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Comparing the effects of different absence entitlement
contracts on attitudes towards absence and the
psychological contract between two existing groups of
employees at a north-west branch of Tesco

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Chester
for the degree of Master of Arts in Management

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Declaration

This work is original and has not been submitted previously for any academic purpose.
All secondary sources are acknowledged.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Abstract

Research into the area of absence has mainly been concerned with cost, cause and more frequently management. The current study taps into an area, that has received very little previous investigation, but is becoming more relevant as organisations bring in new absence management techniques, creating different culture groups within the organisation. The study tackled three research objectives; to assess whether the two group's psychological contracts differed, and which areas (i.e. trust, value, commitment, and fairness) were most affected. To assess whether the two groups attitudes towards absence differed, and finally to assess whether the second group had a lower absence levels. These research objectives were achieved using a survey design that was put together using existing scales, previous literature and informal observations. The end sample size was 69 participants, which were obtained via random sampling techniques. Throughout the study the host organisation put many constraints upon the researcher and some aspects of the methodology had to be abandoned, despite access being initially granted. Due to the lack of responses, only descriptive statistics could be used, although a Person r Correlation showed a strong relationship between identified aspects and the psychological contract, furthermore a relationship was found between absence attitudes and the psychological contract. The end results went against previous literature and the researcher hypotheses, as no difference was found between the two group's scores. Possible methodological and theoretical explanations for this are discussed in chapter six and implications and future recommendations are given in chapter seven.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to Research

In 2003 Tesco ran three pilot schemes to help improve attendance and discourage absence in 20 of its UK stores (Pollitt, 2004). Two of the schemes were based around incentives, for example for 12 months of 100 percent attendance, either (a) extra holiday leave or (b) store vouchers were given. The third scheme however was based around a more 'punitive' approach, withdrawing occupational sick pay for the first three days of absence. Not surprisingly the third scheme received the most attention from researchers and other organisations (CIPD, 2005), and has since been put in place permanently with new employees adopting the contract automatically and old employees receiving a monetary bonus if they willingly transferred to the new contract (Marchington & Wilkingson, 2005).

The 'punitive' absence contract was put into place with the aim to "reduce unplanned absence" and "discourage people from taking the odd day off" (Pollitt, 2004; p21), thus cutting down the cost of absence. However the indirect costs of such a scheme are unknown, as are employee attitudes. This study aims to fill this gap in research and may provide organisations with a more informed evaluation of such a scheme to aid future policy design.

1.2 Research Question

The aim of the study was to compare the two existing groups of employees, to assess whether the different contractual entitlements regarding absence pay, affected their attitudes towards absence and their psychological contract. This was achieved via self-administrated surveys.

When looking at the psychological contract four aspects were identified; trust, commitment, perceived value and fairness. These dimensions were chosen as it was felt they were most relevant for the situation under investigation. The concepts were measured using a self-designed survey, taken from adapted pre-existing survey items

and newly designed items based on secondary data and informally observed employee comments.

1.3 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical issues had to be considered when carrying out this study. Firstly anonymity of the branch and the employees that participated. Secondly confidentiality of the individual employee responses. Participants were made aware of the issue of confidentiality in a cover letter attached to the survey. Participants were informed of why the study was being carried out, who would and would not see the information and how the data would be used and destroyed of after use. Thirdly informed consent was considered. As previously mentioned a cover letter was attached to each survey that told the participants everything they needed to know to be 'informed'. Also the issue of 'harm' was considered. The survey covered morally questionable behaviour that may have stimulated negative feelings, such as guilt, frustration, anger etc. Also it was considered that new employees may not be aware that they were on a more disadvantaged contract, and this may have resulted in conflict or resentment. Finally Tesco involvement was considered. Participants were informed that the study had nothing to do with Tesco, and that management would not see individual responses. Although Tesco management were not involved in the development and design of the study, management did put certain constraints on the researcher and requested to approve all material before it went public.

1.5 Outline of Dissertation

Chapter two will discuss previous literature on absence and the psychological contract aspects identified. This will then be followed by chapter three that examines the positivist approach adopted explaining why the quantitative paradigm was chosen for this investigations and how it influenced the studies design. Chapter four details the pilot study, the instruments validity and reliability and finally how the data was analysed using SPSS v.13. Chapters five and six will then present and discuss findings and how this impacts on previous literature and the research hypothesis. Finally chapter seven will conclude the research project and discuss future implications of the findings.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review

Chapter two evaluates previous research and theories on absence and the psychological contract. The chapter will discuss previous areas investigated and limitations of research, including absence causes, cost and management. It will then discuss the psychological contract, looking at the traditional and contemporary definitions and dimensions covered. Finally the four aspects highlighted in chapter one will be examined along with their relevance to this study. The chapter will then end by restating the research objectives and how they will be achieved before moving into chapter three where these issues will be discussed further.

Absence has been studied for over 50 years, with UK organisations taking a more active role in research since the UK government stopped refunding statutory sick pay costs in 1994 (Taylor, 2000). Absenteeism is a major concern for organisations as it affects productivity, reputation, moral, and can cost the organisation huge amounts when direct and indirect costs are considered (Matharu, 2005). The absence topic has mainly been concerned with areas such as causes, costs and less frequently with absence management (ACAS, 1997; Evans & Walters, 2002). Nicholson and Johns (1985) criticised absence research for being ‘too focused on the individual and not the organisational climate’. However many academics (Porteous, 1997) have argued that absence is an individualistic phenomenon and therefore subjective.

The cost of absence is a complex area to investigate. However in such competitive climates, organisations’ costs are of extreme focus and importance, with absence indicating the corporate health (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005). Absence should be expected within an organisation and can never be fully eradicated (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2002). However phenomena such as absenteeism and the identification of causes of absence can be analysed and steps can be taken to reduce these issues, which will result in decreased absence costs (Evans & Palmer, 1997).

Three main problems arise when studying absenteeism. Firstly how to define absence and which type of absence should receive the most attention. Absence can be categorized into two groups (ACAS, 1997). Firstly authorized absence, this includes events such as approved holidays, training, public duties etc. These events can be planned for in advance and although costly are not disruptive to the organisation (Swain & Strach, 1995). The second category of absence is unauthorized absence, which is defined as failing to attend work when expected (Morris, 2001). This also can be split into two subgroups; involuntary and voluntary (Porteous, 1997). The first deals with the inability to attend work due to illness, transportation difficulties, child care problems etc and the latter refers to lack of motivation to attend work (Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Unauthorized absence cannot be planned for, is very disruptive, can prove costly to the organisation (ACAS, 1997) and is the main focus of absence control procedures. The second problem is concerned with how to measure absence (Taylor, 2000). Currently there is no universal method for measuring absence and organisations differ in respect to whether they look at duration or frequency and the formula they use (Torrington & Hall, 1998). The final problem is identifying the actual or 'real' cause of absence (Evens & Walters, 2002). Researchers have found it difficult to 'pin point' the underlying cause of absence, as employees many not wish to identify the real reason and prefer to justify their illness with a socially acceptable 'excuse', also the underlying reason may not be visible to the employee, researcher or organisation (Taylor, 2000).

Causes of Absence

Causes of absenteeism have traditionally been seen as singular factors. Nicholson (1977) proposed there were three causes of absenteeism; pain avoidance, adjustment to work and economic decision making by employees.

Pain avoidance looks at psychological pain from job dissatisfaction that could be reduced by not attending. The correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism is controversial with researchers arguing on the strength of the relationship, if there is an actual relationship or if other variables are contributing to the causation, for example age, tenure, level. Johns (1997, Cited in Muchinsky, 2000) found the correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism to be .25. However he acknowledged that absence could be due to other factors, but argued that if the individual enjoyed their job they would make the extra effort to attend. Absenteeism has also been linked with

turnover, with research suggesting that absence is either an alternative to, or an indicator of turnover (Fitzgibbons & Moch, 1980. cited in Smither, 1994).

The adjustment to work category proposed that new employees would have more absences as they were 'adjusting' to the new environment and to 'absent culture' norms. Johns (1985, cited in Smither, 1994) argued that different groups within the organisation developed individual absence norms. New employees learn these norms via social exchange theory (Chad-Wick Johns, Nicholson & Brown, 1982 cited in Landy, 1989) and by the experience of others and how hard or lenient the organisation was on their absence. Rhodes and Steers (1990) also added equity theory and exchange theory into this category, suggesting that if individuals perceived intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to be unfair it would result in absence.

Finally the last category refers to the cost-benefit analysis employees make when considering unplanned absence (Aamodt, 1991). If the perceived value of taking the day off outweighs the cost of being absent, then the individual will be absent no matter how high their job satisfaction level is (Youngblood, 1984, cited in Smither, 1994). Researchers also emphasize that as the majority of organisations pay for sick leave, and therefore the cost of unplanned absenteeism is becoming far less for the employee (McKenna, 2000). Dolton and Mesch (1991, Brief, 1998) found that 60% of absences had no real illness. If the cost-benefit explanation is true, organisations should work to encourage attendance by increasing positive benefits and decreasing consequences of being present, whilst increasing disadvantages of being absent (Aamodt, 2004; Mullins, 1999). Surprisingly a study by CIPD (2004) found that whilst 90% of investigated organisations believed they could reduce absence, less than half put measures in place to achieve lower absence levels (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005)

Despite the large amount of research concentrating on one possible cause of absence, it seems questionable that absence is due to only one factor, which may be why recent research has now turned its attention to multiple-factors, for example personal characteristics, the organisational context and external factors (Evens & Walters, 2000).

There has been a lot of research examining the links between absenteeism and personal characteristics. If organisations recognized which type of people would be most prone to absence they could reduce the number they hired in the first place (Evens & Palmer,

1997). A study by Keller (1983, cited in Smither, 1994) found that those employees with lower absence levels tended to be older, married, at a higher level, with a longer tenure. One problem with these results is that the older employees will have probably been with the company longer and have been developed within that organisation, buying in to the culture (Smither, 1994).

Studies looking at gender differences have found that females tend to be more absent than males. However this finding is inconsistent with other research suggesting the trend is seasonal (Markham, Dansereau & Alutto, 1982, cited in Smither, 1994) or changes yearly (The Industrial Society's Survey, 1997; 2001). Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) also noted that the rate of absence correlated with age of dependant child, suggesting that female absence is a result of female roles and responsibilities outside of work, which the organisation can help with, for example, childcare services, flexi time etc (Porteous, 1997). Studies have also found a link between past absence behaviour and future absence behaviour, suggesting that the former predicts the latter (Breugh, 1981, cited in Saal & Knight, 1993; Ivancevich, 1985, cited in Smither, 1994). Other personal characteristics that have been studied include personality traits, in particular the 'big 5' (Evens & Walters, 2000).

Research looking at the role of the organisational context on absenteeism has highlighted that work design, work group norms and culture, absence policies and stress all have an influence on the rate of absence (Evens & Palmer, 1997). Research also indicates that once these factors have been recognized as a contributor to absenteeism, steps can be taken to resolve them. For example Rhodes and Steers (1990) found that those organisations resembling 'scientific management' approaches; routine, repetition, fragmentation etc in job design also had lower levels of job satisfaction and motivation and higher levels of absenteeism. However through job redesign organisations can increase motivation and job satisfaction which in turn decrease absence levels. Other issues to consider include the organisations size (CBI, 2001) and the psychological contract held by its employees (Bolton & Hughes, 2001). For example Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) found that as organisational size increased so did absence.

External forces look at factors that prevent people from attending, rather than factors that cause absence as in the previous two. These include economic conditions, genuine illness, travel problems and family responsibilities (Evens & Walter, 2000).

Organisations can help its employees solve these problems, for example job sharing, working from home etc, resulting in lower absence levels. Also organisations can try and prevent having these problems in their recruitment of new employees, for example not employing applications that live so many miles away, as journey time has a positive impact on absence levels (Evens & Walter, 2000).

