or structure principles, for example, there is a production and a maintenance/technical team, then supervisory and management personnel. The plants have scheduled weekly meetings that are attended by non-managerial and managerial employees where they discuss all related plant issues, that is, from production to safety matters. There are also scheduled monthly works meetings that are supposed to be attended by all the employees within the works where similar issues are discussed and ensure that employees and business processes are aligned. Such meetings were also utilised for sampling purposes.

3.7.1 Sampling design

Sampling design is part of the basic business research process (Hair et al., 2015). It is the most widely used tool for gathering important and useful information from a population (Bajpai, 2011). Thompson (2012) outlined that the procedure by which the sample of units is selected from the population is called the sampling design and with most well-known sampling designs, the design is determined by assigning to each sample, the probability of selecting that sample. In this study, the sampling units were ArcelorMittal Vanderbijlpark Works permanent employees who are organised in terms of the plants in which they are working.

3.7.2 Sampling type

The sampling type that the researcher chooses depends on the feasibility and sensibility of collecting data to answer the research questions in order to address the research objectives from the entire population (Saunders et al., 2015). There are two basic sampling types, that is, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. A probability sample is defined as a sample in which every element of the population has an equal chance of being selected while a non-probability sample is where units are selected on the basis of personal judgment (Adams et al, 2014). Saunders et al. (2015) defined probability samples by outlining that the chances or probability of each case being selected from the population is known and is usually equal in all cases, that is, it means it is possible to answer research questions and to achieve objectives that require the researcher to estimate statistically the characteristics of the population from the sample. On the other hand, with non-probability sampling, the samples

or probability of each case being selected from the total population is not known and it is impossible to answer the research questions or address objectives that require the researcher to make statistical inferences about the characteristics of the population (Saunders et al., 2015).

Due to budget constraints and the time that is required to complete a self-administered questionnaire, data was not collected from the entire population. The sampling type that was adopted for this research was probability sampling because it is normally associated with the survey-based research strategies and enables inferences from the sample to be made about ArcelorMittal South Africa permanent employees (population) in order to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives. Probability sampling enables the data collected or the results to be quantified and to be easily presented or analysed in order to make sense of the responses provided by the respondents (Saunders et al., 2015). This probability sampling design was adopted also due to the fact that the population members are most likely to have similar characteristics within the organisation. Good valuable information was obtained without necessarily compromising on the quality of the data. With regard to this study, the probability of each permanent employee being selected for the sample was known because each employee has a unique employee number assigned to him/her that is used within the company for identification and other employment related transactions. In addition, the number of permanent employees that are still employed within a particular plant is well known at any given time and the work categories that they are in can easily be established by making use of the organisational structure and those same employee numbers. Therefore, it is easy to check if the employees are production, maintenance or managerial employees. This sampling type is used because it reduces sampling bias and assists in achieving a representative sample (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Hair et al. (2015) highlighted that probability sampling is typically utilised in quantitative research where findings can be generalised to the population with a specified degree of accuracy, hence the sampling design adopted will be suitable given the fact that the researcher adopted the quantitative research study.

Probability sampling has been described by Hair et al. (2015) as involving a selection of a representative sample from the population using a random procedure to ensure the objectivity in selecting the sample. The probability sampling has four stages:

- Identify a suitable sampling frame based on your research questions or objectives.
- Decide on a suitable sample size.
- Select the most appropriate sampling technique and select the sample.
- Check that the sample size is representative of the population (Saunders et al., 2015).

3.7.3 Sampling frame

A researcher takes a sample from a population list, directory, map or any other sources used to represent the population and this list possess the information about the subjects that is called a sampling frame (Bajpai, 2011). Sekaran & Bougie (2016) defined a sampling frame as a physical representation of all the elements in the population from which the sample is drawn, e.g., the payroll of an organisation would serve as the sampling frame if its members are to be studied. Saunders et al. (2015) emphasised that obtaining a sampling frame that is complete, accurate and up to date is very important because:

- Individual databases are often incomplete,
- The information that is held about organisations in databases is sometimes not accurate,
- The information held in databases soon becomes out of date.

Therefore, an incomplete or inaccurate sampling frame/list means that some cases will have been excluded and so it will be impossible for every case in the population to have a chance of selection. However, when a sampling frame does not exactly match the population then coverage errors may occur, but it is important to recognise the problem and not be too concerned about it because the discrepancy between the target population and the sampling frame is small enough to ignore (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In relation to this study, a list of all the current permanent employees within the company was obtained from an employment list of all the permanent employees from the Human Resource department that can be accessed from the SAP integrated computer system (internally referred to as the 0.5 document that consists of all employees, names, grades, job title, work schedules etc.) and used as a sampling frame. The sampling frame is likely to be almost 100 percent accurate

though there could be some recent employee terminations, new recruitments into the organisation, employee absenteeism and other related changes within a period/month but the discrepancies are not significant enough to affect the purpose of the study and meeting the research objectives. The discrepancies are small because ArcelorMittal new employees generally start work or terminations are done by the human resource department with effect from the first day of the month or last day of the month respectively, thereby giving the organisation a chance to correct the employee records and information every month. As a result, the employee information or sampling frame is constantly up to date and can be relied upon. As a result, the sampling frame still provided confidence as a basis to be used for the research.

3.7.4 Sampling technique

Stratified random sampling was the technique that was utilised in this study. Stratified random sampling involves a process of stratification or segregation whereby the population is first divided into mutually exclusive groups or strata that are relevant, appropriate, and meaningful in the context of the study, and then followed by a random selection of subjects from each stratum (Sekaran, 2010). The process of sampling using stratified random sampling followed the following steps outlined by Saunders et al. (2015):

- Selected the stratification variables (job levels within the organisation)
- Divided the sampling frame into discrete sections (strata). The four different strata were senior management, middle management, junior management and non-managerial employees at Vanderbijlpark Works at ArcelorMittal.
- Numbered each stratum with a unique code for example senior management 01, middle management 02, junior management 03, and non-managerial 04.
- Randomly selected from each stratum.

Stratified random sampling was used because dividing the population into a series of the strata enables the data from the various categories to be generalised because each stratum is represented within the sample (Saunders et al., 2015). Stratification is also an efficient sampling process and it enables more information to be provided because there is more data to be gained between groups rather than if it is from within one group or stratum (Sekaran, 2010).

Determining the sample size is very complex because many factors have to be taken into consideration simultaneously (Hair et al., 2015). Saunders et al. (2015) highlighted that there are some factors that must be taken into consideration when determining a sample size which are:

- the confidence you need to have in your data – that is, the level of certainty that the characteristics of the data collected will represent the characteristics of the total population;
- the margin of error that you can tolerate – that is, the accuracy you require for any estimates made from your sample;
- the types of analyses you are going to undertake – in particular, the number of categories into which you wish to subdivide your data, as many statistical techniques have a minimum threshold of data cases for each cell (e.g. chi square, Section 12.5); and to a lesser extent:
- the size of the total population from which your sample is drawn.

A reliable and valid sample should enable the researcher to generalise the findings from the sample population that is under study, that is, the sample statistics should be reliable estimates and reflect the population parameters as closely as possible within a narrow margin of error (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). ArcelorMittal South Africa has about 9 000 permanent employees across South Africa and has about 5 000 permanent employees at the Vanderbijlpark Works business unit, which is the head office (ArcelorMittal, 2017). Saunders et al. (2015) indicated that if the population that is under study is 5 000 (permanent employees), then it requires a sample size of 357 (permanent employees at the Vanderbijlpark business unit) to give a 95% confidence level (see table below).

Table 3.1: Sample sizes for different populations (assuming data are collected from all cases in the sample) (Saunders et al., 2015)

Population	Margin of error			
	5%	3%	2%	1%
50	44	48	49	50
100	79	91	96	99
150	108	132	141	148

200	132	168	185	196
250	151	203	226	244
300	168	234	267	291
400	196	291	343	384
500	217	340	414	475
750	254	440	571	696
1000	278	516	706	906
2000	322	696	1091	1655
5000	357	879	1622	3288
10000	370	964	1936	4899
100000	383	1056	2345	8762

Overall, about 500 questionnaires were sent out in order to get to the required sample sizes, taking into consideration that some questionnaire responses might be spoilt and also in case there are no responses when people ignore or can't respond to the questionnaire due to various reasons. The sample was stratified and the following responses were obtained:

Table 3.2: Sample sizes of Vanderbijlpark Works population

	Managerial employees	Non-managerial employees	Total
Population	119	4049	4168
Sample size	86	226	312

The sampling size that is appropriate should have a confidence level of 95% because the level of certainty that the characteristics of data collected will represent the characteristics of the total population with a 5% margin of error which is also the required accuracy for estimations to be made from a sample (Saunders et al., 2015). However, although the sample size obtained did not reach the 95% confidence level, it was still acceptable considering that the workforce composition at Vanderbijlpark Works is very homogenous.

3.7.5 Time horizon

A time horizon refers to an estimated time that the data will be collected from the sample and that is sufficient enough to undertake and complete a research project (Saunders et al., 2015). A cross-sectional study design was used because it is very popular in the field of business research and it involves the collection of information from a sample of a population at one point of time (Bajpai, 2011). The cross-sectional study aims to study a particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time and is akin to taking a "snapshot" rather than taking a longitudinal design (Saunders et al., 2015). Sekaran & Bougie (2016) also defined a cross-sectional study as a study where the data will be gathered just once, perhaps over a period of days, weeks or months in order to answer research question(s). The cross-sectional time horizon was chosen due to the fact that the full research project would take about one year to complete after permission to proceed with the research was granted by the University' of Johannesburg's Ethics committee. As a result, the researcher did not have sufficient time to plan and carry out a longitudinal study hence the choice to adopt the cross-sectional time horizon. The cross-sectional study was utilised because it is the time horizon that is normally used with surveys in which the samples happen to be representative of the population (Bajpai, 2011). The researcher had limited financial resources to conduct the research and collect data hence the cross-sectional study was appropriate and was useful in fulfilling the objectives of the research. Lastly, the researcher adopted descriptive studies to answer the research questions and fulfil the research objectives therefore, the cross-sectional study is the appropriate time because descriptive studies provide a snap short or description of business elements at a given time and are considered as cross- sectional (Hair et al., 2015).

3.7.6 Data analysis

After the data was gathered using the questionnaire, it was analysed statistically with the objective of interpreting it. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software package was used to analyse the data. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics on information relating to gender, age, qualifications, marital status, number of dependents, organisational tenure, and current job level, that is, the frequencies, means, modes, standard deviations were analysed. Exploratory factor analyses were conducted where the results and the questionnaire results were tested for reliability using the Cronbach's Alpha. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Tests were also used to test for validity of the results. Correlations were utilised to test how closely or related the variables are to each other. The

Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were utilised to test for normality on the factors of absenteeism and the variables. Lastly, the T-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests were also used to establish if there are significant relationships and differences between the demographic variables and the absenteeism variables.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored at the research methodology. It started with a presentation of the research design, that is, it was a descriptive study that made use of the quantitative research approach. The study followed the survey research technique and made use of the cross-sectional time frame due to resource and time constraints. In terms of sampling, the appropriate sampling technique was identified and as a result, the researcher adopted the probability sampling that is usually associated with the survey and quantitative studies. The population was clearly established, and the appropriate sample size determined. The primary data was collected using an established structured questionnaire that takes into account the ethical considerations associated with collecting data using such an instrument. The data was analysed and constructed meaning that can be useful to ArcelorMittal South Africa management team. A list and description of factors affecting absenteeism at ArcelorMittal were established and presented using frequencies and descriptive statistics. Relationships between and among the independent and depend variables will be delineated and tested using correlations, T-tests, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis Tests. Managerial implications will therefore be proposed to the management team for possible adoption.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows the descriptive and inferential statistics after data was collected and captured. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software was used to analyse the data. The descriptive statistics involved analysing the frequencies, means and standard deviations. Factor analysis was also used to reduce large sets of variables into smaller sets of factors or components (Pallant, 2016). Correlations were used to test how closely or related the variables are to each other and T-tests were also used to determine the relationships and differences between the demographic variables and the absenteeism variables in an attempt to answer the research objectives and questions.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics were utilised to transform the data that was collected and present it in a more meaningful structure. Information relating to gender, age, qualifications, marital status, number of dependents, organizational tenure and current job level is outlined. There were 312 employees who participated in the research and descriptive statistics were used in order to understand the profile of the research participants.

4.2.1 Gender

Table 4.1: Gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	254	81.4
Female	58	18.6
Total	312	100.0

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of the respondents were males. This is partly the result of the steel manufacturing industry being a heavily male-dominated environment due to the nature of the hard labour required to process and manufacture steel.

4.2.2 Age

Table 4.2: Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18 to 25years	52	16.7
26 to 35years	131	42.0
36 to 45years	42	13.5
46 to 55years	64	20.5
56 years or more	23	7.4
Total	312	100.0

In table 4.2 the results indicate that there is a fairly even split in terms the age profiles of the employees though the biggest age group was those between 26 and 35 years. This age group is large and the most economically active group, which is comprised of operator and maintenance employees who are developing and honing their skills and competencies for future job opportunities within and outside the company. The second largest age group is between 46 to 55 years, partly because the company is in the Vaal area which is relatively small and not able to provide a lot of job opportunities for employees with steel making skills and competencies, resulting in employees generally working there for a very long time until they retire. The third largest group was between 18 to 25 years, which is a result of the steady intake of new employees who are recruited and trained to replace the aging workforce and resignations. In general, the number of respondents from the various age categories reflects the general composition of the workforce within the company.

4.2.3 Highest education qualifications

Table 4.3: Qualifications of the respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Below Matric	15	4.8
Matric	109	34.9
Trade Certificate	56	17.9
Diploma	60	19.2
Degree	34	10.9
Post to graduate degree	38	12.2
Total	312	100.0

The company recruits many production learners who are trained and appointed as operators when they finish the training. To be eligible for this, recruits need a matric qualification.

Those operators constitute the majority of the workforce; hence the majority of the participants in table 4.3 above have a matric qualification. Participants with diplomas were the second highest group, because this group is composed mainly of the technicians and other personnel with relevant diplomas who work in the maintenance and other departments across the plants. The third largest group of employees is employees with trade certificates who are predominantly artisans who also form part of the maintenance teams. The groups of participants with degrees and post graduate degrees combined constituted the second largest group of participants. Since the company is in the steel manufacturing business, it has a large group of engineers and other professionals in support functions, which explains the significant number of people in this category. The last group is participants who do not have matric and it is a small group of older employees who joined the company a long time ago, before the matriculation education system was introduced.

4.2.4 Marital status

Table 4.4: Marital status of the respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Single	124	39.7
Divorced	18	5.8
Married	135	43.3
Living with a partner	35	11.2
Total	312	100.0

The composition of respondents in table 4.4 is fairly balanced between the single and divorced people, on the one hand, with those married or living with a partner on the other. With regard to marital status, the majority of the participants are married, established within the organisation and have been there for a long time. The second largest group is participants who are single. This is due to the company recruiting a lot of young production and artisan/maintenance employees who will be starting their careers and are still establishing themselves within the organisation; hence most of them are not married.

4.2.5 Number of dependents

Table 4.5: Number of dependents of the respondents

Number of dependents	Frequency	Percent
One	112	35.9
Two	89	28.5
Three	56	17.9
More than three	55	17.6
Total	312	100.0

Table 4.5 indicates that the majority of the participants have zero to one dependent. This resonates with the information presented earlier that there are a significant number of participants who are single. The rest of the participants have two or more dependents, which may be considered to be expected, given the high number of married (and divorced) participants.

