

TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION INTO
ABSENTEEISM IN CAPE TOWN ORGANISATIONS

by

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Without the contributions of all the above, the survey could not have been undertaken.

ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT

This dissertation describes the investigation into absenteeism in Cape Town manufacturing industries which the writer conducted in 1992. It presents the main findings from this investigation as well as a series of recommendations regarding the recording and reduction of absenteeism in industry.

The investigation was undertaken to investigate: the nature and extent of absenteeism in the Cape Town area, the main causes or variables associated with the problem of absenteeism, and to establish what industries were doing to combat the problem.

The writer used a convenience sample of twenty manufacturing industries in the Cape Town region. The study involved identifying the amount and nature of absenteeism by quantitative analysis of attendance records.

The writer conducted in-depth interviews - using structured questionnaires - with a sample of senior managers, personnel managers/officers, shop stewards, and sound and poor work attenders from the shop-floor. The interviews yielded perceptions on a wide range of issues related to absenteeism, including: causes and variables affecting absenteeism, factory problems which could affect work attendance, and recommendations for combatting absenteeism.

(ii)

The writer, by using the Chi-squared test, was able to test associations between good and poor attenders and selected variables. The variables which tested statistically significant, included: length of service ($p < .001$), health status ($p < .001$), travel mode ($p < .001$), problems in the home ($p < .001$), worker's level of motivation ($p < .001$), and development opportunities in the company ($p < .001$).

A major finding of the study was that the extent of absenteeism was above what most writers on the subject regard as a satisfactory level. The average annual percentage absenteeism rate was found to be 4.7% for 1992. The highest absenteeism rate amongst the twenty companies was 7.5% and the lowest 2.5%. The general standard of recording, analysis and reporting of absenteeism was found to be disappointing. The writer concluded that senior managers in the industries did not have the necessary information to assist them in making the right conclusions and decisions regarding absenteeism rates and trends.

A discrepancy was found concerning who was primarily responsible for absenteeism control. The writer concluded that there was a direct association between sound management/ supervisory behaviour and low absenteeism. The majority of interviewees perceived that a strong association existed between autocratic management behaviour and high absenteeism.

Certain trends were found: Mondays see high levels of absenteeism, Winters cause absence through illness and transport difficulties, and pay-days are good for attendance.

The dissertation presents recommendations obtained from senior managers, personnel managers/officers and shop stewards, and the writer's own thoughts on the subject, for combatting absenteeism. These recommendations include comments on: the responsibility for combatting absenteeism; recording measures; measuring and analysing; reporting; identifying causes of absenteeism; creating an awareness of the effects of absenteeism; monitoring and controlling of absenteeism; rewarding; and recognising; and taking the necessary disciplinary action; as well as the recruiting of social welfare officers and implementation of creche facilities within each industry.

LEGEND: COMPANY CODES

	COMPANY	FACTORY
A	RIVIERA FASHIONS	MAITLAND
B	PEP DUETTE	PAROW
C	PEP DIVISION (APOLLO)	PAROW
D	MONO CONTAINERS	MAITLAND
E	COATES BROTHERS	MAITLAND
F	DAIRYMAID	EPPING
G	MOIRS (BROMOR)	SUNRISE CIRCLE (NDABENI)
H	TEJ	TOKAI
I	PEP FASHIONETTE	PAROW
J	RENOWN FOODS	MAITLAND
K	ATLANTIC FISHING	DOCKS
L	FLORIDA CLOTHING	EPPING
M	TASTIC	EPPING
N	DAIRYBELLE	EPPING
O	YARDLEY	EPPING
P	EPIC	MAITLAND
Q	BROOKES (BROMOR)	SALT RIVER
R		
S		
T	IRVIN & JOHNSON	WOODSTOCK
U		
V		
W	GABRIEL	RETREAT
X		
Y	IRVIN & JOHNSON (TRAWLING)	WATERFRONT
Z		

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

A review of the literature dealing with absenteeism gives the impression that absenteeism is of concern to any employer because it is expensive and impacts negatively on profitability and productivity. For instance, Robert Blair, in his study of absenteeism, mentions that "one of the foremost manpower problems in South African Industry is the high rate of absenteeism among workers resulting in loss of productivity" (Blair, 1982:1). The negativity of absenteeism is also expressed by Hattingh (1984:2), "absence is a complex and costly socio-industrial problem. Often the aforementioned becomes an accepted irritation in the knowledge that workers do become ill, do have accidents, and, on occasion participate in plausible strikes".

Absenteeism has adverse consequences for the employer in that it disrupts the production flow, forces management to make ad-hoc decisions to replace the absent worker, increases overtime for other workers, affects the quality of finished goods, affects customer service, has an adverse effect on the morale of staff and workers, and generally lowers the overall standards of performance in an organisation.

Most employers are aware of these implications and institute record systems in order to measure and control absenteeism. Unfortunately, many such systems fail to present the collected data in a manner which enables the manager to take positive action.

Though the literature of absenteeism tends, understandably, to focus mainly, on the negative aspects of absenteeism, it also has positive consequences for the employee and other workers, as will be discussed later in this thesis.

The writer has a special interest in the field of Industrial Sociology because of its practical focus on work-place dynamics. One aspect of Industrial Sociology which is of particular interest relates to the phenomenon of Absenteeism. This study aims to assist management by indicating how absenteeism might be measured as well as controlled and by indicating the perspectives of management, workers and shop steward officials to this problem. The writer attempted to research absenteeism in terms of 15 subproblems:

- 1.1 The extent of absenteeism in Cape Town manufacturing industries.
- 1.2 The nature and extent of absenteeism in terms of certified absence (certified by a medical sickness certificate) and uncertified absence.
- 1.3 The variation of absenteeism in different industries.
- 1.4 The trends with respect to absenteeism levels in Cape Town companies.
- 1.5 The extent to which absenteeism is perceived to be a problem by companies operating in the Cape Town area.

- 1.6 The major problems associated with high levels of absenteeism.
- 1.7 Financial costs of absenteeism.
- 1.8 The main causes of absenteeism, that is, factors that may be causing poor attendance.
- 1.9 The typical profile of the poor work attender.
- 1.10 The typical profile of the sound work attender.
- 1.11 The relation between such things as management style and management practices and absenteeism.
- 1.12 The strategies and tactics being deployed in the companies studied to combat absenteeism.
- 1.13 The rates of success of the strategies that are employed.
- 1.14 Other things which can be done to achieve more acceptable levels of attendance at the work-place.
- 1.15 The recommendations that can be suggested to combat absenteeism.

It is hoped that this investigation will help industry to better understand the nature and extent of absenteeism and to provide new insights into methods of effectively combatting the problem.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

CHAPTER TWO - THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

2.1 DEFINITION OF ABSENTEEISM

2.1.1 Major Influences On Attendance

2.2 CLASSIFICATION OF ABSENCE

2.3 MEASUREMENT OF ABSENTEEISM

2.3.1 The Recording Of Absence and the Supervisor

2.3.1.1 The Supervisor and Recording of absence

2.3.1.2 Recording Absence

2.3.2 Effects Of Recording Absenteeism

2.4 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

2.4.1 Personal Factors

2.4.2 Organisational Factors

2.4.3 External Factors

2.5 CONSEQUENCES OF ABSENTEEISM

2.6 FINANCIAL COSTS OF ABSENTEEISM

2.7 CONTROL OF ABSENTEEISM

2.7.1 Methods Of Controlling Absenteeism

2.7.1.1 Absence data

2.7.1.2 Rewards to control absenteeism

2.7.1.3 Disciplinary action to control absenteeism

CHAPTER TWO - THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Although there have been numerous studies on absenteeism, most reviewers of this literature would agree that a body of research based on sound theory, measurement and procedures, has not been developed and that many of the findings do not inform practice. For example, Goodman and Atkin (1984:ix), in their review, came to the conclusion that "there is little relationship between theory and research on absenteeism and the practice of managing employees".

The aim of the chapter is to review the literature on absenteeism in order to provide background information which can be used in comparing and analysing the data obtained in the present study.

2.1 DEFINITION OF ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism can simply be defined as non-attendance.

However, in terms of this definition, authorised absences including vacation leave, suspension, compassionate leave, military service and the like, qualify as absenteeism.

Consequently, absenteeism is better defined as "non-attendance when an employee is scheduled to work" (Van der Merwe and Miller, 1988:3).

In customary practice, a worker is marked absent in the attendance register if he/she fails to report for duty on a day when he/she is expected to be present. If the worker did not seek prior permission to stay away from work, or is not granted permission, then he/she loses wages and risks disciplinary action.

Absenteeism can take many forms, ranging from the newly-hired employee who seldom shows up for work or to the employee who takes extra long weekends.

In essence, absenteeism is an unscheduled day or more off, whether for illness, bad weather or for personal reasons; ranging from hangovers to the decision to go fishing.

In Gaudet's (1963:12) words, "absenteeism is the failure of workers to appear on the job when they are scheduled to work. It is a broad term which is applied to time lost because of sickness or accident which prevents a worker from being on the job, as well as unauthorised time away from the job for other reasons. Workers who quit without notice are also counted as absentees until they are officially removed from the payroll".

When an employee fails to attend work, it is because of two reasons:

- (a) they are absent because of the inability* to attend work, for example: illness/car breakdown/sick child, or,
- (b) they choose to be absent.

Among the debatable reasons for absenteeism is its use as a means of temporary withdrawal from the stress of work. The quality of the person-work relationship determines whether, consciously or unconsciously, relief of stress will be sought by temporary absence from work. Absences are seen as motivated behaviour. All forms of absence can be considered under this concept of withdrawal from the work situation.

* Note on inability: inability to attend is an elastic idea. How sick does one have to be? How serious does an emergency have to be to justify staying away from work? The elasticity of inability is a factor that exercises the minds of workers and management and is responsible for much conflict associated with absenteeism.

2.1.1 Major Influences On Attendance

Absenteeism is the opposite of work attendance. Hence to understand absenteeism it is useful to bare in mind, the reason for people attending. The Steers and Rhodes's model (Figure 2.1) identifies the variables which contribute to an individual's decision to attend.

In Steers and Rhodes's definition, attendance behaviour is a function of "motivation to attend and ability to attend" (Steers and Rhodes, 1984:236).

The first influence, job situation, is affected by a number of factors. For example, leadership style influences attendance. If a particular management style is aggressive and autocratic, the workforce tends to dislike this type of management style as a lack of communication develops between management and the workforce and thus, results in friction. Poor attendance rates might be the outcome.

The second influence, employee values and job expectations, also have an influence on employee attendance, that is, an employee may have specific expectations of what his/her job should entail according to certain standards. If for some reason the job or value system does not live up to the employee's expectations, then dissatisfaction may result and the employee loses interest and this may result in absenteeism.

The third influence, personal characteristics, also has a major influence on employee attendance. Age, for example, may have an influence. The old timers in the job have perhaps settled in their jobs for a number of years, are stable and feel secure in the workplace. A much younger employee, who has perhaps just started employment, may be unsettled and may tend to be absent more frequently, thus, risking the chance of losing his/her job. The younger employee may not have accepted the corporate culture, or may not have adjusted to the new job.

The fourth influence, job satisfaction, is important with regard to the work situation and attendance. An employee who is bored, uninterested, and unhappy in their job will influence his attendance more negatively than somebody who finds rewards and is happy in their job, that is, finds a sense of achievement.

The fifth influence, pressure to attend, is affected by a number of factors. These include, the economic or job market conditions, (that is, in terms of high unemployment, there may be increased pressure to maintain a good attendance record for fear of losing one's job), incentive/reward systems (for example, financial or other incentives offered by employers which are immediately visible and fairly large), work-group norms (members of highly cohesive groups often

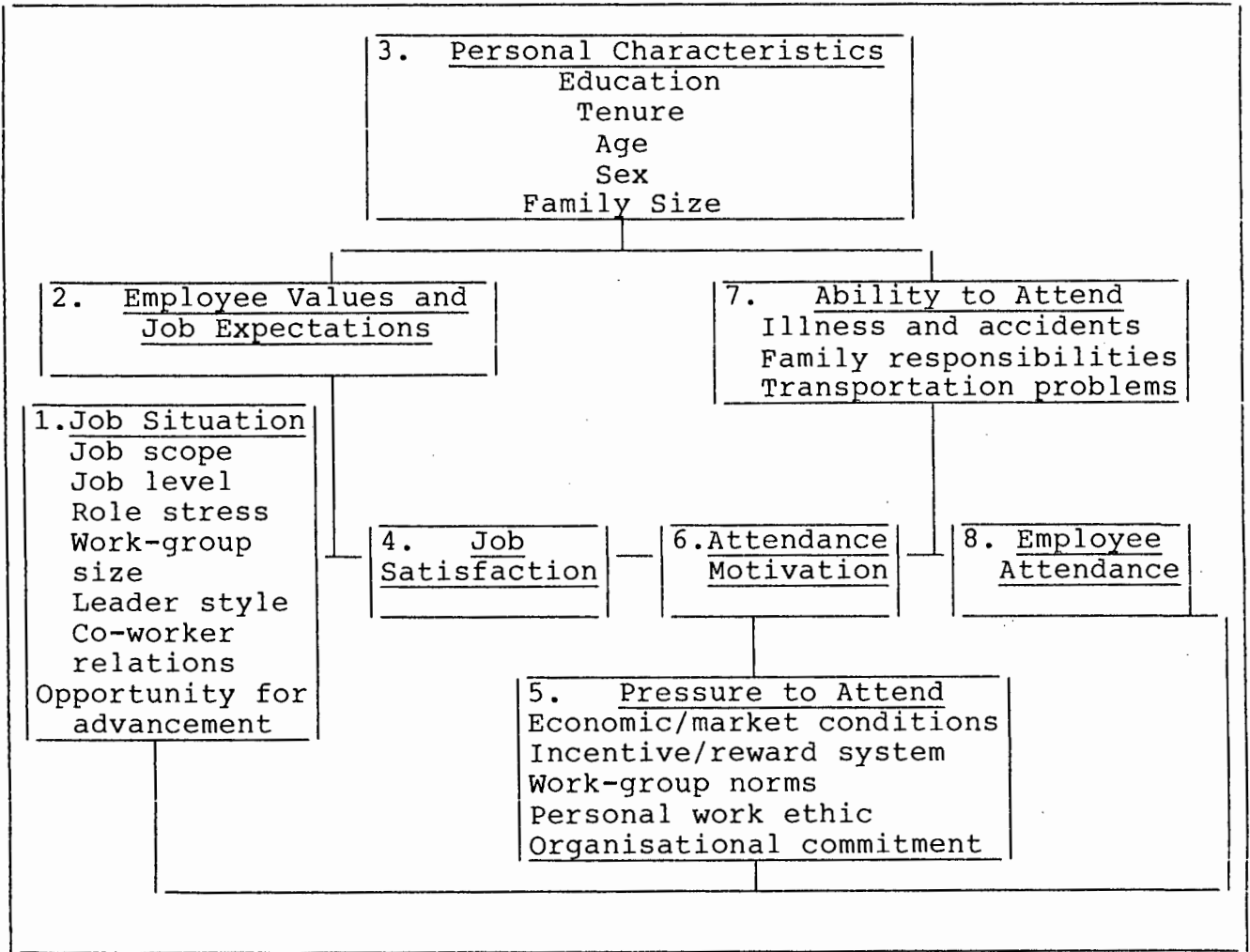
view coming to work to help one's co-workers, as highly desirable), personal work ethic (that is, one's personal value system or set of principles associated with work), and organisational commitment (one's commitment to the organisation and its goals).

The sixth influence, direct attendance motivation, is also a factor which influences employee attendance. A number of direct factors can motivate a worker. For example, an attendance bonus, an attendance reward or recognition, may help to motivate a worker to attend work. Workers who are given sick leave, for example 36 days in a three year cycle, may decide to take off sick, even if they are not sick, because they have sick leave due to them. An attendance bonus could perhaps enhance attendance if workers know that there will be some type of reward if there is 100% attendance throughout the year.

The seventh influence, ability to attend, is affected by three factors: illness and accidents of the employee; domestic responsibilities (for instance, if not having someone to look after a sick child) and transportation problems (for example, a taxi strike, which affects the transportation of employees to work).

The final major influence on attendance, employee attendance, is affected by all the influences mentioned above.

FIGURE 2.1
STEERS AND RHODES MODEL: (1984:236)
MAJOR INFLUENCES ON EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE



2.2 CLASSIFICATION OF ABSENCE

There is a distinction between sanctioned and unsanctioned absence. The former implies that in the eyes of the employer, the employee's absence is seen outside the worker's control, and therefore, has to be accepted as unavoidable. Whereas the latter is seen as absence which is deliberate or irresponsible on the part of the employee. However, sanctioned absence need not be paid absence, for example, "an hourly-paid employee may spend the day in court through no fault of his/her own, but the employer may very likely decide not to pay the employee" (Van der Merwe and Miller, 1988:9). It must be mentioned that the term, sanction, is ambiguous, since people speak of positive and negative sanctions. What Van der Merwe and Miller meant by sanction is "approval"; behaviour which has the "blessing" of management and/or fellow workers.

The degree to which an organisation is prepared to sanction various forms of absenteeism lends itself as a suitable criterion upon which to classify absence. Hence, absenteeism can be classified into three broad categories as identified by Van der Merwe and Miller (1988:9):

- "(1) Sickness absence (including sick advised absence)
- (2) Authorised absence, or absence with permission; and
- (3) Unexcused absence, or, absence without leave".

The first category of absence, sickness absence, carries the highest sanction and includes all absence for which a doctor's certificate is produced by the employee on return to work. In terms of a company's wage determination and/or a company policy, a doctor's certificate is compulsory where sickness is in excess of two consecutive days.

Sick advised absence is reserved for sick absences of less than 3 days requiring no medical certificate, provided that the supervisor or personnel department were given prior notification by the employee not later than the first day of absence.

The second category, authorised absence, is absence other than sick absence, where prior permission of the line manager is obtained, or where the employee's reason on returning to work is accepted by line management.

Van der Merwe and Miller (1988:9) in their study into absenteeism, found that the categories of authorised absence were classified in terms of paid and unpaid absence. These can be seen in Table 2.1. In terms of authorised unpaid absence, a visit to the Government office or going to court are mentioned, whereas doing military service or attending a funeral are considered as special paid absence.

TABLE 2.1
AUTHORISED LEAVE CATEGORIES
Van der Merwe and Miller (1988:9)

AUTHORISED UNPAID LEAVE	SPECIAL PAID LEAVE
Visit to Government Office	Moving residence
Domestic problems	Court (state witness)
Charge office	Military
Gaol	Educational
Lawyers	Cultural
Driver's licence	Sport
Court	Funeral

The last category, unexcused absence, carries no sanction, that is, no authorisation or prior permission can be given by line management or the personnel department. So, this category of absence is unacceptable to a company's management because of its unsanctioned nature.

In terms of a further analysis of authorised and unauthorised absence, Townsend (1968:73&74) writes the following:

"Authorised absence usually refers to the leave facilities allowed for in a company's leave policy. Absence here is usually unpaid leave, special leave, compassionate leave, and so on, and is usually embodied in industrial agreement and/or legislation. Unauthorised absence is due to incidents which fall outside a company's leave policy".

What the above boils down to is that authorised absence is synonymous with excused, sanctioned and certified absence. Unauthorised absences, are synonymous with unexcused, unsanctioned and uncertified absence.

For the purpose of this study, absenteeism will be classified into two main categories, namely certified absence (AS) and uncertified absence (A). It was a common occurrence in all twenty companies surveyed that certified absence was abbreviated as AS (absence with a sick certificate) and uncertified absence as A (absence).

2.3 MEASUREMENT OF ABSENTEEISM

With regard to measuring absenteeism, Nel (1973:34) states that it is basically done to establish two things:

- "(i) the extent to which employees are staying away from work, and
- (ii) whether absenteeism is above the expected level".