Cost of Absence

Various figures illustrating the cost of absence have been published e.g.

- Estimated annual UK cost of absence 13billion (IDS, 1998)
- In 2003 an estimated 2.7 million people were on 'the sick' (IRS, 2003)
- In 2002 the estimated cost of absence to UK employers was 11.6million (Manocha, 2004)
- In 1998 an estimated 200million days were lost as a result of absence (CBI, 1999).

Although each statistic varies in content all illustrate that absence is extremely costly to an organisation. Costs can be split into two categories; direct and indirect, and can affect the origination itself, its employees and its customers or clients.

Direct costs include paying for sick pay and cover, both of which can be easily calculated. Indirect cost however, are harder to identify and calculate, but can include administration costs and time (Morris, 2001), poorer quality and service, lost production and management time. Also employee frustration, low morale and lowered job satisfaction can be seen as a cost of absence (Bolton & Hughes, 2001).

The present study does not examine the costs of absence, but how the actual 'absence management' impacts on absence both directly via behaviour and indirectly by aspects of the psychological contract.

Absence Management

Once an organisation has investigated all the possible reasons for its employees' absenteeism it can then start to implement suitable policies and procedures.

Organisations have a wide selection of existing policies to choose from (Harvey & Nicholson, 1993). Absence policies have moved away from simply controlling absenteeism and now focus on managing absence and creating an environment that

employees want to come to. Absenteeism policies fall into three categories; punitive, incentive and preventive (Taylor, 2000).

Punitive techniques manage absence; they have clear procedures, explain what they expect from the employee and what they will give in return, set targets on absence and monitor absence causes, length, frequency etc (Taylor, 2000). Punitive methods use punishment techniques to discourage absence, for example, restricted or reduced pay, return to work interviews and disciplinary procedures once a trigger level has been met (Evens & Walters, 2000). These types of techniques have many criticisms for example they have little affect in the short term, decrease morale whilst increasing turnover (Harvey & Nicholson, 1993), increased the rate of ill people attending work (Chatterji & Tilley, 2002), increase employee withdrawal and lower commitment and are seen as unfair as they punish those who are genuinely ill (Edwards & Whitson, 1993). However when Surveyed (CIPD, 2005) organisations ranked punitive methods as the most successful, most liked by employees, and were also found to be the most used.

Incentive techniques concentrate on encouraging attendance by using either financial or non-financial rewards, lottery systems or bonuses. Rewards for good attendance are designed to change people's attitudes towards attendance to more positive ones (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005). But these too have their limitations such as encouraging sick people to attend (Chatterji & Tilley, 2002), have little effect on long-term absence, and rewards can be seen as undermining if too small (Taylor, 2000). Research on the success of reward schemes has been contradictory, for instance the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Survey (2001) found that the number of organisations using attendance bonuses had increased, yet they were rated one of the least effective tools. Whilst other studies have found lower usage rates but positive responses on their effectiveness (Gee, 1999, in Evens & Palmer, 1997; Huczynski & Fitzpatrick, 1989). Lawler, (1981, cited in Porter, Bigley & Steers, 2003) argues that although attaching bonuses to attendance can be costly; this cost can be less than absenteeism, if reduced performance, financial costs and organisation reputation are taken into account. Other benefits that have been linked with the use of reward schemes include increased morale, teamwork and commitment etc (Taylor, 2000).

Finally preventive methods monitor causes of absence and find ways of reducing them, which in turn is hoped to lower absence levels. Preventive techniques can include

occupational health programmes, flexible working and rehabilitation (Landstad, Vinberg, Ivergård, Gelin, & Ekholm, 2001; Taylor, 2000).

Due to the limitations of all the above categories, an organisation would need to look at its employee's needs and expectations and use a mixture of techniques in order to design an effective absence policy (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2002). Also to ensure its success organisations need to make sure that higher levels of staff are committed, line managers are trained, the policy is implemented consistently and trade unions and employees are involved in the design and kept up-to-date on developments. (Taylor, 2000)

Both absence management techniques use a simple stimulus-responses explanation of behaviour, and suggest that organisations can manipulate its employees with the use of either rewards/reinforcers or punishment. Despite the behaviourists' simplistic explanation of behaviour and the ethical issues of its implementation, the application of theory has proven effective in many different organisational problems, including absence (Pedalino & Gambo, 1984, cited in Muchinsky, 2000).

Many organisations have now started to restrict sick pay in order to reduce absence, and this technique has proven effective in lowering absenteeism, short-term and long-term absence (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005). However a predicament facing these organisations is how to manage having two or more absence contract entitlements in place. When implementing new absence entitlements new employees will automatically be placed under these conditions. However older employees cannot be 'forced' to sign up to these conditions and therefore need to be persuaded, otherwise two different groups emerge in the company (ACAS, 1997). These groups may have different attitudes to absence, different cultures and expectations, and may also differ in their psychological contract expectation.

Psychological contract

Schein (1980) proposed that employers and employees define their expectations of each other and obligations to one another in an informal, unwritten contract, known as the psychological contract.

Every member of an organisation will have their own psychological contract, but as they join groups their values, beliefs and expectations modify to fit in with the groups culture (Makin, Cooper & Cox, 1996).

The employee considers the psychological contract more important than their formal one, and reacts more severely and emotionally when its conditions are broken by the organisation (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), for example, feelings of disappointment, frustration, distress, anger and resentment (Pete & Malone, 2000). Also behavioural outcomes from broken psychological contracts include decreased commitment, satisfaction, trust and citizenship (Robinson, 1996).

The traditional psychological contract offered elements such as trust, loyalty, commitment and conformity in exchange for security, flexibility, promotions etc (Arnold, 2005). However some authors (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995, cited in Leopold, Harris & Watson, 1999) argue that organisations are now enforcing new psychological contracts on their employees, that expect employees to commit to increased hours and responsibility, broader skills and readiness to change, in exchange for 'a job'. This has resulted in negative responses from employees, as well as feelings of violation, uncertainty of their self worth and identity (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995, cited in Leopold et al, 1999) and a decrease in contribution to organisation (Parks & Kiddler, 1994, cited in Arnold, 2005).

Anderson (1996) proposed that violations of the psychological contract occurred when organisational justice was not present. Organisational justice can be split into three categories; distributive justice, procedural justice and finally international justice (Pete, Martin & Goldrick, 2003).

Many researchers have theorised that absenteeism could be one behavioural outcome of psychological contract violation (Guest, 1996; Guest & Conway, 1997; Nicholson & Johns, 1985), as attitude and behaviour are connected (Connor & Armitage, 1978; Connor & Sparks, 1996, cited in Pete et al, 2003), and defined within the culture through communication and interaction (Nicholson & Johns, 1985). However a recent study by Pate et al, (2003) failed to find this connection.

The current researcher acknowledges this possible correlation, and asks how the different formal contracts regarding absence pay entitlement affect the informal psychological contract and absence attitudes and behaviour. To investigate this further four aspects of the psychological contract were identified; perceived value/worth, trust, commitment and fairness.

Perceived Value/Worth

In the traditional psychological contract the feeling of 'value' was given to the employee as part of the organisations terms and conditions (Arnold, cooper & Robertson, 1998). Employers made employees feel 'valued' by taking an interest in their opinions, feelings and rewarding their contributions (Bolton & Hughes, 2001).

However in today's organisations 'value' can not easily be recognised and the effects of this are unknown, for example on absence, performance, or other psychological characteristic such as commitment and trust (Pete et al, 2003).

Trust

The concept of 'trust' is a vital aspect of the psychological contract, as its terms and conditions are formed around a 'promise' (Rousseau, 1989). The definition of trust varies, but common traits include fairness, ethical and non-threatening behaviour, faith (Cook & Wall, 1980; Carnevale & Waschler, 1992) and one party becoming vulnerable to the other (Mishra, 1996). The study of organisational trust has been split into three categories; trust in the organisation, management and co-workers (Mollering, Bachmann & Hee lee, 2004).

Trust in management is based on information sharing or the lack of it (Tyler & Degoey, 1996), whilst co-worker trust is concerned with how reliable, fair, and ethical co-workers are (Cook & Wall, 1980). Both of which involve cognition-based trust and affect-based trust (Greenberg & Baron, 2000).

Trust can influence many different aspects within the organisation (Ferres, Connell, & Travaglione, 2004), for example, employee attitudes and relationships (McAllister, 1995), affective and continuance commitment (Tan & Tan, 2000; Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian & Casier, 2000), turnover (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991), absence, and can

add value (Cohen & Prusak, 2000) or give competitive advantage (Naphapier & Ghosal, 1998).

Recent research examining trust has found that certain people are more trusting than others for example, Jackson and Schuler (1990; cited in Taylor, 2000) found that younger members of staff had lower levels of trust and loyalty and Mayer & Davis (1999) proposed that trust could be a dispositional personal trait.

Commitment

Organisational commitment is usually considered in three dimensions; affective, continuance and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), however over recent years other researchers have suggested other segments areas organisational commitment might cover, for example, job involvement, career salience, protestant work ethic, union commitment, etc (Morrow, 1983; Randall & Cote, 1991, cited in Carmeli & Gefen, 2005).

The relationship between work commitment and withdrawal intention has received much attention with research indicating a connection between commitment and absence (Sagie, 1998), turnover (Cohen, 1993; Tett & Mayer, 1993) and performance (Brett et al., 1995). However Randall and Cote (1991) argued that many studies in this area have provided disappointing results, suggesting a new multivariate approach is needed to understand such a complex relationship and the general topic of organisational commitment. Similarly Guest (1992) found that organisational commitment could be affected by a number of different factors, for example, personal characteristic, experience, the job, structural factors and policies.

Fairness

Many researchers have examined the effects of perceived unfairness on absence and other aspects of organisational life (DeBoer, Bakker, Syroit, & Schaufeli, 2002). Within the organisation fairness can surround the distribution of outcomes (distributive fairness) or the processes of the organisation (procedural fairness) (Boer, et al, 2002). Feelings of unfairness arise when individual beliefs of certain conditions are not met in one of the two areas (Gilliland, 1993).

Much of the research on fairness in organisations stems from Adam's (1965) Equity theory, which suggests that individuals evaluate their own inputs and outputs and compare them to others in the organisation. If the perceived ratios are equal, the individual believes they are being treated fairly, however if the ratios are unequal, feelings of unfairness motivate the individual to react, to make the situation equal again (Greenberg & Baron, 2000). If the individual finds themselves in the underpayment situation, they may steal (Greenberg, 1990), leave or decrease their inputs (Arnold, 2005). Also as this individual has found themselves in an aversive working condition, voluntary absence could be used (DeBoer et al, 2002).

Similarly other studies looking at distributive unfairness have also found that those individuals that perceive themselves to be in an unfair position have higher levels of absence than those that perceive equity in the workplace (Geurts, Buunk & Schaufeil, 1994; Dittrich & Carrell, 1979; Rollinson 2002).

Studies looking at procedural unfairness have found connections with decreased trust and commitment (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993, cited in Makin et al, 1996).

2.2 Research Objectives and Hypothesis

Using the defined concepts and previous research the present study will attempt to fulfil three research objectives:-

1. To assess whether the two groups psychological contract scores differ, and which areas (i.e. trust, value, commitment, fairness) are most affected.
2. To assess whether the two groups attitudes towards absence differs.
3. To assess whether the second group has a lower absence levels, as the new contract was designed to do.