4.2.6 Years of service with the company

Table 4.6: Years of service with the company of the respondents

Years of service with the company	Frequency	Percent
0 to 1 year	37	11.9
1 to 5 years	101	32.4
5 to 10 years	63	20.2
10 to 15 years	28	9.0
15 to 20 years	17	5.4
More than 20 years	66	21.2
Total	312	100.0

The participants within the organisation are mostly those who have been there for a period of one to five years. This is because the company is constantly recruiting people, partly due to high labour turnover rate as well as due to the company having a large pool of personnel that could be undergoing training at any given time. The second largest group is employees who have been with the organisation for more than 20 years, which can mainly be attributed to limited opportunities in the industry for older persons, thereby resulting in employees staying at the company for a reasonably long time. The third group of the participants has been with the company for less than one year and is mainly new employees who were recently appointed after finishing their training.

4.2.7 Job category

Table 4.7: Job categories of the respondents

Job category	Frequency	Percent
Senior Management	13	4.2
Middle Management	30	9.6
Junior Management	43	13.8
Non-Managerial	226	72.4
Total	312	100.0

The workforce is predominantly non-managerial employees who are mostly production and maintenance employees and a few support services employees responsible for the actual production of steel. Managerial employee participants constituted a combined 27.6%, consisting of junior managers or supervisors who are responsible for supervising the production and maintenance teams, middle management responsible for managing production and maintenance through their supervisors and senior managers who are accountable and responsible for managing the whole departmental productivity and profitability. These results are generally representative of the actual workforce composition.

4.2.8 Number of times of absences taken in 2018

Table 4.8: Type of leave

Type of leave	Never	1 to 3 times	4 to 5 times	6 times or more
Sick leave	37.2%	55.1%	5.8%	1.9%
Special leave – study	76.0%	15.4%	4.8%	3.8%
Special leave compassionate	80.4%	17.6%	1.9%	0.0%
Special leave - social responsibility	89.4%	9.3%	1.3%	0.0%
Special leave - special circumstances	83.7%	14.4%	1.9%	0.0%
Special leave – paternity	90.7%	9.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Maternity leave	95.8%	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Vacation leave	29.5%	54.2%	9.3%	7.1%
Unpaid leave	92.9%	6.1%	0.3%	0.6%

Sick leave - In table 4.8, within the sick leave category, over 60% of respondents had taken sick leave over a nine-month period. The information is not surprising given the fact that the company is struggling with high levels of absenteeism and employees frequently use sick

leave as an excuse not to come to work. The company subjects employees to sick leave counselling when employees abuse sick leave, for example when a person takes three sick leave incidences in three months. Therefore, when employees have taken sick leave on three occasions within a short period of time, they start hesitating to exceed that because of the fear that the company is monitoring them. The sharp drop to single digit or smaller percentages for sick leave taken over four times in a year therefore tends to be legitimate cases. Quite a high percentage (37.2%) of the participants had not taken any sick leave in 2018 which is a group of employees who are medically fit, honest and do not want to abuse the company's sick leave privileges bestowed upon them if they are not sick.

Special leave (study) **-** 15.4% of the participants have taken study leave between one to three times in 2018. This higher percentage is usually at the beginning of the year when people are registering for study courses/classes (with external colleges/universities) and attending a few classes, then it stabilises until they write exams at the end of the semester or year. The company offers many in-house training programs that are registered by the company. Although many employees will be training, their training or studying time is part of their official working time. Hence they do not need to take special leave in order to attend classes and write exams. This explains why the majority of participants did not take any study leave. Also a number of employees do not feel the need to pursue tertiary qualifications after being appointed in permanent positions.

Special leave (compassionate) - compassionate leave is usually taken when an employee's loved ones, such as a child, is ill. Table 4.8 indicates that most participants have not taken any leave based on compassionate grounds within the year. Few days are allowed for compassionate leave (five days per annum), therefore it is understandable to have low levels of compassionate leave because it is dependent on the illness of the child or death of close family members' and such incidents do not happen frequently throughout the year for all employees and there is a cap on the days offered by the company.

Special leave (social responsibility**) -** This type of leave is generally limited and requires high level management approval because it has to do with incidences where employees are taking part in social or national events of significance.

Special leave (special circumstances) **–** This leave is a type of special leave that is used for special situations that do not occur regularly, for example, an employee being subpoenaed by a national court to become a state witness. As a result, the number of respondents who took

this type of special leave is also generally low due to it being granted only in special circumstances where the company/management has to seriously consider its application. Nonetheless, slightly over sixteen percent of respondents took this type of leave over a nine month period. These figures seem high and the reasons thereof will have to be investigated further.

Special leave (paternity) **-** this leave is taken by male employees when their wives or partners give birth. Nine percent of the participants took paternity leave to attend to their newborn babies in 2018 in the one to three time's category. One participant took paternity leave four to five times in 2018 despite the fact that the company grants a maximum of paid paternity leave of up to three days and to exceed that, special permission must be granted by the head of the Human Resources department. Most of the participants did not take any paternity leave during the period. This is explained by the relative youth of the majority of respondents, the high number of single/divorced employees together with those who are married but have been employed by the organisation for a long time. The latter group of employees might not be starting families, hence explaining the low levels of paternity leave.

Maternity leave **–** Maternity leave applies to female employees when they give birth to a child for up to a maximum of 182 days on the salary of 33% of the earnings or 121 days on full pay. Only 4.2% of the participants took maternity leave in the category of one to three times in 2018. However, maternity leave is taken once, on a continuous basis hence the reason why all the respondents are in that category. In addition, the working environment is heavily male dominated, therefore there are few women and that translates to the low levels of maternity leave. Although maternity leave is generally for a long period, the low numbers of female employees imply that, at an aggregate level, they won't make a big impact on this type of leave.

Vacation leave **–** this type of leave is generally the most utilised form of leave and employees are granted many days (between 30 and 37 days annually) to take as vacation leave throughout the year. When employees want to take leave and rest or do any other things in their own time and space, they usually take vacation leave. This explains the high percentage of over 70 percent of participants who have taken some level of vacation leave during 2018. Almost a third of the participants had not taken any vacation leave during the period under review, but as most employees tend to take annual vacation leave over the festive season, which was not included in the period under review, this figure would be considered normal.

***Unpaid leave* –** A large majority (92.9%) of the respondents had not taken any unpaid leave in 2018. Unpaid leave is generally utilised when employees require leave but have exhausted their vacation leave. Unpaid leave usually happens in exceptional circumstances or situations; hence the figures are generally very low. The company's leave days (vacation, sick, maternity) are generally high compared to other industries and employees tend to first try to exhaust all the other leave options they can utilise before they opt for unpaid leave days; hence it explains the low numbers on this leave type.

4.2.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, the descriptive statistics were analysed in relation to the demographic variables in order to understand the profiles of the respondents. The demographic variables that were explained are gender, age, qualifications, marital status, number of dependents, organisational tenure and job categories of the respondents. The results of the analysis indicate that the work environment is very male dominated with the majority of the respondents being within the age group of 26-35 years old. Most of the respondents have a matric qualification although there are a significant number of employees with trade certificate/diplomas and degrees. There are a balanced number of participants who are single/divorced on the one hand and married/living with a partner on the other but the majority of the respondents has two or more dependents. In addition, the majority of the respondents have been with the company for a period of between one to five years and most of the respondents are in non-management positions. Within the category of non-management employees, the majority of the participants are junior managers. The leave types taken over a period of nine months were also examined and it showed that vacation leave is the most utilised leave type followed by sick leave and different forms of special leaves respectively.

4.3 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

There are three ways that must be used in business research when measuring the central tendency, that is:

- value that occurs most frequently (mode),
- middle value or mid-point after the data have been ranked (median),
- value, often known as the average, that includes all the data values in its calculation (mean) (Saunders et al., 2015).

The descriptive statistics such as mode, median, means and standard deviations were obtained and analysed from the research's independent variables on causes of absenteeism. Standard deviation is used to describe the extent of the spread of numerical data that is being used (Saunders et al., 2015). The variables were drawn from a 5-point Likert-type scale in Table 4.9 with the following measure: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. The results are illustrated in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Causes of absenteeism: measures of central tendency

Factors	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Personal issues				
Child care/illness of child/school responsibilities	3.17	3.00	5	1.505
Other family responsibilities (illness, elder care, family conflict)	3.04	3.00	3	1.251
Personal illness/injury	3.57	4.00	5	1.378
Personal appointment (medical/non-medical)	3.23	3.00	4	1.333
Bereavement leave (death in the family)	3.41	4.00	4	1.425
Need a day off for personal time	2.95	3.00	4	1.325
Personal distress (e.g. depression, divorce, phobia)	2.51	2.50	1	1.349
Alcohol/drug related	1.63	1.00	1	1.009
Not worried about losing your job	1.71	1.00	1	1.057
Lack of motivation to come to work	2.09	2.00	1	1.288
Personal safety reasons at work	2.23	2.00	1	1.245
Work/job conditions				
Occupational illness/injury	2.63	3.00	1	1.404
Poor working conditions	2.35	2.00	1	1.297
Long working hours	2.34	2.00	1	1.227
Tired from working overtime/many consecutive days worked	2.33	2.00	1	1.279
Management & supervision				
Unchallenging/repetitive work	2.30	2.00	1	1.137
Inability to get approved time off	2.27	2.00	1	1.158
Lack of flexibility regarding the work shifts	2.30	2.00	1	1.184
Lack of adequate resources (e.g. no replacement labour)	2.41	2.00	1	1.257
Lack of monitoring of and consequences for being absent	2.23	2.00	1	1.120
Excessive rework/changes	2.23	2.00	1	1.069
Excessive pressure from supervisor/manager to meet scheduled deadlines/production targets	2.34	2.00	2	1.214
Unclear work assignments/instructions	2.24	2.00	2	1.104
Lack of development opportunities	2.80	3.00	3	1.367
Lack of recognition/incentives (e.g. time off, money or appreciation)	3.07	3.00	3	1.398
Low wages/salaries	3.18	3.00	5	1.440
Interpersonal relationships				
Issues or poor relationship with supervisors/manager/subordinates	2.43	2.00	1	1.311
Issues or poor relationship with co-workers e.g. poor team spirit, bullying	2.18	2.00	1	1.200
External issues				
Transport issues (traffic congestion, delays, bad weather, car/bus/taxi breakdown	2.41	2.00	1	1.341
Long commuting hours/distance to work	2.16	2.00	1	1.145
Poor transport system to and from work (crowded/overload, long waiting time for another bus)	2.20	2.00	1	1.224
Missed bus/car pool to the plant	2.07	2.00	1	1.154
Inadequate parking facilities at work	1.90	2.00	1	1.025
Bad weather for working	1.99	2.00	1	1.107
Unreliable car share arrangements	2.00	2.00	1	1.059

(a) Personal issues:

When it comes to personal issues, the study results from table 4.9 revealed that personal illness/injury, bereavement leave and personal appointments have the highest mean scores of 3.57, 3.41 and 3.23 respectively. This shows that the participants agree that they become absent from work when they are not feeling well, or when they are attending a funeral when a close family member has passed away or sometimes when they just need time off to fix personal issues. The respondents largely disagreed that alcohol/drug related reasons (mean score 1.63) and not worried about losing a job (mean 1.71) are factors that cause them to be absent from work. Lack of motivation to come to work was also rejected as a reason for absenteeism within the organisation. Although childcare/illness and child/school responsibility did not have the highest mean score, it had the highest mode score together with personal illness/injury. This confirms that the majority of the respondents strongly agree that sickness or care for the child or personal injury/illness impact absenteeism within the company to a large extent. It is also important that personal appointments, bereavement leave and need for personal time reasons had a mode score of 4 meaning that the majority of the respondents also agreed that those reasons cause absenteeism within the organisation. In addition alcohol/drug related, not being worried about losing your job and personal safety reasons had the lowest standard deviation scores of 1.0, 1.06 and 1.25 respectively indicating no meaningful variation and the participants largely disagreed with these as causes for absenteeism. The highest standard deviations were found on child care/illness and child/school responsibilities, bereavement leave and personal illness reasons with the scores of 1.5, 1.43 and 1.38 respectively. This shows that the responses were very varied and a significant number of participants agreed whilst others disagreed with the reasons as influencing absenteeism within the organisation.

(b) Work/job conditions

When it comes to work or job conditions, according to table 4.9, all the absenteeism reasons had mean scores below three, which implies that the participants generally disagreed with the reasons as influencing their decision to attend work. In other words, the respondents disagreed that occupational illness/injury, poor working conditions, long working hours and being tired from working overtime/many consecutive days caused them to be absent from work. This can partly be the result of employees understanding that the organisation puts

safety first in terms of its operations and has invested a great deal of resources towards protecting its employees and ensuring that the safety incidents are as low as possible. Also the working conditions are relatively good and stable with production and some maintenance employees working a three shift pattern on an eight hour basis. The employees generally accept and understand the criticality of operating the shift pattern to ensure productivity within the organisation. Lastly overtime is not forced and many employees perceive working overtime as a source of earning extra income and not as a reason to be absent from work. The mode scores of one on all the reasons of absenteeism under work or job conditions reveal that the majority of the respondents strongly disagree with the reasons as causing absenteeism within the organisation. The standard deviations scores are relatively high with the lowest score being 1.23 and the highest being 1.4 showing marked variations in terms of the perceptions with regard to the reasons but generally the respondents disagree that work or job conditions negatively affect absenteeism within the organisation.

(c) Management and supervision

When analysing how management and supervision factors affect absenteeism from table 4.9, the results show that low wages/salaries and lack of recognition/incentives had mean scores of 3.18 and 3.07 respectively. These were the only reasons that have mean scores above three indicating that some respondents agree and some disagree with the reasons as causing absenteeism. However, the mode score for low wages/ salaries is 5 indicating that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the reason as a cause for absenteeism. The issue of wages/salaries is an emotive issue within the organisation. The bargaining unit employees have consistently received annual salary increases of about seven percent over the years whilst the package category employees' salary increases have followed a different route. In some years they would not get a salary increase while on some occasions they would get an increase but the percentages would be less than the other group of employees. This has created different sentiments within the organisation. However, generally, the employees feel that the company salaries are below industry standards, which may explain such a high mode score. The mode scores of three for lack of development opportunities and lack of recognition indicates that the responses are almost balanced from both sides where some disagree and some agree with the reasons as causing absenteeism. This could be as a result that the company offers some development opportunities and recognition/incentives,

but there are not enough or there is room for improvement hence the answers are bordering around neutrality.

The lowest mean scores were from the reasons of lack of monitoring of and consequences for being absent, excessive rework/changes and unclear assignments/instructions with mean scores of 2.23, 2.23 and 2.24 respectively. This is a result of the company having systems and procedures in place to monitor excessive absenteeism and address such problems from the employees through instituting counselling sessions and disciplinary actions. The company also operates with specific key performance indicators that guide employees in terms of daily and weekly targets with a huge emphasis on quality and minimising rework or changes on steel products. That could explain why the respondents disagree with the reasons as causes of absenteeism. However, generally the majority of the reasons under this category had a mode score of one implying that the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with the reasons (unchallenging/repetitive work, inability to get approval for time off, lack of flexibility regarding work shifts, lack of monitoring of and consequences of being absent, excessive rework/changes) as causes of absenteeism because the company has systems, policies and initiatives to avoid or minimise the negative effects of these reasons to the organisation. The highest standard deviation was observed with the issues of low wages, salaries (1.44), lack of recognition/incentives (1.40) and lack of developmental opportunities (1.37), meaning that there were marked variations in the responses with regard to these reasons.

(d) Interpersonal relationships

The results in table 4.9 showed that interpersonal relationships between managers/supervisors and subordinates or among co-workers are not causing absenteeism as indicated by the mean scores which are below three, that is they are 2.43 and 2.18 respectively. The two reasons also had mode scores of one, indicating that the respondents strongly disagree with the reasons as causing absenteeism within the company. This can be as a result of the nature of how work and tasks are organised around teams throughout the organisation and employees generally working as a family. The standard deviations scores of 1.3 for issues or poor relationships with supervisors/manager/subordinate and 1.2 score for issues of poor relationships with co-workers indicate that some significant variations exist whereby some

respondents disagree that the relationships are good within the organisation and affects absenteeism. There are participants who agreed and those who disagreed with the reasons but ultimately the dominant perception is that interpersonal relationships are not causing respondents to be absent from work.