He goes on to add that, other uses of absence statistics could be: firstly, to measure the effectiveness of absence control procedures, secondly, to chart trends in absenteeism over the week, month, year or even in the industry and thirdly, to contrast absence between departments/plants/divisions and so on.

A large number of measures of absenteeism have been used by various researchers. Of these, three measures have been found to be sufficient for group absence data. These are the Gross Absence Rate, the Severity Rate and the Absence Frequency Rate. The first measure, the Gross Absence Rate (GAR) measures the extent of absenteeism. Lost time is

expressed as a percentage of the total possible working time, that is, the hours or days lost through absence as a percentage of the total number of hours or days which the individual or group would have worked if no such absence had occurred.

The GAR is calculated at the month-end and the total possible working time is arrived at by multiplying the average number in employment for that month by the total working days in the period. For example,

$$\text{GAR} = \frac{\text{Total days lost through all absences} \times 100}{\text{Total possible man-days} \quad 1}$$

The Severity Rate, the second measure of absenteeism, is the average length or duration of the absences. The formula is as follows:

$$\text{Severity Rate} = \frac{\text{Time lost due to absenteeism} \times 100}{\text{Number of absences} \quad 1}$$

The third measure, the Absence Frequency Rate (AFR), measures the number of absence incidents per employee during a given period (for example, a month or a year). The formula is as follows:

$$\text{AFR} = \frac{\text{Total number of absence incidents over period/employee}}{\text{Average number in employment for that period}}$$

The GAR is read together with the AFR to give greater insight into the type, nature, and duration of absence.

A further useful measure of absenteeism is the Time Lost Index (TLI). A survey done by Chadwick-Jones et al (1971) on industrial absenteeism revealed that the TLI of absence is used worldwide. It is calculated as follows:

$$\text{TLI} = \frac{\text{Total number of working days lost in a year for any reason (excluding strikes, layoffs and public holidays)}}{\text{Total number of working days available to work}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

The measure of absence used in this study is similar to the TLI as originally described by Chadwick-Jones et al (1971) namely, time lost as a percentage of possible working time. The writer identified absence rates as follows:

- (a) Certified sickness absence rate, that is, certified sickness absence in days, expressed as a percentage of potential working days (excluding overtime).
- (b) Uncertified absence rate, that is, calculated in the same way as the certified absence rate.
- (c) Gross absence rate, representing the total absence due to certified sick and uncertified absences.

These absence rates do not provide any information in respect of the distribution of absence, however, they differentiate between certified sickness and uncertified sickness absences.

2.3.1 The Recording of Absence and the Supervisor

The recording of individual and group absence is a prerequisite for calculating, understanding, controlling and reducing absenteeism. The employee who is in the best position in most organisations to deal with absenteeism in a face-to-face way is the supervisor. This is because he/she is the person responsible for seeing that the work gets done and is the one who is aware of absenteeism and its impact on production. It is for this reason that the supervisor is regarded in most organisations as the key person in recording and controlling absenteeism.

2.3.1.1 The Supervisor and Recording of Absence

A "typical" job description of a supervisor is clearly expressed by Goldstein and Sorcher (1980:3) who list the responsibilities:

- " 1. Orienting a new employee.
2. Teaching the job.
3. Motivating the poor performer.
4. Correcting inadequate work quantity.
5. Correcting inadequate work quality.
6. Reducing absenteeism and lateness among workers.
7. Reducing turnover among workers.
8. Discussing personal work habits with an employee.
9. Discussing formal corrective action with an employee.

10. Giving recognition to the average employee.
11. Delegating responsibility.
12. Conducting a performance review".

As can be seen under point 6 of this typical job description of a supervisor, the supervisor is responsible for controlling or reducing absenteeism.

The quality of first-line supervision is vital in the recording and controlling of absenteeism. "Lax supervision makes bad attendance possible although the reverse is not necessarily true. Good supervision, by itself, may not cure absenteeism, but the relationship and attitude of employee to supervisor is of great importance in developing team spirit and group cohesion" (Van der Merwe, 1988:28).

Because of the pivotal position of supervisors in regard to absenteeism, it is in the interests of management to identify the departments with the highest absence rates and feed this information back to the supervisors in the departments. It is also in the interests of managers that supervisors be given comprehensive training with regard to the methods of recording, combatting and controlling absenteeism (this would include training, for example, control mechanisms, communicating with employees, grievance and discipline handling, listening, counselling, and motivation techniques).

Absenteeism thus should be of concern to each supervisor, and each supervisor should be responsible for recording absence within his/her line or department. The supervisor may have a register to record the employee's absence, that is, name of employee, date absent, reason for absence, and so on.

2.3.1.2 Recording Absence

The general method used in the twenty companies surveyed to record absenteeism was in the form of clock cards, which were collected from the clocking-in racks weekly, as well as attendance registers. The supervisor kept an attendance register for each employee on his/her line or department.

All returning absentees had to report to the personnel office to collect their clock cards and were also briefly interviewed by the supervisor who established the reason for absence. This information, together with other details of the absence incident, was recorded on the employee's individual folder/card which was obtained from the personnel officer. If the employee had a recent history of absence, this would be drawn to the supervisor's attention and the employee would be cautioned if the absenteeism became excessive and frequent.

Sick certificates were then examined and filed in the employee's folder. In cases where prior authorisation had been given by the employee's supervisor an authorisation slip was pinned to the employee's file to await his return. The clock card was signed by the supervisor and returned to the employee, who continued to clock in.

2.3.2 Effects of Recording Absenteeism

The act of accurately recording absence may reduce group absenteeism. Supervisors become aware that management is concerned about absence and may, therefore, take a stronger line with subordinates regarding their attendance.

2.4 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

There is no direct cause-effect linkage to absenteeism. There are, however, a number of factors which are associated with influencing employee attendance. Many researchers including Porter and Steers, (1973) and Steers and Rhodes, (1984) have attempted to identify the factors related to absenteeism. Any absence may differ from any other because the mix of factors, as well as the relative importance of these factors, will change over time.

The factors related to absenteeism are dealt with under three main headings: personal, organisational, and external factors.

2.4.1 Personal factors

Examples include factors such as sex, age, and length of service.

There are few consistent relations between personal factors and absenteeism in the literature. However, in terms of sex and absenteeism, absence rates for females are frequently found to be much higher than for males. There is a fair amount of evidence of a direct relationship between age, length of service, and lower frequency of absence. Younger workers with shorter service may be absent more frequently than the older ones with longer service. A study by Sexton and Schumann (1985) found that the younger worker was absent more frequently. A reason for this could be that older workers have a stronger commitment to work than younger workers, and are less likely to be absent.

2.4.2 Organisational factors

Examples of include factors such as size of work group, nature of supervision and the type of work.

Among the factory workers, employee attendance appears to be related to group size, with larger work groups having a higher rate of absenteeism. This would explain how in the largest departments, absenteeism is often the highest. The nature of supervision also affects employee attendance.

If negative methods of supervision are used (for example, a harsh critical approach), higher rates of absenteeism generally occur. The type of work is another variable which affects employee attendance. Absence in unskilled, lower grade jobs, is statistically higher than absence in skilled and higher grade jobs.

2.4.3 External factors

Examples include factors such as the socio/political and economic situation of a country, the social environment, (which includes poor home background and domestic problems), distance from work, quality and reliability of transport system and the weather.

The economic and political situation in a country has an important effect on the relationship between work satisfaction and absenteeism. When there is a high rate of unemployment, workers may place a higher value on their jobs, and, fearing dismissal, may not as readily express dissatisfaction through absence.

Transportation may also be affected at times of political instability in the country. For example, a strike on public transport in the Western Cape, is one way in which an employee's attendance can be affected.

2.5 CONSEQUENCES OF ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is not, despite the negative connotation of the term, a totally negative phenomenon. It has both positive and negative consequences. Goodman and Atkin (1984:280) list these. As Table 2.2 shows, the consequences relate to the individual, co-workers, work group, organisation-management, union officers, family and society.

The most positive consequence of absenteeism to the employee relates to the individual recovering from illness and having plenty of rest in which to recover: this is functional for the individual and, in the future, to the organisation. The main negative consequence of absence to the employee is the loss of pay and possible disciplinary action. With regard to the employee's co-workers, the main positive consequence of absenteeism is the opportunity for them to work on different jobs, that is, increased job flexibility and skill development. On the negative side, co-workers may have an increased work-load, resulting in undesired overtime, and this may result in conflict with their absent worker.

The main positive consequence of absenteeism with regard to the work group is greater job flexibility amongst the group, that is, job switching within the group. The main negative consequence of absence to the work group is a decrease in productivity. These same consequences (positive and negative) apply to the organisation - management.

The main positive consequences of absenteeism with regard to the union officers is a strengthened power position and a negative consequence is the cost that is involved in processing grievances.

With regard to the family, the main positive consequence of absenteeism is the opportunity to deal with health or illness problems whereas a negative consequence is less earnings for the family.

Finally, the main consequence of absenteeism with regard to society is the reduction of job stress and mental health problems whereas the negative consequence is a loss in productivity.

TABLE 2.2
CONSEQUENCES OF ABSENTEEISM ACCORDING TO
GOODMAN AND ATKIN (1984:280)

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Individual	Recovery of illness & rest Reduction of job-related stress Meetings of nonwork role obligations Benefits from compensatory non-work activities Compliance with norms to be absent	Loss of pay Discipline, formal and informal Increased accidents Altered job perception Conflict with other workers
Co-workers	Job variety Skill development Overtime pay	Increased work load Undesired overtime Increased accidents Conflict with absent worker
Work group	Greater crew flexibility in responding to absenteeism and to production problems	Decreased productivity Increased accidents
Organisation-management	Greater job knowledge base in work force Greater labour-force flexibility	Decreased productivity Increased costs More grievances Increased accidents
Union-officers	Articulated & strengthened power position Increased solidarity among members	Weakened power position Increased costs in processing grievances
Family	Opportunity to deal with health or illness problems Opportunity to manage marital problems Opportunity to manage child problems Maintenance of spouse's earnings	Less earnings Decline in work reputation Aggravated marriage and child problems
Society	Reduction of job stress and mental health problems Reduction of marital related problems Participation in community political processes	Loss of productivity

2.6 FINANCIAL COSTS OF ABSENTEEISM

There are a number of empirical studies that have attempted to determine the financial costs of absenteeism. One of these, Chadwick-Jones (1982:15), estimated that one day's absence by an employee costs the organisation one and a half times the daily rate of pay of that employee.

There is no established method for calculating the cost of absenteeism, however there are several ways to estimate the costs associated with absenteeism.

One of these, the aggregate approach, estimates the number of additional workers hired to offset the effects of absenteeism. If a number of individuals are absent, the firm has to hire an additional pool of workers (casuals) who act as replacements to the absent employees. "The cost of recruiting, selecting, training and paying these additional workers represents one way in which the costs of absenteeism can be estimated" (Goodman and Atkin, 1984:309).

Another approach estimates the incremental costs per day associated with an absent worker, that is, the firm still incurs the costs of fringe benefits, for example, pension contributions to absent employees. If a worker is absent and a casual is hired, the task of management is to compare the costs that would have been involved if the absent worker had come to work, with the additional costs of having to hire a replacement worker.

Absenteeism includes both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include wages, overtime, costs of recruiting and training replacements. Indirect costs include losses in productivity, rework and accidents. Absenteeism has, as mentioned above, severe cost implications for the organisation, not only for effective functioning and productivity, but also related to relationships amongst the work group in an organisation, as well as for labour relations.

2.7 CONTROL OF ABSENTEEISM

2.7.1 Methods of controlling absenteeism

In order to reduce, control and manage absenteeism, two control methods can be implemented. Firstly, the organisation's absence policy needs to be clearly formulated, (for example, disciplinary action) enforced and communicated to all employees and secondly, absence data needs to be collected systematically and accurately by using an absence recording system.

2.7.1.1 Absence data

A senior member of management, who may, for instance, be the personnel manager, needs to be designated to co-ordinate the programme for absence control. Absence data needs to be collected effectively and this would include individual absence records as part of absence

control in a company. Individual records can serve as an early warning to management, enabling action to be taken to interview and counsel employees, especially where they may be main offenders regarding work attendance.

2.7.1.2 Rewards to control absenteeism

There have been many attempts at controlling absenteeism by rewarding good work attenders and non-absentees. Kempen (1982:40) suggests that financial and other incentives are effective only if they are immediately visible and fairly large.

Some managers do not support the rewarding of good attendance because they regard this as an implicit requirement of the job.

2.7.1.3 Disciplinary action to control absenteeism

Most firms counteract severe absenteeism by using some disciplinary measure. For example, counselling, verbal warnings, written warnings (including final warnings), and dismissal.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 APPROACH TO THE STUDY
- 3.2 THE SAMPLE OF INDUSTRIES
- 3.3 THE SAMPLE OF MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARDS
- 3.4 THE SAMPLE OF WORKERS
- 3.5 BROAD STAGES IN THE RESEARCH STUDY
- 3.6 WORKER INTERVIEWS
- 3.7 SHOP STEWARD INTERVIEWS
- 3.8 MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL INTERVIEWS
- 3.9 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 APPROACH TO THE STUDY

For this study, the writer tried to be as objective and ethically neutral as possible, and to respect confidentiality. A guarantee was given to the companies surveyed that their company names would not be revealed in the research report. The companies were also promised a copy of the final report.

3.2 THE SAMPLE OF INDUSTRIES

The writer's original intention was to use a sample of ten manufacturing and ten non-manufacturing industries. However, due to a difficulty with obtaining co-operation from the non-manufacturing industries, it was decided that a more focused approach would be adopted based on a sample of twenty manufacturing industries in the Cape Town region.

To obtain a convenience sample of manufacturing industries, the writer relied on her father's professional contacts. These contacts facilitated entry to various industries and allowed contact to be made which was usually with the personnel manager. The writer, in most cases, outlined to the contact manager the steps and procedures to be involved in the study and pointed out how their company would benefit from a study of absenteeism.

In most cases, the contact manager gave the 'go ahead' to continue with the study, but in other cases the writer was informed that permission from senior management would first have to be obtained. In some cases, the writer visited a company before the go-ahead was given to make a presentation to management and/or shop stewards informing them of the full implications of the study.

Negative responses to the request to participate were received from a number of manufacturing industries. An engineering company and a dairy manufacturer refused to participate. Two food manufacturers and a brewery also declined to participate when approached. This was a pity as their involvement in the study would have provided a better balance to the survey and allowed the opportunity to make comparisons of absenteeism rates between diverse industries.

The reasons given by the five companies for not wishing to participate in the study were:

- * a food company declined to participate because their absenteeism records were not up-to-date.

- * a dairy producer had ongoing industrial relations problems and felt that such a study would exacerbate existing antagonism between management and the trade union.

- * a brewery refused to participate as the shop stewards felt that the writer had other intentions within the company.

- * a food company was prepared to provide absenteeism statistics for the writer but would not allow any interviews with shop stewards and workers to take place, due to continued industrial strife on the shop floor.

- * an engineering company refused to participate as the managing director did not approve because he was ^{wary?} weary of the shop stewards' reaction to the study.

The industries which did agree to participate in the survey included: dairy, food, cosmetics, industrial inks, clothing, light engineering and metal industries.

3.3 THE SAMPLE OF MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARDS

The study involved 238 people being interviewed in the 20 companies. The interviews included 160 workers, 40 members of management and 38 shop stewards. The management/personnel and shop steward interviewees were the persons in each industry considered to be the most knowledgeable about absenteeism. The contact manager in each industry selected and then arranged for the writer to interview the members of management and personnel (usually a production/factory manager and a personnel manager/officer) and two shop stewards.

stewards. The shop steward and management/personnel interviews were conducted with the use of structured questionnaires (see Appendix 7 and 8). One company, however, was not unionised and therefore no interviews with shop stewards took place.

3.4 THE SAMPLE OF WORKERS

The writer in all the twenty industries, analysed the absenteeism records of all the hourly/weekly-paid employees. The absenteeism records were either in the form of clock cards, attendance registers or employee absenteeism records. A number of absenteeism records had departmental divisions which made it easier for the writer to analyse the records. The writer then analysed the attendance records of the two smallest departments, two medium-sized departments, and the two largest departments in each industry, where this was possible. If the records could not differentiate workers into departments then the writer did not calculate department trends with regard to absenteeism. Each employee's attendance record was recorded over a year period (the immediate past 12 months) and a percentage was calculated to show the absenteeism rate for the employee.

This percentage was calculated as follows:¹

$$X - Y = Z$$

$$\therefore \frac{Z}{X} \times \frac{100}{1} = W$$

1 X = Total number of days available to work over certain period
Y = Number of days absent over certain period
Z = Number of days present over certain period
W = Percentage rate of attendance for certain period

Certified (AS) and uncertified absence (A) rates were also calculated. A bar chart was drawn for each worker, in each of the six departments in each industry, for the immediate past year, in order for the writer to identify the good and poor attenders (Appendix 3). Those who had the highest attendance rate (between 90 - 100%) were classified as good attenders, average attenders ranged from 80 - 90%, and those who had the lowest rate (below 80% attendance) were classified as poor attenders.

The writer used two samples in her study, namely, the interview sample and the biographical details sample.

In the interview sample, the writer selected and interviewed the four best attenders (good attenders) and the four worst attenders (poor attenders) from the six departments selected in each industry, a total of eight workers in each industry. A total of 160 workers were interviewed in all twenty industries (eighty good and eighty poor attenders).

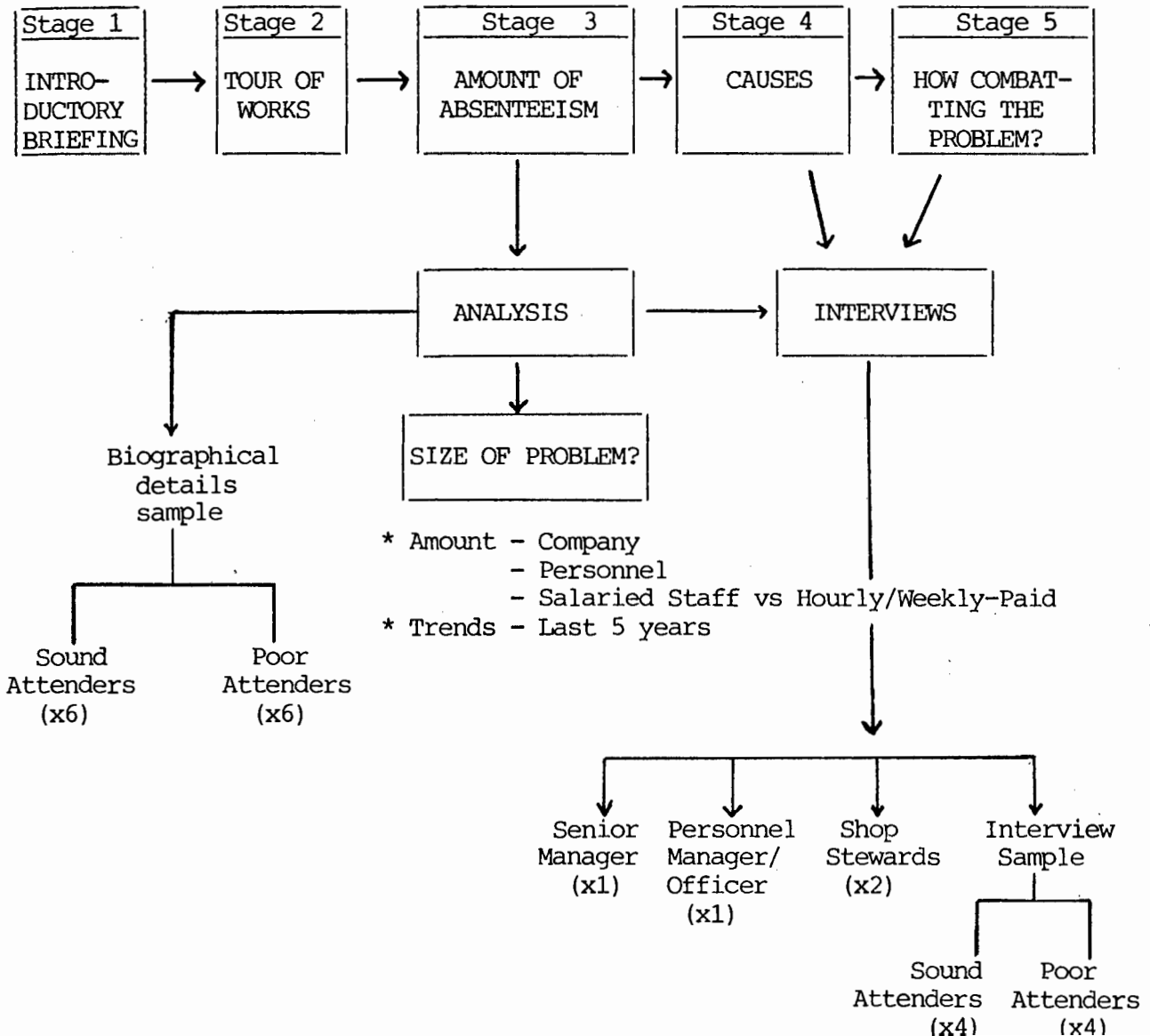
In the biographical details sample, the writer did not interview the good and poor attenders. She obtained biographical details of six good attenders and six poor attenders from the six departments selected in each industry, a total of twelve in each industry (240 in all twenty industries). The biographical details were obtained from the employees' personal files, with the personnel manager/officer providing the information which included information on: sex, marital status, dependent children, age, length of service, level of education and the work situation.