It is predicted that the first group will have a higher psychological contract score in comparison with the second group, as they feel more valued, have bought into the organisation and feel better treated. It is also predicted that the second group will have a higher score on absence attitudes as they will feel more pressured into attending due to them not receiving monetary benefits for being absent as the other group (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005). Finally it is predicted that the second group will have a lower absence level, due to the consequences of being absent being higher than the other group.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has looked at previous research into absence and absence management. Previous research indicates that absence policy does affect absence behaviour as employees react to the way it is communicated, implemented and take advantage of loop-holes (Dolton & Mesch, 1991; Farrell & Stamm, 1988). The current research assesses what affects there are having two absence contracts in place, and to the employees attitudes towards absence and their psychological contract by comparing the results from one branch of Tesco's. The next chapter will now address how the research objectives outlined above will be achieved.

Chapter 3

Methodology & Research Design

Chapter three outlines and presents a rationale for the research methods adopted to accomplish the three research objectives outlined in the previous chapter. It will justify the methodological stance adhered to throughout chapters three and four when discussing how this 'view point' determined the procedures and tools used (Bell, 1993, cited in Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Chapter three will outline the general design of the study and will discuss how the survey was designed using the concepts identified in chapter two, while chapter four details the techniques used for data analysis as well as the pilot study procedure and the instruments' validity and reliability.

3.1 Overview of Research Design

To achieve the objectives outlined in chapter two, a multi-method approach was planned (Denscombe, 2003). This allowed the researcher to address the three research questions from three different angles; objective data, interview material and subjective survey data. Although on the surface, this multi-method approach appears to mix the two paradigms of research, it does not (Creswell, 2003). The researcher adheres to a quantitative approach using a positivist and objectivist view to guide the design of the study (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). As 'reality' was considered an external event that 'acted upon' the individual and therefore measurable, collecting data via surveys and actual historical data was considered appropriate. The survey was standardised and developed using deducted information from previous theories and studies in similar areas, with the intention of formulating generalisations from the data collected (Bryman, 2004).

The quantitative approach was considered the most appropriate paradigm as it allowed the researcher to achieve a large number of responses in the shortest period of time (Brace, 2004). However quantitative research does have many limitations, such as, it is considered 'artificial' as it may not reflect 'real' behaviour and also interpretations may

differ between researcher and participants and between participants (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003).

When deciding on the most appropriate paradigm qualitative research was considered. Qualitative research could prove valuable when looking at attitudes towards the different absence policies and other affected concepts, as it would provide in-depth understanding (Bryman, 2004). However it was felt that the limited number of responses could not be justified in such a large organisation, when the aim of the study is to consider indirect costs of having two policies in place

3.2 Participants

Participants were taken from one branch of Tesco in the North-West region of the UK. The researcher requested data on the population framework, and although initially promised, was never provided. However, survey responses although low were fairly evenly split between the two groups, with 36 participants in the full payment group (G1) and 33 in the payment after three days group (G2). Due to the type of work, working hours and costs involved, sampling and distribution techniques were extremely limited. As the sample frame was considered reasonably small with the response rate for survey studies low, all employees were asked to take part in the study resulting in a random sampling technique (Punch, 2003).

Questionnaires were left at the staff reception and staff canteen. Posters were placed in staff areas and each member of staff was asked if they would like to take part as they came into work. This distribution technique potentially gave all employees the opportunity to take part. A sealed box was left at staff reception for participants to return their completed surveys in the envelopes provided. In addition to the envelopes, a cover letter was also attached to the survey, this outlined what the study was about, why it was being carried out, and information on how the responses should be given back and by when (Denscombe, 2003).

Although this method of distribution has its limitations, for example it further decreases the response rate, participants may feel that the return box was not 'safe', etc, it was really the only feasible method when considering the constraints upon the researcher due to both the nature and management of the organisation (Oppenheim, 1992).

The desired sampling size was approximately 100 responses from each group. This number was chosen as a target as it was felt this would allow for a meaningful analysis that would not be too time consuming, costly and hard to manage. Although questionnaires can potentially reach a large population, they tend to have the lowest response rate (Brace, 2004). Although the actual response rate cannot be calculated as the number of possible participants is not known, it is believed the response rate is well below the estimated average of 30% (Warhurst, 2005). Factors that may increase the response rate were examined and discussed further in the next section.

Participants were given a return by date on their cover letters, and the return box was collected the day after. However the box was left at the reception for a further 3 days in case of late returns. Responses were then put onto SPSS version 13 using the pre-codes ready for analysis (Denscombe, 2003).

3.3 Research Tools

Data collection was originally planned in three methods. Firstly historical data on absence levels from the branch under investigation (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Annual absence percentages for the two groups over a two year period or more, a break down of absence rates over the different departments, and population data for the two groups was requested. Both the store manager and Human Recourses manager agreed to this information being given. However after numerous attempts to collect this information, it became apparent they did not wish to reveal this data. This objective data was to be used to examine whether the two groups of absence contracts had different levels of absence and if the 'punishment' (G2) contract has the lowest, as anticipated by Tesco when designing the policy (Pollitt, 2004). Unfortunately this objective could not be achieved as the data was not provided.

The second approach proposed was an informal, semi-structured interview with the Human Resource Manager at the branch. This approach was to be used to get background information on the two contracts, in particular their differences, the aims and rational, an evaluation of the two contracts and the environment they create (Creswell, 2003) . However again the problem of access was an issue, and although originally granted, the HR manager made themselves unattainable and frequently blamed others, for example, interview questions were given twice via hard copies. On

the first occasion it was 'misplaced as they were sharing their office', and on the second they 'gave it to somebody else to post'.

The final technique used was surveys. The majority of the time allocated to the research project was taken up with survey design. As the research questions were around attitudes to absence and aspects of the psychological contract the majority of questions were in the form of likert scales collecting interval data (Arnold, 2005). Traditional likert scales give participants numerous statements reflecting an attitude dimension, which they choose whether they agree or disagree with and to what extent, usually on a five point scale with the middle point being neutral (Rollinson, 2002). For this survey a six point scale was used (Oppenheim, 1997). This eliminated the middle neutral response which participants usually go for, and forced them to chosen a side (Brace, 2004).

To try and reduce issues such as order effect, acquiescence, central tendency and pattern avoiding both negative and positive statements were used and particular attention was put on the statement orders and subsection ordering (Coolican, 1992, cited in Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Other layout considerations were use of headings, use of space and how to make the survey look attractive and professional (Oppenheim, 1997).

Headings were used to separate different attitude dimensions being studied, i.e. absence attitude, trust, commitment, fairness and perceived value etc. This gave the impression of the survey containing fewer questions (Oppenheim, 1997). Also it allowed participants to complete the questionnaire in small chunks and gave a sense of achievement when a section was finished (Brace, 2004). The questionnaire was evenly spread out over six pages, with background information, absence behaviour and absence attitudes having their own pages and the psychological contract aspects being grouped two to a page. The final page was dedicated to 'participants own comments' and restated what to do with finished questionnaires (Punch, 2003). To make the questionnaire look attractive and professional, the quality of paper, use of colour and whether to use double-sided print was considered (Saunders, et al, 2003). Research suggests that the use of colour has no impact on the response rate and therefore to keep costs down was not used (Brace, 2004). In the pilot study, surveys were printed using both sides, however for the actual survey it was decided to print on only one side, as this

not only looks more professional and improves the quality, it also eliminates the problems of participants missing questions printed on the reverse side, as was noticed in the pilot study (Oppenheim, 1997).

Another issue considered was that of language. Survey design guides suggest using clear, unambiguous language and avoiding jargon where possible (Brace, 2004). This was taken into account and attitude statements went through several drafts before being used in the survey (Denscombe, 2003). Finally the order of attitude statements and subsections was considered. Questionnaire design guides suggest that behaviour questions should come before attitude questions, as behaviour is easier to recall as it has already happened, whereas attitudes change and are continuously forming and may be harder to isolate (Oppenheim, 1992). Also it was advised to put more general questions first and then move to more specific questions (Brace, 2003). Oppenheim (1992) argued that a questionnaire formed a relationship with the participant as it communicates with them, and therefore trust needs to be formed before the participant is willing to divulge personal feelings and details. This point was taken into consideration when ordering the attitude statements and subsections. However as previous questionnaires seen by the researcher placed background details at the beginning, this format was followed.

The questionnaire used a self-completing standardised format so that a large sample could be gathered, that would be easy to code, enter and interpret (Oppenheim, 1992). Two types of errors were kept in mind when designing the questionnaire and procedures, firstly, those that arise from sampling errors and secondly, those that arise from non-sampling techniques such as coding and data entry (Brace, 2004).

3.4 The 'Survey'

Once constructs were highlighted in the deductive investigation, previous surveys were examined to find established sections that could be either adopted or adapted. Bourgue & Clark (1994. cited in Saunders et al, 2003) suggest that questionnaires can be developed in three ways; adopted previous surveys, adapted previous surveys or design your own survey. Despite the subject of absence being well studied the particular area under current investigation was not; therefore the survey instrument consists of all three methods.

Research guides suggest questionnaires should be around 6-8 pages long to get a good response rate. The current questionnaire was spread over six pages (Saunders et al. 2003). Below details the survey instrument that was developed (see appendix A).

- Cover letter*
- Biographical section*
- Absence Behaviour*
- Absence Attitude*
- Psychological contract aspects*
 - *Valued*
 - *Trust*
 - *Commitment*
 - *Fairness*
- Comments*

Cover Letter

The cover letter explained why the research was being conducted and the topic it was examining (Saunders et al, 2003). It gave an estimated maximum time of completion so that participants would know how much time was expected from them, and it stated that all questions should be answered honestly. It then explained the sampling technique and the importance of their response to the study. It also addressed ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity and how these issues would be dealt with. In the final paragraph participants were instructed on where, how and by when completed questionnaires should be given back, with a thank you message and further contact details to finish (Brace, 2003).

Biographic Section

The biographic section consisted if:-

- Gender (male 1, female 2)
- Age (in years)
- Department (BWS 1, Checkout 2, Clothing 3, Dotcom 4, Grocery 5, Health and Beauty 6, Non-Foods 7, Produce 8, Provisions 9, Bakery 10, Services 11 & Other 12.)
- Employee Status (Full time 1, Part time 2)
- Tenure (in years)

- Contract Type (full payment 1, first three days no payment 2)
- Know differences between two contracts (Yes 1, No 2)

This ‘background’ data was collected as previous research suggests that gender, age, peers and tenure play a part in absence attitude formation and behaviour (Keller, 2003). Contract type was needed to separate the participants into the two identified groups. Also as the study was looking at the effects of having different contracts, on employees, it was felt necessary to establish if the employees themselves knew of the different terms and conditions each group had. If the employees were not aware of these differences then the actual contract conflict could not have had an impact on their absence attitude or behaviour.

Absence Behaviour

This section was designed to collect subjective absence behaviour data from the participants. Questions used in this section were taken from Hayes’s (2003) survey used to examine causes of absence among social services staff. Data was collected in interval format (frequency and duration) and nominal format (causes). The section consisted of:-

- Frequency of absence (occurrences in days)
- Duration of absence (length in days)
- Actual cause of last two absences (‘Monday Morning’ 1, Hangover 2, Waiting for repairs 3, Waiting for Delivery of Goods 4, Tiredness 5, Anxiety 6, Depression 7, Personal Problems 8, Bullying/harassment at work 9, Family Responsibilities 10, Bereavement 11, Transportation Difficulties 12, Medical Appointment 13, Ill Health, Debility or injury 14, Back or Musculoskeletal Problems 15, Other 16.)

This data was collected to examine if the two groups absence behaviour differed, in areas such as frequency, duration and cause. Although there is a link between attitudes and behaviour, one does not always predict another (Arnold et al,1998). Even if the two groups did have different attitudes towards absence and there psychological contract aspects varied, their actual behaviour may have been comparable because of similar organisational strains upon the two groups. However as the terms and conditions of the contracts were not the same, interpretation of what is acceptable absence behaviour may change between the two groups as does their individual cost/benefit analysis (Aamolt,

2004). As this information is ‘remembered’ events it was not relied upon too strongly, and is one reason why actual absence data was requested.