(e) External issues

The results from table 4.9 reveal that the respondents generally do not agree that external factors result in absenteeism. All the mean scores are also below three implying that the respondents disagree with the reasons under this category to be causing absenteeism. The mode score of one on all the external reasons further supports this notion in that the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that external issues such as transport issues, long commuting hours/distance from work, poor transport systems, missed bus/car pool to plant, inadequate parking facilities at work, bad weather for working and unreliable car share arrangements negatively affect employees' decisions to attend work. This can be as a result of majority of the participants having their own cars or access to reliable transport to come to work when required. The company also offers parking spaces for those employees who own cars and there is a bus system that transports employees within the company to different sections of the plant. Some employees have car share agreements with their colleagues and friends as solutions to their commuting needs. In addition, the majority of the employees stay within the Vaal area, in the neighboring communities and the commuting distances to and from work are short. As a result employees can easily get to work even in the event of bad weather for working. All these factors explain why respondents might not think the external factors would cause them to be absent from work and they generally strongly rejected the reasons.

In conclusion, the results of the different categories demonstrated that the majority of the reasons for absenteeism were rejected by the respondents as causing absenteeism. All external factors, interpersonal relationships, work/job conditions were rejected as causing absenteeism within the organisation. Factors within the personal issues category such as child care/illness and child/school responsibilities, other family responsibilities, personal injury, personal appointment were accepted as influencing respondents to be absent from work.

Lastly, within the management and supervision category, two (low wages/salaries and lack of recognition/incentives) of eleven reasons were identified as causing absenteeism within the organisation amongst the respondents.

4.4. EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS: CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

4.4.1 Reliability

The thirty five items related to causes of absenteeism described in section 4.3 were tested from the questionnaire results that came out of the survey using an exploratory factor analysis. The factor analysis is a type of statistical analysis that assists with understanding how the variables that are being studied form patterns or structures; that is, all the questions in a questionnaire will end up being grouped into a meaningful, interpretable and manageable set of factors (Sekaran, 2016). The exploratory factor analysis was conducted in an effort to summarise the factors which affect absenteeism into structured and more manageable components. The factor analysis was initiated by using the Cronbach's Alpha to test for internal consistency. The results of this test are shown in table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Cronbach's Alpha results of the overall absenteeism questionnaire

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.946	35

The high Cronbach's alpha results of the overall absenteeism measuring instrument suggest that the instrument has good internal consistency and it is reliable because it exceeded the recommended value of 0.7 (Pallant, 2016). The questionnaire is therefore reliable to be used for the purpose of this study.

Two parts of the survey instrument were analysed separately to reduce the number of factors in each case. The first of these tested the causes of absenteeism, whilst the second considered the interventions to reduce absenteeism.

4.4.2 The KMO and Bartlett's Test

The factorability of the data was assessed by making use of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. In other words the validity of the factor analysis was justified using the KMO index of sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant ($p<0.05$) for the factor analysis to be considered as appropriate. The KMO index ranges from 0 to 1 with 0.6 suggested as the minimum value for a good factor analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

Table 4.11: KMO & Bartlett's test results

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.930
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6846.062
	Df	595
	Sig.	0.000

The Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated these results ($p=0.000$, $p<0.05$). The data is therefore appropriate for factor analysis. The minimum index level KMO = 0.93. The KMO is above 0.6 thereby indicating that the factor analysis was appropriate. Both the results of the KMO and Bartlett's tests conformed to the recommended results in order to support the factorability of the correlation matrix.

4.4.3 Determination of components

The 35 items of absenteeism were subjected to an extraction method called the principal axis factoring (PCA) whereby all the original variables/items were transformed into small linear combinations, with all the variance in the variables being used (Pallant, 2016). The results are shown in table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12: Initial factor analysis – total variance explained

Total Variance Explained									
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**12.991**	37.117	37.117	12.603	36.009	36.009	5.206	14.874	14.874
2	**2.765**	7.900	45.017	2.340	6.686	42.696	3.816	10.903	25.777
3	**2.551**	7.289	52.306	2.207	6.305	49.001	3.299	9.426	35.203
4	**1.627**	4.648	56.953	1.256	3.590	52.590	2.964	8.467	43.670
5	**1.276**	3.647	60.600	0.809	2.312	54.903	2.451	7.004	50.673
6	**1.215**	3.471	64.071	0.717	2.050	56.952	1.479	4.227	54.900
7	**1.011**	2.889	**66.960**	0.575	1.642	58.594	1.293	3.694	**58.594**
8	0.857	2.450	69.410						
9	0.813	2.324	71.734						
10	0.804	2.296	74.030						
11	0.759	2.168	76.198						
12	0.711	2.031	78.229						
13	0.605	1.728	79.957						
14	0.592	1.690	81.647						
15	0.528	1.508	83.155						
16	0.510	1.458	84.613						
17	0.474	1.353	85.966						
18	0.409	1.168	87.134						
19	0.404	1.155	88.289						
20	0.381	1.088	89.376						
21	0.367	1.049	90.425						
22	0.342	0.978	91.404						
23	0.318	0.907	92.311						
24	0.304	0.869	93.180						
25	0.294	0.840	94.020						
26	0.269	0.768	94.788						
27	0.254	0.727	95.515						
28	0.243	0.696	96.210						
29	0.235	0.671	96.881						
30	0.216	0.616	97.497						
31	0.209	0.597	98.094						
32	0.201	0.576	98.670						
33	0.175	0.501	99.171						
34	0.160	0.457	99.628						
35	0.130	0.372	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

The PCA revealed the presence of seven components with eigenvalues above 1, explaining 37.1%, 8%, 7.3%, 4.6%, 3.6%, 3.4% and 2.9% of the variance respectively, as indicated in table 3.4 above. According to the table, the first seven components which have eigenvalues above one explain a total of 66.96% of the variance in causes of absenteeism.

4.4.4 Determination of factors (factor rotation and interpretation)

The scree plot indicated that there was a clear break after the seventh component. In conformity with the Catell's scree test approach and principles (Cattell, 1966), it was decided that the seven component solution would be used for further investigation. The factors were rotated using the varimax method with Kaiser normalisation in order to retain them and the items converged into seven factors, as indicated in table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation results

Rotated Factor Matrix[a]							
	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B32	**0.810**						
B33	**0.795**						
B36	**0.769**	0.250					
B34	**0.741**						
B31	**0.739**						0.255
B30	**0.727**						
B35	**0.723**						
B19		**0.688**			0.311		
B20		**0.680**		0.285			
B22	0.313	**0.625**					
B21	0.261	**0.601**					
B18		**0.565**			0.280		
B17		**0.484**		0.380		0.288	
B23	0.315	**0.474**		0.414			
B24		**0.473**		0.384			
B3			**0.715**				
B4			**0.705**				
B5			**0.665**				
B1			**0.610**				
B2			**0.607**				
B7			**0.541**		0.300		

B13	0.278		**0.415**		0.338		0.263
B26		0.265		**0.791**			
B27				**0.732**			
B25				**0.709**			
B15		0.268			**0.789**		
B16		0.345			**0.586**		
B14			0.265	0.257	**0.537**		
B12	0.314	0.305			**0.470**	0.273	
B9						**0.573**	
B10				0.354		**0.568**	
B6						**0.389**	
B8						**0.309**	
B28		0.278		0.271			**0.592**
B29	0.271			0.288			**0.552**

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.[a]

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Although only two items (B28 and B29) loaded onto the final factor, these were retained as they were separate sections within the survey instrument and could thus be explained as a contained factor. The factor rotation produced seven factors which were interpreted or categorised as follows:

1. External factors
2. Management factors
3. Illness and family responsibility
4. Personal development
5. Working conditions
6. Motivation
7. Interpersonal relations

The seven factors' data was further assessed by making use of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity again and revealed the results shown in table 4.14 below.

Table 4.14: KMO and Bartlett's Test results on the seven factors of absenteeism

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.869
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	918.159
	Df	21
	Sig.	0.000

The Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated these results ($p=0.000$, $p<0.05$). The data is therefore appropriate for factor analysis. The minimum index level KMO = 0.87. The KMO is above 0.6 thereby indicating that the factor analysis was appropriate. The results comply with recommendations required to support the factorability of the correlation matrix.

4.4.5 Correlation matrix – Seven factors of absenteeism

The measure of sampling adequacy test was conducted on the factors and the results are shown in table 4.15 as follows:

Table 4.15: Correlation matrix results of the seven factors of absenteeism

Anti-image Matrices							
Anti-image Correlation							
	External factors	Management factors	Illness & family responsibility	Personal development	Working conditions	Motivation	Interpersonal relations
External factors	.917[a]	-0.249	-0.136	-0.019	-0.051	-0.049	-0.183
Management factors	-0.249	.824[a]	-0.041	-0.413	-0.406	-0.093	-0.167
Illness & family responsibility	-0.136	-0.041	.885[a]	0.018	-0.300	-0.163	0.002
Personal development	-0.019	-0.413	0.018	.831[a]	0.127	-0.193	-0.185
Working conditions	-0.051	-0.406	-0.300	0.127	.838[a]	-0.139	-0.176
Motivation	-0.049	-0.093	-0.163	-0.193	-0.139	.924[a]	-0.028
Interpersonal relations	-0.183	-0.167	0.002	-0.185	-0.176	-0.028	.916[a]
a. Measures of Sampling Adequacy(MSA)							

The correlation matrix of the seven factors indicates their strength in relation to each other. Table 3.8 results indicated that all seven factors are adequate and therefore reasonable to use.

4.4.6 Communalities

The communalities were extracted using principal axis factoring and the results are shown in table 4.16 as follows:

Table 4.16: Communalities of the seven factors of absenteeism

Communalities		
Factor	Initial	Extraction
F1	0.399	0.441
F2	0.674	0.773
F3	0.346	0.336
F4	0.455	0.418
F5	0.565	0.587
F6	0.343	0.378
F7	0.429	0.473
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.		

The results indicate that the values of the components were all above 0.3 indicating that all the items fit well with other items in the components.

4.4.7 Total variance explained

After the seven factors were established a further extraction was conducted using the principal axis factoring. Components with an eigenvalue of one or more were checked. The results indicated that factor 1 was the only factor with an eigenvalue that exceeded 1 and it explained the total of 56% of the variance on causes of absenteeism.

Table 4.17: Second factor analysis – total variance explained

Total Variance Explained						
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**3.887**	55.529	**55.529**	3.406	48.658	48.658
2	0.790	11.287	66.816			
3	0.661	9.441	76.257			
4	0.517	7.390	83.647			
5	0.484	6.911	90.558			
6	0.428	6.112	96.670			
7	0.233	3.330	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.						

The results of the exploratory factor analysis indicate that absenteeism is influenced by thirty five variables, which are represented by seven latent factors. The strong loading on component 1 reveals that there is one primary driver of the causes of absenteeism within the organisation. However the results of the factor analyses showed that there were seven factors that caused employees/respondents to be absent from work, that is, external factors, management factors, illness and family responsibilities, personal development, working conditions, motivation and interpersonal relations. This is supported by literature of factors affecting absenteeism (Dunn et al., 2016; Yousef, 2016; Elshout et al., 2013; Dale-Olsen, 2012). The results of the factor analyses are supported by the findings of some open ended questions that cited family responsibility and child care, personal illness/sickness, personal time to fix personal issues as some of the three most dominant reasons why respondents become absent from work. This indicates a convergence on the factors of absenteeism between absenteeism literature and personal opinions from the participants.

4.4.8 Reliability of results

Reliability is defined as the extent to which the data collection technique or analysis procedure will yield consistent results or findings (Saunders et al., 2015). The reliability of the survey instrument's internal consistency was assessed by utilising the Cronbach's alpha. Reliabilities less than 0.60 are considered to be poor, those in the 0.70 range are considered

acceptable and those above 0.80 are regarded as good (Sekaran, 2010). All the seven factors were tested for reliability and the results are shown in table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Cronbach's Alpha results for the factors of absenteeism

No	Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
1	External factors	0.93	7
2	Management factors	0.91	8
3	Illness and family responsibility	0.84	7
4	Personal development	0.88	3
5	Working conditions	0.84	4
6	Motivation	0.62	6
7	Interpersonal relations	0.75	2

The Cronbach's Alpha results of all the seven factors were considered as acceptable although the value of the motivation factor was low (0.62) but it is still considered to be acceptable. This suggests that the seven factors of absenteeism have good internal consistency.

4.5 COMPARISONS OF ABSENTEEISM FACTORS ACCORDING TO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

4.5.1 Age

The literature asserts that there are differences in absenteeism patterns, dependent on the age of the employee (Magee et al., 2016; Aluko 2015). As a result, tests were conducted to determine whether there were any differences in the reasons for absenteeism, as experienced by younger and older respondents. To determine the differences, respondents were divided into those 35 years and younger, and those over 35 years. A test for normality was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics test because the group size of the participants was larger than 50 (Pallant, 2007). The results indicate that the p-value scores were all ≤ 0.05, which implies that they were not normally distributed. Consequently, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the difference between the two independent groups (that is those below 35 years old and those above 35 years old) by comparing the medians of the two groups in terms of the factors that affect absenteeism (Pallant, 2007). These are shown, together with the means, in table 4.19 (a) below.

Table 4.19 (a): Group statistics and ranks

Factor	Age group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
External factors	35 years or younger	183	2.30	0.971	175.87
	Older than 35 years	129	1.82	0.906	129.02
Management factors	35 years or younger	183	2.36	0.870	163.66
	Older than 35 years	129	2.20	0.966	146.34
Illness and family responsibility	35 years or younger	183	3.21	1.001	169.03
	Older than 35 years	129	2.88	0.944	138.72
Personal development	35 years or younger	183	3.10	1.223	161.85
	Older than 35 years	129	2.89	1.306	148.91
Working conditions	35 years or younger	183	2.38	1.033	163.09
	Older than 35 years	129	2.21	1.047	147.15
Motivation	35 years or younger	183	2.07	0.808	153.23
	Older than 35 years	129	2.13	0.800	161.14
Interpersonal relationships	35 years or younger	183	2.48	1.209	168.99
	Older than 35 years	129	2.05	0.937	138.78

Table 4.19 (b): Mann-Whitney U Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]				
Factors of absenteeism	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
External factors	8258.000	16643.000	-4.575	**0.000**
Management factors	10492.500	18877.500	-1.677	0.094
Illness and family responsibility	9510.500	17895.500	-2.926	**0.003**
Personal development	10824.500	19209.500	-1.254	0.210
Working conditions	10597.500	18982.500	-1.549	0.121
Motivation	11205.000	28041.000	-0.768	0.443
Interpersonal relationships	9517.500	17902.500	-2.964	**0.003**

The Mann-Whitney U test in table 4.19(b) revealed that when testing for differences in the causes of absenteeism, there were no significant differences between the younger and older respondents regarding management factors, personal development, working conditions and motivation, implying that these factors were not influenced by age. External factors, illness and family responsibilities and interpersonal relationships did however show significant differences between the groups. There is significant difference between younger and older respondents in the perception of external factors as a cause for absenteeism, that is, between the participants who are below 35 years old (Md = 2.29, n = 183) and participants older than 35 years (Md = 1.57, n = 129), U = 8258, z = -4.58, p = 0.000, r = 0.26). The effect size of

the difference is medium with mean rank being higher with the 35 years or younger group. The difference is likely to be attributable to older employees having more responsibilities and therefore greater commitment to their jobs (Senel & Senel, 2012). They are therefore more likely to come to work even if there are external factors that affect their ability to come to work.