The writer's objective was to see if there was an association between biographical particulars and good and poor attenders.

3.5 BROAD STAGES IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

A number of broad stages were involved in the research study as can be seen in Figure 3.1.

FIGURE 3.1
METHODOLOGY : BROAD STAGES IN RESEARCH STUDY



Firstly, an introductory briefing meeting took place and was usually conducted with the personnel officer/manager. The writer outlined the stages in the research study, and also asked the personnel respondent to complete a background questionnaire (Appendix 1). This questionnaire sought information about:

- * the industry's organisation structure.
- * the industry's products/markets.
- * number of salaried staff and hourly/weekly-paid employees.
- * type of hourly/weekly-paid workers, that is, male and female.
- * departments (largest to smallest).
- * hours worked by hourly/weekly-paid workers/if shift or seasonal work was involved.
- * special environmental factors.
- * benefits available to hourly/weekly-paid workers.
- * trade union representation.
- * redundancies, short-time working, the employment of a social welfare worker, and creche facilities.

The writer also outlined the information which was needed. A checklist had been drawn up for this purpose (Appendix 2).

This checklist enabled the writer at the end of the three days allocated to each industry investigation, to check that all the required information had been collected.

This consisted of company absenteeism rates, department absenteeism figures, trends analysis (for the past 5 years), sample analysis (biographical details of good and poor attenders), as well as certified (AS) and uncertified (A) absence. This checklist was given to the personnel interviewees in the introductory briefing meetings, in order to give them enough time to collect the data.

The second stage in the research study (see Figure 3.1) involved a tour of the works. The writer found this first hand experience most interesting and valuable as she was able to relate with the working conditions in each factory and note particular environmental conditions, for example, hot or cold temperatures prevailing in the factory. The environmental conditions can be seen in Chapter Four as a cause of absenteeism, and in Chapter Five, the writer discusses recommendations concerning these environmental conditions.

The third stage in the study involved identifying the amount and nature of absenteeism in each company through a quantitative analysis of absenteeism records. For instance, what the percentage of absenteeism was over a 5-year period, whether the absence was certified or uncertified, if there were any trends, and so on.

The fourth stage involved separate interviews with management/personnel, shop stewards, and workers which took place to identify the causes of absenteeism (that is, the main variables associated with employee absenteeism).

The fifth stage involved interviews with the same respondents when they were asked their opinions on how absenteeism could be combatted?

The sixth stage involved a sample analysis of 240 workers, which provided the biographical details of good and poor attenders - no interviews took place, only an analysis of personal files. Finally, the information and data collected over the 7-month period was processed and the responses analysed and summarised.

The workers responses were tested, in order of significance using the Chi-squared test.

3.6 WORKER INTERVIEWS

The workers were not informed that they had been chosen because of their good or poor work attendance. Managers and the shop stewards did not want the 'labels' of 'good attender' and 'poor attender' to be attached to worker interviewees for obvious reasons.

Each worker interview lasted for 30-40 minutes. A simple, structured questionnaire was designed and used during the interviews with the good attenders (Appendix 5) and with the poor attender (Appendix 6).

Both the good and poor attenders answered questions which related to biographical details and completed a quick reaction sheet (Appendix 4). The biographical details included personal details such as: sex, ethnic group, age, marital status, dependent children, length of service, level of education, travel mode, and so on. The quick reaction sheet, using a rating scale from lowest to highest (1 - 7), asked questions around the central issue of the employee's motivation at work, their relationship with their supervisor, their relationship with their colleagues, and so on.

The worker interviews were conducted in both English and Afrikaans and in some cases an interpreter (usually a shop steward) was present when the writer spoke to Xhosa-speaking employees. The interviews, using an interpreter, lasted approximately 60 minutes, while the others took 35 minutes.

3.7 SHOP STEWARD INTERVIEWS

The shop stewards were interviewed to establish their perceptions related to the main causes of absenteeism, as well as any ideas/suggestions that they might have regarding combatting the problem of absenteeism.

These interviews were also structured through the use of a questionnaire (Appendix 7), and the main questions related to:

- * the nature and extent of absenteeism.
- * responsibilities with regard to combatting absenteeism.
- * absenteeism reporting and control.
- * the main causes of absenteeism.
- * profiles of good and poor attenders.
- * departments with the worst attenders (and reasons).
- * absenteeism trends.
- * the shop stewards' perception on how management dealt with absenteeism.

The interviews were conducted mainly in English and Afrikaans but in Xhosa in two factories. Another shop steward/or employee aided in the Xhosa interviews. Each interview took between 50 to 75 minutes. The writer found it gratifying that all the shop stewards were receptive to the questions contained in the questionnaire and freely expressed their opinions.

3.8 MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL INTERVIEWS

Management/Personnel were also interviewed about absenteeism. These interviews tried to identify perceptions regarding the causes of absenteeism as well as recommendations for combatting the problem (Figure 3.1).

The management interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire (Appendix 8) and the major questions dealt with:

- * the extent of absenteeism within the company.
- * the nature and extent of certified and uncertified absence.
- * the trends with respect to absenteeism levels within the company.
- * the financial costs of absenteeism.
- * the measurement and control of absenteeism.
- * the main causes of absenteeism.
- * the profiles of good and poor attenders.
- * the relationship between management style and absenteeism.
- * strategies and tactics in combatting absenteeism.
- * recommendations to combat absenteeism.

Each management interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. Due to the length and detail of the interviews, a tape recorder was used (with the prior permission of the manager) to help the writer with regard to the recording of answers to questions contained in the questionnaire. Only one manager refused the interview to be recorded.

As can be seen from Appendix 8, a large portion of the management questionnaire related to the control and monitoring of absenteeism (see question 5), that is, the recording, analysing and reporting of absenteeism. The questionnaire was so structured that one part was aimed at the personnel officer/manager and the other part was directed at the production manager or factory manager.

The field work began on 5 May 1992 and ended on 4 December 1992. Appendix 9 provides a summary of the surveyed organisations in terms of the number of days spent in each industry, company codes and details of the interviewees.

3.9 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

The final phase of the research process involved three stages:

- (1) Writing up the responses from the management/personnel, shop steward and worker interviews. The responses were analysed and summarised, some of them into a tabular format. For example, the perceptions regarding the main causes of absenteeism were tabulated in order of importance and are presented in Chapter Five.
- (2) The average annual absenteeism rates for 1992, and for previous years, were calculated and are presented in Appendix 10. A bar chart of the average annual absenteeism rate for 1992 is presented in Chapter Four.
- (3) Statistical analysis of the worker responses was undertaken to identify the most and least important variables related to absenteeism. The Chi-squared measure of association was used in order to determine the statistical significance of the associations found. These findings are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS

SECTION A: QUANTIFICATION OF ABSENTEEISM

4.1 ABSENTEEISM RATES AND TRENDS

- 4.1.1 Amount of Absenteeism In Year 1992
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- 4.16.1 The association between good and poor attenders and length of service.
- 4.16.2 The association between good and poor attenders and development opportunities.
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- 4.17.1 The association between good and poor attenders and travel mode.

SECTION A : QUANTIFICATION OF ABSENTEEISM

4.1 ABSENTEEISM RATES AND TRENDS

4.1.1 Amount of Absenteeism In Year 1992

As a vital part of the study, an attempt was made to obtain absenteeism figures for the past five years in all the twenty companies studied. Data for the year of the study, 1992, was unfortunately only available from sixteen companies. It was disappointing to find that four companies could provide no absenteeism rates for 1992. The reasons given were:

- a personnel manager having figures for years 1989 and 1990 and then leaving to have a baby and not continuing with the absenteeism records.
- a personnel manager believing that absenteeism in the company was not a problem and there was no need to keep absenteeism rates (head office had not asked for percentage absenteeism rates).
- a new personnel manager could not find any absenteeism records left behind by his predecessor.
- a personnel practitioner said it was the responsibility of the industrial sister to keep absenteeism records. The sister kept daily records but not monthly or annual statistics.

On the basis of the data obtained from the 16 companies, the average annual percentage absenteeism rate, trends in absenteeism over the past five years, as well as the ratio of certified and uncertified absence for 1992 were established. These findings are presented in Appendix 10.

As can be seen from this Appendix, it was found that the average annual percentage absenteeism rate for the twenty companies was 4.7% for 1992. The highest rate was 7.5% and the lowest rate 2.5%.

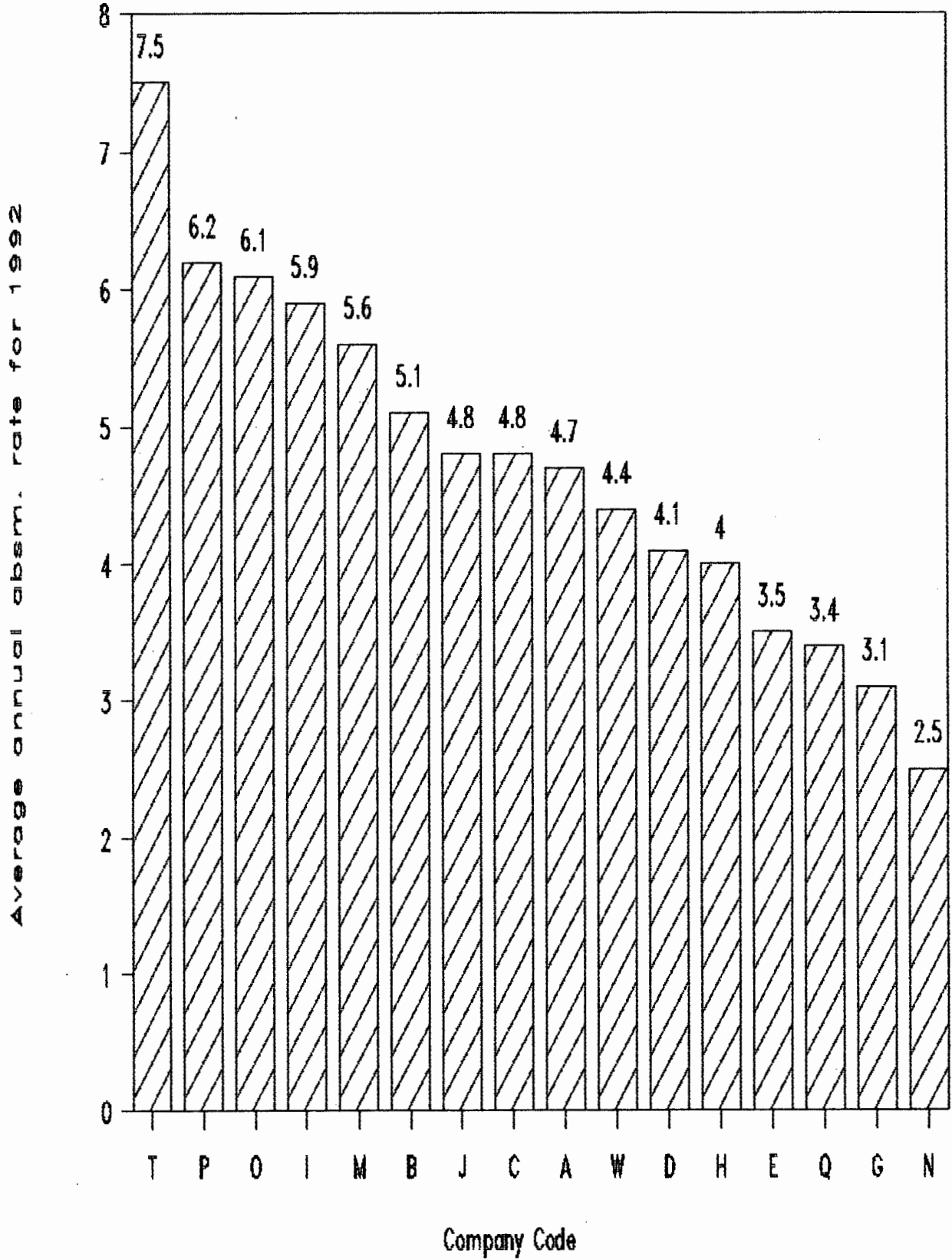
Figure 4.1 shows the average annual percentage absenteeism rate for 1992, presented in bar chart format and in descending order for the 16 companies which had absenteeism data. The four companies with the lowest rates were: 2.5% (Co. N/Dairy), 3.1% (Co. G/Food), 3.4% (Co. Q/Food), and 3.5% (Co. E/Inks). The four companies with the highest rates were: 7.5% (Co. T/Fishing), 6.2% (Co. P/Food), 6.1% (Co. O/Cosmetics) and 5.9% (Co. I/Clothing).

Although some absenteeism is to be expected and is unavoidable in any company, rates beyond certain levels are regarded by commentators as problematical. According to Van der Merwe and Miller, "if the Gross Absence Rate (GAR) is 10% then absenteeism is serious by any standards, any rate over 5% should be regarded as an indicator of a situation needing further investigation.

FIGURE 4.1

BAR CHART OF AVERAGE ANNUAL ABSENTEEISM

RATE IN THE 16 COMPANIES FOR 1992



Absence below 3% can be seen as satisfactory, although capable of further improvement" (1988:25).

4.1.2 How Absenteeism Is Recorded, Analysed And Reported

4.1.2.1 Recording, Analysis And Reporting Of Absenteeism

Generally speaking, it was found that the twenty companies studied did not have sound systems for the recording, analysing and reporting of absenteeism, as table 4.1 shows:

TABLE 4.1

SUMMARY OF CURRENT ABSENTEEISM REPORTING SYSTEMS OF THE SURVEYED TWENTY COMPANIES

Company

Daily Attendance Register
Absenteeism by department
Graphs/Tables of absenteeism
Sound and Poor offenders identified
Absm. tabled at weekly mgt. meetings
Frequency of reporting
(weekly or monthly)
Comparative analysis in 1992
(with previous years)

YES		NO	
No.	%	No.	%
10	50	10	50
6	30	14	70
7	35	13	65
2	10	18	90
1	5	19	95
13	65	7	35
6	30	14	70

Only ten companies kept a daily attendance register. In the other ten factories, absenteeism was reported manually mainly on employee record cards, and this made it difficult for the writer to analyse absenteeism rates and trends, as well as certified/uncertified absence.

Only one company produced a weekly absenteeism report, and twelve companies a monthly absenteeism report. The other seven factories did not produce any management report on absenteeism.

Of the thirteen factories producing a weekly or monthly absenteeism report, only seven presented their reports using graphs or tables (for easy reading and interpretation): tables were used in all of the seven companies.

No company produced any graphs to highlight, for example, individual employee attendance, departmental attendance, and attendance trends over time.

As mentioned in section 4.1, only one company kept a five-year absenteeism trend.

Six companies carried out some kind of comparative analysis of absenteeism, that is, current year figures compared with previous year/s.

Only six companies showed absenteeism rates by department. The writer had to work through the employee absenteeism records or supervisory register to calculate departmental figures in seven companies. This was a laborious and time-consuming exercise. The remaining seven factories did not have a recording system to enable departmental figures to be calculated by the writer.

Only two companies identified 100% work attenders as well as main offenders regarding absence. Again, the writer had to work from employee records or attendance registers to calculate attendance per individual per department; a time-consuming activity.

In only one company, was absenteeism tabled at weekly management meetings.

Eighteen factories did not realise they had employees with 100% attendance records (for a one year period) until the writer identified them via analysis. It was not possible therefore, for the companies to recognise or thank the 100% attenders.

The interviewees' responses indicated a general lack of proper management recording and reporting systems regarding absenteeism. In addition, a number of interviewees' expressed a need to improve their controls in this respect in order to deal with absenteeism more effectively.

4.1.2.2 Shop Steward Interviewees' Comments With Respect To Absenteeism Reports

Table 4.2 indicates that only eleven of the shop steward interviewees in the twenty factories said that they would like to see such absenteeism reports issued by management on a regular basis.

TABLE 4.2
SHOP STEWARDS RESPONSES TO ABSENTEEISM REPORTING BY MANAGEMENT

	Shop Stewards
Would like to see the reports/feel they should see report	11
Only sees supervisor records, no personnel report	6
Information put on notice board in factory, for example, person with highest absence/supervisor with highest production	6
Sees % of absenteeism and A and AS	2
Absenteeism control list on board	2
Only sees disciplinary report for individual case	2
Every month/3 months/1 year a list in each department shows 100% attendance and % of absenteeism. Worst dept. mentioned	2
In training centre absm. graph for each dept. & % displayed	2
In mgt. meeting compare % of absm. in co. to other companies	2
Only told % of absenteeism but do not see figures	1
Only told which departments are main offenders	1
No interest in seeing any report	1
TOTAL	38

Nine interviewees said they would like to see such a report on a regular basis. Only one interviewee said he was not interested in having such information. Six respondents (from the same group) said they saw their supervisor's records but no management report. Six shop stewards said information regarding attendance was obtained from the notice board in the factory, and two interviewees mentioned an absenteeism control list which was also displayed on the notice board.

4.1.3 Absenteeism Rates For Different Industries For 1992

Analysing the absenteeism rates for 1992 for each industry (Appendix 10) the following results emerged:

TABLE 4.3
ABSENTEEISM RATES FOR DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES FOR 1992

Industry	Number of Industries Surveyed	Average Annual % Absence (Year 1992)
Clothing	5	4.9%
Food	5	4.6%
Fish Products	1	7.5%
Light Engineering	2	
Dairy	1	2.5%
Industrial Inks	1	3.5%
Cosmetics	1	6.1%

By looking at the GAR rates in Table 4.3 above, and comparing them to the standards set by Van der Merwe and Miller (1988), it can be seen that the rates of market sectors of fishing/fish products and cosmetics are higher than 5%, an indication of a situation needing attention. The absence rate of dairy is below the satisfactory standard of 3%, implying that it is highly satisfactory. No company had absenteeism rates above 10% or below 2.4%.

4.1.4 Departmental Absenteeism Rates (that is, departments compared within each company)

A disappointing finding was that only six companies could provide figures for departmental absenteeism rates for 1992. The other fourteen companies did not keep such records. Appendix 10 shows that the highest absenteeism rate (1992) for any department was 37.4% (Co. E), and the lowest, 0.6% (Co. M).

4.1.5 Certified (AS) And Uncertified Absence (A)

As already noted, it was a common practice in all twenty companies, that certified absence was abbreviated as AS (absence with a sick certificate) and uncertified absence as A (absence).

Certified absence (AS) can be subdivided into sick certified absence when a doctor's certificate is produced on return or absence where prior permission has been sought and granted by the supervisor or whoever else has the authority to do so. The reason for the absence is irrelevant. For example, it might be to take a sick child to hospital or to attend a court hearing.