Absence Attitudes

Attitudes in absence were collected using a six point likert scale. The first four questions were taken from Buchan and Seccombe’s (1995) study on nurse absenteeism, while the last six questions were designed using previous absence literature and comments observed from Tesco employees (Taylor, 2000; Evens & Palmer, 1997, Swain & Strach, 1995).

Psychological Contract

To examine the psychological contract and if the two groups differed, four psychological aspects were identified (see chapter two) and researched to form the following constructs. Constructs were measured using 5-6 statements. Although it could be argued using such few statements cannot really assess the constructs identified, other surveys have successfully used a limited number of items in their investigation, for example DeBoer, et al (2002). Also if items were made longer, so to would the survey time, and this may have limited the number of responses (Brace, 2004).

Feel Valued

To measure employees perceived ‘value’ six statements were designed using existing literature in employees’ perceived value and Eisenberger, Huntingdon, Hutchinson & Sowa’s (1986) survey instrument measuring “perceived organisational support”, for example, “this organisation is willing to help me when I need a special favour”, “the organisation values my contribution to it’s well-being”, and “the organisation cares about my opinion”. Statements were altered to address perceived value and absence.

Trust

To measure the amount trust participants had 6 attitude statements were formed. Statements one, two and four were adapted from Cummings and Bromiley’s (1966) ‘*Organisational Trust Inventory*’ (*short form*), while the rest of the questions were designed using secondary data (Cook & Wall, 1980; Greenberg & Baron, 2000; Ferres & Connell, 2004) and comments observed from the population studied. All of the questions, except question three, looked at trust in management, whereas question three looked at co-worker trust (Cook & Wall, 1980). Adapted and designed questions were

tailored towards the particular situation found in this branch, i.e. two different absence entitlement contracts working simultaneously in one branch. Although the number of statements could have been increased to incorporate the three areas of trust identified in chapter 2, to keep the overall length of the survey down each section was limited to six statements.

Commitment

Despite the many existing surveys on commitment (Mowdey et al 1979, Bateman & Strassers, 1984; Warr et al, 1979; Allen & Mayer, 1990, all cited in Arnold, 2005), due to the nature of the study they could not be used in their current form, as not all dimensions of commitment affect absence and existing questions were considered too general. Instead commitment statements for this study were designed or adapted from previous instruments personalising them to match the current situation being studied.

The first commitment question measures continuance commitment and was adapted from Allen & Mayer's (1990) eight item scale. The second question was adapted from Spector and Jex's (1991) one item '*intention to quit*' measure. The fourth question was also adapted from an existing instrument (Travaglione, 1998) measuring affective commitment. Questions five and six were tailored to the situation under investigation using secondary data (Arnold, 2005; Rollinson, 2002) and comments observed from the target audience to guide the statement. Question three was left general to assess how much participants 'enjoyed their job' as Johns (1997) suggests that those individuals that like their job have lower absence levels as they try to attend even when genuinely ill.

Fairness

For the fairness section of the survey all statements were designed using secondary data (Deboer et al, 2002; Gilliland, 1993; Greenberg & Baron, 2000; Rollinson, 2002; Makin et al, 1996) and observed comments from the target population, as no pre-existing instruments were found that could have been used.

The first statement addresses general fairness, whereas the following four statements are directed towards to situation found in this particular branch. Statement four looked at harmonisation (Greenberg & Baron, 2000) and assessed the affects on the less advantaged group, for example does not having the same benefits make them feel as

'second class citizens'. The last statement examines how the participants perceive the way they are actually treated and how this differs, if at all, to other members of staff. As the issue of consistency is highlighted in many writings on absence attitudes and behaviour, it was felt necessary to address this matter in the survey (Greenberg & Baron, 2000).

Comments

The final page of the questionnaire is left open for employees to make their own comments on the topic. Questionnaire design guides recommend adding this section as it gives participants the impression that the researcher is interested in what they have to say. Also as all previous questions have been pre-determined closed questions this gives the participant a chance to add something that they couldn't before, which may prove valuable (Brace, 2004).

3.5 Summary

This chapter explained that the researcher took a quantitative approach to the research question stated in chapter two. It has detailed how the study was carried out and justified why surveys were the most appropriate and the way the sample was chosen and study carried out. It also went through the survey instrument explaining where statement came from and the layout. The next chapter will now look at how the data collected was analysed, the validity and reliability of the instrument and how the pilot study was conducted.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

Following on from the last chapter, chapter four will examine the pilot study, issues of validity and reliability, and address how the data gathered from the surveys was analysed.

4.1 Pilot Study

Traditionally pilot studies are given to a sample of the intended research population, so that data can be collected to assess the validity and reliability of constructs and item statements used in the instrument (Saunders et al, 2003). However due to the numerous constraints imposed on the researcher, a more contemporary procedure was used instead. The researcher gathered four members of the intended population and gave them each a copy of the survey including the cover letter. Participants were asked to read through and complete the survey, paying special attention to wording, format, spelling and grammar mistakes, ease of flow and instruction comprehension. The researcher took notes on speed of participants and where participants spent the most time on particular questions. Participants talked through any confusion or problems they encountered and changes were made where appropriate. Although this method did not check validity and reliability in a statistical way, it did provide valuable and insightful information that could not have been achieved through a more traditional approach. For example how participants felt about the survey, issues regarding statements, participant suggestions regarding format and wording and a small debate occurred concerning absence within the organisation and how absence was dealt with.

4.2 Validity

To test for validity a Person's R Correlation was conducted on the mean scores of the five concepts (see table 10 in Chapter five) (Clegg, 1982). These results illustrate a strong relationship between the aspects identified and the psychological contract and a relationship between attitudes towards absence and the psychological contract.

However not all the aspects of the psychological contract correlated with each other or attitudes towards absence. For example, perceived value correlated with absence attitude (.230), trust (.345), and commitment (.287) but not fairness (.194). Trust correlated with value, commitment (.427) and fairness (.254) but not absence attitude (.132). Commitment correlated with value and trust but not fairness (.071) and absence attitude (.050). Finally Fairness correlates with trust and absence attitude (.305) but not commitment or value.

4.3 Reliability

To assess the internal consistency of the items used in each of the five scales a Cronbach's Co-efficient alpha was used (see table below) (Coakes, Steed & Dzidic, 2006). The table shows that the results of the Cronbach's Co-efficient alpha test were generally low, therefore suggesting that reliability is also low. However this could be due to the low number of items used in the scales or the limited number of responses (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

Scale	Cronbach's alpha	Number of Items
Attitudes Towards Absence	.548	10
Value	.409	6
Trust	.370	6
Commitment	-.763	6
Fairness	.507	5

4.4 Data Analysis

Once data was entered onto SPSS all responses were checked for incorrect codes and missing data. Six participants' responses were not used due to missing data concerning attitudes. Those participants with missing age date (5) were still used due to age not being a significant variable in this study. Also those responses missing question 6 (*Which absence contract are you currently on?*) were filled in by the research as those participants who had been with the company for less than two years were automatically put onto the second contract. As age and tenure had been asked for in years, this data was then coded into groups (see chapter five) ready for analysis. Due to the limited number of responses stronger statistical tests could not be used and therefore descriptive statistics were carried out instead (Saunders et al, 2003).

Distribution patterns are displayed using tables, bar graphs and pie charts. These illustrate how the participant population was dispersed over age ranges, departments, gender, tenure, hours worked and contract types. To address the research objectives stated in chapter two, the two contract groups mean scores for the psychological contract and attitudes towards absence had to be worked out and compared. When looking at the participants responses question 7 (*Are you aware of the differences between the two absence contracts?*) was vital. This question demonstrated that not all participants were aware of differences, and therefore how could the contract affect their attitude. To combat this, the two groups were divided into two categories (those that knew the differences and those that did not).

To calculate the psychological contract total the four aspects identified in chapter 2 (perceived value, fairness, trust, commitment) were added together. Then results of the total psychological contract, attitudes towards absence, trust, commitment, value and fairness were segregated into the four participant groups and mean scores were calculated using SPSS (Bryman & Cramer, 2005). These mean scores were then compared using a bar graph (see chapter five).

4.5 Summary

The above chapter extended upon the methodology detailed in chapter four, by explaining and justifying the pilot study, assessing the instruments validity and reliability and described how data analysis was conducted. The next chapter will show the results of the described data analysis, followed by chapters six and seven that will discuss the results and address how they relate to the research hypothesis and previous research, while making suggestions for further research.

Chapter 5

Research Findings

The previous chapter detailed how data was collected and analysed. This chapter will build upon this and present the findings of the data analysis. This will then be followed by the Discussion chapter (chapter 6) which will pull together the findings from this study and that of previous research and present how these findings can contribute to the area of absence management.

5.1 Distributions

Gender

The end sample consisted of 24 male participants (34.8%) and 45 female participants (65.2%), resulting in an unbalanced split between the genders. Possible reasons and implications of this distribution will be examined in the next chapter.

Age

Participants were originally asked to give their age in years, however once all data had been placed onto SPSS age groups were defined as it was felt individual ages could not be used successfully when analysing age with other variables. Ten age groups were defined each increasing by 5 years. A break down of age groups can be found in table: 1 and age group distribution is shown on Figure 1

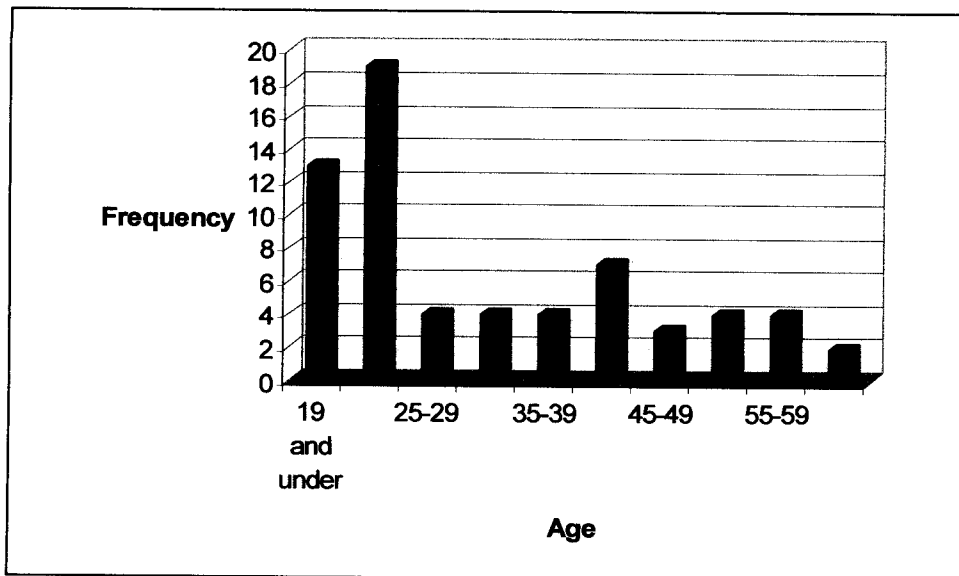


Figure 11: Age Group Distribution

Five participants chose not to give their age. However, as the age variable was not essential to the initial study objectives, their responses were still used. Frequency analysis revealed the mean age to be 32, the median age to be 24 and the mode age as 19.

Table 12: Age Group

	Frequency	Percent
19 and under	13	18.8
20-24	19	27.5
25-29	4	5.8
30-34	4	5.8
35-39	4	5.8
40-44	7	10.1
45-49	3	4.3
50-54	4	5.8
55-59	4	5.8
60 and above	2	2.9
Total	64	92.8
Missing	5	7.2
Total	69	100.0

When comparing age groups with absence periods, the table (2) below shows that the 20-24 age group had the most reported periods of absence, followed by the 19 and under group, and then the 40-44 age group, with the 60 and over age group having the lowest reported absence periods. Table 3, which compares age groups and absence

duration, shows that the majority of absences lasted either 1 or 2 days, the majority of which were caused by the first two youngest age groups.