There is a significant difference between the younger (Md=3.29, n=183) and older participants (Md=3.00, n=129), U=9510, z=-2.93, p=0.003, r=0.17) in terms of how they perceive illness and family responsibilities causing them to be absent from work. The younger participants generally scored it higher as a reason for absenteeism. The reason for the difference is likely to be attributable to the older employees having a better work ethic, such that they still come to work when they are sick unless it's a major illness, yet the younger participants may decide not to come to work over a small or short illness because they think they should not come to work if they are not feeling well (Singh & Chetty, 2016). It is also likely that younger respondents may have younger families and associated responsibilities may therefore be higher (Karlsson, 2013).

There is a significant difference in terms on interpersonal relationships as a cause of absenteeism between the younger participants (Md=2.5, n=183) and older participants (Md=2.0, n=129), U=9517, z =-2.96, p=0.003, r=0.16). The effect size of the difference is small but significant as shown by the mean rank that is higher in the younger group. It is likely that the younger group can still be settling into their work settings and if they don't have good relationships with their colleagues or supervisors, it can negatively affect their intentions to attend work. On the other hand, the older employees who are more mature, married and used to dealing with different people and have different relationships with people still tend to come to work even if they have a negative working relationship with other employees (Bii, 2016).In conclusion, considering the seven factors of absenteeism, there was significant difference between the two different age groups in relation to three factors, that is, external factors, illness and family responsibility and interpersonal relationships. The mean and median scores of the younger participants were generally higher than the older participants.

4.5.2 Qualifications

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used to test for normality on the distribution of the scores with regard to the factors of absenteeism in relation to the qualification levels of the participants. The results show that all the scores were not normally distributed except for two specific factors, that is, management factors and illness and family responsibility. The p-values of participants with matric and below in relation to management factors were 0.2 and the p-values for participants with a degree or higher in relation to illness and family responsibility also indicate that it was normally distributed (p=0.183). These results are shown in table 4.20(a) below.

Table 4.20 (a) Group statistics and rank

Factors of absenteeism	Qualifications	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
External factors	Matric and below	124	2.35	1.003	177.83
	Trade Certificate / Diploma	116	2.18	0.919	166.78
	Degree or higher	72	1.55	0.774	103.20
	Total	312	2.10	0.972	
Management factors	Matric and below	124	2.49	0.859	175.39
	Trade Certificate / Diploma	116	2.33	0.892	161.12
	Degree or higher	72	1.89	0.922	116.53
	Total	312	2.29	0.913	
Illness and family responsibility	Matric and below	124	3.31	0.901	176.85
	Trade Certificate / Diploma	116	3.14	0.976	161.61
	Degree or higher	72	2.58	0.995	113.22
	Total	312	3.08	0.990	
Personal development	Matric and below	124	3.16	1.092	165.88
	Trade Certificate / Diploma	116	3.17	1.314	167.33
	Degree or higher	72	2.52	1.330	122.91
	Total	312	3.01	1.260	
Working conditions	Matric and below	124	2.63	0.990	184.82
	Trade Certificate / Diploma	116	2.32	1.041	156.63
	Degree or higher	72	1.76	0.898	107.51
	Total	312	2.31	1.041	
Motivation	Matric and below	124	2.19	0.783	167.03
	Trade Certificate / Diploma	116	2.13	0.840	159.68
	Degree or higher	72	1.89	0.755	133.24
	Total	312	2.10	0.804	
Interpersonal relationships	Matric and below	124	2.38	1.105	163.49

	Trade Certificate / Diploma	116	2.48	1.178	169.92
	Degree or higher	72	1.88	0.962	122.83
	Total	312	2.30	1.124	

Table 4.20 (b): Kruskal-Wallis Test statistics

Test Statistics[a,b]			
Factor	**Kruskal-Wallis H**	**Df**	**Asymp. Sig.**
External factors	34.416	2	**0.000**
Management factors	20.013	2	**0.000**
Illness and family responsibility	23.309	2	**0.000**
Personal development	13.119	2	**0.001**
Working conditions	33.982	2	**0.000**
Motivation	6.707	2	**0.035**
Interpersonal relations	13.811	2	**0.001**
a. Kruskal Wallis Test			
b. Grouping Variable: Qualifications			

The Kruskal-Wallis test allows the comparison of scores on some continuous variable for three or more groups, the scores are converted to ranks and the mean rank for each group is compared (Pallant, 2016). Most of the variables were not normally distributed; hence the test was used. The test results in table 4.20(b) revealed that qualification has an effect on all the factors of absenteeism. It is clear that there is a statistically significant difference across the different educational categories (matric and below, trade certificate/diploma and degree or higher) with regard to all the seven factors of absenteeism. Qualifications have an impact on how the participants scored on the factors of absenteeism because all their scores had a p-value = ≤ 0.05. The degree and higher group has the lowest mean rank scores on all the factors in relation to the educational groups. The matric and below group and the trade certificate group generally think similarly in terms of the factors of absenteeism except for working conditions. In other words, the degreed and higher group thinks differently from the rest of the groups when it comes to the factors of absenteeism. This might be because the degreed group of participants are in better jobs in terms of the hierarchy and with better satisfaction and involvement in their jobs compared to employees who are not degreed who will be on the lower level jobs within the organisation (Singh & Chetty, 2016). As a result

they have different organisational challenges and other factors that affect them; hence explaining the difference in perceptions on the factors of absenteeism.

4.5.3 Marital Status

To test for differences between the participants in relation to the marital status, the respondents were categorised into those who are single/divorced and those who are married/living with a partner. The test for normality was then conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and the p-values of participants who are single or divorced and indicated that their scores were normally distributed in relation to illness and family responsibility (p=0.200). The rest of the factors' scores in relation to marital status were not normally distributed for either those participants who are single/divorced and married/living with a partner. Most of the data was not normally distributed, hence it was decided to use a parametric test because it is robust and the fact that it can be used if there is no normality on the scores, particularly if the group sizes are almost similar and the sample is large enough. An independent samples T-test is used when comparing the mean score on a continuous variable for two different groups of subjects (Pallant, 2016). The two independent groups that were tested are single/divorced and married/living with a partner.

Table 4.21 (a): Group statistics and rank

Group Statistics					
Factor of absenteeism	**Marital status**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean Rank**
External factors	Single / Divorced	142	2.28	1.006	172.15
	Married / Living with partner	170	1.96	0.920	143.42
Management factors	Single / Divorced	142	2.31	0.835	159.29
	Married / Living with partner	170	2.27	0.976	154.17
Illness and family responsibilities	Single / Divorced	142	3.15	0.990	163.02
	Married / Living with partner	170	3.01	0.988	151.05
Personal development	Single / Divorced	142	2.94	1.184	149.65
	Married / Living with partner	170	3.08	1.320	162.22
Working conditions	Single / Divorced	142	2.46	1.049	168.28
	Married / Living with partner	170	2.19	1.021	146.66
Motivation	Single / Divorced	142	1.99	0.841	142.14
	Married / Living with partner	170	2.19	0.764	168.50
Interpersonal relations	Single / Divorced	142	2.49	1.185	170.90
	Married / Living with partner	170	2.14	1.047	144.47

Table 4.21 (b): Levene's Independent sample test

Factors	Variance	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
External factors	Equal variances assumed	2.001	0.158	2.999	310	**0.003**	0.327
	Equal variances not assumed			2.975	289.107	0.003	0.327
Management factors	Equal variances assumed	5.382	0.021	0.382	310	0.703	0.040
	Equal variances not assumed			0.387	309.816	0.699	0.040
Illness and family responsibility	Equal variances assumed	0.001	0.974	1.233	310	0.219	0.139
	Equal variances not assumed			1.233	300.027	0.219	0.139
Personal development	Equal variances assumed	3.844	0.051	-0.944	310	0.346	-0.135
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.953	308.410	0.341	-0.135
Working conditions	Equal variances assumed	0.010	0.920	2.240	310	**0.026**	0.263
	Equal variances not assumed			2.235	297.118	0.026	0.263
Motivation	Equal variances assumed	0.157	0.692	-2.135	310	**0.034**	-0.194
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.117	288.113	0.035	-0.194
Interpersonal relations	Equal variances assumed	4.791	0.029	2.760	310	0.006	0.349
	Equal variances not assumed			2.729	284.050	**0.007**	0.349

The independent test results in table 4.21(b) demonstrated that there is a significant difference between single/divorce and married/living with a partner with regard to factors of absenteeism, that's external factors, working conditions, motivation and interpersonal relations. To expand further on each of those factors it is highlighted that there is a significant difference between the single/divorced group (M=2.28, SD=1.0) and married/living with a partner (M=1.96, SD=0.92); t(312)=2.99, df=310; p=0.003 (two-tailed) in terms of external factors as a cause for absenteeism. The external factors such as transport issues and unreliable car sharing arrangements can affect single/divorced people more because they might not have a partner to rely on and assist when they are faced with such external factors than those who are married or with a partner. The results also revealed that there is a significant difference between the single/divorced group (M=2.46, SD=1.0) and married/living with a partner (M=2.19, SD=1.0); t(312)=2.24, df=310; p=0.026 (two-tailed) in terms of working conditions as a cause of absenteeism. The participants who are single/divorced are more likely to be

affected by working conditions and can respond by not attending work, whereas those participants who are married/living with a partner are likely to have dependents and thus more responsibilities and, as a result, they are forced by those responsibilities or circumstances to continue coming to work (Aluko, 2015).

Thirdly, there is a significant difference in scores between the single/divorced group (M=1.99, SD=1.0) and married/living with a partner (M=2.19, SD=0.84); t(312)=2.14, df=310; p=0.034 (two-tailed) in terms of motivation factor as a cause of absenteeism. The difference can be explained by assuming that if the participants who are single/divorced are not motivated, it is easier for them to decide not to come to work whereas those who are married are more careful and consider the consequences of such a decision from the company and how it affects their families. Interpersonal relationships results as a factor of absenteeism also indicated that there is a significant difference between the two groups in terms of their perception, that is, the single/divorced group (M=2.49 , SD=1.3) and married/living with a partner (M=2.14 , SD=0.92); t(312)=2.72, df=284; p=0.007 (two-tailed). Participants who are married/staying with a partner, can still come to work even if there are negative interpersonal relationships between them and their supervisors or colleagues because they can still encourage and influence them to come to work even when they do not feel like it. In other words marriage or living with a partner imposes increased responsibilities that make a job more valuable and important, making it less likely for married people or those living with partners to miss work even if they have other factors that will be negatively affecting their intentions to come to work (Bii, 2016). Yet single/divorced people may not have that pressure to come to work and regard interpersonal relations as an important part of the working culture and it therefore affects their attendance to work. Generally, single/divorced participants have fewer push factors that force them to come to work than participants who are married or living with a partner, that is, their household contexts and influencers of absenteeism are different (Possenriede, 2011).

4.5.4 Number of dependents

Literature on family and marital status indicate that the number of dependents that an employee has usually influences their attendance or absenteeism in that single employees without dependents are more likely to be at work compared to those with many dependents

(Posseride, 2011). Langenhoff (2011) corroborated that view by stating that there is a negative correlation between absenteeism and family size. In order to ascertain the difference in terms of number of dependents, the respondents were divided into two categories, that is, between participants with one or less dependents and those with more than one dependent. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to test the variables for normality in terms of the distribution of the scores and it was established that all the scores for participants with more than two dependents reflected that they were not normally distributed. The scores of the participants who have one or less dependents showed that the majority of the scores were not normally distributed except for when it relates to illness and family responsibility which has a p-value of 0.191. The Mann-Whitney U test was subsequently utilised because the group sizes are different from each other and they are not normally distributed. The results of the tests are shown below.

Table 4.22 (a): Group statistics and rank

Group Statistics					
Factor	**No of dependents**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean Rank**
External factors	One or less	112	2.15	1.068	158.37
	Two or more	200	2.08	0.916	155.46
Management factors	One or less	112	2.16	0.867	145.37
	Two or more	200	2.36	0.933	162.73
Illness and family responsibility	One or less	112	2.95	1.044	146.32
	Two or more	200	3.15	0.953	162.20
Personal development	One or less	112	2.84	1.261	143.54
	Two or more	200	3.11	1.252	163.76
Working conditions	One or less	112	2.28	1.109	153.89
	Two or more	200	2.33	1.003	157.96
Motivation	One or less	112	1.93	0.759	138.40
	Two or more	200	2.19	0.816	166.64
Interpersonal relations	One or less	112	2.26	1.180	152.27
	Two or more	200	2.33	1.093	158.87

Table 4.22 (b): Mann-Whitney U Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]				
Factor	**Mann-Whitney U**	**Wilcoxon W**	**Z**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)**
External factors	10991.000	31091.000	-0.277	0.782
Management factors	9953.500	16281.500	-1.637	0.102
Illness and family responsibility	10060.000	16388.000	-1.493	0.135
Personal development	9749.000	16077.000	-1.908	0.056
Working conditions	10907.500	17235.500	-0.386	0.700
Motivation	9172.500	15500.500	-2.669	**0.008**
Interpersonal relations	10726.500	17054.500	-0.630	0.529
a. Grouping Variable: No of dependents				

The results in table 4.22 (b) indicate that the motivation cause is the only factor that showed that there was a significant difference between the participants who had one or less dependents (Md=2.0, n=112) and participants who had more than one dependent (Md=2.0, n=200), U=9172, z=-2.669, p=0.008). The mean rank scores for the participants with two dependents or more had higher scores (166.64) compared to the participants who had one or no dependent (138.40) and there is a marked difference between the mean ranks. Participants with more dependents are motivated to come to work because they have more responsibilities and more financial obligations to look after their families than those who have one or no dependent and are not too scared to lose their jobs as a result of absenteeism. This is in line with literature which states that there is a negative relationship between absenteeism and family size or family responsibilities (Akgeyik, 2014).

4.5.5 Organisational tenure

Organisational tenure affects absenteeism within an organisation and the extent of absenteeism is significantly related to the number of years the employee has been with the company (Lattouf et al., 2014). The participants were divided into three categories relative to the organisational tenure, that is, those who have been with the organisation between 0-5 years, 5-20 years and lastly more than 20 years. Thereafter, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov U test was administered, it revealed that the p-values of participants who have been with the company for 5 to 20 years was 0.2, indicating a normal distribution of scores in relation to the illness and family responsibility as a cause of absenteeism. The rest of the organisational tenure categories in relation to the factors of absenteeism were not normally distributed. The

Kruskal-Wallis test was combined with the Mann-Whitney test in order to display and establish if there were significant differences among the categories of the respondents in relation to the factors of absenteeism and the following results were revealed.