Uncertified absence (A) is absence with no sick certificate or company permission and where absence is less than the minimum period required for certification (normally three days). If an employee is uncertifiably absent, he/she may be subject to disciplinary action.

From the data collected (see Appendix 10), it was determined that the average ratio of AS to A (for 1992) in nineteen of the surveyed companies was 7.1 (AS) to 2.9 (A). The proportion of A of 2.9 for uncertified absence appears high to the writer. The highest and most favourable ratio (AS to A) was 9.9 to 0.1 (Co. O/Cosmetics) and the worst ratio (AS to A) was 4.2 to 5.8 (Co. H/Clothing). Company H was the only factory to report more uncertified absence than certified absence for 1992. The second least favourable situation was a ratio of 5.4 (AS) to 4.6 (A) for company Q (a food manufacturer).

Table 4.4 highlights a breakdown of certified (AS) and uncertified (A) absenteeism rates. Both company figures and the worst departmental situations are shown for AS and A. Only ten companies could provide figures of AS and A (expressed either as number of hours or as a percentage of AS and A), whilst in eight factories AS and A figures could only be found on employee absenteeism records or attendance registers (the writer had to extract the figures). One company calculated figures for AS only, whilst the remaining factories did not produce any figures of AS or A even from employee absenteeism records. The departments could not be mentioned as the writer was obliged to reserve anonymity.

TABLE 4.4
CERTIFIED AND UNCERTIFIED RATES AND WORST DEPARTMENT
FOR AS AND A IN EACH COMPANY

Company Code	Total AS (%)	Total A (%)	Worst Dept.	A/AS%
J	62,9	37,1	59,7	40,3
D	68,5	31,5	50,7	49,3
T	79,2	20,8	31,1	68,9
A	27,9	72,1	30,2	69,8
N	24,5	75,5	27,8	72,2
G	55,2	44,8	81,5	18,5
Q	53,9	46,1	73,4	26,6
W	88,6	11,3	n/a	n/a
L	62,2	37,8	39,9	60,1
Y	56,4	43,6	55,0	45,0
B	68,3	31,7	33,1	66,9
F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
I	92,7	7,3	12,2	87,8
E	94,7	5,3	15,4	84,6
C	64,5	35,5	43,0	57,0
H	42,2	57,8	n/a	n/a
K	64,6	35,4	n/a	n/a
M	84,4	15,6	n/a	n/a
O	99,8	0,2	n/a	n/a
P	59,4	40,6	n/a	n/a

As can be seen from table 4.4, Co. H (clothing factory) has the worst situation with a higher uncertified absence than certified absence (that is, 57.8% A and 42.2% AS).

4.1.6 Absenteeism Trends

Absenteeism rates for a single year are not a reliable indicator of the general rates of absenteeism for an industry, a company or a department. For this reason, the writer wanted to obtain and analyse the absenteeism rates in the twenty companies over the past 5 years. The writer was both disappointed and surprised to discover that only ONE of the companies was able to provide absenteeism rates for the past 5 years (Co. M). The writer was disappointed because this meant that certain kinds of analysis would not be possible. The writer was surprised because it would seem that good managerial personnel practice would require the keeping of such records.

TABLE 4.5
ABSENTEEISM FIGURES AVAILABLE IN THE TWENTY COMPANIES

	No.	%
No figures available at all	3	15
Figures for Year 1989 to 1990 only	1	5
Figures for Year 1992 only (1 year)	4	20
Figures for Years 1991 and 1992 (2 years)	5	25
Figures for Years 1990 to 1992 (3 years)	5	25
Figures for Years 1989 to 1992 (4 years)	1	5
Figures for Years 1988 to 1992 (5 years)	1	5
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>100</u>

The upshot of the varied and brief period for which data was available in most companies was that it was not possible to report any trends in absenteeism rates in the companies.

SECTION B: MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARD RESPONSES TO
THE MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARD
QUESTIONNAIRES

4.2 ABSENTEEISM: A PROBLEM OR NOT A PROBLEM?

Management/Personnel and Shop Steward respondents were asked to what extent absenteeism was perceived to be a problem in their companies. Table 4.6 below shows the management/personnel responses and the shop steward responses:

TABLE 4.6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARDS
PERCEIVE ABSENTEEISM TO BE A PROBLEM IN THE COMPANY

	Management and Personnel	Shop Stewards
Very serious problem	6	11
Serious problem	18	18
A problem	12	9
Satisfactory	4	-
Not a problem	-	-
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>38</u>

Similar responses were received from both sets of interviewees with shop steward respondents seeing absenteeism in a slightly more serious light than management/personnel. Eleven (29%) of the shop steward interviewees rated the "very serious problem" category, compared to six (15%) management/personnel interviewees. The same number of management/personnel and shop steward interviewees (18) scored the "serious problem" box. Twelve management/personnel and nine shop steward respondents scored the "problem" category. Four management/personnel interviewees (10%) - two management and two personnel - went for the "satisfactory" box, whereas no

trade union respondents gave a rating for "satisfactory". No interviewees - management/personnel or shop stewards - rated the "not a problem" category.

In sum, therefore, 100% of the shop steward interviewees and 90% of management/personnel interviewees saw absenteeism as representing either a problem, serious problem, or a very serious problem.

4.2.1 Comments And Perceived Problems Caused By Absenteeism

Analysing the comments of the management/personnel and shop steward interviewees it was found there were no discernible differences regarding the perceptions of management/personnel and shop steward interviewees with respect to the way they viewed the problems caused by absenteeism. The problems mentioned by interviewees can be summarised under 3 headings, namely:

- problems for THE COMPANY
- problems for THE SUPERVISOR/MANAGER, and,
- problems for THE WORKERS

The problems for The Company were stated as:

- operational problems, especially with regard to the disruption of the flow of work, production losses, and productivity being badly affected.
- dead-lines being missed, deliveries to customers being affected, and, as one shop steward mentioned, to a loss of orders.

- higher production costs, that is; overtime, hiring of casuals, re-work, cancelled orders, and the like.
- the need to hire casuals (at extra cost) who are unskilled, less productive and who would have to be trained and supervised more closely.
- quality being affected when experienced/skilled workers were absent.

The problems for Supervisors and/or Managers included:

- spending unnecessary time re-scheduling the daily work programme.
- having to hire, train and closely supervise (unskilled) casual labourers.
- managing the tensions created on the shop-floor caused by the disruptive effect of absenteeism.

The problems for Workers were stated as:

- worker dissatisfaction and tension due to the disruption of having to be moved to another job (or department) to cover for an absent colleague.

- further dissatisfaction caused by the extra pressure of work and attempting to meet a specific target without a full complement of skilled workers.
- worker fatigue.
- team morale being badly affected.
- work groups missing out on production bonus targets.
- a feeling of unfairness which workers experience when they have to carry on with production demands when workers are absent.

4.3 RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

Management/Personnel and Shop Steward interviewees were asked "who was primarily responsible for combatting absenteeism?" Table 4.7 shows their responses:

TABLE 4.7
THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM:
MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARD RESPONSES

	Management and Personnel	Shop Stewards
Employee/Worker	3	19
Supervisor/Foreman	11	6
Employee and Supervisor	9	2
Production Mngr and Line Supervisor	5	1
Management and Shop Stewards	3	2
Management	2	3
Personnel and Supervisor	4	-
Total workforce of Company	3	-
Employee and Management	-	3
Personnel	-	2
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>38</u>

As table 4.7 indicates, some major differences exist between management/personnel and shop steward respondents with regard to the question of combatting absenteeism.

The most popular response from management/personnel (eleven interviewees representing 28% of the total) was that the supervisor was primarily responsible for combatting absenteeism.

The most popular shop steward response (nineteen respondents representing 50% of total responses) stated that the (absent) worker was primarily responsible. Only three management/personnel respondents agreed with the shop steward interviewees when stating that the absent worker was primarily responsible, whilst six shop steward interviewees agreed with the manager/personnel interviewees who named the supervisor being primarily responsible.

It can be seen from Table 4.7 that no less than eight different answers were received from the management/personnel interviewees to the question about responsibility for combatting absenteeism. There are eight different shop steward replies to the question.

Twenty-one (26%) of the responses see the supervisor as responsible for controlling absenteeism. This view is consistent with that of Peter Taylor (1982:33) who sees the supervisor as important in absence control and who believes that the line supervisor/ supervisor should interview poor attenders to find the cause of absence before deciding an action.

The importance of the supervisory role in the control and mastering of everyday problems, like grievance handling, disciplinary procedures, and implementation of management absence programmes are all important in order to combat absenteeism.

Supervisory training is one, if not the key to controlling absenteeism. As many senior managers and personnel managers agreed that absence control is a vital part of the supervisory training programme. The supervisor's job description should include absence control as one of his/her primary responsibilities. Also the employee's annual performance appraisal review must include a review of his/her actual performance against his/her department's absence standards.

4.4 FINANCIAL COSTS OF ABSENTEEISM

4.4.1 Number Of Companies Calculating Costs Of Absenteeism

The total cost of absence to a firm is the loss in profit which results from such absence. It can be expressed as "an amount of loss per person employed per unit produced (and sold) over any given period of time, or it can be estimated as total loss per year" (Mets, 1979:14).

For the purpose of this research, the cost of absence will be expressed in terms of:

- (a) Direct/fixed costs: that is, actual loss of production, due to a shortage of labour. It could also be those costs "spent on personnel and medical functionaries who are directly involved with absenteeism. They form part of the salary costs of these functionaries" (Mets, 1979:14).

- (b) Indirect/variable costs: that is, all the overhead costs. For example, having to pay a casual to do the job or having to pay another employee an overtime rate in order to get the job done.

With regard to the companies surveyed, eight (40%) companies conducted some kind of cost analysis regarding absenteeism. The other twelve (60%) factories did not attempt any cost exercise.

Not all of the eight companies were prepared to give the writer details of their cost analysis and, consequently, the writer cannot go into detail with respect to the way in which the surveyed companies compiled the costs of absenteeism. However, a number of different formulas were used by the eight companies when it came to calculating the costs of absenteeism.

The most common formula for calculating the costs of absenteeism was as follows:

The production manager would calculate, in terms of AS and A, the total working-hours lost for the month. The formula to do this is as follows:

TOTAL POTENTIAL-WORKING HOURS BUDGETED TO WORK (in month)	-	ACTUAL WORKING- HOURS WORKED (in month)	=	TOTAL WORKING- HOURS LOST (in month)
---	---	---	---	--

Once the total working-hours lost had been calculated, the wage clerks in the wages department would then calculate the cost of absenteeism as follows:

TOTAL WORKING-HOURS LOST (in month)	x	HOURLY-RATE OF EMPLOYEES	=	COSTS OF ABSENTEEISM IN RAND VALUE (for month)
--	---	-----------------------------	---	--

4.4.2 Some interesting observations and quotes from the interviewees regarding the cost to the company of absenteeism:

- "It's the finance department's task to keep such costs", commented a personnel practitioner.

- The personnel manager of one company said costs were compiled, but the factory manager said that no costs were calculated. It is interesting to note this inconsistency.

- A spokesman for one company said "no costs are formulated but this can easily be done if head office asks for costs".

- "Costs are done on an ad-hoc basis", said one personnel officer in a company.

- A spokesperson for one company said "no costs are done for absenteeism", but a study on one production line, of lost time due to toilet breaks, showed a loss of R215 425,00 for a year if over-time was involved. The workforce included 562 hourly-paid employees.

4.5 THE ACTION THAT IS TAKEN TO DEAL WITH EXCESSIVE OR UNCONDONED ABSENTEEISM

4.5.1 Management Approach To Tackling Excessive Absenteeism

According to management/personnel interviewees, all twenty companies had a well-defined Industrial Relations (I.R) disciplinary procedure which - in theory - would be invoked against an employee for excessive absenteeism.

The disciplinary procedure varied slightly from factory to factory but usually involved most of the following stages: counselling, a verbal warning, a number of written warnings, and a disciplinary enquiry attended by the employee and a representative (normally a shop steward) and management. Dismissal could follow the final warning/enquiry. An appeal system against dismissal was in place in the majority of the companies.

As identified above, some of the surveyed factories did not readily identify the main offenders of absence, so disciplinary action was difficult to implement.

Two of the twenty companies had not dismissed any employee in recent years for absenteeism offences. Four factories - for different reasons - rarely, or inconsistently, invoked the I.R. disciplinary procedure.

The explanations given by interviewees were: it rarely happened that someone was dismissed for excessive absenteeism, the supervisors were too lenient towards absenteeism, the company was very understanding to workers with domestic problems, and the I.R. procedure was not always applied.

The remaining fourteen companies appeared to implement the I.R. disciplinary procedure for absenteeism - to different degrees of strictness and rigidity - and dismissal was the end result.

4.5.2 Who Gets Involved In Disciplinary Action?

It was interesting analysing who, within the twenty companies, got involved in taking some form of disciplinary action, or recommending disciplinary action regarding absenteeism offences. According to Van Coller (1979:115), a model disciplinary procedure involves the following stages:

- "1. Supervisor gives the employee a verbal warning, after a series of counselling sessions.
2. Supervisor gives the employee a formal written warning.
3. Department manager holds a disciplinary inquiry with supervisor, employee, employee representative, personnel officer present.
4. Head of division hears recommendations of department manager and personnel officer and has authority to dismiss.
5. Employee may invoke grievance procedure at advanced stage if he does not accept disciplinary action".

The following findings make interesting reading:

In three companies the industrial sister became directly involved in counselling, giving warnings, or making recommendations for disciplinary action to senior management. It was significant to observe that an industrial sister was involved in a line function, that is, giving warnings to workers.

Personnel practitioners in three companies were primarily responsible for action against poor work-attenders: again, this involved staff members (personnel practitioners) being directly involved in a line function.

Other combinations regarding who took action against absenteeism offenders, were:

- The factory manager and personnel manager (one company)
- The factory manager or personnel manager (one company)
- The human resources manager and shop steward (one company)
- The factory manager keeps pressure on personnel and the supervisors to take action against poor attenders (one company)
- A member of line management, that is, a factory manager or production manager (ten companies).

4.6 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

4.6.1 Management/Personnel Responses

Table 4.8 shows the responses to the management/personnel questionnaire related to perceptions on the main causes of absenteeism.

TABLE 4.8
THE MAIN CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM ACCORDING TO MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL RESPONDENTS

STATED CAUSE	RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS						TOTAL
	1st MAIN CAUSE	2nd MAIN CAUSE	3rd MAIN CAUSE	4th MAIN CAUSE	5th MAIN CAUSE	6th MAIN CAUSE	
Ill-health (stemming from socio-eco. sitn)	35	3					38
Socio-economic (family, housing, strife)	2	26	5	1		1	35
Outside busn. eg going to lawyer/welfare		2	12	11		1	26
Negative attitude of employee		2	10	3	2		17
Transport - direct link to weather	1	1		1	3	2	8
Myth that sick leave is owed to worker		2	2	3	1		8
Alcohol & drug related problems			3	1	4		8
Laziness - especially Mondays & Winter		2	1	2			5
Mgt. of dept.- workers not part of Company		1	1	1			3
Winter period - floods & storms - problems				1	2		3
Living in Trans/Ciskei, take unpaid leave				3			3
Political pressure eg stay-aways			1	1	1		3
Poor relationships between supv. & worker				1	2		3
Working hours - long shifts - work w/ends get overtime pay - absent in week	2						2
Attending funerals				2			2
Wife only bread-winner: extra burden			2				2
Negative attitude of superv. at workplace					2		2
Double standards (mgt. better conditions)				1			1
Employees who feel financially secure				1			1
Remuneration not sufficient			1				1
Working environment - hot or cold					1		1
Large female workforce - natural illness		1					1
People educating themselves eg exams			1				1
Young & irresponsible: work for parents				1			1
Doctors too willing to give certificates						1	1
Near retirement				1			1
Type of work not stimulating					1		1
Low standard of education - for example do not know affects on absenteeism				1			1
TOTAL	40	40	39	36	19	5	179

Note: Respondents were asked to give six main causes of absenteeism, but, as can be seen above, not all interviewees' gave six causes: some only gave two major reasons for absence.

Looking at the "Total" column of Table 4.8, it can be seen that according to the respondents the main causes of absenteeism were:

- ill-health (socio-economic) 38 responses (21% of total)
- socio-economic conditions 35 responses (19.5% of total)
- Workers dealing with outside business 26 responses (14.5% of total)
- Negative attitude of employee 17 responses (9.5% of total)
- Transport problems 8 responses (4.5% of total)
- Myth: sick leave owed to worker 8 responses (4.5% of total)
- Alcohol and drug related problems 8 responses (4.5% of total)

It is interesting to note that only seven responses (3.9% of total) related to such things as: management approach, poor supervision, and the relationship between the supervisor and workforce.

It can be seen that a total of 68% of the response items perceived the main causes of absenteeism either as factors OUTSIDE the factory or factors (criticisms) related to the individual worker. Only 32% of responses related to factors INSIDE the factory.

- a) factors outside the factory: 12 responses (43% of total) for example, socio-economic factors, transport.
- b) factors associated with individual worker : 7 responses (25% of total) for example, laziness, positive attitude, etc.
- c) factors inside the factory : 9 responses (32% of total) for example, long working hours, type of work.

It can be seen that no less than thirty-five of the forty respondents (87%) said the main cause of absenteeism was ill-health of workers due to the socio-economic situation in the Western Cape. Twenty-six respondents (65%) stated socio-economic conditions as the second main cause for absenteeism. Of 179 responses to the question, 40% of all responses related to ill-health of workers (due to socio-economic conditions) and socio-economic conditions themselves. Responses which were categorised under "socio-economic" conditions included: poor housing, township living conditions, poverty, large families living together under one roof, a poor standard of living, domestic strife, and so on.

4.6.2 Shop Steward Responses

Table 4.9 shows a similar shop steward response to the question of main causes of absenteeism, as was found by Management/Personnel.

TABLE 4.9
THE MAIN CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM ACCORDING TO SHOP STEWARDS

STATED CAUSE	RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS						TOTAL
	1st MAIN CAUSE	2nd MAIN CAUSE	3rd MAIN CAUSE	4th MAIN CAUSE	5th MAIN CAUSE	6th MAIN CAUSE	
Ill-health(stemming from socio-econ.sitn.)	36		1				37
Socio-economic (family, housing, strife)		26	5	4			35
Outside business - go to lawyer/welfare		2	10	3	5	1	21
Poor supervisor & worker relationship			4	9	1	2	16
Alcoholic/drug problems		2	3	4	3		12
Transport problems, stay far from station			3	2	5	2	12
Some workers are lazy/tired		3	1	3	1	2	10
Myth that sick leave is owed to them	1	2	2		3		8
Irresponsible & uncaring attitude (workers)				4		1	5
Political stay-aways: workers threatened					4		4
Stay-away for no reason; not sick			1	1	1		3
Negligence of company to educate worker				3			3
Week-end drinking (Monday absence)	1			1			2
Cold conditions at workplace		1	1				2
Safety with regard to transport - train			2				2
Too much pressure/stress at workplace			1		1		2
Privileges given to salary: not hrly workers		2					2
Accommodation problems			1				1
Extra marital affairs at the workplace						1	1
Workers give long-service; with changeover of management workers become despondent				1			1
Extra day to travel to Transkei (Xhosa)					1		1
Doctors seen as culprits as they give time off because workers paid for certificate			1				1
Young workers - single and carefree					1		1
Working for parents, not themselves				1			1
TOTAL	38	38	36	36	26	9	183

Note: Respondents were asked to give six main causes, but, as can be seen from the above responses, some interviewees only gave two responses.

Thirty-six of the thirty-eight respondents (94.7%) said the main cause of absenteeism was illness of the worker or a family member, with a strong indication that socio-economic conditions had an influence. Twenty six respondents (68%), stated the second main cause as domestic problems, again related to socio-economic conditions. Of 183 responses to the question, 39.3% of all responses were related to ill-health of workers (and their families) and domestic problems/strife due to poor socio-economic conditions.