Table 13: Age Groups and Absence Periods

Days⇨ Age Groups⇩	0	1	2	3	4	5	8	10	12	Total
19 and under	3	3	3	1	2	0	0	1	0	13
20-24	4	4	2	5	2	1	1	0	0	19
25-29	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
30-34	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
35-39	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
40-44	2	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
45-49	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
50-54	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
55-59	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
60 and above	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	11	18	16	9	6	1	1	1	1	64

Table 14: Age Groups and Absence Duration

Days⇨ Age Groups⇩	0	1	2	3	4	6	7	14	2 Weeks and Over	Total
19 and under	3	4	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	13
20-24	5	3	6	4	0	0	0	0	1	19
25-29	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
30-34	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	4
35-39	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
40-44	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	7
45-49	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
50-54	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	4
55-59	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
60 and above	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	12	16	16	8	3	1	4	2	1	64

Department

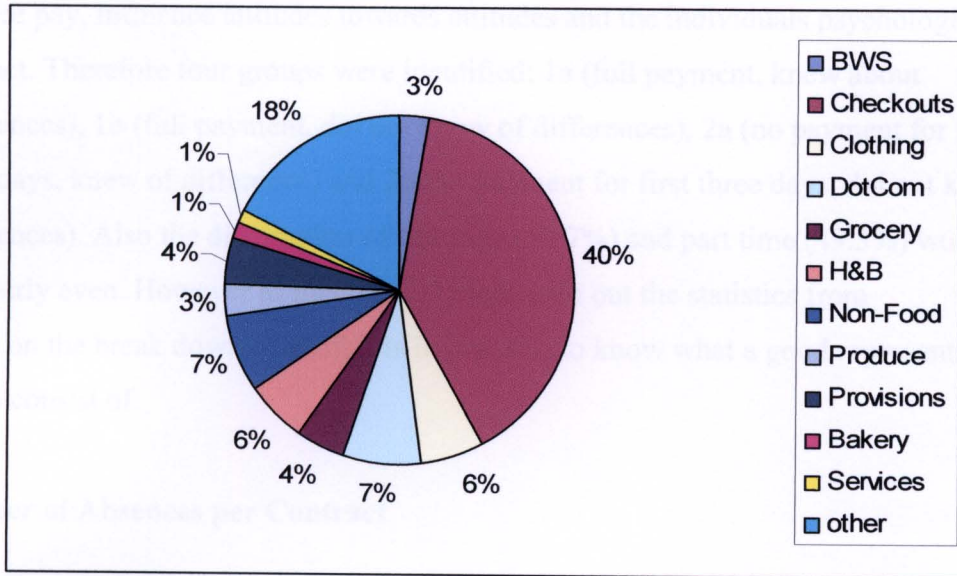


Figure 12: Department Responses

The pie chart shows an uneven distribution of responses, with the most feedback from the checkout department. The second largest area of responses is the 'other' category, which is made up of lots of smaller groups mainly from the stockroom, offices and reception. On the surface the checkout department may appear over-represented; however this is the largest department within the store, with other departments consisting of small teams. Nevertheless without the objective figures from Tesco, that were requested, it is impossible to analyse how close this sample group is to a representation of the store.

Contract

Table 15: Contract

	Frequency	Percent	Understanding	
			Yes	No
Full payment	36	52.2	31	5
First 3 Days No Payment	33	47.8	20	13
Total	69	100.0	51	18

The distribution of employees across the two absence contracts were fairly even (see table 4), with group one having 36 participants and group two having 33 participants. However, the survey also revealed that not all participants knew the differences between

the two contracts, which begs the question, how can contractual differences regarding absence pay, influence attitudes towards attitudes and the individuals psychological contract. Therefore four groups were identified; 1a (full payment, knew about differences), 1b (full payment, did not know of differences), 2a (no payment for first three days, knew of difference) and 2b (no payment for first three days, did not know of differences). Also the distribution of full time (50.7%) and part time (49.3%) workers was fairly even. However as mentioned before with out the statistics from Tesco on the break down of staff, it is impossible to know what a good representation would consist of.

Number of Absences per Contract

Table 16: Contract Absences

Number of Absences	Contract 1 (people)	Contract 2 (people)
0	5	8
1	8	10
2	10	7
3	6	3
4	6	2
5	0	1
8	0	1
10	0	1
12	1	0
Total Absence	82	64
Mean	2.21	1.93
Median	2	1
Mode	2	1

Table 5 shows that employees on contract 1 (82 periods) have in total more periods of absence that those employees on contract 2 (64 periods), although both groups have a mean average of 2 absences per 18 months. However this information is based on employee recollection and not subjective absence data.

Reason Given for Absence

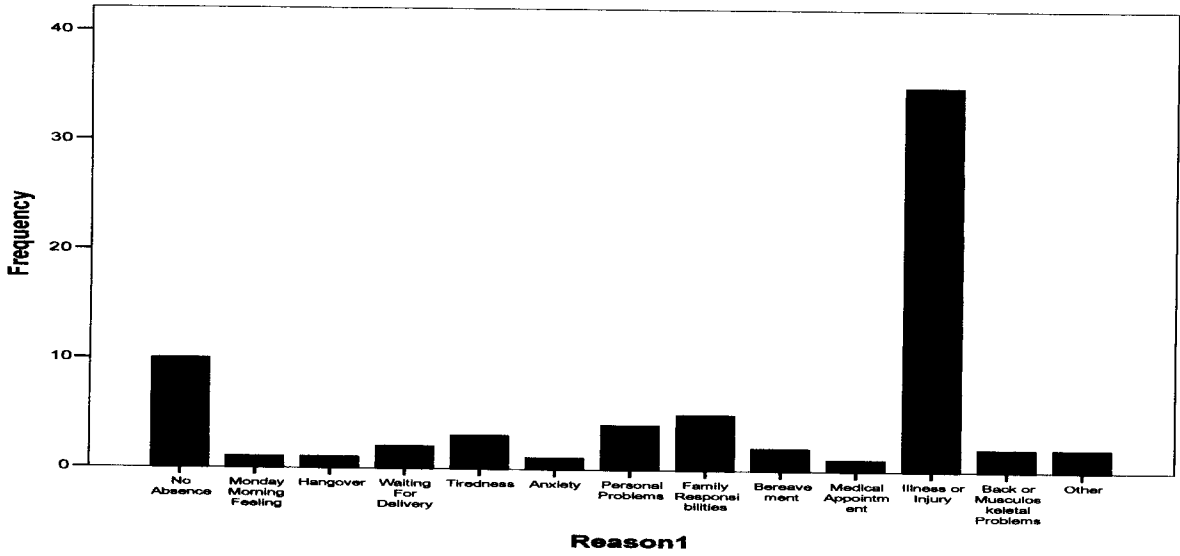


Figure 13: Reason 1

On the first reason of absence the number of participants that responded ‘no absence’ was 14.5%. The most common reason given for the first absence was illness/injury which received 50.7% of the total responses, with family responsibilities (7.2%) and personal problems (5.8%) following.

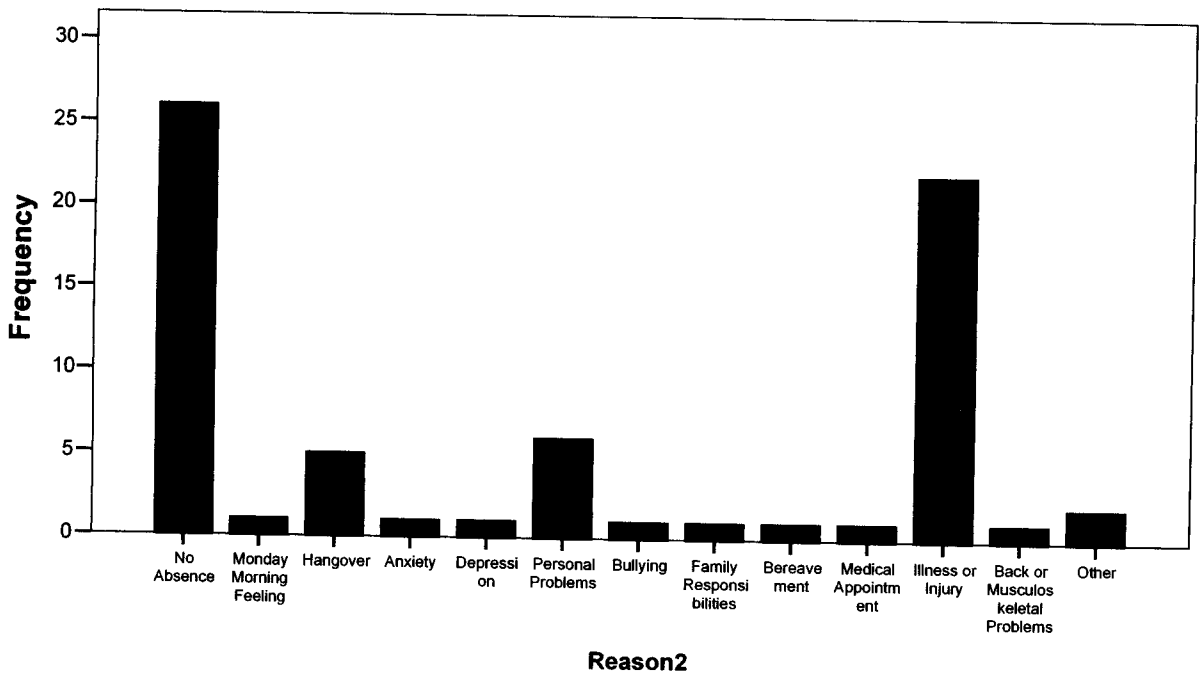


Figure 14: Reason 2

On the second reason of absence the number of participants that responded ‘no absence’ increased to 37.7%. The most frequent reason given for the second absence was illness/injury which received 31.9%, followed by personal problems (8.7%) and surprisingly hangover (7.2%).

When comparing reason with gender it was found that illness/injury category and ‘no absence’ was the first two reasons for both genders, with the female participants recording family and personal problems next, whereas males recorded back or musculoskeletal problems. On the second reason for absence given, again illness/injury and no absence was the first two reasons given, however both genders then reported personal problems, and interestingly females reported ‘hangover’ as being the cause.

Table 17: Reason 1

Women	Frequency	Men	Frequency
Illness/injury	25	Illness/injury	10
(no absence)	5	(no absence)	5
Family Responsibilities	4	Back/ Musculoskeletal Problems	2
Personal Problems	3	Hangover	1
Waiting for Delivery	2	Tiredness	
Tiredness		Anxiety	
Bereavement	1	Personal Problems	
Other		Family Responsibilities	
Anxiety		Medical Appointment	
		other	

Table 18: Reason 2

Women	Frequency	Men	Frequency
Illness/injury	17	(no absence)	11
(no absence)	15	Illness/injury	5
Personal Problems	4	Personal Problems	2
Hangover		Other	
Back/ Musculoskeletal Problems	1	Tiredness	1
Bereavement		Anxiety	
Depression		Hangover	
Family Responsibilities		Bullying	

Tenure

Table 19: Tenure

	Frequency	Percent
0-11 months	10	14.5
12-23 months	14	20.3
24-35 months	8	11.6
36-47 months	13	18.8
48-59 months	13	18.8
60-71 months	3	4.3
84-95 months	4	5.8
96-107 months	1	1.4
121 months and above	3	4.3
Total	69	100.0

As with age, tenure was reported by the participants in years and months, and then transcribed into the above groups, each of which increases by 12 months. Those individuals with two or more years of tenure with the store were generally on contract one, although some employees did opt to change to contract two once the new contract was being implemented. Those participants with less than 2 years tenure with the store would have been automatically placed under the conditions of contract two. The table indicates that the majority of responses came from those individuals that had 1-2 years of tenure (20.3%) (Contract 2) or 4-6 years of tenure (18.8%) (Contract 1).