Table 4.23 (a): Test descriptives and rank

Descriptives					
Factor	**Years of service with the company**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean Rank**
External factors	0-5 years	138	2.39	1.009	182.21
	5-20 years	108	1.93	0.844	142.62
	More than 20 years	66	1.80	0.943	125.46
	Total	312	2.10	0.972	
Management factors	0-5 years	138	2.40	0.919	165.61
	5-20 years	108	2.31	0.844	161.02
	More than 20 years	66	2.04	0.974	130.05
	Total	312	2.29	0.913	
Illness and family responsibility	0-5 years	138	3.20	1.039	168.70
	5-20 years	108	3.15	0.937	162.43
	More than 20 years	66	2.69	0.880	121.30
	Total	312	3.08	0.990	
Personal development	0-5 years	138	3.11	1.210	161.68
	5-20 years	108	3.08	1.290	162.10
	More than 20 years	66	2.71	1.285	136.50
	Total	312	3.01	1.260	
Working conditions	0-5 years	138	2.47	1.066	169.43
	5-20 years	108	2.26	0.976	153.12
	More than 20 years	66	2.07	1.048	134.98
	Total	312	2.31	1.041	
Motivation	0-5 years	138	2.05	0.827	149.74
	5-20 years	108	2.25	0.803	174.28
	More than 20 years	66	1.94	0.723	141.55
	Total	312	2.10	0.804	
Interpersonal relations	0-5 years	138	2.55	1.278	172.73
	5-20 years	108	2.31	0.983	160.17
	More than 20 years	66	1.78	0.775	116.56
	Total	312	2.30	1.124	

Table 4.23 (b): Kruskal-Wallis Test statistics

Test Statistics[a,b]			
Factors	**Kruskal-Wallis H**	**df**	**Asymp. Sig.**
External factors	22.117	2	**0.000**
Management factors	7.408	2	**0.025**
Illness and family responsibility	13.071	2	**0.001**
Personal development	4.156	2	0.125
Working conditions	6.848	2	**0.033**
Motivation	6.872	2	**0.032**
Interpersonal relations	18.203	2	**0.000**
a. Kruskal Wallis Test			
b. Grouping Variable: Years of service with the company			

The Kruskal-Wallis test results in table 4.23 (b) indicate that there were statistical differences on all the factors of absenteeism in relation to the different categories of organisational tenure except for the personal development factor (which had a p-value of p=0.125; therefore p=≥0.05) as a cause for absenteeism. This is aligned with some of the literature on absenteeism that relates to organisation tenure which outlines that absenteeism is significantly related to the number of years that the employee has been with the company (Lattouf et al., 2014; Singh & Chetty, 2016). The results also indicated that the participants with years of services within the 0-5 years category had the highest mean rank scores on five of the factors, namely external factors, management factors, illness and family responsibility, working conditions, and interpersonal relations. Personal development and motivation were the only two factors which the category of participants who have been with company between 5-20 years had the highest mean ranks. However, from all the factors, the category of participants who have been with the company for more than 20 years had the lowest mean ranks on all the seven factors. In addition, when an analysis of the median and mean scores was conducted in relation to the factors of absenteeism, it can be observed that the scores of the participants between 0-5 years and 5-20 years within the organisation's scores are closer to each other than the participants who have been with the company for more than 20 years.

There is a clear difference in perceptions between these groups. The reason for the difference can be because participants who have been with the company for more than 20 years have

established themselves and are now secure within the company (Aluko, 2015). As a result, most of the reasons for absenteeism no longer relate to them, for example, people who have been with the organisation the longest select lack of recognition and or advancement opportunities as the main causes of absenteeism than all other categories such as illness of the child, poor working conditions (Sichani et al, 2011). The employees who have the longest organisational tenure might be enjoying good relationships with the management and supervision that is, increasing organisational tenure is a result of employees being increasingly familiar with organisational culture, norms and goals and have acquired social acceptance and relationships within that organisation (Steffens et al., 2014). In addition employees who have been with the organisation for a longer period have developed loyalty to the organisation and it increased over time and could result in decreased absenteeism (Aluko, 2015). The more they remain in the organisation the more they commit, irrespective of the stressful circumstances they experience (Asrar et al, 2017).

4.5.6 Current job level (between management and non-management)

The current job levels were analyzed in order to assess how they affect absenteeism within the organisation. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test normality in terms of the distribution of the scores because the groups of variables were more than 50 between management and non-management. The p-values on all the factors were $p = \leq 0.05$. The respondents were divided between management and non-management employees in order to assess if there would be differences in terms of their responses. The Mann-Whitney U test was then applied to test the differences between the two groups of respondents.

Table 4.24 (a): Group statistics and rank

Group Statistics						
Factors	**Current job level**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	Mean Rank
External factors	Management	86	1.70	0.899	0.097	117.64
	Non-Managerial	226	2.26	0.956	0.064	171.29
Management factors	Management	86	1.97	0.874	0.094	125.35
	Non-Managerial	226	2.41	0.900	0.060	168.35
Illness and family responsibilities	Management	86	2.67	0.961	0.104	120.30
	Non-Managerial	226	3.23	0.958	0.064	170.27
Personal development	Management	86	2.73	1.244	0.134	137.61

	Non-Managerial	226	3.12	1.252	0.083	163.69
Working conditions	Management	86	1.86	0.861	0.093	117.26
	Non-Managerial	226	2.48	1.053	0.070	171.43
Motivation	Management	86	2.03	0.765	0.083	150.81
	Non-Managerial	226	2.12	0.819	0.054	158.67
Interpersonal relations	Management	86	1.91	0.916	0.099	126.38
	Non-Managerial	226	2.45	1.160	0.077	167.96

Table 4.24 (b): Mann-Whitney U Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]				
Factors	**Mann-Whitney U**	**Wilcoxon W**	**Z**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)**
External factors	6376.000	10117.000	-4.752	**0.000**
Management factors	7039.000	10780.000	-3.776	**0.000**
Illness and family responsibilities	6605.000	10346.000	-4.377	**0.000**
Personal development	8093.500	11834.500	-2.293	**0.022**
Working conditions	6343.000	10084.000	-4.777	**0.000**
Motivation	9228.500	12969.500	-0.692	0.489
Interpersonal relations	7128.000	10869.000	-3.701	**0.000**

When testing for differences, the Mann-Whitney U test results in table 4.24 (b) indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between management and non-management participants in terms of how they perceive all the factors of absenteeism except for the motivation factor. This view is supported by Belita et al (2013) who outlined that absenteeism and factors of absenteeism are usually associated with hierarchical levels within the organisation, that is, between management and non-managerial employees. The factors which showed significant differences between management and non-management respondents are external factors, management factors, illness and family responsibilities, personal development, working conditions and personal relations because they all had a p-value of ≤0.05 (2-tailed). The mean rank scores and mean scores for the participants who are in non-managerial positions were all higher than participants in management positions on all the factors of absenteeism. In addition, the median scores on non-managerial employees were generally higher than those of managerial employees except for two factors when the median scores were similar (3.0), that is, personal development and motivation factors as causes of absenteeism.

There is a general trend that management thinks significantly different from the non-management employees in terms of the extent of the cause of absenteeism. Part of the reasons for the significant differences are that management represents the organisation and are usually at the forefront of making absence procedures that work, trying to improve the working environment, external factors, management factors and all other factors that negatively affect employees' ability to attend work and reduce absenteeism levels within the organisation (Torrington et al., 2014). The overview of absenteeism within an organisation reflects the competencies of managers within the scope of good absenteeism management and it is their responsibility to manage absenteeism in a structured and holistic approach (Koziol et al, 2016). On the other hand non-managerial employees will come to work to deliver a service and if they do not feel comfortable to come to work due to various reasons, it is easier for them to decide to be absent from work because their perceptions and values are different from that of management employees. It is then possible that because they are on different ends of the organisational structures, their views will differ significantly with non-managerial employees on a variety of issues (Belita et al., 2013).

4.5.7 Current Job level (between senior/middle management and junior management)

A further test was instituted to determine if there are differences in perceptions within the management category of respondents on how they perceive causes of absenteeism. The test was conducted in order to see if there is a distinction in how senior/middle management and junior management view or think are the causes of absenteeism The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test if the scores were normally distributed between the two groups of participants (senior/middle management and junior management) in relation to the factors of absenteeism. The test results revealed that there was not a normal distribution of the scores between the two groups of management in relation to the factors of absenteeism except for illness and family responsibility. The p-value of senior management/middle managers and junior managers was 0.073 and 0.099 respectively in relation to the factor, that is, p-value = ≥ 0.05.

Table 4.25(a): Group statistics and rank

Group Statistics					
Factors	**Current job level**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean Rank**
External factors	Senior/Middle Management	43	1.67	0.922	41.33
	Junior Management	43	1.72	0.886	45.67
Management factors	Senior/Middle Management	43	1.88	0.937	39.85
	Junior Management	43	2.07	0.806	47.15
Illness and family responsibilities	Senior/Middle Management	43	2.47	1.000	38.08
	Junior Management	43	2.87	0.887	48.92
Personal development	Senior/Middle Management	43	2.29	1.239	34.69
	Junior Management	43	3.17	1.097	52.31
Working conditions	Senior/Middle Management	43	1.73	0.727	40.41
	Junior Management	43	1.99	0.970	46.59
Motivation	Senior/Middle Management	43	1.95	0.803	41.08
	Junior Management	43	2.11	0.726	45.92
Interpersonal relations	Senior/Middle Management	43	1.91	0.908	43.58
	Junior Management	43	1.91	0.934	43.42

Table 4.25 (b): Mann-Whitney U Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]				
Factor	**Mann-Whitney U**	**Wilcoxon W**	**Z**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)**
External factors	831.000	1777.000	-0.850	0.396
Management factors	767.500	1713.500	-1.374	0.169
Illness and family responsibilities	691.500	1637.500	-2.017	**0.044**
Personal development	545.500	1491.500	-3.301	**0.001**
Working conditions	791.500	1737.500	-1.179	0.238
Motivation	820.500	1766.500	-0.907	0.364
Interpersonal relations	921.000	1867.000	-0.031	0.975

Another Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted (see table 4.24(b)) in order to assess if there are significant differences in terms of the two groups' perceptions of the seven factors of absenteeism within the managerial category. The results revealed that generally there is no significant difference between senior/middle management and junior management on most of the absenteeism factors except for illness and family responsibility and personal development

factors as causes of absenteeism. The median scores of senior/middle management of 2.4 and junior management (3.0) indicate that the senior/middle management was more towards disagreeing with the illness and family responsibility as a factor that causes absenteeism within the organisation whereas the junior management participants were indifferent or neutral about the reason as cause of absenteeism.

Part of the reason for the difference may be that junior managers are responsible for the actual absenteeism management within the organisation and are more close to the people that report to them and request for absenteeism permission. As a result, they understand the reasons why employees will be absent from work though they can personally disagree with the reasons. This notion has been was well articulated by Townsend and Dundon (2015) when they indicated that supervisors or first line managers s are more closely involved with their employees and they are best placed to monitor and deal with the attendance of employees who report to them, they know them personally and see them on a regular basis whereas senior managers are more detached from the shop floor and are committed to providing executive level attendance management and achieving good attendance targets and other forms of support to encourage attendance.

In relation to the personal development factor as a cause of absenteeism, management disagreed with the reason as indicated by their median score result of 2.0 while the junior managers had the median score of 3.3. This indicates that the junior managers are neutral about the reason that the lack of development opportunities can negatively affect them in terms of work attendance and understandably so because at AMSA, for a junior manager to be promoted to a middle manager, the employee must have a degree and some work experience. If the junior manager does not have a degree, then he/she can feel stagnant or having reached a career or glass ceiling and this can be demotivating or frustrating, resulting in employees being absent from work. Khoung and Chi (2017) said glass ceiling affects the employees' commitment towards the organisation negatively, decreases job satisfaction, increases absenteeism and intentions to leave the organisation. However, management does not agree with these reasons, possibly because they think the organisation offers good personal development opportunities and invests a lot in training and development of employees. Junior managers have to manage a range of issues including personal

development and coaching of employees which are often unseen by senior managers or business owners (Townsend & Dundon, 2015). Management spearhead such initiatives hence the unlikeliness of them to agree with lack of personal development opportunities as a factor for causing absenteeism.

4.5.8 Summary

The table below gives a summary of the comparisons of absenteeism factors that were tested in the study in relation to the demographic variables. The key areas of differences are highlighted.

Table 4.26: summary of comparisons of absenteeism factors according to demographic variables

Demographic variable	Factors of absenteeism - Test for normality & significant differences						
	External factors	Management factors	Illness & family responsibilities	Personal development	Working conditions	Motivation	Interpersonal relationships
Age (35 years or younger & older than 35 years	**0.000**		**0.003**				**0.003**
Qualifications (matric & below; trade certificate/ diploma; degree or higher)	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.001**	**0.000**	**0.035**	**0.001**
Marital status (single/ divorced & married/living with a partner	**0.003**		(**Yes for single/ divorced**) - 0.219		**0.026**	**0.035**	**0.007**
Number of dependents (one or less & two or more)			**(Yes for one or less dependents)** - 0.135			**0.008**	
Organisational tenure (0-5 years; 5-20 years; more than 20 years	**0.000**	**0.025**	**0.001**		**0.033**	**0.032**	**0.000**
Current job level (management & non-management	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.022**	**0.000**		**0.000**
Current job level (senior/middle management & junior management			**0.044**	**0.001**			

p≤ 0.05 = significant difference

4.6 INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE ABSENTEEISM

The descriptive statistics for absenteeism interventions were also obtained from the research results. This section will analyse descriptive statistics such as means, medians, modes and standard deviations that were obtained from absenteeism intervention responses obtained for possible adoption by management from the participants. The absenteeism interventions were drawn from a 5-point Likert-type scale with the following measure: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

Table 4.27(a): Measures of central tendency and dispersion

Statistics				
Absenteeism Interventions	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**
Initiate disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism	3.52	4.00	4	1.240
Absence notification procedure (employee to call the supervisor directly to notify his/her absence	4.08	4.00	4	0.986
Absence management (track absenteeism with reports, check patterns etc.)	3.92	4.00	4	1.018
Offer employee assistance programmes (e.g. counselling, professional support etc.)	4.01	4.00	4	1.005
Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs	4.10	4.00	5	0.977
Offer attendance incentives (e.g. bonus, time off & other rewards for good attendance)	4.26	5.00	5	1.048
Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedule & shift patterns	4.00	4.00	5	1.082
Improving the working environment	4.06	4.00	5	0.954
Creating a positive company culture	4.36	5.00	5	0.897

The results from the table 4.27(a) above indicate that none of the participants disagreed with the absenteeism interventions that can be adopted by the company in order to reduce absenteeism as reflected by the fact that all the mean, median and mode scores were above the three score on the Likert scale. The differences in perceptions with regard to the absenteeism interventions were differentiating mostly what the participants in various categories agreed with in terms of the adoption of the variables as a solution to curb absenteeism. The intervention variable "initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism" scored the lowest mean scores (3.52) and it is indicated as the least favoured intervention to reduce absenteeism within the organisation by the participants. This is not surprising taking into consideration that the intervention is punitive to employees. Although

the participants might understand the company's intentions for punishing employees who have excessive absenteeism, the intervention is still the least favoured. However, it is noted that the disciplinary action intervention still had a mode and median score of 4.0 thereby indicating that most of the participants agreed with the intervention being used to reduce absenteeism. The standard deviation for the variable was also high (1.2) showing that there was a relatively high variation on the responses although the dominant view was that the intervention could be utilised to reduce absenteeism. "Absence management" was also rated relatively lower (mean score of 3.92) than other interventions. The intervention involves management keeping track of absenteeism of participants by making use of reports and tracking absenteeism behaviour and patterns. It is understandable why participants would rate this intervention low, because generally employees do not like to be monitored or tracked, especially if the monitoring process will result in adverse consequences from management such as counselling and institution of disciplinary actions.

The most favoured three absenteeism interventions were creating a positive company culture, offering attendance incentives and offering company medical assistance, which had mean scores of 4.36; 4.26 and 4.10 respectively. The intervention of "creating a positive company culture" within the organisation had a median and mode score of 5.0. The majority of the participants feel that the current operating company culture is not conducive enough to motivate employees to attend work; hence it must be improved or changed. "Offering attendance incentives" intervention had a median score of 4.0 and a mode score of 5.0. This also demonstrates that majority of the respondents think that the company should offer those incentives for absenteeism to improve. When employees anticipate and get paid more money in the form of attendance bonuses or an additional cash lump sum, absenteeism improves, employees are happy and "nothing talks better than cold hard cash" for employees (Kocakulah et al., 2016). This narrative generally has been proven to work because compensation systems within the organisation influence absenteeism and absences are less when employees receive higher compensation (Torre et al., 2015; Pfeifer, 2010). As a result, it is understandable why participants would think that if they are compensated then the absenteeism level within the company would improve. Offering company assistance and wellness programs' high median score of 4.0 and mode score of 5.0 was surprising because the company has invested immensely in providing medical assistance by paying the 60% of the employees' medical aid, has an onsite medical clinic, offers medical assistance and

support on and off site services, such as psychologists when required, among other measures. However, the reason that can explain the mean score is that the participants still feel the company can do more and improve on what it currently provides especially in terms of wellness programs. For example, the company has gym and training facilities but there is no plan in place to fully utilise the facilities or opening it to interested employees. In addition, although the company has intentions to introduce wellness programs, the participants still feel there is much room for improvement, particularly with the younger employees. The standard deviation on most of the absenteeism interventions is 1.0 or close to 1.0 indicating a high variation in terms of the responses provided by the participants. In general, most of the participants agree/strongly agree that the company should adopt the interventions to reduce absenteeism and they relate to the resolutions.