Looking at the "Total" column of Table 4.9, it can be seen that the most commonly cited to the main causes of absenteeism were:

- illness of the worker/ family member	37 responses (20.2% of total)
- domestic problems	35 responses (19.1% of total)
- workers dealing with outside business	21 responses (11.4% of total)
- poor worker/supv. relations	16 responses (8.7% of total)
- alcohol/drugs	12 responses (6.5% of total)
- transport problems	12 responses (6.5% of total)
- some workers lazy/tired	10 responses (5.4% of total)

Twenty-four different factors were given as main causes of absenteeism (Table 4.9) and these can be grouped into 3 categories, as follows:

- a) factors outside the factory : 11 responses (46% of total)
- b) factors associated with individual worker : 7 responses (29% of total)
- c) factors inside the factory : 6 responses (25% of total)

It can be seen that a total of 75% of shop steward responses saw the main causes of absenteeism either as factors OUTSIDE the factory or factors (criticisms) related to the individual worker. Only 25% of responses related to factors INSIDE the factory. It is significant that few of the shop stewards blame the job or factory situation.

4.6.3 Comparison of Management/Personnel and Shop Steward Responses

Very similar responses were obtained from management/personnel and shop steward interviewees related to their perceptions on the main causes of absenteeism. As can be seen, both management/personnel and shop stewards saw the three main causes of absenteeism as relating to:

- (1) Ill-health (stemming from the socio-economic situation).
- (2) Socio-economic reasons (family, housing, strife).
- (3) Outside business, for example, going to lawyer or welfare.

One significant difference was that sixteen shop steward responses (8.7% of total) were related to poor supervisory/worker relationships, compared with seven similar responses from management/personnel (3.9% of total).

4.6.4 Worker Responses

Table 4.10 shows worker views regarding the main cause of absenteeism.

TABLE 4.10
THE MAIN CAUSE OF ABSENTEEISM: WORKER RESPONSES

	Frequency	Percentage
Sickness	113	70.6%
Domestic problems (child/husband)	14	8.8%
Outside business (clinic/court)	4	2.5%
Too much over time/overworked	0	0.0%
Supervisor - too harsh	1	0.6%
Financially secure:can afford to be Absent	0	0.0%
Lazy/tired/habit to take day off	15	9.4%
Areas where worker lives is unsafe	0	0.0%
Weather in winter	1	0.6%
Don't like job/non caring attitude	5	3.1%
Stay off Monday/drinking on weekend	4	2.5%
Take advantage of sick leave scenario	2	1.3%
Transport: if miss train/bus, go home rather get doctor's note than be Shouted at by supervisor	1	0.6%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>100%</u>

As can be seen from Table 4.10, the main cause of absenteeism (reason 1) relates to sickness (illness of the worker/family member): 113 out of 160 responses (70,6% of total). Fifteen of the 160 responses (9,4%) felt the main cause related to some workers being tired/lazy. Fourteen of the 160 responses (8,8%) felt that domestic problems were the main cause.

Once again, very similar responses were obtained from worker, management/personnel and shop steward interviewees relating to their perceptions of the main cause of absenteeism, that is, sickness and domestic problems.

To investigate worker views on absenteeism further, the views of the good and poor attenders were compared. Table 4.11 shows a higher percentage of poor attenders (61,9%) saw the main cause of absenteeism as sickness compared with 38.1% of the good attenders who held this view.

TABLE 4.11
THE MAIN CAUSE OF ABSENCE ACCORDING TO WORKERS

	Sound Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Sickness	38.1%	61.9%	100%
Domestic Problems	85.7%	14.3%	100%
Outside Business	50.0%	50.0%	100%
Supervisor Too Harsh	100%	0.0%	100%
Lazy/Tired	73.4%	26.6%	100%
Weather	100%	0.0%	100%
Don't Feel Like Doing Job	79.4%	20.6%	100%
Stay Off Monday (drinking)	73.1%	26.9%	100%
Take Advantage Sick Leave	100%	0.0%	100%
Transport	100%	0.0%	100%
TOTAL	80%	20%	100%

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, the causes as well as the importance of particular causes, will change over time.

These causes can be attributed to factors within the group of workers themselves, such as socio-economic background and their cultural attitudes to work. These could vary regionally or locally. Secondly, the organisation and working conditions within a company may result in higher levels of absenteeism within the company. For example, higher levels of absence can be expected where shifts are worked. Finally, levels will be determined by the economic conditions in the labour market at any time; thus, in times of a recession, a worker will not be absent so readily if he/she perceives a threat of dismissal and the likelihood that he/she may not find another job so easily.

4.7 PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARD
INTERVIEWEES REGARDING TYPICAL PROFILES OF THE POOR
AND SOUND WORK ATTENDER

4.7.1 Profile Of Poor Work Attender

The responses of management/personnel and shop steward interviewees regarding their perceptions of the typical poor attender profile can be seen in Table 4.12 and Table 4.13.

TABLE 4.12
THE TYPICAL PROFILE OF THE POOR WORK ATTENDER:
PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

	Management	Personnel
Uninterested in their job/ non caring attitude	7	16
Full of domestic problems (for example, alcohol)	9	10
Bad attitude and not enthusiastic	9	-
No motivation	6	-
Irresponsible late comer	1	6
Lazy	2	6
Young - has social life	2	5
Uneducated	5	2
Give feeble excuses for absence	4	3
Unhappy	-	4
Pattern of absence - becomes a habit	4	1
Lies at work	3	-
Short time with company	3	3
Ill-health	2	3
Attitude that "sick leave owed to me"	-	3
Need discipline	-	3
Workers exploit system	-	2
Battling with finances	3	2
Earn too much money (can afford to be absent)	1	2
Male	1	1
Managed in incorrect way	1	-
Negative attitude of management	1	1
Stress	1	1
Slow at type of job	1	-
Insecure	1	-
Unreliable	1	-
TOTAL	68	74

The main personnel responses were related to such comments as:

- the workers not being interested in their job/non-caring attitude (16 responses/21.6% of total)
- personal problems of workers (10 responses/13.5%)
- laziness (6 responses/8.1%), and,
- the irresponsible latecomer (6 responses/8.1%)

Only three responses out of a total of 74 (4.05%) related to factors inside the factory which could be contributory reasons for a person's regular absence, that is, badly managed, stress at work, and excessive overtime.

The main management responses were:

- bad attitude of worker (nine responses/13.2% of total)
- domestic problems (nine responses/13.2%)
- uninterested in type of work (seven responses/10.3%)
- no motivation (six responses/8.8%)

Only the seven responses related to "uninterested in their job" (10.3% of total) relate to factors inside the factory.

As Table 4.12 shows, there were some emotive and critical comments aimed at the worker, especially from management interviewees, that is, they earn too much money (1), give feeble excuses for absence (4), lies at work (3), they have no respect for management (1), and are unreliable (1).

TABLE 4.13
THE TYPICAL PROFILE OF THE POOR WORK ATTENDERS:
SHOP STEWARD RESPONSES

	Shop Stewards
Worker not interested in their work/just working for pay	24
Lack of motivation due to relationship with supervisor/ no communication with supervisor	23
Workers are lazy & don't want to help with extra duties	15
Domestic problems become problems at the work-place	15
Attitude problem/trouble maker (always cursing)/is given warnings about problem	11
Young and heavy socialiser on week-end; will affect Mondays absence	10
Has severe health problems	8
Alcoholic/drug problems	8
Uphappy in type of job	7
Only think for themselves - selfish/careless/stubborn	6
Attitude that sick leave owed to them by company	4
Not involved - quiet and reserved personality type	3
Latecomers	3
Irresponsible with regard to absence (not informing company)	3
Uneducated - do not know how business operates	3
Lives far from work-place - problems with transport	2
Poor work performance	2
Always absent on same day - pattern arises	2
Always has same excuse for absence	2
Those who are in late 40's, with long service, who have been overlooked for company promotion - demotivates them	1
Too much pressure at workplace - for target to be met	1
With excessive overtime workers have pure exhaustion	1
Works in worst department, that is very demanding job	1
Stay off unnecessarily, for example, 3 days off for a headache	1
May have business outside & need to stay off Monday & Friday	1
Depressed	1
TOTAL	160

The main characteristics identified by the shop stewards were:

- not interested in their job/just working for pay (24 responses/15% of total)
- lack of motivation due to poor relations/communications with supervisor (23 responses/14.3%)
- lazy (15 responses/9.4%)
- domestic problems (15 responses/9.4%)
- attitude problem/trouble maker (11 responses/6.9%)
- young/heavy socialiser (10 responses/6.2%)
- severe health problems (10 responses/6.2%)

Hence, a somewhat different picture emerged. The shop steward respondents were still critical of certain workers (for example, lazy and those with an attitude problem) but stressed other factors - not mentioned to the same extent by management or personnel - such as: a lack of motivation due to a poor relationship/communications with the supervisor, domestic problems, and severe ill-health. These responses relate to factors INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE FACTORY (and therefore beyond the personality of the worker). The comments related to the worker having poor relations/communications with their supervisor, are seen as significant by the writer.

A minority of shop steward comments related to other factors. Inside the factory, such as: unhappy in type of job, excessive job pressure, and extensive overtime.

4.7.2 Profile Of Sound Work Attender

The responses of management/personnel and shop steward interviewees regarding their perceptions of the typical sound attender profile can be seen in Table 4.14 and Table 4.15.

TABLE 4.14
THE TYPICAL PROFILE OF THE SOUND WORK ATTENDER:
MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL RESPONSES

	Management	Personnel
Energetic, eager and happy	14	13
Pride in work	13	
Loyal and caring	5	8
Worker is responsible	9	8
Stable family life	5	6
Sees future in company	2	6
Good relations with supervisor and workers	6	3
Mature in attitude at work	-	5
Feels positive	-	4
Healthy	3	4
Hard working	4	3
Actively involved in company	-	3
Person needs job	-	3
Honest	3	-
Long service	-	3
Always on time	-	2
Come from better background/area	1	2
Needs extra money	-	1
Enjoys recognition	1	-
Only absent in extreme cases	1	-
Quiet	1	-
Educated	1	-
TOTAL	69	74

The main comments that the personnel respondents made were:

- energetic, eager and happy (13 responses/17.6% of total).
- is responsible (8 responses/10.8%).
- are loyal and caring (8 responses/10.8%),
- stable family life (6 responses/8.1%), and,
- see future in company (6 responses/8.1%).

The main management responses were:

- happy, keen and enthusiastic (14 responses/20.3% of total)
- right attitude/pride in their work (13 responses/18.8%)
- is responsible (9 responses/13.0%)
- good relations with supervisor (6 responses/8.7%)

The thirty-eight shop steward interviewees gave a total of 155 answers to the question which, again was many more responses than those given by management and personnel.

TABLE 4.15
THE TYPICAL PROFILE OF THE SOUND WORK ATTENDER:
SHOP STEWARD RESPONSES

	Shop Stewards
Motivated/interested/happy	32
Hardworking and has right attitude	15
Responsible	12
Long service	10
Has qualities for improving self in company	10
Loyal worker	9
Talkative but doesn't complain	7
Good relationship with supervisor and management	7
Has few domestic problems, for example, children	6
Believes in working as a team	5
Workers that do their job correctly	4
Work become habit, not an effort	4
Has good relationship with colleagues	4
Attitude that if absent, lose one day's pay	4
Rather be at work than home	4
Cannot afford to stay at home - need the money	4
Women breadwinners (must work for income)	3
Financially secure	3
No severe health problems	3
Good timekeeper	2
Even if sick come to work if headache - take pill	2
Religious (no heavy socialising or drinking)	1
Educated, that is, 6M training by company	1
Are subordinate to management 'Yes baas, no baas'	1
Proud of job	1
Always willing to work overtime	1
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 155

The main features identified by the shop stewards were:

- motivated/interested/happy (32 responses/20.6% of total)
- hard working and has right attitude (15 responses/9.7%)
- responsible (12 responses/7.7%)
- long service employees (10 responses/6.4%)
- has quality for improving self in company (10 responses/6.4%)

It can be seen that a similar picture emerged regarding management/personnel and shop steward responses to the question.

4.8 DEPARTMENTS HAVING THE WORST ABSENTEEISM RECORD AND REASONS

4.8.1 Management/Personnel And Shop Steward Responses

Management/Personnel and the shop stewards were given the opportunity to say which departments had the worst absenteeism rate and to list the reasons for this.

The reasons can be seen in Table 4.16. Although the departments were identified by the respondents they are not identified in this report to preserve anonymity.

TABLE 4.16
THE DEPARTMENTS WHICH ARE THE MAIN OFFENDERS RE: ABSENTEEISM
- MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARD RESPONSES

	Management & Personnel	Shop Stewards
One of largest departments but do not receive PPA Bonus*	-	18
Department with worst type of job/work	13	5
Department with worst physical environment	12	-
Females have natural illness and domestic responsibilities	-	11
Largest department - highest absenteeism	10	-
All/large female workforce	10	-
Very demanding job - require hardwork	-	8
Largest department with production bonus	-	7
Bad management style, no communication between supervisor and worker	5	6
Worst working conditions	-	5
Young and single mothers have domestic problems	2	3
Main offender of dept. increases absenteeism	-	2
Male workforce - problem with alcohol and drugs - young single males	2	2
Autocratic management style	2	-
Target set too high	2	-
A particular supervisor on leave	1	-
Certain depts. - heavy drinking on weekends	1	-
Unstable home environment	1	-
12 hour shift work	1	1
No incentives	1	-
Reason not given (but department mentioned)	1	1
Females performing difficult tasks (for example, heavy lifting)	-	1
Work force uneducated	-	1
Working class of company	-	1
Conditions in factory - asbestos roof in summer causes drowsiness	-	1
Conditions in factory - dust/fumes affect health of workers	-	1
Conditions in factory - working in extreme cold temperatures	-	1
Workers outside exposed to hot/cold conditions: no shelter	-	1
TOTAL	63	76

* PPA bonus: a type of performance bonus

With regard to the management/personnel responses, the main reason given for departmental differences, was related to the types of work/job performed:

- types of jobs performed, that is, lowest grade of work, not fulfilling job, monotonous tasks, worst hours, heaviest workload, and so on. Thirteen responses (20.6% of all replies)
- department with the worst physical environment, that is, extremely cold, poor ventilation, dangerous gasses/fumes, very hot, and so on. Twelve responses (19% of all replies)
- largest department. Ten responses (15.8% of all replies)
- large female workforce. Ten responses (15.8% of all replies)
- lax supervisory attitude/badly managed department. Five responses (7.9% of all replies)

The main reasons given by the shop stewards were as follows:

- large department, having no bonus system. Eighteen responses (23.7% of all replies)
- female workforce having natural illnesses and domestic responsibilities. Eleven responses (14.5%)
- very demanding job in department requiring hard work
Eight responses (10.5%)
- poor management style/no communication (supervisor/worker)
Six responses (7.9%)

It can be seen that the shop steward responses differ only slightly from the management and personnel responses also shown in Table 4.16.

4.9 PERCEPTIONS ON ABSENTEEISM TRENDS

4.9.1 Management/Personnel And Shop Steward Perceptions

Table 4.17 shows the management/personnel and shop steward responses to the question: "Have you noticed any trends in absenteeism over the last 3 to 5 years?".

TABLE 4.17
THE TRENDS IN ABSENTEEISM OVER THE LAST THREE TO FIVE YEARS:
MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARDS

	Management & Personnel	Shop Stewards
Mondays worst day for attendance (due to excessive socialising on weekend)	25	33
Pay day - excellent attendance	23	26
Winter period, cold weather & flu	17	16
Winter period, rain causes leaking roofs/ transport problems	2	14
After pay day: high absence - spend money	7	5
Day before/after Public Holiday - if phone on Friday, take off Thursday.	4	6
Work Saturday and Sunday for overtime then take off weekday	5	1
Months of year - Oct/Nov (shutdown period)	5	-
Tues. - Thursday absence: company is lenient (Monday & Friday: company views problem)	-	5
Wednesdays: T/W/T, M/T/W, W/T/F pattern occurs (could be start of week)	2	4
Public holidays, especially Easter & Christmas	-	3
Pregnant women in 5/6 month - ailments occur	3	3
Political pressure - strikes/stayaways	3	-
Conditions in factory - hazardous to health	3	-
Workers off Monday and Friday	3	-
Summer: increase in production increases overtime and absenteeism	2	2
Any day of week: genuine illness	2	2
If sick, take 3 days off, one day absent no pay	2	-
Percentage increases during Tuesday to Thursday	2	-
Midweek: take off to do business which cannot be done at weekends	1	2
Family problems - a recurrent problem	-	1
Summer season - heat in factory causes asthmatic problems	-	1
Summer season - heat in factory, would rather be on beach	-	1
Night shift has extra hours and higher absenteeism	-	1
Absenteeism has improved, due to attendance bonus	1	-
Labour intensive: heavy work load causes health problems	1	-
Sport activity in company, for example, soccer causes injuries	1	-
If financially secure: take off weekday	1	-
Best day because factory closed at 15h30	1	-
TOTAL	116	126

Thirty nine of the forty management/personnel respondents answered in the affirmative to the question.

The three most frequently cited trends were:

- Monday is the worst day for attendance. Twenty-five responses (21% of all replies)
- Pay-day is an excellent day for attendance. Twenty-three responses (19.8%)
- Winter months (various reasons given largely due to illness and housing problems). Seventeen responses (14.6%)

Very similar responses were received to the question from shop steward interviewees and the three trends that were frequently mentioned were:

- Mondays: high absenteeism due to excessive drinking/ socialising at weekends. Thirty-three responses (26.2% of total)
- Pay-day: everyone present. Twenty-six responses (20.6%)
- Winter: causes flu and other sickness. Sixteen responses (12.7%)

With regard to the most frequently cited trend, that is, Mondays are poor and Fridays good as regards attendance, this is consistent with many other studies. For example, Cilliers (1979) investigated the distribution of absence and concluded that "tests for significance showed clearly that the mean absence rate for Monday was significantly higher than that of any other day of the week, and that the mean for Friday was significantly lower than that of any other day of the week" (1979:212).

Hattingh (1984) also found that an employee is "frequently absent on a Monday or Friday, or on a day following a holiday and that an employee who is young and healthy, but frequently absent may also be suspected of excessive absenteeism" (1984:25).

Furthermore, "poor leadership increases the absentee rate, and long distances and bad weather will affect the absentee rate" (Hattingh, (1984:25).

Mets (1979:21) concluded that production stress and poor working conditions, as well as certain aspects of supervision also influence absenteeism.

4.10 PERCEPTIONS ON MANAGEMENT STYLE AND ABSENTEEISM, AND ACTUAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

4.10.1 The Relationship Between Management Style And Absenteeism

Management and Personnel interviewees were asked if they thought there was a relationship between management style and levels of absenteeism. Nineteen (95%) of the twenty personnel practitioners answered in the affirmative. Eighteen (90%) of the twenty management interviewees also believed there was an association between management style and absenteeism.

Analysing the responses in more detail, it can be seen that a vast majority of respondents believed there was a direct association between sound management/supervisory behaviour and practices and low absenteeism. Interviewees talked about the importance of having good interaction between the supervisor (and manager) and the worker, as well as the importance of a participative management/supervisory style. Respondents said it was, in the interest of managers and supervisors to develop a close, trusting and open relationship with their workers, so as to:

- a) gain the respect of workers
- b) motivate employees
- c) make the workers "think twice before they stay off"
- d) encourage employees to want to talk to their supervisors when they had a genuine personal problem (which could involve taking some time off work to handle the problem)
- e) gain the commitment of the workers to the department, supervisor/manager, and the company

Other comments made by several interviewees were:

- a participative management style for the interviewees involved the following: management being approachable, showing an interest in the team and individual employees, treating people properly and with dignity, communicating openly and freely.
- the majority of interviewees thought there was a direct association between autocratic management behaviour/practices and high absenteeism. They went on to describe the dangers of managers and supervisors behaving aggressively or paternalistically, as follows:

- a) workers would distance themselves from such managers/supervisors
- b) an "us" and "them" environment would be created
- c) workers would be scared to discuss their personal affairs with their managers/supervisors
- d) employees would deliberately take time off to get their own back on their superiors

Other comments made by several interviewees were:

- Companies needed discipline and factory rules and regulations irrespective of management style, they needed training for supervisors and workers to communicate with each other (some factories had recently or were currently implementing such training programmes), and companies had to move away from an autocratic to a participative style of management.