When comparing tenure groups and periods of absence, it appears that the 1-2 year group had the highest amount of absence periods, of which the majority were 2 days. The second highest group for periods of absence appears to be the 4-5 and 5-6 year groups that had the majority of their reported absences as just 1 day. However as table 5 showed before those employees on contract 1 in fact have the highest level of absence, the current table may not reflect this because it does not take into account those employees that opted to change from contract 1 to 2.

Table 20: Tenure and Periods of Absence

Table	Periods of Absence	0	1	2	3	4	5 or more periods of absence	Total
	0-11 months	4	4	1	1	0	0	10
	12-23 months	3	4	2	2	1	2	14
	24-35 months	0	2	3	0	2	1	8
	36-47 months	2	3	5	2	1	0	13
	48-59 months	2	2	2	4	2	1	13
	60-71 months	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
	84-95 months	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
	96-107 months	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	121 months and above	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
	Total	13	18	17	9	8	4	69

Tenure and Absence Duration

	0	1	2	3	4	6	7	14	Over 2 Weeks	Total
0-11 months	4	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	10
12-23 months	3	3	3	2	1	0	1	1	0	14
24-35 months	1	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	8
36-47 months	2	3	2	1	1	0	3	1	0	13
48-59 months	2	5	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	13
60-71 months	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
84-95 months	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	4
96-107 months	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
121 months and above	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	15	16	16	9	3	1	4	3	1	69

5.2 Inferential Statistics

Once all survey data had been put into SPSS v.13, mean scores were calculated for each of the four groups highlighted above (1a, 1b, 2a & 2b) on psychological contract, and absence attitudes, and the individual psychological aspects outlined in previous chapters, in order to compare the groups to see if there were significant differences, as previous research would suggest.

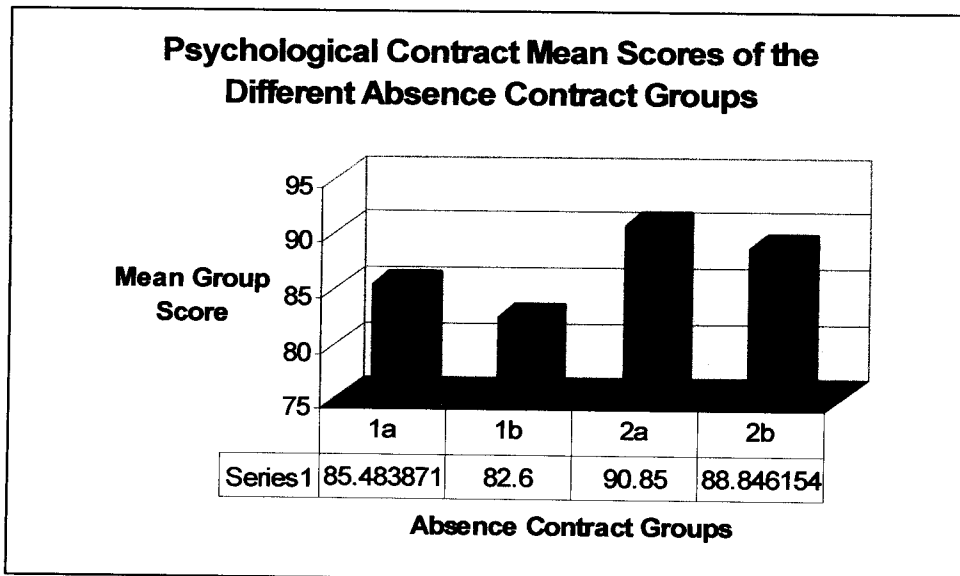


Figure 15: Psychological Mean Responses

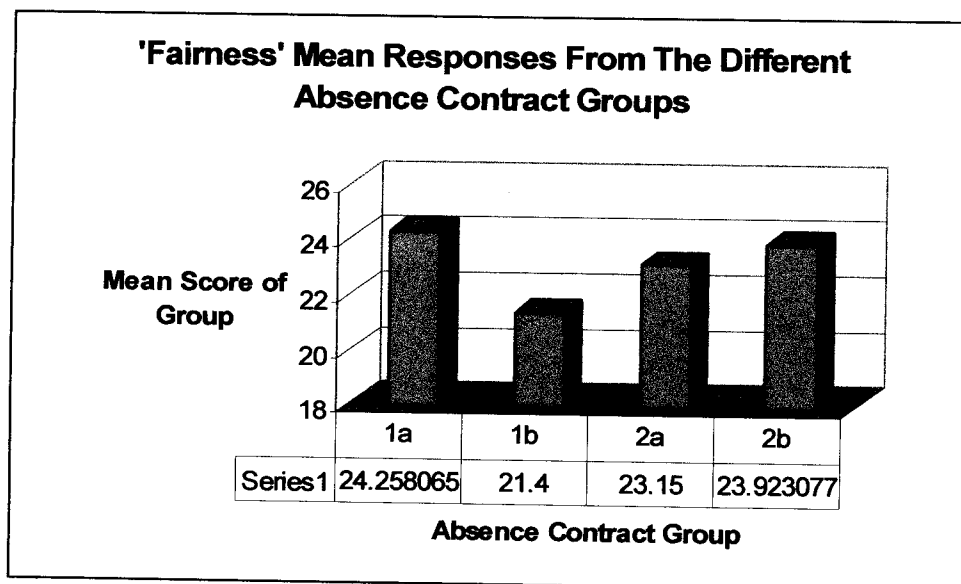


Figure 16: Fairness Mean Responses

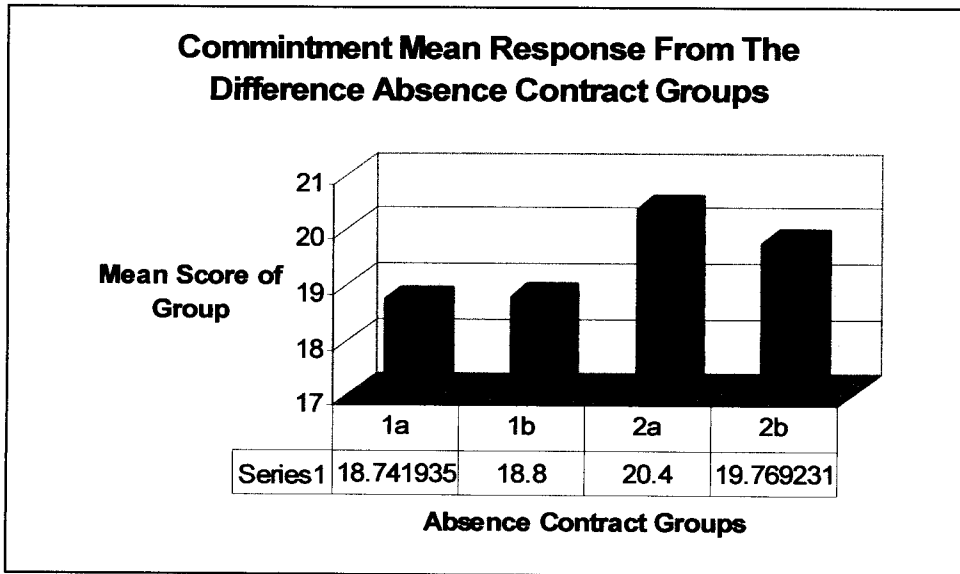


Figure 17: Commitment Mean Responses

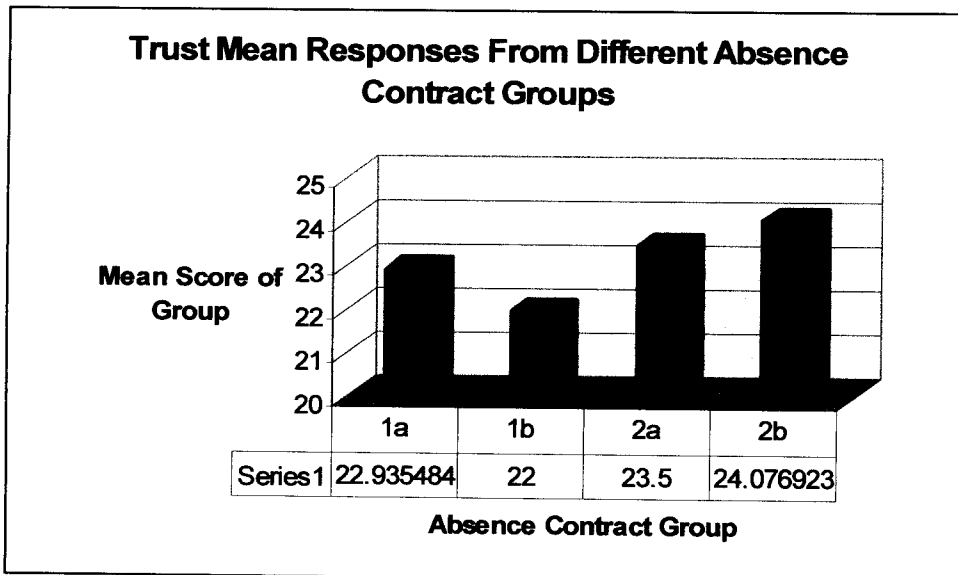


Figure 18: Trust Mean Responses

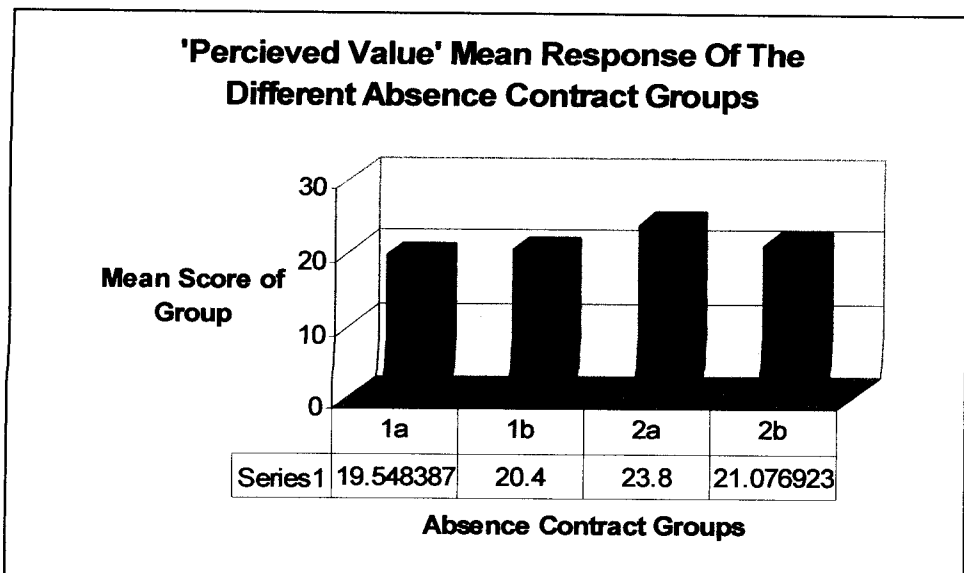


Figure 19: Perceived Value Mean Responses

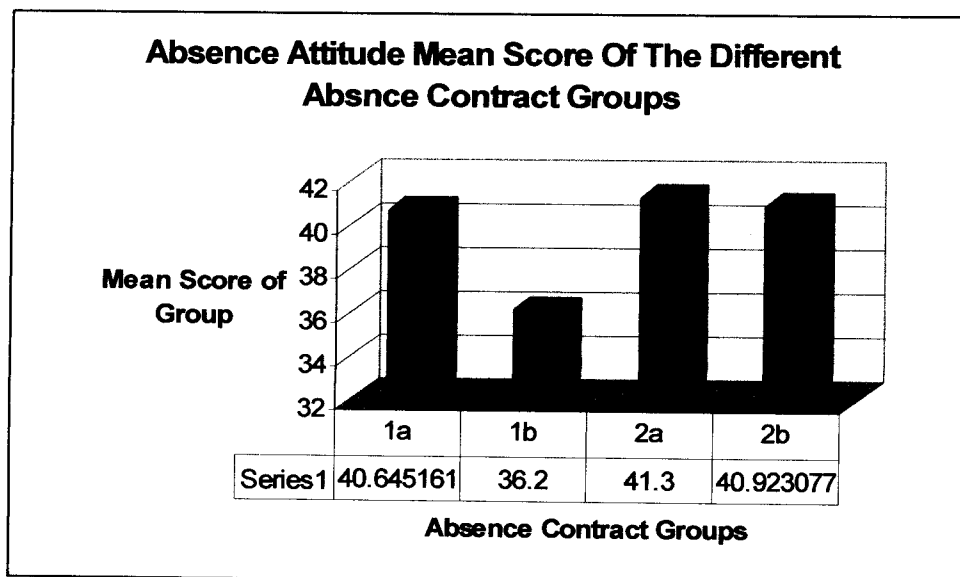


Figure 20: Attitudes towards Absence Mean Responses

The above graphs indicate no significant differences in responses between the four groups and the psychological aspects or absence attitude, implications and reasons for this will be discussed in the next chapter. Also when age and gender variables were looked at in comparison to mean scores of psychological contract and absence attitude, again no significant difference was found.