4.7 EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS: INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE ABSENTEEISM

4.7 1 Test for reliability

The interventions for reducing absenteeism were tested for reliability and the following results were obtained, as shown in table 4.28 below.

Table 4.28: Cronbach's Alpha results of the absenteeism interventions

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.825	0.833	9

The statistical reliability results using the Cronbach's Alpha for interventions to reduce absenteeism was 0.83 (good) for nine items.

4.7.2 The KMO and Bartlett's Test

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were also used for factor analysis on the interventions to reduce absenteeism and the results were as shown in table 4.29

Table 4.29: KMO and Bartlett's Test results

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.830
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	996.640
	Df	36
	Sig.	0.000

The Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated these results ($p=0.000$, $p<0.05$). The data is therefore appropriate for factor analysis. The minimum index level KMO=0.83. The KMO is above 0.6 thereby indicating that the factor analysis was appropriate.

4.7.3 Correlation matrix

Table 4.30: Correlation matrix results

Anti-image Matrices									
Anti-image Correlation									
	C41	C42	C43	C44	C45	C46	C47	C48	C49
C41	.686[a]	-0.091	-0.488	-0.094	0.056	0.088	0.045	0.053	-0.029
C42	-0.091	.874[a]	-0.274	-0.109	-0.049	-0.088	-0.022	0.051	-0.251
C43	-0.488	-0.274	.766[a]	-0.146	-0.041	-0.098	-0.055	0.027	0.016
C44	-0.094	-0.109	-0.146	.839[a]	-0.458	0.022	0.046	-0.121	-0.077
C45	0.056	-0.049	-0.041	-0.458	.819[a]	-0.236	-0.192	-0.131	0.040
C46	0.088	-0.088	-0.098	0.022	-0.236	.888[a]	-0.002	-0.182	-0.154
C47	0.045	-0.022	-0.055	0.046	-0.192	-0.002	.881[a]	-0.228	-0.172
C48	0.053	0.051	0.027	-0.121	-0.131	-0.182	-0.228	.843[a]	-0.359
C49	-0.029	-0.251	0.016	-0.077	0.040	-0.154	-0.172	-0.359	.844[a]
a. Measures of Sampling Adequacy(MSA)									

The correlation matrix of the nine interventions that can be adopted by management to reduce absenteeism indicates their strength in relation to each other. Table 4.30 indicates that all the nine interventions are adequate to adopt and it is therefore reasonable so utilise and report on them because they are independent and different.

4.7.4 Communalities

The communalities for the interventions to reduce absenteeism were extracted using the Principal Axis Factoring and the results are as follows:

Table 4.31: Communalities results of absenteeism interventions

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
C41	0.361	0.485
C42	0.394	0.433
C43	0.485	0.710
C44	0.489	0.478
C45	0.517	0.516
C46	0.351	0.390
C47	0.311	0.347
C48	0.477	0.596
C49	0.464	0.494
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.		

The results indicate that the values of the components of interventions to reduce absenteeism were all above 0.3 indicating that all the interventions fit well with other items within the component.

4.7.5 Total variance explained

Table 4.32: Factor analysis – total variance explained

Total Variance Explained									
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	**3.925**	43.616	43.616	3.425	38.055	38.055	2.753	30.583	30.583
2	**1.478**	16.426	**60.042**	1.026	11.400	49.455	1.698	18.872	**49.455**
3	0.759	8.429	68.471						
4	0.676	7.512	75.983						
5	0.570	6.336	82.319						
6	0.544	6.042	88.361						
7	0.377	4.190	92.551						
8	0.354	3.932	96.483						
9	0.317	3.517	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.									

The nine items on interventions to reduce absenteeism were subjected to the principal axis factoring where the original items are transformed into smaller combinations. The components with an eigenvalue of 1 or more were also checked. The PCA results revealed that factor 1 and 2 were the only absenteeism interventions with an eigenvalue that exceeded 1 explaining 43.6% and 16.4% of the variance respectively as shown in table 4.32. Those two components explained the total of 60% of the variance on interventions that can reduce absenteeism within the organisation. The two components are initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism and absence notification procedures (employees to call the supervisor directly to notify his/her absence). This means that they are the two factors with the biggest variations in relation to absence intervention responses. The two components could explain the variance for the absenteeism interventions because they are predominantly management tools that are used to control employee attendance and absenteeism. Employees regard absence notifications which can result in disciplinary action taken against them as punitive, harmful and not necessarily leading to increased attendance (Bakar & Muhammed, 2013). On the other hand, management perceives absence notification procedures and instituting disciplinary action as important tools that enhance attendance by increasing the possibility of job loss among the employees (Sichani et al., 2011). These two contrasting views could explain why such a variance exists with regard to the factors.

4.8. COMPARISONS OF MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS ACCORDING TO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

The comparisons of the interventions that can be adopted to reduce absenteeism were done on all the nine elements instead of the two factors of absenteeism interventions. The reason is because all the elements of absenteeism interventions had a median or mode scores of either a four or five. This means that the majority of the respondents agreed with the absenteeism interventions as useful hence they were all worth to be considered for analysis. Below are the comparisons between demographic variables and the interventions for absenteeism reduction.

4.8.2 Age

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to assess if there is a significant difference between participants who are younger than 35 years and those who are older than 35 years in terms of their perceptions of the management interventions that can be adopted in order to reduce absenteeism within the company.

Table 4.33 (a): Group statistics and rank

Absenteeism Intervention	Age group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism	35 years or younger	183	3.40	1.241	147.63
	Older than 35 years	129	3.67	1.226	169.08
Absence notification procedure	35 years or younger	183	4.06	1.006	155.39
	Older than 35 years	129	4.10	0.959	158.08
Absence management	35 years or younger	183	3.88	1.004	151.42
	Older than 35 years	129	3.98	1.038	163.70
Offer employee assistance programmes	35 years or younger	183	4.04	1.010	159.75
	Older than 35 years	129	3.97	1.000	151.89
Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs	35 years or younger	183	4.24	0.924	170.03
	Older than 35 years	129	3.89	1.017	137.31
Offer attendance incentives	35 years or younger	183	4.39	0.953	167.23
	Older than 35 years	129	4.07	1.147	141.28
Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedules & shift patterns	35 years or younger	183	4.13	1.051	167.91
	Older than 35 years	129	3.81	1.102	140.32
Improving the working environment	35 years or younger	183	4.19	0.919	168.76
	Older than 35 years	129	3.88	0.976	139.10
Creating a positive company culture	35 years or younger	183	4.45	0.868	166.16
	Older than 35 years	129	4.24	0.925	142.79

Table 4.33 (b) Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]				
Absenteeism Interventions	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism	10181.000	27017.000	-2.134	**0.033**
Absence notification procedure	11599.500	28435.500	-0.279	0.780
Absence management	10874.500	27710.500	-1.258	0.208
Offer employee assistance programmes	11208.500	19593.500	-0.804	0.421
Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs	9328.000	17713.000	-3.366	**0.001**
Offer attendance incentives	9840.500	18225.500	-2.782	**0.005**
Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedules & shift patterns	9716.000	18101.000	-2.814	**0.005**
Improving the working environment	9559.500	17944.500	-3.039	**0.002**
Creating a positive company culture	10035.000	18420.000	-2.527	**0.012**
a. Grouping Variable: Age				

The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between participants who are 35 years and younger and those participants who are older than 35 years on six out of the nine interventions that can be utilised to reduce absenteeism (which are initiating disciplinary action in cases of excessive absenteeism; p-value=0.033, offer company medical and wellness assistance; p-value=0.001, offer attendance incentives; p-value=0.005, provide flexible working arrangements/time schedules and shift patterns; p-value=0.005, improve working conditions; p-value=0.002 and creating a positive culture; p-value=0.012). The Mann-Whitney tests also revealed that the mean ranks between the two groups of participants indicated huge gaps in terms of their perceptions regarding the six variables as interventions to reduce absenteeism. In relation to those six variables where significant differences exist, the highest mean rank scores on five intervention variables were from the younger than 35 years group except for the "initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism" variable where the older than 35 years group hand a higher mean rank score. Such a difference can be as a result that the older than 35 years old group is in a different generation who believes in punitive measures to effect change through ensuring strict discipline on the workforce, while that perception is not shared by younger generation of

participants who are below 35 years old who believe in more motivational/positive incitement approaches to improving employee attendance rather than force. Twenge and Campbell (2016) said that the younger generations, especially the millennials, want to be encouraged, coached and given direction but they do not want to be told how to do something and to be disciplined because they are being raised in family cultures that are anti-authoritarian and with parents that do not instill discipline.

4.8.3 Current job level (management/non-management)

Table 4.34 (a) Group statistics and rank

Group Statistics						
Absenteeism interventions	**Current job level**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**Mean Rank**
Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism	Management	86	3.90	1.117	0.120	184.60
	Non-Managerial	226	3.37	1.256	0.084	145.81
Absence notification procedure	Management	86	4.27	0.832	0.090	171.81
	Non-Managerial	226	4.00	1.031	0.069	150.67
Absence management	Management	86	4.35	0.763	0.082	193.87
	Non-Managerial	226	3.76	1.056	0.070	142.28
Offer employee assistance programmes	Management	86	4.17	0.800	0.086	165.83
	Non-Managerial	226	3.95	1.068	0.071	152.95
Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs	Management	86	4.03	0.887	0.096	146.72
	Non-Managerial	226	4.12	1.011	0.067	160.22
Offer attendance incentives	Management	86	4.30	0.921	0.099	154.73
	Non-Managerial	226	4.24	1.094	0.073	157.17
Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedules & shift patterns	Management	86	3.86	1.170	0.126	147.13
	Non-Managerial	226	4.05	1.044	0.069	160.07
Improving the working environment	Management	86	4.01	0.833	0.090	147.52
	Non-Managerial	226	4.08	0.997	0.066	159.92
Creating a positive company culture	Management	86	4.49	0.732	0.079	164.97
	Non-Managerial	226	4.31	0.949	0.063	153.28

Table 4.34 (b) Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]				
Absenteeism interventions	**Mann-Whitney U**	**Wilcoxon W**	**Z**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)**
Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism	7301.500	32952.500	-3.503	**0.000**
Absence notification procedure	8401.000	34052.000	-1.984	**0.047**
Absence management	6504.000	32155.000	-4.797	**0.000**
Offer employee assistance programmes	8916.000	34567.000	-1.194	0.232
Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs	8876.500	12617.500	-1.261	0.207
Offer attendance incentives	9566.000	13307.000	-0.237	0.812
Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedules & shift patterns	8912.000	12653.000	-1.197	0.231
Improving the working environment	8945.500	12686.500	-1.153	0.249
Creating a positive company culture	8990.000	34641.000	-1.146	0.252
a. Grouping Variable: Current job level (management and non-managerial employees)				

A test to assess if there are significant differences between the two groups of participants (management and non-management employees) in relation to the absenteeism interventions was done using the Mann-Whitney U test. The test results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between management participants and non-management participants on three of the absenteeism interventions that is, initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism, absence notification and absence management whose p-values are 0.000, 0.047 and 0.000 respectively. There was no significant difference between the two groups of participants on the rest of the absenteeism interventions. The test results showed that in terms of the "initiating disciplinary intervention" had a higher median score (4.0) and mean score of 3.9 from management respondents compared to a median score of 3.0 and mean score of 3.37 from non-management employees. The difference is understandable given the fact that discipline of employees at work is a management responsibility and as a result they will score it higher than non-management employees who are usually at the receiving end of such an intervention. Management as a function typically operates as an agent of owners of the company and has authority and power that they hold over the employees in order to control them when they manage the employment relationship (Townsend & Dundon, 2015). The absence notification intervention had median scores of 4.0 from both groups but the mean scores were 4.3 from management and 4.0 from non-managements. It is expected that management would score higher on this intervention than non-management participants

because the intervention is a management tool designed to ensure that employees speak to their direct line manager or nominated representative about their absence from work and the manager will be able to ask about the nature of the problem and the anticipated date of return (Torrington et al., 2014). When employees are absent or not going to come to work, they try to avoid contacting the supervisor directly but instead send a work colleague to communicate the message or send a text message which is usually at variance with management who will be insisting and expecting that the employee must call the supervisor or management if they are going to be absent from work.

The last intervention of significant difference is "absence management" where the median scores were equal between the two groups of participants (median scores of 4.0) but the mean scores were different with management employees scoring 4.35 and non-management participants scoring 3.76. The difference in the perceptions of the two groups of participants is probably because management perceive such interventions like tracking absenteeism with report, checking absenteeism patterns as necessary management tools that must be in place within the organisation in order to monitor and control employees' absenteeism, hence they will score it higher compared to employees who will view such interventions as limiting their freedom and the thought of being monitored generally does not augur well with employees. The reasons that employees give for absence can end up being investigated further if necessary by management and this is problematic for employees because sometimes they give illegitimate excuses for being absent (Torrington et al., 2014). Consequently, as part of the process, employees are requested to complete absence forms and provide a doctor's sick note and if the reasons are deemed not sufficient, money is deducted from their salaries and disciplinary action can follow (Kocakulah et al., 2016). It is also important to highlight that the mean rank differences between management and non-management respondents showed a huge gap between the two groups of participants and the highest mean ranks scores were all from the management participants for all three interventions that showed significance between the two groups. The rest of the management interventions showed that there were no significant differences between the management and non-management respondents.

The mean rank scores and mean scores for the participants who are in non-managerial positions were all higher than participants in management positions on all the factors of

absenteeism. In addition, the median scores on non-managerial employees were generally higher than those of managerial employees except for two factors when the median scores were similar (3.0), that is, personal development and motivation factors as causes of absenteeism. There is a general trend that management thinks significantly different from the non-management employees in terms of the extent of the cause of absenteeism. Part of the reasons for the significant differences are that management represents the organisation and is usually at the forefront of trying to improve the working environment and its process, yet non-managerial employees are usually there to come to work and earn their salaries. One of management's roles within the organisation is to influence absence trends and employees are there to work and be productive (Belita et al., 2013). It is then possible that because they are on different ends of the organisational changes, their views will differ significantly with non-managerial employees on a variety of issues.