According to Cilliers (1979), "management styles that are only oriented toward production will result in high rates of deviant industrial behaviour, however, management styles that are people-orientated, will result in low rates of deviant industrial behaviour" (1979:220).

4.10.2 Shop Steward Involvement In Discussing Absenteeism With Management

Continuing with management styles, the shop steward interviewees were asked if their management teams involved them in discussions related to work attendance. Twenty-six of the thirty-eight shop stewards (68%) said they were involved in discussing the problem of absenteeism with management; twelve shop stewards (32%) said they were not involved.

Of the twenty-six respondents who answered in the affirmative, only eleven (42%) said they had regular monthly meetings. The other fifteen individuals replied "not very often" (58%).

Table 4.18 shows the circumstances under which management/personnel and the shop stewards discuss absenteeism.

TABLE 4.18
THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND THE SHOP STEWARDS DISCUSS ABSENTEEISM, ACCORDING TO SHOP STEWARDS

	Shop Stewards
Boardroom meetings: Shop Stewards and Management/Personnel	17
Problem of absm. discussed if % very high	12
Only disciplinary hearing, that is, individuals absm. record	10
Each month absm. on agenda: if % very low, not discussed	6
Management only shows shop stewards graphs showing % of absenteeism per department and which main offenders	12
Shop stewards put forward ideas of combatting absenteeism	2
Personnel manager briefly mentions absm. but not discussed	2
Management just mentions seriousness of excessive absenteeism	1
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 52

Asked under what circumstances such discussions take place, the main responses from the twenty-six shop stewards were: boardroom meetings with management/personnel (17 replies), ad-hoc meetings if absenteeism was very high (12 replies), and only at disciplinary hearings (10 replies).

4.10.3 Management Taking Up Workers Ideas About Improving/Changing A Situation At The Workplace

Continuing on the theme of management styles, management/personnel interviewees were asked if they took into account workers' ideas for improvements/changes at the workplace. These ideas are seen in Table 4.19.

TABLE 4.19
MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL REPONSES OF TAKING INTO ACCOUNT WORKERS
IDEAS ABOUT IMPROVING/CHANGING A SITUATION AT THE WORK-PLACE

	Management and Personnel
Shop stewards and management meeting	14
Suggestion box	6
Open door policy	6
Via supervisors	6
Approach management direct	6
"Green areas" (an area on shop floor, where management and worker meet to discuss any issues)	3
"Towards excellence" group sessions (to increase productivity)	3
Regional head approaches workforce	2
Briefing meetings with supervisors and workers	1
Department team meetings	1
Ideas after Business Sense Course	1
Steering committee	1
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>50</u>

- The main channel for worker ideas was via their shop steward who raised them at the monthly "forum" or "steering committee" with management (14 responses).
- Six respondents, out of forty (15%), mentioned their company operated an open-door policy.
- It was a disappointing finding to learn that just six respondents said that workers approached their supervisors in the first instance whilst another six interviewees said that workers could approach their manager directly (missing out the supervisor). Yet, fourteen respondents said the workers would approach their shop stewards first with ideas: presumably missing out the proper communication line (the grievance procedure which exists in all twenty companies), that is, their immediate supervisor.
- There were few creative or innovative worker participation schemes in operation except for: "towards excellence" group sessions (3), "green areas" (3), suggestion boxes (6), and regular departmental team meetings (1).
- Other comments made were: management are not always responsive (1), the briefing sessions tend to be one-way (1), seldom do ideas come from workers (5), we have a suggestion box but few suggestions (3), and workers are only interested in their pay (1).

4.11 STRATEGIES AND TACTICS USED BY MANAGEMENT IN TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF ABSENTEEISM

4.11.1 Strategies and Tactics

From the responses shown below in Table 4.20, it can be seen that:

- disciplinary action was the most common response (17 responses).
- some form of incentive/bonus was the second most popular response (15), and,
- counselling (10) another significant reply.

TABLE 4.20
THE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL USE TO HANDLE THE PROBLEM OF ABSENTEEISM WITHIN THE COMPANY

Note: The following strategies/tactics are presented per company, not as individual responses:

	Management and Personnel
Disciplinary action	17
Incentives/Bonus	15
Counselling	10
Sister/clinic involvement	7
Participative management	4
Management support/problem solving (pro-active)	4
Shop stewards involvement	4
Social welfare department	3
New control information to aid supervisor	2
Peer group pressure/notice board	2
Company organises transport	2
Recognition	2
Phone doctor about sick certificates	1
Protective clothing	1
Training and education	1
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>75</u>

The writer categorised (subjectively) the 75 responses shown in Table 4.20 into: positive strategies/tactics ("carrots"), negative strategies/tactics ("sticks") and neutral approaches, as follows:

- Positive strategies/"carrots" (for example, incentives, management support, participative management, counselling, recognition, peer group pressure (with positive intentions) and social welfare: fifty responses (66.7%)

- Negative strategies/"sticks" (for example, disciplinary action, peer group pressure with negative intentions): eighteen responses (24%)

- "neutral approaches" (for example, new control information, company phoning doctor, shop steward involvement): seven responses (9.3%)

There were few really positive, imaginative management tactics to encourage work attendance. The few that impressed the writer were: recognition for good attendance, up-front support of workers with their problems by an industrial sister or personnel officer, management arranging transport for workers under difficult situations, and the company providing protective clothing.

Only 3 (15%) companies employed full-time social welfare workers.

4.11.2 Shop Steward Responses to the question of how management deals with the problem of absenteeism are shown in Table 4.21 and largely revolved around the companies' disciplinary procedures.

TABLE 4.21
THE WAY IN WHICH MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM
OF ABSENTEEISM ACCORDING TO THE SHOP STEWARDS RESPONDENTS

	Shop Stewards
If absent frequently, disciplinary action is taken by mgt.	33
Each dept. given production bonus (target). If worker is absent, lets down team & doesn't qualify	7
Shop steward represents workers in disciplinary action	6
If 1 - 3 days absent, 10% annual bonus deducted	5
Counselling workers major task: occurs before disciplinary action	5
Disciplinary measures give number of warnings, that is, verbal/1/2/3/final	4
Takes long time before disciplinary action taken: supervisors are too laxed & workers abuse system	2
Problem not dealt with by management: supervisory problem	2
Attend. bonus R1,50 wkly. Tries to be motivating factor	2
Company bus to organise transport for workers	2
Incentive scheme which motivates workers to attend work	1
If 100% attendance will receive different awards 3, 6 9 & 12 months	
Certain number of days allocated for sick leave, when used up, management try to see if pattern occurs. If so, disciplinary action	1
If worker improves absm. within 6 mths. warning dropped	1
At management meetings shop stewards discuss options for handling absenteeism	1
Industrial sister helps curb absenteeism	1
TOTAL	73

4.11.3 Incentives

The responses to the type of incentives used by the surveyed companies are shown in Table 4.22.

TABLE 4.22
THE INCENTIVES USED TO ENCOURAGE HIGH LEVELS OF
ATTENDANCE AT WORK: MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL RESPONSES

	Management and Personnel
Production performance attendance bonus	7
Attendance bonus	6
Peer group pressure to attend work	2
Performance appraisal system	1
Annual bonus	1
100% incentive scheme	1
Attendance trophies	1
Peer group pressure	1
TOTAL	20

Fifteen of the twenty companies operated some form of incentive scheme related to work attendance.

An attendance bonus - with some kind of standard of attendance stipulated - was the most popular way in which an incentive was offered. Good work attenders would qualify for the attendance bonus, whilst defaulters were penalised.

Some companies offered a production bonus where different departments had targets to achieve, and clearly such targets and productivity were affected by work attendance.

A few factories offered inducements such as: finish early on Friday if attendance and production standards were reached or a company cup, wallet, or gift vouchers were given for 100% attendance.

With regard to incentive schemes, Van der Merwe and Miller suggest that "financial and other incentives are effective only if they are immediately visible and fairly large. Additionally, it is essential that any such bonus is seen as a reward and does not become part of the accepted wage" (1988:28).

Orpen (1977) conducted a survey of coloured female factory workers in South Africa, who were subjected to a behaviour modification programme. The results indicated that the rate of absenteeism decreased markedly amongst those subjects who were given a small weekly payment contingent upon attending work.

Some critics and managers believe that since it is the duty of an employee to be on the job, and he/she is paid for being there, why should the employee be rewarded for what is expected and paid for?

There is evidence that either reward or punishment may work well at certain times and fail at others, depending on the circumstances. The effect of rewards is normally short of duration.

4.11.4 Shop Steward Responses To The Way Management Approached The Problem Of Absenteeism

Shop Steward interviewees were asked how they felt regarding the way their management team tackled the problem of absenteeism.

There were fifty-four statements made by the shop stewards interviewees and these were categorised as follows:

- supportive statements of management action: 28 responses (51.9% of total)
- unsupportive statements of management action: 16 responses (29.6)
- positive statements with reservations: 6 responses (11.1%)
- neutral statements: 3 responses (5.6%)
- no comment: 1 response (1.8%)

The supporting statements included comments like: if absenteeism is high, management must discipline/absenteeism must be controlled (8 responses), the company disciplinary procedure is acceptable to the union (5), and management is interested in helping workers to improve their attendance (4).

The unsupportive statement included comments like: management is too lenient/too lax/needs stricter control/no one has been dismissed for absenteeism (7 responses), and, management is too harsh/"don't punish by warnings"/management is too quick to take action/warnings don't solve the problem (5).

The supportive responses, with reservations included comments and quotes including: "I agree with discipline but management has to recognise the reasons". "I am happy with the disciplinary procedure but only when there is an appeal mechanism", and "absenteeism would have to be excessive with a poor reason".

4.12 MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

4.12.1 Management/Personnel Responses

Table 4.23 records management/personnel suggestions with respect to combatting absenteeism.

TABLE 4.23
MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT ABSENTEEISM

	Management and Personnel
Participative management	17
Supervisor must better analyse causes for Absm. and control	12
Increase facility of educating workers (6M training)	12
Introduce or increase attendance bonus/rewards	11
Encourage relationship between supervisor & worker	4
Pay untaken sick leave at year end, for example, cash bonus	4
Change attitude that sick leave is owed to worker	4
Encourage production bonus - if absent bonus is decreased	3
Encourage counselling - personnel & supervisors to worker	3
Encourage peer group pressure: workers as a team	3
Educating workers on effects of absenteeism/changing negative attitude	2
Managers need to be more responsive to workers social problems	2
Management to create stable working environment	2
Improve canteen/recreational facilities on site	2
Air conditioning to be improved in factory	2
Introduce 3x8 hr shift to improve attendance and domestic situation	1
Implementation of absentee policy by management, personnel and supervisor	1
Annual bonus changed to quarterly to motivate workers	1
Resolve Black/White hostility - move away from past to future	1
Encourage wealth creation bonus: if absent letting company down	1
Closer monitoring of absenteeism by new company clocking system	1
Encourage 100% incentive scheme: rewards for 3/6/9/12 months	1
Try create more incentives at workplace to encourage attendance	1
Workers get paid if off for 3 days - do not get paid for one day off. Try & change situation so workers get paid for day off	1
If worker's attendance improved after warnings: show recognition	1
Industrial nurse would help curb absenteeism	1
Personnel to take more responsibility for monitoring of absm.	1
Try eliminate negative attitude of worker	1
Helping workers cope with drinking or drug problems	1
TOTAL	97

The main management/personnel suggestions were as follows:

- a need to move towards participative management: 17 responses (17.5% of total)
- increase the training and education of workers: 12 responses (12.3%)
- supervisor must better analyse causes for absenteeism and control more effectively: 12 responses (12.3%)
- introduce or increase attendance bonus/rewards: 11 responses (11.3%)

4.12.2 Shop Steward Responses

Table 4.24 shows the shop steward recommendations with respect to combatting absenteeism.

TABLE 4.24
SHOP STEWARD RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT ABSENTEEISM

	Shop Stewards
Improve attitude of supervisor (and more control of absm).	16
Improve relationship between supervisor and worker	13
Make attendance bonus available to all workers	13
Educate workers - 6M or literacy training given by company	10
Improve attitude of managers. Workers scared of managers	7
Management needs to be flexible: time off for outside problems	6
Treat alcoholics/drug users: mgt. responsible for treatment	5
Mgt. need to carry on counselling workers on affects of absm.	5
Change autocratic style of management	4
Increase attendance bonus to be motivating factor	4
Pay out sick leave at end of year if 100% attender	4
Introduce production bonus: encourage workers to work as a team	3
Employ social welfare worker, industrial sister & weekly doctor	2
Encourage peer group pressure eg through absm. control list	2
Management need to provide recreational facilities for workers	2
Management could arrange one person to collect tablets for sick people, for example, asthma sufferers	1
Employ social welfare officer to check genuine sickness	1
3x8 hr/shift would increase attendance (instead of 2x12hrs)	1
Provide creche facility	1
Organise raffle system/lucky draw for good attenders	1
Encourage 100% incentive scheme to motivate workers	1
Decrease target ie too high for workers to achieve	1
Mgt. needs stricter control regarding disciplinary measures	1
Encourage peer group pressure - list of 100% attenders	1
Recognition given to workers if achieve target	1
Change myth 'sick leave is owed to me by the company'	1
Mgt. must show workers how necessary and important they are	1
Company needs to provide incentive and make work environment more pleasant	1
Awareness programmes - videos on drugs and alcohol and so on	1
TOTAL	111

It can be seen that the main suggestions were:

- improve the attitude of the supervisor: 16 responses (14.4% of total)
- make attendance bonus available to all workers: 13 responses (11.7%)
- improve relationship between supervisor and worker: 13 responses (11.7%)

- educate and train workers
(for example, 6M training,
literacy training) : 10 responses (9%)

It was interesting to find the common ground between the management/personnel and shop steward responses especially with respect to references to the supervisor, as well as to the introduction of attendance bonuses. The shop steward interviewees placed a lot of importance once again on improving the attitude of the supervisor and improving the relationship between the supervisor and the worker. Adding the two shop steward totals together, no less than twenty-nine responses (26.1% of total) referred to the supervisor.

In this connection, it is worth noting that, Hattingh (1984) found that "the increased responsibility of supervisors controlling absenteeism personally on their individual production lines resulted in greater job satisfaction, and created a greater sense of responsibility towards the company and fellow employees" (1984:85).

4.13 MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL AND SHOP STEWARD REPLIES TO THE QUESTION "WHAT ELSE CAN BE DONE TO ACHIEVE MORE ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF ATTENDANCE AT THE WORKPLACE?"

4.13.1 Management/Personnel Responses

Following on from the question related to recommendations for combatting absenteeism, management and personnel interviewees were asked

- what else could be done to achieve more acceptable levels of absenteeism in their factories. The main responses are seen in Table 4.25.

TABLE 4.25
MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL RESPONSES TO QUESTION OF WHAT ELSE CAN BE
DONE TO ACHIEVE MORE ACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF
ATTENDANCE AT THE WORKPLACE?

	Management and Personnel
Introduce/increase attendance bonus or rewards	19
Participative management/giving worker a sense of belonging	16
Better attitude of supervisors to absenteeism/being more proactive	12
Educating workforce to understand finances and absenteeism	11
- 6M training	
Pay out untaken sick leave at year end - cash bonus	4
Worker attitude: "sick leave is owed to me" must change	4
Introduction improvement of canteen facilities/subsidised meals	3
Improve communication between supervisor & worker	3
Encourage 100% incentive scheme - rewards after	3
Encourage counselling - personnel and supervisors to workers	3
Encourage peer group pressure: workers as a team	3
Mgt. to recognise when worker attendance improved after warnings	2
Management to create stable working environment	2
Air conditioning to be improved in factory	2
Negotiating a 3x8 hr shift - reduce long hours and overtime	1
Eliminate supervision and have control by worker teams	1
Encourage people to use disciplinary measures correctly	1
Encourage attendance by production bonus - leave early Friday	1
Closer monitoring of absenteeism by new computer clocking system	1
Workers get paid if off for 3 days ie don't get paid for 1 day	1
off - change situation so workers get paid for day off	
Recruitment of an Industrial nurse would help curb absenteeism	1
Personnel department to take more responsibility for monitoring	1
of absenteeism	
Try eliminate negative attitude of worker	1
Helping workers cope with drinking or drug problems	1
<hr/>	
TOTAL	97

The main management/personnel responses can be summarised as follows:

- introduce or increase attendance bonus/rewards (different types of rewards were stated): 19 responses (19.6% of total)
- participative management/giving the worker a sense of belonging: 16 responses (16.5%)
- a better attitude from the supervisor to absenteeism/ the supervisor being more proactive instead of reactive: 12 responses (12.4%)
- educating and training the workforce to understand finances and the consequences of absenteeism: 11 responses (11.3%)

4.13.2 Shop Steward Responses

The replies to the question concerned with what else could be done to achieve more acceptable levels of attendance at the workplace, can be summarised as follows:

- rewards/incentives/perks/reduced targets (for example, recognition for 100% attenders, improved attendance bonuses, introduction of attendance bonuses, subsidised meals and improved transport: 23 responses (32.9%)
- improve supervisory management/relations and advice to management (for example, better management/supervisory relations with workers (13), change autocratic management style (3), improve counselling (2) and improve recognition of good attenders (2): 22 responses (31.4%)
- improve training for example, training of workers (7), and supervisors (5): 12 responses (17.1%)
- improve the physical conditions in the factory (for example, a recreation centre (2), company creche (2), more pleasant working environment (2): 7 responses (10%)
- other ideas (for example, better control of absenteeism, attend to alcohol/drugs problem (2), introduce shorter working shifts, change attitude of workers to sick leave: 6 responses (8.6%)

It can be seen from the responses, that the shop stewards' ideas were more comprehensive and imaginative compared to the management/personnel responses.

Recommendations will be dealt with in more detail (using other sources) in Chapter 5.

4.14 MANAGEMENT/PERSONNEL RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU CAN SAY, RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY REGARDING THE SUBJECT OF ABSENTEEISM?"

The replies from management and personnel interviewees to the above question, can be summarised as follows:

- comments related to management/supervisors: (for example, move away from autocratic management (6), create a more pleasant work environment (3), obtain more commitment from workers, management not interested in workers, there is no respect for management from the workforce): 12 responses (26.1%)
- comments related to workers: (for example, they need educating/training (5), they need to be more responsible (3), should be aware of seriousness of absenteeism (3), they have no pride): 11 responses (23.9)
- comments aimed at the company: (for example, need to take absenteeism more seriously, give recognition to workers who improve attendance, need for consistent counselling and discipline): 6 responses (13.0%)
- comments aimed at the supervisor (for example, improve the supervisor's communication with the worker, supervisor needs to be firmer but approachable, and supervisor has to control absenteeism better): 5 responses (10.9%)
- other comments (for example, give cost analysis feedback on absenteeism to shop stewards, doctors too ready to issue sick notes, introduce incentives, management and workers must work together to tackle absenteeism): 12 responses (26.1%)

SECTION C - WORKER RESPONSES TO THE WORKER QUESTIONNAIRE

It is a common finding in studies of absenteeism that absenteeism behaviour is not random. What is found is that certain individuals are poor attenders unlike others who are seldom, if ever, absent. On the basis of the information available in this study, the workers in the sample were divided into good, average, and poor attenders. This was done on the basis of their attendance record. Those who had 100% attendance for a year period, or those who's attendance rate ranged between 90 - 99% were categorised into good attenders. Average attenders, ranged between 80 - 90% and poor attenders were those who had an attendance rate which was below 80%. The formula used to calculate the absenteeism rate is described in Chapter three (3.4).