Table 22: Results from Persons Correlation

		Psychological Contract Total	Perceived Value	Trust	Commitment	Fairness
Attitudes Towards Absence	Pearson Correlation	.276(*)	.230(*)	.132	.050	.305(**)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.011	.029	.140	.340	.005
Perceived Value	Pearson Correlation	.802(**)	1	.345(**)	.287(**)	.194
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.002	.008	.055
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.717(**)	.345(**)	1	.427(**)	.254(*)
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.002		.000	.018
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.599(**)	.287(**)	.427(**)	1	.071
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.008	.000		.281
Fairness	Pearson Correlation	.512(**)	.194	.254(*)	.071	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.055	.018	.281	

The results from Persons r Correlation shows a strong relationship between all aspects identified as contributing to the psychological contract and the psychological contract (Fairness .512, perceived value .802, commitment .599 and trust .717). It also has a weaker relationship with attitude towards absence (.276)

5.3 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the current study. In the next chapter the author will report how these results impact on the research objectives, previous research and implications for the general area of absence management. Chapter 6 will also put forward suggestions for why the present study found the results that it did, and put forward suggestions for future investigations.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will explain the research findings, in particular looking at how they impact on previous literature, the research hypotheses and implications for the organisation. This will then be followed by chapter seven which will consider future research and recommendations to organisations.

The research objectives for this study were to:-

4. Assess whether the two group's psychological contract scores differed, and which areas (i.e. trust, value, commitment, and fairness) were most affected.
5. Assess whether the two groups attitudes towards absence differed.
6. Assess whether the second group had a lower absence level, as the new contract was designed to do.

When comparing the two groups (1a & 2a) mean scores on the total psychological contract, the four independent concepts and absence attitudes, no significant difference was observed (see chapter 5), suggesting that the two groups were not affected by the different terms and conditions of their individual contracts. This finding goes against the current research hypotheses and current literature. For example theory such as absence policy affects absence behaviour (Dolton & Mesch, 1991; Farrell & Stamm, 1988), equity theory (Adam, 1965), cost-benefit theory (Aamodt, 2004), psychological contract violations (Pete et al, 2003) etc. Possible explanations for the current studies finding fall under two categories; methodological and theory limitations.

6.2 Methodological limitations

The survey instrument itself could have influenced the results. For example the Cronbach's alpha score was low, signifying a low reliability (Coakes et al, 2006). Therefore perhaps, scale items needed to be rephrased and more research and pre-testing was needed to make sure all items were measuring the same thing. Also more items per construct may have been required to increase validity (Hussey & Hussey,

1997). Another methodological limitation of the study could have been sampling technique and size (Saunders et al, 2003). The methods of sampling available were limited due to the constraints put on the researcher by the host organisation. However as the researcher relied on volunteer participation this could have affected the type of people that took part in the study. For example, research suggests that although the average absence is 8.5 days per employee (McHugh, 2002), in many organisations the majority have far less than this, whilst a small group of employees has a much higher absence level (Evens & Walters, 2002). It is suggested therefore that those employees with a higher level of absence may have preferred not to take part as they may have feared repercussions. This fear may have been heightened due to an increase of interest around absence by the host organisation, for example managers meetings, a visit from senior head office staff, an increase in disciplinary and absence reviews and posters in staff areas commenting on high absence levels. When speaking to members of staff many remarked that they did not believe this was an independent piece of research and thought that Tesco management were involved, and even when reassured that no member of Tesco would see results they were still unhappy to take part. Also research has found that some people are more willing to take part in survey research, and this may have affected people's decision to take part (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

Another research limitation was the end sample size. It was hoped for a larger sample size, and as already mentioned the sampling technique will have played a major part (Creswell, 2003). However another reason for a limited number of responses could be due to members of management staff. For example the receptionists were asked to give out surveys to staff as they came on shift, however although they agreed, as the week went on they may have found this tiresome, may have forgot, were too busy or simply could not be bothered. Furthermore managers kept hiding the response box as they did not think it was appropriate to have it on show. When the researcher asked members of staff if they had filled out a survey many did not know anything about it.

6.3 Theory Limitations

Once all methodological limitations were ruled out the researcher then turned their attention to weakness in theory. For example theories that rely on a conscious cost-benefit analysis assume that absence is an intentional decision and that payment is a key factor (Aamodt, 2004). However as Youngblood (1984, cited in Smither, 1994) suggests other things may be more important to the individual, for example a sick child that

needs looking after, and whether or not they will be paid is insignificant in comparison, and perhaps does not enter their decision making. Also even when an employee is ill, other elements may affect their decision to attend or not, for example, a strong work ethic, don't want to let colleagues down, or are afraid of consequences, such as disciplinary procedures (Carmeli & Gefen, 2005), all of which were commented on by participants in the survey.

“I try not to take many days off, mainly because the department suffers when I'm not in.”

“Employees are frightened to be off sick.”

“When people are off work, the burden should not fall on the staff who are present”.

Equity theory (Adam, 1965) suggests that employees weight up their own inputs and outputs and compare them with similar employees; however employees may not be consciously aware of the differences between contracts (Arnold, 2005). Out of the 69 people used in the study, 18 people admitted to not knowing the difference between the two contracts (see chapter 5, table 4). Similarly when the researcher was collecting information before the survey and while the pilot study was taking place, employees on the second contract were unaware of older employees receiving full absence pay. Also over time employees may forget this information or change their opinion to eliminate the tension and frustration that knowing the differences creates (Arnold, 2005). On the comments part of the survey people stressed their feelings on how unfair the current system is and how everyone should be on the same contract.

“I find it a little sad that absence contracts should differ but understand why they exist. However wage structures could be a little more flexible to encourage morale and better attendance”.

“I do believe that everyone should be on the same contract to be fair to all”.

“There should be a staggered entitlement to sick pay for all”.

The third research objective was to examine which contract group had the lowest level of absence, with the prediction that the second group would have the lowest due to them not receiving a monetary bonus, as the other group did. Self reported absence (see table 5, chapter 5) was slightly lower for group 2 (64 periods) than group 1 (84 periods),

however without the subjective absence records this finding cannot be verified, nor can a pattern be established as it is unclear what the real difference between absence rates is as the researcher is only going off employees memory. However if the second group are having less absences, the question is why; as the results from the study suggest there is no difference in absence attitudes or their psychological contract with the company. Possible explanations for this inconsistency could be that people were not honest in their responses, the survey did not tap into the right areas (Punch, 2003), attitudes do not always predict behaviour, or something other than payment affects people's decision to be absent (Arnold, 2005).

The distribution patterns illustrate an uneven distribution between age, gender and department. However this could be due to a number of factors for example, some departments have larger teams than others, the nature and climate of the organisational sector for example part-time work and female or student population, personality characteristics, and also as the researcher worked for the organisation this may make some people are willing to take part. The distribution of contracts was a fairly even split, however the number of participants not knowing the differences between the two contracts was higher than expected.

6.4 Findings Related to theory

Nicholson (1977) proposed that new employees had higher levels of absence as they were adjusting to the new organisational climate. However the current research found that older employees recorded slightly more periods of absence than new employees. One reason for this could be that newer employees were placed under contract 2 and did not receive payment, although this reason was not reflected in their attitudes towards absence or psychological contract. Johns (1977) also proposed that new employees learned organisational norms via social exchange. In the current store a pilot study was conducted with older employees moving onto the new contract, bring with them their established norms and culture. Therefore when new employees came into the store and modified their behaviour, attitudes and psychological contract to fit in with the group (Makin et al 1997) a new culture was not formed as previously predicted. However, if older employees had not moved onto to the new contract, this may not have been the case.

Keller's (1983) researcher indicated that those employees with lower levels of absence tended to be older, married employees with higher levels of tenure and position. The current study only obtained data on tenure, age and absence periods; however Keller's finding was not replicated as no obvious difference could be seen between the groups of employees. A reason for this difference could be that when Keller was conducting his research tenure and position increased with age as employees stayed with the same organisation. However today this is not the case, especially in the grocery trade with organisations recruiting more retired people, who cannot help falling ill due to their declining immune system (Leopold et al, 1999). Previous studies also indicated that females take more absences than males, due to family responsibilities (Huczynski & Fitzpatrick, 1989). The current study also found this pattern, although the ratio of female to male responses was extremely uneven, which could be a factor of the organisational climate that attracts more female workers. The main reason reported by both genders was illness/injury; however after this reasons started to differ with males reporting back/musculoskeletal reasons and females reporting personal problems or family responsibility. Research suggests that family responsibilities would have been reported more, however, Tesco has many systems in place to help 'mums' which may indicate that Tesco has realised that this is a common reason for absence (Porteous, 1997).

A lot of research has been conducted around psychological contract violation and has argued that absence is one of many behavioural outcomes (Pete et al, 2003; Guest, 1996; Guest & Conway, 1997; Nicholson & Johns, 1985). However this research indicates that the psychological contract was not affected by having more than one formal contract in place with different pay entitlements. Reasons for this may include that individual psychological contracts were modified to fit in the organisational groups (Makin et al, 1997), that as the employee knew of the differences before they started the job their psychological contract was not broken and also definitions of the psychological contract have changed over the years and employees may be more accepting of this situation as it is experienced more (Leopold et al, 1999).

Research on perceived employee 'value' or 'worth' proposed that employers made employees feel 'valued' by taking an interest in their opinions, feelings and rewarding their contributions (Bolton & Hughes, 2001). This research took the opinion that payment was considered by the employee as an important signifier of value to the

organisation. However, as motivational theories have found financial incentives are not always important to the individual, and intrinsic rewards may be more influential. Bearing this in mind, when looking at Tesco other mechanisms used to make employees feel like 'valued' members could include, '*how am I doing*' interviews, career development plans, star employee board, receiving extra responsibility and training etc (Bolton & Hughes, 2001).

Trust research argues that conflict arises between the employee and organisation when a promise has been broken. No difference was found regarding trust between the two contracts groups, one possible explanation could be that new employees knew the differences before they started and therefore no promise was broken as they knew what to expect. However when talking to employees at the pilot study stage it was found that many newer employees were not aware of the differences, a fact that is reflected in table 4 (chapter 5).