4.8.4 Current job level (senior/middle management/junior management)

Table 4.35 (a): Group statistics and rank

Group Statistics					
Absenteeism interventions	**Current job level**	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean Rank**
Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism	Senior/Middle Management	43	4.02	1.058	46.17
	Junior Management	43	3.77	1.172	40.83
Absence notification procedure	Senior/Middle Management	43	4.19	0.824	40.34
	Junior Management	43	4.35	0.842	46.66
Absence management	Senior/Middle Management	43	4.35	0.783	43.53
	Junior Management	43	4.35	0.752	43.47
Offer employee assistance programmes	Senior/Middle Management	43	4.07	0.799	40.37
	Junior Management	43	4.28	0.797	46.63
Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs	Senior/Middle Management	43	3.81	0.824	37.03
	Junior Management	43	4.26	0.902	49.97
Offer attendance incentives	Senior/Middle Management	43	4.26	1.026	43.17
	Junior Management	43	4.35	0.813	43.83
Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedules & shift patterns	Senior/Middle Management	43	3.60	1.312	39.01
	Junior Management	43	4.12	0.956	47.99
Improving the working environment	Senior/Middle Management	43	3.93	0.799	40.83
	Junior Management	43	4.09	0.868	46.17
Creating a positive company culture	Senior/Middle Management	43	4.35	0.842	39.65
	Junior Management	43	4.63	0.578	47.35

Table 4.35 (b): Test statistics

Test Statistics[a]				
Absenteeism interventions	**Mann-Whitney U**	**Wilcoxon W**	**Z**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)**
Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism	809.500	1755.500	-1.052	0.293
Absence notification procedure	788.500	1734.500	-1.304	0.192
Absence management	923.000	1869.000	-0.014	0.989
Offer employee assistance programmes	790.000	1736.000	-1.244	0.213
Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs	646.500	1592.500	-2.540	**0.011**
Offer attendance incentives	910.500	1856.500	-0.134	0.894
Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedules & shift patterns	731.500	1677.500	-1.745	0.081
Improving the working environment	809.500	1755.500	-1.057	0.291
Creating a positive company culture	759.000	1705.000	-1.643	0.100
a. Grouping Variable: Current Job level (senior/middle management and junior management)				

A further Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on management respondents in order to assess if there will be a significant difference between two groups of management, that is, senior/middle management and junior management. The test results indicated that there is one absenteeism intervention where there is a significant difference between senior/middle management and junior management and that is "offer company medical assistance and wellness programs" and it has a p-value of 0.011. Senior/middle managers had a median mean score of 3.81 and a median score of 4.0 while the junior managers had a mean score of 4.26 and a median score of 5.0. The difference in perceptions can emanate from the perspective that senior/middle managers can think the company is doing enough as far as offering medical assistance and wellness programs, but the junior managers work closely with non-management employees and see the need for improvement especially when it comes to wellness programs. The mean rank scores show that there is a significant gap between senior/middle managers and junior managers and the highest mean rank scores are from the junior management category. In terms of the rest of the absenteeism interventions, there was no significant difference between senior/middle management and junior management which is commendable because it is not ideal for these two groups of management not to be on the same level when it comes to management of people or subordinates. This is critical because

junior or line managers should be aligned with senior management on operational matters including management of absenteeism and one of their roles is to link between strategic direction of the organisation and the management of employees (Townsend & Dundon, 2015).

4.8.5 Summary of comparisons of absenteeism interventions according to demographic variables

The table below gives a summary of the absenteeism interventions that were tested in the study in relation to age and current job level. The key area findings are highlighted below.

Table 4.36: summary for absenteeism interventions according to demographic variables

Demographic variable	Absenteeism interventions - test for significant differences								
	Initiating disciplinary action	Absence notification procedure	absence management	offer employee assistance programme	offer company medical assistance	Offer attendance incentives	provide flexible working arrangements	Improving the working environment	creating a positive company culture
Age (35 years or younger & older than 35 years	**0.033**				**0.001**	**0.005**	**0.005**	**0.002**	**0.012**
Current job level (management & non-management	**0**	**0.047**	**0**						
Current job level (senior/middle management & junior management					**0.011**				

p≤ 0.05 = significant difference

4.9 CONCLUSION

Descriptive statistics were used to transform the data into a more meaningful structure where information relating to demographic variables such as gender, age, qualifications, marital status, number of dependents, organisational tenure and current job level was presented. The type of leave that was mostly utilised during the period of January and September 2018 was sick leave. The causes of absenteeism were also outlined and their measures of central tendencies and dispersion analysed. The thirty five items on the causes of absenteeism

questionnaire were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis and the results indicated that the scale had good internal consistency and can be reliably used. The instrument was also tested for validity using the Keiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's' Test of sphericity and the results confirmed that the items were valid. A principal axis factoring (PCA) was then conducted on the thirty items of the questionnaire and the items were transformed into seven factors of absenteeism namely external factors, management factors, illness and family responsibilities, personal development, working conditions, motivation and interpersonal relationships. The factors were tested again and it was revealed that they are reliable and valid. All seven factors of absenteeism were tested for correlation and proved to be adequate and reasonable for use and also all the items did fit well in the components. The absenteeism interventions on the measuring instrument were also tested and the results showed that the interventions were reliable and valid. Comparisons of absenteeism factors in relation to the demographic variables were later tested for normality and significant differences. The majority of the results showed that the items were generally not normally distributed. It was also established that generally there are significant differences between the demographic variable and factors of absenteeism except for number of dependents and current job level (senior management/middle and junior management) variables which didn't show a lot of significant differences between them. With regard to the absenteeism interventions, the majority of the participants agreed that they can be used in order to reduce absenteeism within the organisation although there were also significant differences with regard to age and current job levels on some of the interventions such as the use of disciplinary hearings, absence management, and offering company medical assistance to employees.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted based on the premise that ArcelorMittal South Africa is experiencing high absenteeism levels which are affecting the business negatively from a cost and productivity perspective. The research findings were outlined and discussed in detail in chapter four. In this chapter, the key findings of this research will be highlighted for management and other relevant stake holders to understand the real causes of absenteeism that are affecting the organisation. Those key findings will be categorised in terms of those within the "causes of absenteeism" category and those within the "absenteeism interventions" category. The absenteeism interventions are perceptions of the respondents in terms of their views on what can be done to reduce absenteeism within the organisation. The highlights in terms of influences of demographic factors on absenteeism will be indicated. The managerial implications or actions that management can adopt in order to deal with some of the issues revealed in the study are also provided in this chapter. Lastly, the limitations of the study will be outlined and recommendations for future studies will be made.

5.2 KEY FINDINGS

5.2.1 Number of absences taken in 2018

Table 4.8 (page 72) shows the type of leave taken within the nine months of the year between January and September 2018 and indicates that sick leave was the most used type of leave. The information confirms what is generally known by management and explains why the company is struggling with absenteeism. Over 60% of the respondents had already used sick leave within those nine months of the year while other leave types are low thereby indicating possible cases of sick leave abuse where participants use sick leave as an excuse not to come to work.

5.2.2 Causes of absenteeism

(i) Personal issues and management and supervision factors

It is evident from the study results, in terms of the factors that were analysed, that some items within the Personal Issues and Management and Supervision factors were proven to be causing absenteeism within the organisation. In terms of Personal Issues, items such as child care/illness of and child/school responsibilities, other family responsibilities, personal illness/injury and bereavement were regarded as some of the main causes of absenteeism. Within the Management and Supervision factor category, two reasons came out as the dominant reasons for causing absenteeism, that is, low wages/salaries and lack of recognition/incentives by the company. It can be said that the majority of the participants indicated (in table 4.9; page 75) that low wages/salaries, personal illness/injury and child care/illness/school responsibilities as the most significant causes of absenteeism as indicated by the mode score of 5. The rest of the factors were only sometimes indicated by the respondents as causing absenteeism within the company and thus considered to be less significant reasons for absenteeism, thus warranting less managerial attention.

(ii) Factor analysis

The exploratory factor analysis was conducted on causes of absenteeism and the measuring instrument has thirty five items that were investigated. The results showed that the measuring instrument was reliable for use. The thirty-five items were then further subjected to a principal axis factoring extraction method where all the items were transformed into small combinations or factors that are related to each other. The process resulted in the formation of seven latent factors of absenteeism namely external factors, management factors, illness and family responsibility, personal development, working conditions, motivation and interpersonal relations. These factors were then used to determine whether demographic characteristics influence causes of absenteeism.

(iii) Comparisons of factors according to demographic characteristics

The table below shows a summary of the key differences in terms of the demographic variables and the perceptions of the participants in relation to the causes of absenteeism within the organisation.

Table 5.1: Summary of comparisons of significant differences between demographic variables and absenteeism factors

	Factors of Absenteeism						
Demographic variable	External factors	Management factors	Illness and family responsibility	Personal development	Working conditions	Motivation	Interpersonal relations
Qualifications	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital Status	Yes				Yes		Yes
Number of dependents						Yes	
Years of service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Current Job level	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes

The results in table 5.1 above show that there are significant differences in terms of qualifications and years of service with regard to how the participants perceive all seven factors of absenteeism within the organisation. This not surprising when taking into consideration the fact that there is a negative relationship between qualifications, organisational tenure and absenteeism (Aluko, 2015; Lattouf et al., 2014). Educated employees have better working conditions, motivation and satisfaction and better personal development opportunities within the organisation (Sing et al., 2016). This partly explains why there are significant differences with regard to factors of absenteeism on qualifications and years of service. These are the two demographic variables that require a lot of focus from management because there is a recognisable impact of the variables on the factors of absenteeism. The demographic variable of current job level also showed that there was a significant difference between management and non-management employees on almost all the factors of absenteeism except for motivation. Management level employees occupy higher level positions within the organisation and are less affected by most of the factors of absenteeism, hence the reasons that affect absenteeism tend to be different to those in non-managerial positions (Belita, et al., 2013). Marital status is the variable that requires moderate focus because it showed that there were significant differences in terms of the participant's

marital status in relation to external factors, working conditions and interpersonal relations as factors of absenteeism. Not all the factors have an impact on absenteeism and management can focus on those factors where there are significant differences with regard to absenteeism. In addition, the results also showed that there were no significant differences in terms of number of dependents of the participants with regard to the factors of absenteeism except for when it relates to motivation; hence it is the variable that requires the least amount of focus. The lack of significant differences on absenteeism with regard to number of dependents and marital status variables might be because most of the reasons that affect absenteeism are internal and specific to the organisation and not family based reasons or external factors.

5.2.3 Absenteeism interventions

After the root causes of absenteeism within the organisation were established, absenteeism management interventions that can be adopted by the organisation in order to reduce absenteeism were established and analysed. The study results revealed that all the respondents generally agreed with the adoption of all the proposed absenteeism interventions but with different rankings in terms of the preferences of the solutions.

(i) Hard approach to absenteeism management

Table 5.2: summary of the demographic variable's mean scores on hard absenteeism interventions

Absenteeism Intervention	**Participants below 35 years old**	**participants above 35 years old**	**Significant difference**
Initiate disciplinary action in cases of excessive absenteeism	Neutral (m = 3.40)	Neutral (m =3.67)	Yes
Absence management	Neutral (m =3.88)	Agree (m=3.98)	No
Absenteeism Intervention	**Management participants**	**Non-management participants**	
Initiate disciplinary action in cases of excessive absenteeism	Agree (m =3.90)	Neutral (m =3.37)	Yes
Absence management	Agree (m =4.35)	Neutral (m=3.76)	Yes
Absenteeism Intervention	**Senior/middle Management participants**	**Junior management participants**	
Initiate disciplinary action in cases of excessive absenteeism	Agree (m =4.02)	Neutral (m =3.77)	Yes
Absence management	Agree (m =4.35)	Agree (m=4.35)	Yes

m = mean score

The results of the study showed that initiating disciplinary action in incidences of excessive absenteeism was the least favoured intervention as a way of dealing with absenteeism within the organisation. However there were differences between different age groups' perceptions with regard to the intervention where participants older than 35 years tended to rank this intervention higher than those below 35 years old, implying that older employees agree more with the intervention being utilized to reduce absenteeism while younger employees do not really agree with the intervention being utilised. In addition, management employees tend to favour the use of disciplinary action as a corrective measure than non-management employees. The second least favoured absenteeism intervention is when management uses absence management tools such as reports, check for trends and patterns as such tools usually come with management consequences for the employees. Management participants favour the tool as expected compared to the non-management employees who will be monitored. There was general consensus when it comes to absence management tools between the two groups of management and also between participants who are below 35 years old and those who are above 35 years old. Overall, these hard approaches towards absenteeism management are less preferred by participants although they appear to understand their usefulness in maintaining a level of control among employees within the organisation in relation to absence management.

(ii) Soft approach to absenteeism management

Table 5.3: Summary of the demographic variable's mean scores on soft absenteeism interventions

Absenteeism Intervention	Participants below 35 years old	Participants above 35 years old	Significant difference
Absence notification procedure	Agree(m=4.06)	Agree (m=4.10)	No
Offer employee assistance programmes	Agree (m=4.04)	Agree (m=3.97)	No
Offer company medical assistance and wellness programmes	Agree (m=4.24)	Neutral (m=3.89)	Yes
Offer attendance incentives	Agree (m=4.39)	Agree (m=4.07)	Yes
Provide flexible working arrangements/time schedules & shift patterns	Agree (m=4.13)	Neutral (m=3.81)	Yes

Improving the working conditions	Agree (m=4.19)	Neutral (m=3.88)	Yes
Creating a positive company culture	Agree (m=4.45)	Agree (m=4.24)	Yes
Absenteeism Intervention	**Management participants**	**Non-management participants**	
Absence notification procedure	Agree(m=4.27)	Agree (m=4.00)	Yes
Offer employee assistance programmes	Agree (m=4.17)	Agree (m=3.95)	No
Offer company medical assistance and wellness programmes	Agree (m=4.03)	Agree (m=4.12)	No
Offer attendance incentives	Agree (m=4.30)	Agree (m=4.24)	No
Provide flexible working arrangements/time schedules & shift patterns	Neutral (m=3.86)	Agree (m=4.05)	No
Improving the working conditions	Agree (m=4.01)	Agree (m=4.08)	No
Creating a positive company culture	Agree (m=4.49)	Agree (m=4.31)	No
Absenteeism Intervention	**Senior/middle management participants**	**Junior management participants**	
Absence notification procedure	Agree(m=4.19)	Agree (m=4.35)	Yes
Offer employee assistance programmes	Agree (m=4.07)	Agree (m=4.28)	Yes
Offer company medical assistance and wellness programmes	Agree (m=3.81)	Agree (m=4.26)	No
Offer attendance incentives	Agree (m=4.26)	Agree (m=4.35)	Yes
Provide flexible working arrangements/time schedules & shift patterns	Neutral (m=3.60)	Agree (m=4.12)	Yes
Improving the working conditions	Agree (m=3.93)	Agree (m=4.09)	Yes
Creating a positive company culture	Agree (m=4.35)	Agree (m=4.63)	Yes

m = mean score

The soft approach tools for absenteeism management received more favourable rankings from the participants of the study. The soft interventions are: using absence notification procedures, offering employee assistance programmes, offering attendance incentives, provide flexible working arrangements/time schedules and shift patterns, improving working conditions, creating a positive company culture. However, from the results in table 5.3 above, it showed that participants who are below 35 years old scored higher on all seven interventions compared to participants who are older than 35 years old. Management employees did not really think that providing flexible working arrangements/time schedules and shift patterns can assist with improving absenteeism within the organisation, yet non-management employees perceive it as important to implement. On the rest of the interventions, both management and non-management participants agreed with adopting the interventions in order to reduce absenteeism. Nonetheless, it was actually the senior and junior management who did not agree that providing flexible working arrangements/time schedules and shift patterns can assist with reducing absenteeism but the junior managers strongly believed in the intervention being useful. Lastly, senior and middle management participants were neutral in their perceptions when it comes to offering company medical assistance and wellness programmes yet the junior managers think that it will assist with reducing absenteeism if the intervention is followed through. Both categories of management however agreed on the rest of the interventions to be adopted in order to reduce absenteeism within the organisation. Generally, creating a positive company culture and offering attendance incentives to those employees who are normally at work came out more strongly as solutions to reducing absenteeism. Offering company medical assistance and wellness programs and providing flexible working arrangements/time, schedules and shift patterns as interventions to reduce absenteeism also came out strongly. In summary, the soft approach to absenteeism management seem to be the most favoured route in addressing absenteeism problems within the organisation.

5.3. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.3.1 Overview

The results of the study showed that there were significant differences with regard to certain demographic variables such as age and job level that were tested in relation to the nine interventions of absenteeism from the measuring instrument. The significant differences and similarities of perceptions on absenteeism interventions are summarised in the table below.