Due to the number of factors which may influence absenteeism, only some will be discussed.

In order to try to identify the factors which are most strongly associated with high absenteeism, the usual factors discussed in absenteeism studies were analysed in terms of the good/poor attender dichotomy. The strength and statistical significance of their association was tested by means of the X^2 test.

These associations are presented and categorised under three headings: personal variables, organisational variables and external variables. Numerous variables influence absenteeism in a company and these variables should not be seen in isolation.

4.15 PERSONAL VARIABLES

The selected personal variables which influence absenteeism are: health status, worker's level of motivation, age, ethnicity, personal loyalty, and problems in the home.

4.15.1 The association between good and poor attenders and health status

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and health status. From table 4.26 below, it can be seen that a large percentage (27.5%) of poor attenders considered their health to be "poor" and a large percentage (35.5%) of good attenders considered their health to be "excellent".

TABLE 4.26

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS AND HEALTH STATUS

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Poor	2.0%	27.5%	14.7%
Satisfactory	62.5%	54.0%	58.3%
Excellent	35.5%	18.5%	27.0%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 56.02882, df2, p<.001

Good Attenders : 200
Poor Attenders : 200
Total : 400

The main illnesses affecting attendance which were identified by the writer were as follows: influenza, bronchitis, asthma, gastro-enteritis, migraine, myositis (inflammation of the muscles), and the common cold.

4.15.2 The association between good and poor attenders and worker's level of motivation

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and the worker's level of motivation. From table 4.27 below, it can be seen that the good attenders felt more motivated at the workplace (96,2%), than the poor attenders (73,7%).

TABLE 4.27
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS
AND WORKER'S LEVEL OF MOTIVATION

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Average	3.8%	26.3%	15.1%
High to extremely high	96.2%	73.7%	84.9%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 14.16667, df1, p<.001

Good Attenders : 80
Poor Attenders : 80
Total : 160

Cilliers (1979:227) used the well-known Herzberg theory of motivation to explain the association between motivation and absenteeism. He concluded that "as workers reacted more to motivator factors (satisfiers), lower absence rates occurred and the more motivated workers were, the lower absence rates were found to be".

It can be argued that workers whose job needs are fulfilled show little propensity to withdrawal in terms of absenteeism, whereas those whose job needs are frustrated do exhibit this.

The factors which are responsible for job dissatisfaction and lack of motivation are the following: task repetitiveness, lack of job autonomy or responsibility, monotony and poor interpersonal communication.

4.15.3 The association between good and poor attenders and age

A strong and statistically significant association between good and poor attenders and age was found. From table 4.28 below, it can be seen that in the age group of 22 - 30 year olds, more young people are bad attenders (43.0%) whereas the good attenders seem to be older people (28.5%).

TABLE 4.28
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS AND AGE

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
<18 - 21 Years	6.5%	6.0%	6.3%
22 - 30 Years	28.5%	43.0%	35.7%
31 - 40 Years	31.0%	30.0%	30.5%
> 40 Years	34.0%	21.0%	27.5%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 12.09936, df3, p<.01

Good Attenders : 200
Bad Attenders : 200
Total : 400

The significance of age as a factor associated with absenteeism has been stressed in many studies. Nicholson, Brown and Chadwick Jones (1977) discuss age in relation to the "attachment of work". Older people may have an increasing need for stability and thus attend work more regularly, whereas according to Clegg (1983:88), "younger people have different expectations from work and non-work activities and are not 'pulled in' to work to the same degree, leading to increased absence".

Any relationship between age and absence tends to be strongly influenced by length of service, marital status and other variables.

Different age groups represent generations which have developed particular sets of collective values with regard to what should be the conduct of each group in a certain social and cultural setting. In older employees there may be a certain fear or reluctance to risk having to look for other employment. Age also may mean greater social responsibilities in respect of family and dependents, or in the community, and, even though not generally valid, higher pay.

4.15.4 The association between good and poor attenders and ethnicity

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and ethnicity. In table 4.29 below, it can be seen that in the Asian ethnic group, no significant differences could be found between the good and poor attenders. However, in the Black ethnic group, it can be seen that there was a higher percentage (60.9%) of poor attenders than good attenders (39.1%). Also, in the Coloured ethnic group, there was a higher percentage of good attenders (50.6%) as opposed to the poor attenders (49.4%). Finally, in the White ethnic group, a higher percentage of good attenders (56.4%) was found as opposed to poor attenders (43.6%).

mistake

TABLE 4.29
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS AND ETHNICITY

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Asian	50.0%	50.0%	100%
Black	39.1%	60.9%	100%
Coloured	50.6%	49.4%	100%
White	85.7%	14.3%	100%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>56.4%</u>	<u>43.6%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 10.25567, df3, p<.02

Good Attenders : 200
Poor Attenders : 200
Total : 400

Townsend (1968) in his study of absenteeism in the footwear industry in SA, concluded that "economic and social factors undoubtedly have a bearing on absenteeism" (1968:111).

In the Black ethnic group, there is a larger percentage of poor attenders than good attenders. This could be attributed to transport problems or distance from work, that is, having to rely on travelling on public transport (on the taxi, bus and train) to get to work, which is sometimes unsatisfactory and unreliable.

Townsend (1968) says that "although White workers may have a lower frequency, the absence severity is usually higher. White workers also have more sanctioned absence available to them" (1968:83).

4.15.5 The association between good and poor attenders and personal loyalty to the company

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and personal loyalty to the company. From table 4.30 below, it can be seen that the poor attenders tended to see their personal loyalty to the company as low to very low whereas the good attenders saw their loyalty as average to extremely high.

TABLE 4.30
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS
AND PERSONAL LOYALTY TO THE COMPANY

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Very low to low	0.0%	6.3%	3.2%
Average/neutral	7.5%	12.5%	10.0%
High to extremely high	92.5%	81.2%	86.8%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Chi square 6.582734, df2, p<.05

Good Attenders : 80
 Poor Attenders : 80
 Total : 160

It can be seen that there was a higher commitment by the good attenders to the job, other workers and the company itself. This could be explained by the fact that they may be more settled in their jobs and in the work environment as opposed to poor attenders who may have feelings of negativity (feel insecure in the environment).

4.15.6 The association between good and poor attenders and problems in the home

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and problems in the home. To make the associations significant, the table values were grouped together as follows:

Problems: including dangerous residential area, arguments in the home, husband beating wife, child sick or disabled or operation, husband/wife/friend ill or invalid.

TABLE 4.31
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS
AND PROBLEMS IN THE HOME

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Problems	0.0%	16.3%	8.2%
No problems	100.0%	83.7%	91.8%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 12.05652, df1, p<.001

Good Attenders : 80
Poor Attenders : 80
Total : 160

While no good attenders said they had problems, 16.3% of the poor attenders admitted to having problems. The writer found it surprising that no good attenders admitted to having problems.

The reason for this could be attributed to the socio-economic and domestic situation problems with attending work. Other contributing factors including, alcoholism, drug abuse and domestic responsibilities also affect attendance at work.

4.16 ORGANISATIONAL VARIABLES

The selected organisational variables which influence absenteeism are: length of service, development opportunities for the worker and job category.

4.16.1 The association between good and poor attenders and length of service

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and length of service. The longer the length of service, the more regular the attendance. A larger percentage of good attenders (43.5%) have a longer length of service.

TABLE 4.32
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS
AND LENGTH OF SERVICE

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
<1 year - 3 years	19.0%	37.5%	28.2%
4 years - 10 years	37.5%	45.5%	41.5%
11 years	43.5%	17.0%	30.3%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 36.87209, df2, p<.001

Good Attenders : 200
Poor Attenders : 200
Total : 400

The significance of the length of service variable as a factor of absenteeism has been found in many studies.

Rice, Hill and Trist (1950) suggest that during the early weeks of employment, the employee's decision to stay or to leave is influenced largely by how he perceives the workplace, the job and management. As time passes by, familiarity with the job and the formation of group bonds begin to influence the employee's evaluations.

Finally, he/she enters a settled stage and the employee, over the years, becomes more stable in the job and with his/her work colleagues.

Chadwick-Jones (1973) notes that according to some studies, "increasing age and service duration tend to be predictive of low absence" (1973:140). In his words, Townsend found "that absence rates tend to become low as length of service with the organisation increases" (1965:5).

4.16.2 The association between good and poor attenders and development opportunities for the worker

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and the development opportunities for the worker.

From table 4.33 below, it can be seen that the poor attenders tended to see their opportunities for developments as low to very low whereas the good attenders saw them as average to extremely high.

TABLE 4.33
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS
AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNIES FOR THE WORKER

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Very low to low	22.5%	55.0%	38.8%
Average	28.8%	15.0%	21.9%
High to extremely high	48.7%	30.0%	39.3%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 17.9318, df2, p<.001

Good Attenders : 80
Poor Attenders : 80
Total : 160

4.16.3 The association between good and poor attenders and job category

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and job category. The Paterson system was used in the study, that is, a job evaluation system leading to a classification of jobs into grades, in terms of the variation in span of decision making and responsibility.

TABLE 4.34
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS
AND JOB CATEGORY

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
A1 and A2 (Tea Lady and Packer)	27.5%	41.3%	34.4%
A3 (Machinist)	37.5%	47.5%	42.5%
B1 + B3 + B4 (Clerk/driver/supervisor)	35.0%	11.2%	23.1%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 12.89793 df2, p<.01

Good Attenders : 80
 Poor Attenders : 80
 Total : 160

From the table 4.34 above, it can be seen that a large percentage (41.3%) of poor attenders seem to be in the lower grade (unskilled) jobs, where the job can be shown or taught and the worker has limited alternatives. The opposite applies to the good attenders, it can be seen that a higher percentage (35.0%) seem to be in a higher job grade and semi-skilled, and where training for a longer period and experience is essential.

Behrend (1974) found that workers at lower wage levels and thus in a lower job category/or grade, lost more time through absence than workers in the higher job categories/or grades. Nel (1973:48) mentions that "job dissatisfaction is related to absenteeism, particularly among lower skilled levels of employment".

4.17 EXTERNAL VARIABLES

The selected variable which influences absenteeism is travel mode.

4.17.1 The association between good and poor attenders and travel mode

A strong and statistically significant association was found between good and poor attenders and travel mode. To make the association significant, the table's values were grouped together as follows:

Rely on Public Transport/others: including bus, train, taxi, lift.

Self reliant: including walking to work, own car.

From table 4.35, it can be seen that a large percentage of poor attenders (91.3%), are reliant on public transport/others and a larger percentage (33.7%) of good attenders are self reliant.

TABLE 4.35
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GOOD AND POOR ATTENDERS
AND TRAVEL MODE

	Good Attenders	Poor Attenders	Total
Rely on public transport/ other	66.3%	91.3%	78.8%
Self reliant	33.7%	8.7%	21.2%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

Chi square 13.48273, df1, p<.001

Good Attenders : 80
Poor Attenders : 80
Total : 160

The reason for the findings could be attributed to factors such as:

- (1) trains/buses/taxis are generally less reliable than own transport.
- (2) others may also be unreliable, for example, if a friend's car breaks down or he/she oversleeps.

When workers' residential areas are situated so far from their work place that getting to work is a problem (due to transport problems), it is expected that absence rates will be adversely affected.

To conclude, a number of variables were found to be statistically significantly associated with absenteeism: length of service ($p < .001$), health status ($p < .001$), travel mode ($p < .001$), problems in the home ($p < .001$), worker's level of motivation ($p < .001$), development opportunities in the company ($p < .001$), age ($p < .01$), job category ($p < .01$), ethnicity ($p < .02$) and personal loyalty to the company ($p < .05$). A number of other variables were tested but these proved to have weak associations and were not statistically significant. These included: sex, marital status, home language, level of education, and size of family. By testing these associations, the writer identified the most and least significant associations with regard to good and poor attendance.

CHAPTER FIVE
RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER FIVE - RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

5.2 A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

5.2.1 Recording

5.2.2 Measuring and Analysing

5.2.3 Reporting

5.2.4 Identifying The Causes of Absenteeism

5.2.4.1 Employee's with sound and poor attendance records

5.2.4.2 Causes within the factory

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5.2.7 Rewarding and Recognising

5.2.8 Taking Necessary Disciplinary Action

5.3 OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

5.3.1 Recruitment of Social Welfare Officers

5.3.2 Creche Facilities

CHAPTER FIVE - RECOMMENDATIONS

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, all managers/personnel and shop steward officials identified that absenteeism was seen as a problem and expressed the need to reduce the problem. Recommendations were presented by management, personnel and shop stewards and on the basis of these (as well as the writer's research and thoughts on the subject), the following recommendations for increasing attendance are offered. These recommendations are directed at senior management (including personnel) in the different industries.

5.1 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

The first recommendation, is that the primary responsibility for combatting absenteeism should be with the senior management of an industry. Absenteeism control is primarily a line function (not a staff responsibility) and as such, management must be held accountable.

In theory, all employees have some kind of responsibility for work attendance, that is, the management team, the personnel department, supervisors, the shop stewards, as well as the workers. However, the primary responsibility rests with the senior management team of an industry. In the survey, it was too easy for interviewees to point a finger at the personnel function or at the shop stewards, or employee, when it came to allocating the primary responsibility for absenteeism control.

In the same way that such things as output, quality, loss control, safety and productivity, are a function of the line, so is absenteeism control. In fact, work attendance should be regarded as a key performance factor and the measurement of the factory manager's own performance should include the level of absenteeism in his/her factory.

The senior manager in a factory has all the authority invested in him/her to enable him/her to take the necessary decisions and action to ensure that absenteeism is kept at an acceptable level.

5.2 A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

It is recommended that the senior management team in an industry adopts a systematic approach with regard to combatting absenteeism. The key elements of such an approach are: recording; measuring and analysing; reporting; identifying the causes of absenteeism; creating an awareness of absenteeism; monitoring and controlling absenteeism; rewarding and recognising; and taking disciplinary action.

5.2.1 Recording

It is important to note that accurate recording is a prerequisite for meaningful measurement which forms the basis of analysis and control. Industries need to have a reliable system for the recording of work attendance. As one shop steward suggested, someone has to be held accountable for ensuring that the daily attendance of both weekly/hourly-paid and salaried staff employees is accurately recorded. There are numerous computer software systems, which would be able to assist industries to record, analyse and report on work attendance levels. As one senior manager commented, closer monitoring of absenteeism by a computer clocking system would be beneficial. The basis of any sound recording system regarding absenteeism control is that it should be simple and cost effective and provide accurate, daily information efficiently.

5.2.2. Measuring And Analysing

Absenteeism cannot be controlled effectively unless the management team have the answers to the following questions:

- what is the extent of the industry's annual absenteeism rate?

- which departments are the main offenders regarding absenteeism and which departments have the best attendance levels?

- which employees have the worst attendance records?

- how does the industry's absenteeism rate compare with similar industries in the same catchment area or other areas in the country, and with competitors?

- is the industry winning or losing with respect to combatting absenteeism? What are the trends regarding the industry's absence rates, especially over the past five years?

The two main absenteeism measures already defined in Chapter Two, namely, the Gross Absence Rate and Absence Frequency Rate, provide sufficient information for identifying problem areas as well as absenteeism trends.

An industry's attendance records have to be analysed to provide the management team with the answers to these questions. An industry's absenteeism level needs to be recorded, measured and analysed effectively to provide information in a format acceptable to the factory manager. An one Personnel manager suggested, an effective way to analyse absenteeism levels is by using a bar chart format, whereby comparison, between departments (or individuals in a department) can be identified and where trends analysis are simply presented.

Examples are:

FIGURE 5.1
Industry Absenteeism Levels By Year (Trend Analysis)

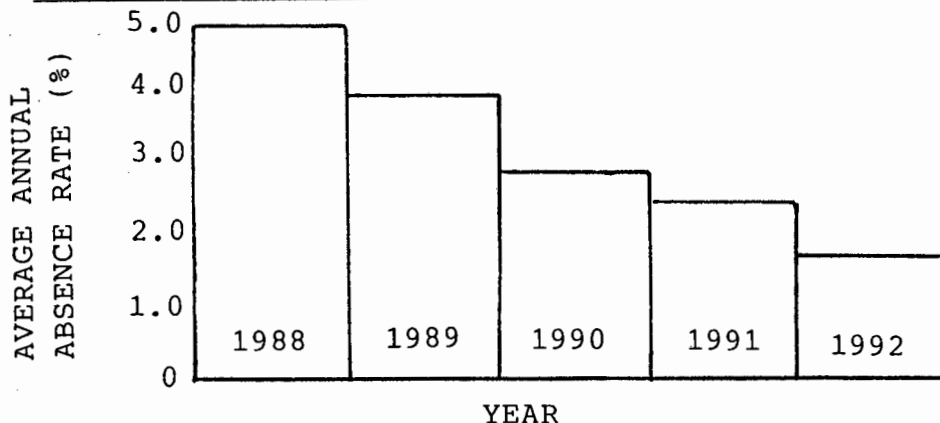


FIGURE 5.2
Industry Absenteeism Levels Per Department
Year: 1992

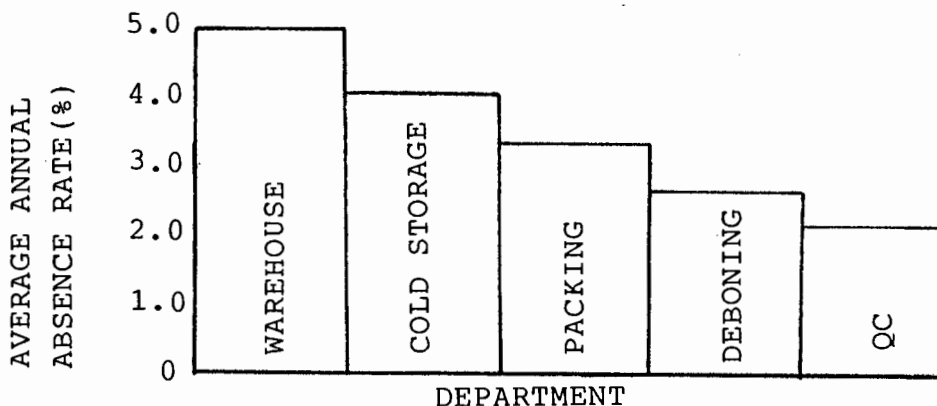
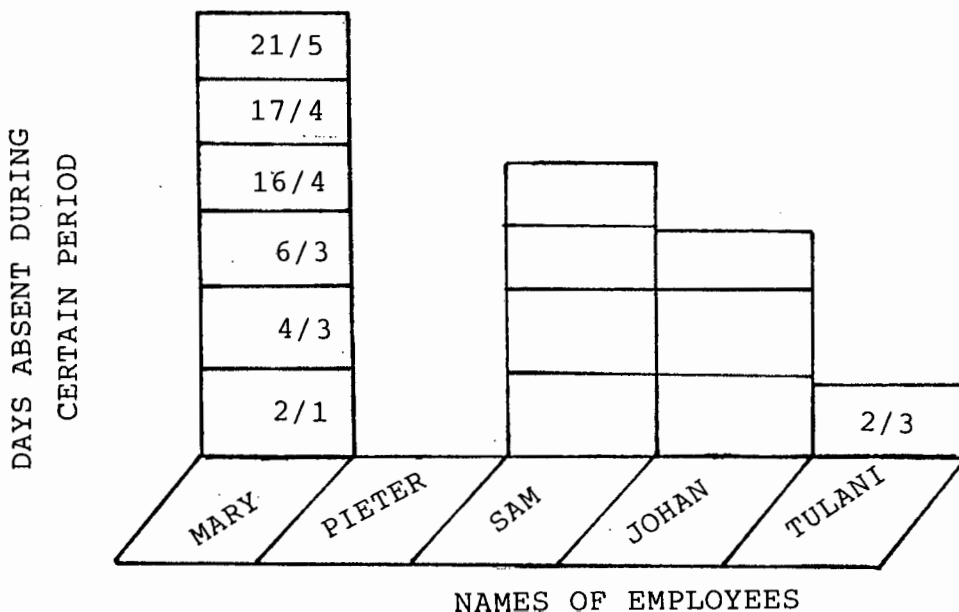


FIGURE 5.3
Industry Absenteeism By Individual Employees Per Department
Department: Machinists



5.2.3 Reporting

It is recommended that an industry's absenteeism level should be reported in the same way as other performance factors. For instance, outputs, productivity, quality, and so on. The typical weekly or monthly management report needs to contain a section related to absenteeism levels and trends. Positive or negative variances regarding attendance levels can then be reported.