Research on commitment has been contradictory with many other factors influencing commitment (Guest, 1992). Organisational commitment occurs at three levels (Allen & Mayer, 1990) with poor commitment resulting in poor absence (Sagie, 1998). The current research argued that the different pay schemes would influence commitment to the organisation (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005), however this was not reflected in the findings. A reason for this could be that employees are commitment to people within the organisation and not the organisation as an entity (Carmeli & Gefen, 2005). Alternatively commitment to the organisation could be increased due to other features, such as shares in success.

Research linking unfairness and absence look at equity theory (Adam, 1965) and justice. Equity theory argues that if individuals find themselves in the underpayment situation they must react to reduce negative feelings such as frustration, anger etc. The present study therefore predicted that those individuals on contract 2 would perceive their situation as unfair as they received no payment for the first three days in comparison with the other group. However the finding did not support this, as fairness scores were similar between the two groups. One reason for this could be that employees on contract 2 changed their perception of the situation to resolve negative feelings; equally they may choose to forget this information. Another reason might be

that employees value the procedural justice more than the distributive justice and make justifications for the differences in payment.

6.5 Significance of Research Findings

With more and more organisations having different groups with different contractual entitlements, the relationship between the behaviour, attitudes and the psychological contract could potentially become more pressing in research.

Previous research has looked at how policy implementation and management affects behaviour such as absence (Taylor, 2000), and how the psychological contract could be affected if violations occur (Pete et al, 2003). However no research has examined the relationship between having different formal contracts and the implications on the psychological contracts of those groups and their behaviour.

The present research found no significant difference between two groups of employees that only differed on absence pay entitlements, in terms of their attitudes towards absence and their psychological contracts. However subjective absence data collected from employee recollection showed a slight difference between actual absence levels; with those on contract one having higher a collective total of absence than those on contract 2. However this data can not be read into too much as actual absence records would be needed to back this up and it is unsure why absence was lower in one group as many factors could have contributed to absence. This finding suggests that having a number of different contracts with different terms and conditions does not necessarily influence work attitude or behaviour.

Organisations are constantly changing contract terms and conditions and procedures to try and deal with organisational problems such as absence. If the current finding is correct and employees' behaviour and attitudes are not affected by employees being on different entitlements, organisations could 'fit' procedures to individual employees depending on what creates a better working environment for them. However previous research has found that employees do react to unfair situations, therefore organisations need to consider employee expectations and proceed with caution when referring to literature.

6.6 Summary

The chapter discussed research findings in relation to the research hypotheses and previous literature. As the current research findings did not reflect previous theories possible explanations for this were examined under two headings; methodological limitations and theory limitations. The significance of the current research findings were then explored in relation to theory and practice. Recommendations for future study and implications for organisational practice will be examined in the next chapter. Then the research report will finally conclude.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

To conclude this dissertation chapter seven will reiterate the main findings of the research project and examine possible implications for future investigation and recommendations for organisational practice.

The research objectives were to assess whether the two group's psychological contract scores differed, and in which areas (i.e. trust, value, commitment and fairness). To assess whether the two groups attitudes towards absence differed, and finally to assess whether the second group has a lower absence levels, as the new contract was designed to do. The current research findings showed that the two groups did not have different psychological contracts or absence attitudes, suggesting that the different terms and conditions of the two contracts did not affect their judgments. This finding conflicts with previous theories that suggest employees act to resolve unfair situations (Arnold, 2005), base absence decisions on conscious cost-benefit analysis (Aamodt, 2004) and react to psychological contract violations (Pete et al, 2003). Reasons for this contradictory finding were examined in chapter six, and fell under two headings; methodological limitations and theory limitations.

7.2 Future Investigations

The researcher believes that this area warrants further investigation due to the contradictory findings and the implications for organisational practice if different cultures do emerge due to different contractual terms and conditions. Future research could use a qualitative approach to aid a better understanding of employee attitudes, as this area is relatively untouched (Creswell, 2003). Although this information could not be generalised and would be based around individualism, the material collected would be in depth and provide more insight into the way employees think than quantitative research provides (Bryman, 2004). In addition this ground work could then be used to inform future standardised survey based research which although limited in its richness could be generalised as more employees, perhaps from different occupational settings

could have their view heard (Bryman, 2004). Although many researchers shy away from using mixed methods designs, with the right team of researchers, resources and funding this could prove to be a valuable approach.

If the current study were to be repeated the researcher would advise scale items to be readdressed, in particular looking at how many items per concept, language and aspects of the psychological contract. Also sampling size, methods and population would need to be re-examined, so that future studies could generalise findings and do more conclusive statistical testing. Finally the author would caution future researchers to the difficulties faced when using an organisation in studies, for example, time delays, unfulfilled verbal promises, missing information, pressure from management etc.

7.3 Recommendations to organisations

The findings from the current study suggests that organisations will see no repercussions from having different contracts in place, as employees' psychological contract and attitudes are similar with no direct affect on behaviour. However, previous research does not agree with this finding, suggesting that either previous theory is mistaken or most likely this study is floored methodologically. Organisations need to be aware of this conflict and consider the consequences of having unhappy employees who feel mistreated, angry and frustrated at the current situation. Also organisations need to look at employees opinions on how best to deal with organisational problems such as absenteeism. Of all the employees that added a comment to their survey, half were concerning policy details and management practice.

"I don't believe employees should be disciplined for being off on a proven sick absence.

One fellow employee got a written warning for getting beat up, this is a disgrace!"

"Management don't care about why you were off, just that you weren't in".

"Like many people I think it's wrong to discipline for sickness; no-one can help being ill".

"Management make you feel like a naughty child and can often hold a grudge".

"You can still give proof of absence, but Tesco don't care".

"There is inconsistency between people – personal views come into place, as do 'needs of the business'".

"Genuine one day absences can lead to AR's...which managers do not deal with fairly"

"Good attendance is not rewarded"

“Some employees abuse the system”

“I think that with a different approach by management (not policy) would gain staffs emotional loyalty to a greater extent and therefore create a better environment and better place to work in!”.

“Absence in Tesco is high at the time of pay day, yet if they changed this to weekly pay the absence would drop”.

“Absence often goes unpunished for those staff who go AWOL, sterner punishments should be in place”

“Managers don’t lead by example”

7.4 Conclusion

This study has attempted to examine an area of absence research that had not had much investigation. The findings did not fallen in line with previous theories, and reasons for this have been examined. Throughout the studies life-span many problems emerged such as problems with access, fewer responses than planned, constrains put on the research process by the host organisation, lack of previous surveys to guide survey design etc. however the researcher believes this piece of research is valuable to the research world, even if it only shows how not to do it in the future. Future recommendations have been made and implications for organisations have been considered. The researcher believes that this area warrants further investigation, and with the right resources, money, time and experience could prove a valuable piece of research to organisational practice.

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Appendix A:

Sample of Survey

Dear Tesco Employee

The enclosed survey forms part of a research study undertaken in fulfilment of a Masters course at the University of Chester. The purpose of the study is to compare the two absence contracts currently in place at Tesco Altrincham. It will examine potential direct and indirect benefits and disadvantages of the contracts and will explain employee's views as to how Tesco manage absenteeism.

The questionnaire should take a maximum of 10 minutes to complete. Please complete the questionnaire at a time when you are unlikely to be disturbed. Read through all directives and statements carefully, but do not spend too long on any one question, as your first response is usually the best and most truthful. **Please answer all questions honestly.**

All information collected is for academic purposes only. No information will be given to Tesco and all questionnaires will be destroyed after the study is completed.

All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence.

When you have completed the questionnaire please return it in the enclosed envelope by posting it in the box provided at staff reception. Please return your completed questionnaire by Saturday 26th August.

I hope you find completing the questionnaire enjoyable and interesting. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and effort. If you have any queries or would like any further information on this research, please do not hesitate to contact me on:-

0202919@chester.ac.uk

Once again thank you for your help.

Catherine Pepper
MA student
University of Chester

Background Details

Gender:

Male

Female

Age: _____

Which department do you currently work on?

BWS

Checkouts

Clothing

Dotcom

Grocery

Health & Beauty

Non-Food

Produce

Provisions

Other (please Specify)

Do you work:

Full Time

Part Time

Approximately how long have you been with Tesco? _____

Which absence contract are you currently on:

Full Payment

First 3 days no payment

Are you aware of the differences between the two absence contracts?

Yes No

How many periods of absence have you had over the last 18 months?

What was the Duration of these absences?

It is acknowledged that when reporting cause of absence some employees may feel the need to give a different reason to their line-manager for a variety of reasons. The question below is to examine the actual reason of absence; therefore it is vital you answer honestly.

What was the main reason for your last 2 absences?

	Absence 1	Absence 2
That 'Monday Morning' Feeling (on any Day of the week)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hangover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting for repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting for Delivery of Goods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tiredness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying/harassment at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family Responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bereavement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation Difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical Appointment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ill Health, Debility or injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Back or Musculoskeletal Problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(Please Specify) _____		

Attitudes towards Absence

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 |
| Disagree | 2 |
| Slightly Disagree | 3 |
| Slightly Agree | 4 |
| Agree | 5 |
| Strongly Agree | 6 |

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, please tick ✓ the appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel guilty about taking time off even when I am ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often come into work when I should be off sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel entitled to take days off sick once in a while	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I could never stay off work if I was not really ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often feel compelled to attend work even when I don't feel up to it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Other people throw ‘sickies’ why shouldn't I”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Absence is a part of organisational life; Tesco expects some level of absence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tesco can afford to pay for my absence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can't help getting ill, and I should not be punished for not being able to attend work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have to stay off when I'm ill because of the environment I work in, it's not my fault, and therefore I should be paid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are you a valued member of Tesco?

- Strongly Disagree** 1
Disagree 2
Slightly Disagree 3
Slightly Agree 4
Agree 5
Strongly Agree 6

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, please tick ✓ the appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
management cares about my well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel that my line manager supports me when I cannot attend work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I am a small cog in a large machine". My absence is not noticed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I was absent my contribution can easily be replaced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My line manager takes into consideration my opinions on absence and how to improve my attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel the inconsistency around absence payment reflects a lack of value towards new employees contributions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Trust

- Strongly Disagree** 1
Disagree 2
Slightly Disagree 3
Slightly Agree 4
Agree 5
Strongly Agree 6

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, please tick ✓ the appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Management takes advantage of our sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Absence is a big problem and I trust the management team to find the best solution for everyone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sick pay was stopped because certain members of staff were abusing the system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Management negotiates new absence procedures with us honestly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel that I have to prove the genuineness of my illness to management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paying some members of staff and not others reflects managements lack of trust in its employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Commitment

- Strongly Disagree 1
- Disagree 2
- Slightly Disagree 3
- Slightly Agree 4
- Agree 5
- Strongly Agree 6

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, please tick ✓ the appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
I only stay here because I need the money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I will be leaving Tesco within the next year or so	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I enjoy my job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with Tesco	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I would be more committed to Tesco if I received sick pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am committed to Tesco as I believe Tesco is committed to me as it pays for my absence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fairness

- Strongly Disagree 1
- Disagree 2
- Slightly Disagree 3
- Slightly Agree 4
- Agree 5
- Strongly Agree 6

To what extent do you agree with the following statements, please tick ✓ the appropriate box.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
“A fair days pay for a fair days work”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff that were here before the new contract was put in place should receive sick pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Its not fair that one member of staff gets paid and another doesn't when off for similar reasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think every member of Tesco should be on the same absence entitlement contract.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The absence procedure is the same for everyone, its only the payment that differs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your Comments

If you have any further comments that you would like to add regarding this questionnaire or absence please feel free to do so in the space provided below.

Once you have finished the questionnaire, please make sure you have answered all questions, then place it in the envelope provided and post it in the box at staff reception.

Please return your completed questionnaire by Saturday 26th August.

Thank you for your time and cooperation