Table 5.4: Summary of demographic variables' differences and similarities on absenteeism interventions

Demographic variable	Significant differences in terms of absenteeism interventions	Similarities in terms of absenteeism interventions
Age (between below 35 years & above 35 years old participants)	• Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism • Offer company medical assistance and wellness programs • Offer attendance incentives • Provide flexible working arrangements/time schedules and shift patterns • Improving working conditions • Creating a positive company culture	• Absence notification procedure • Absence management • Offer employee assistance programmes
Current Job level (between management & non-management employees)	• Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism • Absence notification procedure • Absence management	• Offer employee assistance programmes • Offer company medical assistance & wellness programmes • Offer attendance incentives • Provide flexible working arrangements/time • Improving the working environment • Creating a positive company culture
Current Job level (between senior/middle managers & junior managers)	• Initiating disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism • Absence notification procedure • Absence management • Offer employee assistance programmes • Offer attendance incentives • Provide flexible working arrangements/time schedules and shift patterns • Improving working conditions • Creating a positive company culture	• Offer company medical assistance and wellness programs

The results in table 5.4 above indicate that that there were significant differences in the demographic variables that were tested in relation to the interventions that can be adopted to reduce absenteeism. Demographic variables that have been highlighted in light of the differences they create in relation to absenteeism require management to take them into consideration when devising strategies to reduce absenteeism. This will ensure that the strategy is relevant to a particular demographic group and people are treated fairly and equally. This subsequently increases the chances of the adopted strategies being effective towards resolving the problem of absenteeism within the organisation.

5.3.2 Creating a positive company culture and improve the working environment

In terms of the study, the participants in the different age categories and different job levels agree that this intervention as useful. The organisation should focus on this because if the company culture is strong and cohesive, it will regulate the behaviour of the organisation's members and permeate all of its activities, as a specific catalyst for growth and development of a company but if the culture is negative it will diminish the company's competitive advantage and destroy it (Gavric et al., 2016). It is believed that absenteeism can be reduced by making the workplace more positive and welcoming (Kocakulah et al., 2016). This can be achieved by improving the general welfare of the employees within and outside the organisation, introduce wellness programmes, improving communication with employees, develop and live an ethical organisational culture and move towards an inclusive/diversity sensitive organisational culture (Hassan & Wright, 2014; Kangas, 2015). In addition, the organisation should cultivate and continue improving employee attendance until it becomes a culture or a shared value on its own among employees within the organization. Issues of company culture affect every employee within that organization hence the strategies for its development must focus on everyone. Therefore, an organization should take a responsible approach towards creating or improving its organisational culture.

5.3.3 Offer attendance incentives

The study results revealed significant differences between the different age groups and also between different management categories when it comes to the adoption of attendance incentives as a way of curbing absenteeism but there was general agreement that the intervention should be introduced. As a result, the company should strongly consider introducing attendance incentives in the form of bonuses, paid time-off and other rewards as

forms of positive reinforcements in order to compensate employees for meeting specific attendance standards that are agreed between management and employees. The rewards should be offered to employees who have consistent attendance records, bonuses must be given for missing fewer than a certain number of days, opportunity for buying back unused sick leave should be offered (Mathis et al., 2016). The idea is supported by the different age groups and employees in different job categories. The idea is to improve motivation through financial rewards among employees which will encourage them to attend work. If employee attendance improves, it saves the company from spending on a lot of money on overtime costs, hiring replacement labour and other indirect costs.

5.3.4 Absence notification procedure

The results of the study identified that this intervention is supported by the participants to be adopted in order to assist with the reduction of absence incidents within the organisation, although there were significant differences between the perceptions of the different age groups and management categories. This procedure already exists within the company's disciplinary code of conduct but is not seriously enforced by management, particularly not by supervisors in the various plants. The procedure emphasises that when a person wants to be absent from work, he or she must call and directly speak to the manager or supervisor to request or explain the reasons for absenteeism. This procedure assumes that the telephone conversation becomes the first stage or level of absence management by the organisation (Torrington et al., 2014). When the employee who wants to be absent calls in, the manager or supervisor should seek to encourage the person to come to work (earlier) if it is appropriate or arrange alternative work for the person if he or she is sick rather than be absent from work totally. The existing absence notification procedure must be enforced more rigorously by management and supervisors. The idea is strongly supported by the junior managers (supervisors), therefore they must be encouraged to be diligent and drive this procedure to be used by their subordinates in the various plants.

5.3.5 Provide flexible working arrangements

Flexibility in time schedules, working arrangements and shift patterns was strongly recommended by the participants in the study. The organization should look into providing flexible working arrangements/time, schedules and shift patterns depending on the nature of the job or position requirements. Although there is a policy on flexi-hours which is rigid in its

nature because the employee can request for working flexi-hours but they are fixed for at least a month, that is, an employee can change their starting and finishing times but that becomes fixed once approved by the relevant managers. Against this background the company should introduce flexi-hours that are driven by the total number of hours in a day, week or months. In other words, employees can have some degree of flexibility in terms of their hours for certain jobs as long as they fulfill the number of hours they are required to work within a day or week. This concept will assist in improving the work-life balance of employees and curbing high levels of unscheduled absences within the organization (Celik & Oz, 2011; Maket et al., 2015). This will also assist employees to plan their work schedules accordingly and enable them to make the necessary adjustments when necessary when they have outside work commitments such as family responsibilities (Possenriede et al, 2014). The company can also introduce a compressed week by means of which employees can extend their working hours of the day so that they can leave work earlier on a Friday or any other day during the month (Maket et al., 2015). Alternately, management should consider creating a new shift roster that balances the fatigue of employees and discourages unnecessary absenteeism with the business requirements. The study indicated that the senior and middle managers and employees who are older than 35 years old were not supportive of the idea. The company should therefore focus on changing the perceptions of this category of employees who do not see the value in introducing the intervention and they will be the expected to be the drivers of such initiatives.

5.3.6 Improve remuneration

The study results from the participants acknowledged that the issue of salaries being low was affecting some employees' intentions to attend work and the intervention is strongly recommended for adoption in a bid to influence absenteeism in a positive way. Literature has established before that the design of the compensation system influences the level of absenteeism within the company and pay differential within that company and industry affect employee work attendance depending on how they perceive the equity of the compensation system (Torre et al., 2015; Pfeifer, 2010). ArcelorMittal employees generally perceive that they are not compensated according to industry/market levels and internally there are some remuneration inequalities. This negatively affects absenteeism. However, the organisation should look at ways of improving the compensation packages of employees particularly salaries as a way of improving the motivation and morale of employees and will ultimately

assist with reducing absenteeism. Certain elements can be added to the remuneration system by rewarding low absenteeism and offer extra money for such employees.

5.3.7 Disciplinary action and absence management

The use of disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism and reports to track absenteeism are the least favoured approaches to intervene in order to reduce absenteeism, according to the study results. There were significant differences between different age groups and management categories in terms of their perceptions with regard to the intervention being adopted. Nonetheless the use of these interventions cannot be taken away from management as they are critical and useful in order to manage abuse of absenteeism arrangements and ensure discipline within the organisation. The interventions should however be used responsibly and not only as a tool to punish behaviour, but also to correct it. It is necessary for management to maintain some level of control and understanding of employees' attendance behaviour. Management employees should also be sent for training so that they can institute their duties effectively when it comes to the issues of managing absenteeism and maintaining the general discipline of employees within the organisation. According to the study results, this intervention should be directed at participants who are below 35 years old and are in non-management positions, because they seem not to agree with the intervention as critical for obvious reasons, that is, they are the intended recipients of the intervention.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted at a specific time (cross sectional study) and information with regard to absenteeism causes was not investigated and analysed over a long period of time to establish if the perceptions or sentiments are trends or merely reflective of the current state. Due to time and resource constraints, the research was done at ArcelorMittal South Africa Vanderbijlpark works and was not extended to other operating units across the country such as Newcastle works, Saldanha works, Pretoria works and others or departments like corporate/support services to investigate and understand their reasons for absenteeism. The results cannot be generalised to other companies within South Africa because the study only focused on ArcelorMittal South Africa. Lastly the investigation focused on current permanent employees' perceptions on causes of absenteeism and the solutions that they believe can be

adopted to reduce absenteeism, but did not investigate temporary/contract employees, production learners, apprenticeships and other forms of trainees to obtain their perceptions on the causes of absenteeism and what can be done to reduce it because their reasons and perceptions can be different. As a result, the study results cannot be generalised for the entire workforce.

5.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It has been established that some of the key findings from the research results are that sick and vacation leave are the most utilised type of leave within the organisation between January and September 2018. The results revealed that the main reasons that are negatively affecting absenteeism are child illness/care and child school responsibilities, personal illness or injury of the respondents, family responsibilities, low wages/salaries and lack of recognition and incentives. The rest of the reasons were rejected as major causes of absenteeism from the questionnaire's 35 items/causes of absenteeism. Some demographic variables had an influence with regard to causes of absenteeism perceptions. The qualifications profile of the respondents significantly differed in relation to all the seven factors of absenteeism namely external factors, management factors, illness and family responsibilities, personal development, working conditions, motivation and interpersonal relations. Marital status, years of service with the organisation, job category and number of dependents all had some effect in terms of how respondents perceived the causes of absenteeism within the organisation. However, with regard to the interventions that can be adopted by the company to reduce absenteeism, it was revealed that most of the participants agreed to the suggestions from the study questionnaires. The hard approach to absenteeism management that included actions such as the monitoring of absences and using disciplinary hearings were the least favoured interventions while on the other hand the soft or persuasive approach were the most favoured interventions such as improving the operating environment, offering attendance incentives, providing flexible working arrangements among other suggested interventions. In other words, the carrot and stick approach was favoured over the punitive approach to managing absenteeism. Future studies can focus on conducting a companywide investigation, taking into consideration all the operating units of ArcelorMittal South Africa. This will enable the organisation to understand if the causes of absenteeism apply or are shared within the company, in the various operating units.

The study can also be expanded in future to follow a longitudinal period and try to investigate if the reasons for absenteeism remain constant throughout the years and in different seasons, per different departments or sections, across different races, amongst other factors. This will enable a more comprehensive study on absenteeism to be generated. In addition, the studies can also be extended to the steel industry or steel manufacturing companies in South Africa in order to gain industry-wide perspectives on causes of absenteeism, to determine whether these issues are company specific or more pervasive in the industry. Future studies can also be expanded to investigate absenteeism across the industries such as retail and construction in order to compare the general practices and establish if the causes for absenteeism are similar in organizations that are in different industries. In addition, different strategies or absenteeism interventions can be generated and benefit various stakeholders. With regard to this study, the causes of absenteeism and the impact of demographic factors were measured and tested. The interventions that can be adopted in order to reduce absenteeism were also suggested for the organization. As a result, the objectives of the study were met.

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APPENDIX

Absenteeism Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

School of Business Management

M.Com Business Management Research

Researcher: Lewisham Gutsa (0768705766) **Supervisor**: Dr Rose Luke (0115594951)

An assessment on the factors affecting absenteeism at ArcelorMittal South Africa.

The purpose of this survey is to solicit information from employees regarding absenteeism. The information and ratings you provide will be useful in identifying the factors that affect/cause absenteeism within the organization. There is no right or wrong answer to any question. Make sure you do not skip any questions. Your participation in this survey is completely anonymous and voluntary. You are not required to include your name on the questionnaire, therefore you cannot be identified in any way and you do not have to answer a question if you find it objectionable and you may withdraw at any stage. Your responses will be treated as confidential.

SECTION A- BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Please fill in the following biographical information below:

1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

2. Age

18-25years	1
26-35years	2
36-45years	3
46-55years	4
56+ years	5

3. Highest education qualification

Below Matric	1
Matric	2
Trade Certificate	3
Diploma	4
Degree	5
Post-graduate degree	6

4. Marital status

Single	1
Divorced	2
Married	3
Living with a partner	4
Widowed	5

5. Number of dependents

One	1
Two	2
Three	3
More than three	4

6. Years of service with the Company

0-1 year	1
1-5 years	2
5-10 years	3
10-15 years	4
15-20 years	5
More than 20 years	6

7. Current job level

Senior Management	1
Middle Management	2
Junior Management	3
Non-Managerial	4

8. Please indicate the number of times you have been absent or took leave in the following categories in 2018.

	Type of leave taken	**Number of times**			
		Never	1-3 times	4-5 times	6 times or more
1	Sick leave				
2	Special leave – study				
3	Special leave – compassionate				
4	Special leave – social responsibility				
5	Special leave – special circumstances				
6	Special leave – paternity				
7	Maternity				
8	Vacation				
9	Unpaid leave				

SECTION B-Causes of absenteeism

Please complete the following table to select and indicate the extent to which the following factors impact on the level of **YOUR** absenteeism (excluding vacation leave) within the organization. Indicate your answers about your agreement with each statement by ticking (**X**) in the boxes provided below.

i. Personal Issues						
Factor affecting your absenteeism		**1 Strongly disagree**	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly agree**
1	Child care/illness of child/school responsibilities					
2	Other family responsibilities (illness, elder care, family conflict)					
3	Personal Illness/injury					
4	Personal appointment (medical/non-medical)					
5	Bereavement leave (death in the family)					
6	Need a day off for personal time					
7	Personal distress (e.g. depression, divorce, phobia)					
8	Alcohol/drug related					
9	Not worried about losing your job					
10	Lack of motivation to come to work					
ii. Work /Job Conditions						
Factor affecting your absenteeism		**1 Strongly disagree**	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly agree**
12	Personal safety reasons at work					
13	Occupational illness/injury					
14	Poor working conditions					
15	Long working hours					
16	Tired from working overtime/many consecutive days worked					

iii. Management & Supervision						
Factor affecting your absenteeism		**1 Strongly disagree**	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly agree**
17	Unchallenging/repetitive work					
18	Inability to get approved time off					
19	Lack of flexibility regarding the work shifts					
20	Lack of adequate resources (e.g. no replacement labour)					
21	Lack of monitoring of and consequences for being absent					
22	Excessive rework/changes					
23	Excessive pressure from supervisor/manager to meet schedule deadlines/production targets					
24	Unclear work assignments/instructions					
25	Lack of development opportunities					
26	Lack of recognition/incentives(e.g. time off, money or appreciation)					
27	Low wages/salaries					
iv Interpersonal Relationships						
Factor affecting your absenteeism		**1 Strongly disagree**	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly agree**
28	Issues or poor relationship with supervisor/manager/subordinates. Please specify who you rated (mark with a X): Manager/supervisor ☐ Subordinates ☐					
29	Issues or poor relationship with co-workers e.g. poor team spirit, bullying					
v. External Issues						
Factor affecting absenteeism		**1 Strongly disagree**	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly agree**
30	Transport issues (traffic congestion, delays, bad weather , car/bus/ taxi breakdown)					
31	Long commuting hours/distance to work					
32	Poor transport system to and from work (crowded/overload, long waiting time for another bus					
33	Missed bus/car pool to the plant					
34	Inadequate parking facilities at work					
35	Bad weather for working					
36	Unreliable car share arrangements					

37. What are your 3 main reasons for absenteeism?
(i).....
(ii).....
(iii).....

38. What are the 3 main reasons for absenteeism from your co-workers?
(i)……
(ii)...……
(iii)……
39. What are the 3 main reasons for absenteeism from your managers/subordinates?
(i)……
(ii)……..……
(iii)……..……
40. In your opinion, what other factors do you think are contributing to absenteeism at AMSA?
……
……
……
……

SECTION C – Interventions to reduce absenteeism

The following interventions can be adopted to reduce absenteeism within the organization. Please indicate your response by marking the appropriate box with a cross (X)

Absenteeism Intervention to reduce absenteeism		**1 Strongly disagree**	**2 Disagree**	**3 Neutral**	**4 Agree**	**5 Strongly agree**
41	Initiate disciplinary action in instances of excessive absenteeism					
42	Absence notification procedure (employee to call the supervisor directly to notify his/her absence)					
43	Absence management (track absenteeism with reports, check patterns etc)					
44	Offer Employee Assistance Programmes (e.g. counselling, professional support)					
45	Offer company medical assistance & wellness programs					
46	Offer attendance incentives (e.g. bonus, time-off & other rewards for good attendance)					
47	Provide flexible working arrangements/time, schedules & shift patterns					
48	Improving the working environment					
49	Creating a positive company culture					

50. In your opinion, what other interventions/actions do you suggest management can adopt to reduce absenteeism?.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for participating in this survey