The reporting of absenteeism levels needs to be circulated to the shop stewards and to managers and supervisors in the factory and communicated to workers to make them more aware of the affects of absenteeism. If the commitment of the management and supervisory team, as well as the shop stewards, is to be obtained regarding combatting absenteeism, then they need to have regular feedback on how the company is performing with regard to attendance levels. As one shop steward commented, shop stewards would like to be kept informed regarding the industry's results.

If there is one way in which employees' commitment to the goals of the industry can be improved (one goal being to achieve acceptable levels of attendance), it is by management communicating important information to them and highlighting short-comings in performance.

5.2.4 Identifying The Causes Of Absenteeism

Management teams need to ask questions related to why the industry has a particular level of absenteeism, especially if absenteeism levels are higher than they should be.

5.2.4.1 Employees with sound and poor attendance records

Is there a typical profile regarding the sound and poor work attender? For instance, does age, sex, department, standard of education, job grade, supervision, marital status, dependent children, domicile, mode of transport, distance travelled and length of service influence attendance levels? If so, can the industry change its recruitment and selection procedures so as to attract potential employees with personal attributes which are known to be positively related to high work attendance? Is the industry selecting the right people for each job? As one Personnel Officer mentioned, it is recommended that industries ensure that their recruitment and selection methods are sound. For example, a new recruit is often either under-qualified or over-qualified for a particular position and this mis-match could lead to high levels of absenteeism.

5.2.4.2 Identifying Causes within the factory

It is suggested that there are a number of causes of absenteeism within the factory, as shown by the findings contained in this study, the main causes are as follows:

(a) The supervisor/employee relationship

One of the causes of absenteeism in an industry which was a finding in this study was the lack of a positive relationship between the supervisor and the employee. The supervisor needs to create a working environment within his/her department which is supportive, non-threatening, results-orientated, and where communication is open and honest. The supervisor is responsible for the motivation, welfare, training, and ultimately the performance of the employee. One of the challenges facing a supervisor in an industry is obtaining the commitment of his/her workers to the department and industry. If the supervisor is credible in the eyes of the worker, and if a sound relationship exists between them, the probability of sound attendance will be enhanced. Sadly, this was not always the case in all the industries. Supervisors were selected sometimes only on the basis of their technical knowledge and skills and lacked this credibility. Supervisors need to attend regular training programmes in the area of interpersonal skills. They need to acquire ^{such} skills as listening, communicating, grievance handling, giving instructions, handling problems, disciplining effectively, training, giving feedback, and so on.

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They need training in techniques of managing workers effectively and in the skills in forging sound working relationships with all those around them. Their training should also need to include the management and control of absenteeism.

(b) The physical environment within the factory

It is recommended by the shop stewards that factory managers should question whether enough is being done within their industries and at the work place to ensure that the general environment is conducive to safe, productive, and harmonious work practices. As the shop stewards indicated workers are unhappy if the temperatures within the factory are too hot or cold, and if the toilets, cloakrooms, and eating facilities are not clean or adequate. Employees should be provided with proper overalls and tools, as well as subsidised meals. If the basic needs of employees on the shop-floor are being satisfied, then the workforce will be motivated and happy.

(c) Overtime and long hours

It is recommended by the shop stewards that factory managers need to examine the number of hours being worked by shop-floor workers. Long working days and excessive working hours can lead to work fatigue and recurring illnesses, as well as to higher levels of stress, which in turn could lead to excessive or uncondoned absenteeism.

(d) "Difficult" Jobs

It is recommended that factory managers should examine which jobs in their factory might lead to high levels of absenteeism, that is, jobs which are dangerous to perform, or involve a health hazard. Some jobs are extremely monotonous and others needs a high degree of training before new workers are able to master them. One shop steward believed that managers should ask themselves if these "difficult" jobs could be made safer? One suggestion is that better on-the-job training could be provided.

(e) Transport

As one shop steward recommended, factory managers should review their company's transport arrangements, especially where workers are expected to work unsociable hours (for example, shift work) or where several employees live in areas where public transport is non-existent, infrequent or unreliable. This study revealed many situations where shop stewards and interviewed workers spoke of the difficulty of factory employees commuting long distances, or of the problems of workers getting to and from work because they lived in locations where public transport was not satisfactory and reliable. The feeling of numerous shop steward interviewees was that more could be done by the private sector to ease the burden on workers attempting to travel to and from work; this would eventually lead to better attendance figures.

It was encouraging to learn that several of the surveyed companies provided transport for their shop-floor employees. For example, one industry organised a company taxi for their employees as the factory was situated quite a distance from the nearest train or bus station.

5.2.5 Creating An Awareness Of Absenteeism

The writer gained the impression that little was being done in the surveyed companies to create an awareness amongst employees of the affects of absenteeism. The writer recommends that factory managers should consider ways in which the problem of absenteeism could be better understood by employees.

Managers, supervisors, and factory employees ought to understand the extent of absenteeism (and an allied problem, lateness), as well as the costs and consequences of poor work attendance. There are many ways in which this awareness of the problems of absenteeism could be undertaken. Some recommendations which the writer feels are worth considering are:

- * Displaying weekly attendance records (or absenteeism rates) on notice boards in each department, and highlighting positive and neagtive variances.

- * Including the subject of absenteeism (occasionally) on the agenda of management and supervisory meetings, as well as raising the issue at meetings between management and the shop stewards.
- * Displaying printed posters related to absenteeism in canteens and on notice boards. The posters would need to be changed on a regular basis.
- * Utilising in-house news letters as a method to publicise absenteeism, highlighting success stories regarding improvements in work attendance levels.
- * Eliciting the assistance and ideas of managers, supervisors and shop stewards in communicating and highlighting the problems of absenteeism to shop-floor employees.
- * Including the subject of absenteeism at shop-floor meetings between supervisors and workers. Such meetings could include briefing group meetings, so-called "green-areas" meetings, and other shop-floor contact groups. Encouraging discussion on absenteeism and listening to the ideas of shop-floor employees are ways of improving work attendance. This study revealed that few industries involved their shop-floor employees in combatting absenteeism.

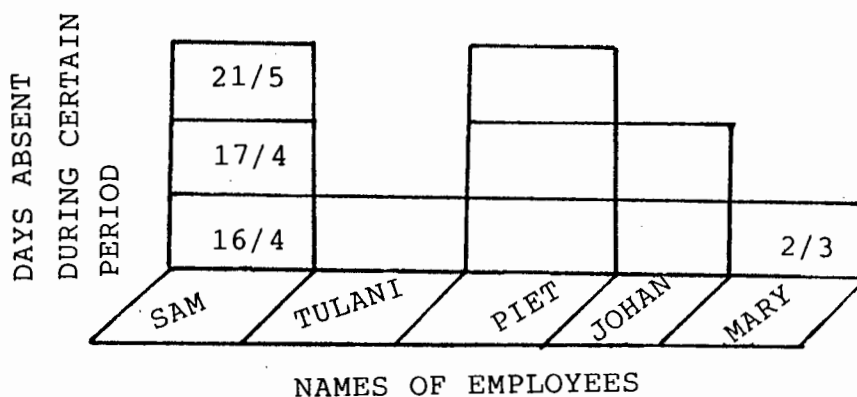
5.2.6 Monitoring and controlling absenteeism

It is recommended that factory managers should ensure that adequate monitoring mechanisms are in place to enable proper control of absenteeism. As many theorists agree, the line supervisor is the best person to keep track of daily absenteeism and to take the appropriate action.

This study revealed a general lack of monitoring systems in the surveyed companies. The writer recommends an effective and simple system which could be maintained by the line supervisor. The system consists of a simple bar chart to record and display individual absenteeism. An example is shown in Figure 5.4.

FIGURE 5.4

Absenteeism: From 1.3.1992. to 30.8.1992.



The names of every employee in the supervisor's department could be placed along the bottom of a sheet of graph paper. Every time an employee is absent, a small building block is drawn above the employee's name.

The date/s that the employee is absent could be written in the building block/s: one date per building block. The building block could be colour-coded to depict whether the day's absence was certified (accompanied by a doctor's sick certificate) or uncertified (absence). The supervisor could then immediately establish which of his/her employees are absent, the extent of the absence, and the frequency of the absence. Furthermore, the control would also identify those employees who had no absence. It is recommended that the system could be maintained for a period of three to four months and then a new graph started. At the same time, a consolidated record of the department's absenteeism, per employee, for the immediate past twelve months could be maintained - again in bar chart format - and displayed in the supervisor's office. It is recommended that the displays of absenteeism (current and the immediate past twelve months) clearly shown. This would give ongoing feedback to employees in the department and help to create an awareness of the problem of absenteeism in the department. There are many advantages to the simple control system shown above, some of these are the following:

- (1) The main offenders regarding absenteeism can be identified, enabling the supervisor to take the initiative in discussing the absenteeism levels with the employees concerned. The supervisor can be proactive instead of reactive regarding combatting absenteeism and can take the appropriate disciplinary action against the consistent poor work attender.

(2) The display board would enable the supervisor to monitor those employees who had not been absent over a long period of time. The supervisor could then recognise the sound work attenders in the department and show recognition.

(3) The department/production manager (who might have a number of sections to manage) can also be kept informed (on a daily basis) about absenteeism levels within each of his/her supervisors' work areas.

The writer's original intention was to conduct interviews with senior managers, personnel managers/officers, shop stewards and workers. It was found during the study, that the supervisor was an important person with regard to recording and controlling of absenteeism. Perhaps a recommendation for future studies could be the inclusion of the supervisor in terms of interviews and analysis of absenteeism.

5.2.7 Rewarding and Recognising

This study revealed that the majority of the surveyed companies were not able to identify 100% attenders and other employees with impressive attendance records (over a twelve-month period). Whenever the writer produced an attendance graph for a particular department showing at least one 100% attender, a member of management or a personnel manager/officer was generally surprised.

It is recommended by the writer that sound work attenders should:

- (i) be identified on an ongoing basis by management.
- (ii) be recognised.
- (iii) be rewarded in a way appropriate for their achievement.

The concept of management providing 100% work attenders with a reward could be a sensitive issue. Some of the industries studied did provide rewards to 100% work attenders (covering a twelve-month period). The rewards were usually a small monetary gift, a food hamper, a company tie (for a man) or a scarf (for a woman) or a similar reward. For employees who had not been absent over a five-year period, a framed certificate was given. Some industries believed that rewards for exceptional work attendance encourage and motivate a work-force towards better attendance. One factory manager believed that a work-force appreciates management identifying, recognising and rewarding employees for any outstanding achievement (this includes sound work attenders). Such management actions send positive messages to the shop-floor that management cares and recognises those sound performers.

When sound work attenders are not recognised (and rewarded) by factory managers, a general feeling of dissatisfaction could occur. This feeling of dissatisfaction might adversely affect work attendance levels in a factory.

5.2.8 Taking Necessary Disciplinary Action

Another recommendation in combatting absenteeism is the importance of taking some form of disciplinary action against the habitual poor work attenders. All of the companies surveyed had a recognised disciplinary procedure which had been negotiated between management and the shop stewards. The majority of disciplinary procedures studied involved a verbal warning, followed by 2 or 3 written warnings within a particular time period. Provision was made for a disciplinary enquiry - attended by representatives of management, personnel, and the shop stewards - as well as the employee with the poor attendance record.

The writer's recommendation is that the disciplinary procedure should be allowed to run its full course. The logical conclusion is that employees who have been subjected to the full disciplinary procedure, and where no mitigating circumstances have been found, should be dismissed. The idea of a disciplinary procedure is that employees (all employees from senior managers to shop-floor workers) who commit serious misdemeanours at work need to be disciplined. The ultimate deterrent and disciplinary action is dismissal. Four of the industries surveyed had not dismissed anyone for poor attendance in recent years; according to a spokesperson in each of the industries.

Another reason why the disciplinary code should be strictly adhered to is to meet the expectations of the supervisor, the shop steward, and shop-floor employees, who want to see management take retribution against employees who continually take advantage of company rules and regulations. The majority of shop-floor workers in a factory (including shop stewards), wish to see management treating all employees fairly but firmly when the occasion arises.

One factory manager believed that employees should have access to effective counselling by trained and qualified staff members when they experience problems which might affect their attendance at work. A supervisor would be effective in counselling workers if he/she has had the necessary training. Such training should also make supervisors willing to record and deal with absenteeism problems. The supervisor is thus the link between the employee and management and thus any grievances which the employee may have must be resolved at the supervisory level. However, necessary training of supervisors in handling grievances and for acting as a counsellor is required. Employees subjected to verbal and written warnings need to be given the support and assistance of management in order for them to improve their performance.

5.3 OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMBATTING ABSENTEEISM

Other recommendations include the recruitment of social welfare officers and the provision of creche facilities at the factory or at another location.

5.3.1 Recruitment of Social Welfare Officers

From the industries surveyed, it was interesting to find that three of the twenty industries employed a social welfare officer. A number of industries had in the past employed social workers but, due to the economic recession in recent years, they were retrenched. They were not considered a vital part of the industry and management believed that the personnel department could assume their function. One of the main causes of absenteeism, as was seen in the findings, was that of domestic strife and socio-economic problems. For example, a domestic problem for an employee could involve marital difficulties. A personnel manager believed that if a social welfare officer was employed at the company, he/she would have received training in marriage counselling and could then assist and advise the employee and his/her spouse. A personnel manager/officer would not ordinarily have received this specialised training.

The social welfare officers in the three industries surveyed believed that they were approachable and that employees could discuss certain personal, or work related issues with them. For example, if a worker had to pay an account or maintenance, the social welfare officer arranged for the money to be paid, this allowed the employee to attend work.

5.3.2 Creche Facilities

Another recommendation by shop stewards which could help in combatting absenteeism, particularly in larger industries, is the organising of a creche facility. Industries with a large percentage of female workers, who typically have greater domestic responsibilities than males, could organise a creche either on the factory premises or at another location. One industry bought a hostel in a Cape Town township and transformed it into a creche. The employees sent their children to the creche which was very near to their place of residence. A teacher was employed to take care of the children. A negative consequence of the creche facility is obviously the fact that it involves the cost of staff, building and maintenance. However, if one considers the cost that is involved through employees taking care of their children at home and absenteeism, then organising a creche may be beneficial in the long term.

The above are recommendations that emanate from the study.

CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER SIX - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarises and concludes the study.

As was mentioned in Chapter One, the writer has a particular interest in the phenomenon of absenteeism, and attempted to gain an insight into: the extent of absenteeism specifically in Cape Town industries; the nature of absenteeism in terms of certified and uncertified absence; the variation of absenteeism in different industries; absenteeism trends; the perceptions associated with absenteeism as a problem; major problems associated with high levels of absenteeism; the financial costs of absenteeism; the main variables associated with absenteeism; typical profiles of poor and sound attenders; management styles and absenteeism; strategies to combat absenteeism and other recommendations to combat absenteeism.

Chapter Two presented some of the main theoretical approaches to absenteeism.

The Steers and Rhodes's model (1984) was discussed. This identifies the major influences associated with employee attendance. These include: job situation, employee values and job expectations, personal characteristics, job satisfaction, pressure to attend (including incentive/reward systems, work-group norms, personal work ethic and organisational commitment), attendance motivation and ability to attend (illness, family responsibility and transportation problems).

In classifying absenteeism, three broad categories, according to Van der Merwe and Miller (1988), are mentioned: sickness absence (all absence with a doctor's certificate), authorised absence (prior permission of supervisor or line manager) and unauthorised absence. In the case of all twenty companies, sickness absence was abbreviated as AS (absence with a sick certificate) and A (absence). In measuring absenteeism, the GAR and AFR rates were commonly used in the companies surveyed. The recording of absenteeism was usually in the form of clock cards, attendance registers, or employee absenteeism records.

Many researchers have tried to identify the variables associated (with absenteeism. The variables tested in this study were grouped under the headings: personal, organisational and external. Personal variables (aimed at the individual), include: sex, age, and length of service; Organisational factors (factors inside the factory), include: size of group, nature of supervision and type of work; and External factors (outside the factory), include: socio/political and economic factors. All the above mentioned variables contribute to employee attendance and certain consequences of absenteeism develop.

Goodman and Atkin (1984) examined the positive and negative consequences of absenteeism for: individual, co-workers, work group, organisation/management, union officers, family and society at large.

A number of studies have also been attempted to determine the financial costs involved in absenteeism, that is, the direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include wages, overtime, and costs of recruiting and training replacements. Indirect costs include losses in productivity, rework and accidents.

For controlling absenteeism a number of recommendations were made. An absenteeism policy needs to be formulated in the organisation and data needs to be collected systematically. The quality of first-line supervision is also vital in the control of absenteeism. Supervisors need to be given comprehensive training in the methods to combat and control absenteeism. Another way to control absenteeism is in the form of disciplinary action. Certain disciplinary measures need to be taken in order to reduce the problem of absenteeism which may include a small minority.

The writer concludes that absenteeism is a difficult and complexed phenomenon. Different sociologists and researchers have developed a variety of models to better understand absenteeism in order to control it more effectively.

In Chapter Three, the writer used a convenience sample of twenty manufacturing industries in the Cape Town region, and a number of broad stages were involved in the study.

The writer conducted interviews with management/personnel and shop stewards. Two samples, namely, the interview sample and biographical details sample were used to conduct analysis of the workers in each industry. The workers responses were tested in order of significance using the Chi-squared test.

Chapter Four contains the main findings of the study. The study revealed that the average annual percentage absenteeism rate for the twenty companies surveyed was 4.7% for 1992. The highest rate was 7.5% and the lowest 2.5%. Van der Merwe and Miller (1988:25) suggest that "absence below 3.0% can be seen as satisfactory although capable of further improvement". Indeed, most management interviewees believed a more acceptable and manageable level of absenteeism was around 2.5 to 3.0%. The writer's conclusion therefore is that absenteeism in the Cape Town industries studied, is, on average, far too high. One industry proved that less than 3.0% was possible. The industries with absenteeism rates of greater than 5.5% were exceptionally high.

It was disappointing to find that four industries could provide no absenteeism rates for 1992, and only six industries could give departmental absenteeism rates for the same year. Furthermore, only one company could provide absenteeism rates for the past five years. The conclusion is that a large percentage of Cape Town industries are not likely to combat absenteeism effectively unless they introduce improved methods of recording, analysing and presenting data related to absenteeism. Such industries will not be aware of whether they are winning or losing the battle against absenteeism. The general standard of recording, analysing, and reporting of absenteeism in the twenty companies was disappointing. Only ten industries kept a daily attendance register, and twelve companies a monthly absenteeism report. Only seven industries presented their absenteeism reports using graphs or tables.

Only two industries were able to identify 100% work attenders, as well as the main offenders regarding absence. Only one industry tabled absenteeism rates at weekly management meetings. Only ten industries could provide figures of certified and uncertified absenteeism rates. Only eleven of the thirty-eight shop steward interviewees (29%) said they saw an absenteeism report issued by management. Only eight industries conducted some kind of cost analysis regarding absenteeism. These statistics indicate that absenteeism does not receive the attention it ought to receive.

The writer spent a lot of time in most of the twenty industries searching for basic information related to absenteeism, as well as having to analyse information (which could have been available). The writer's conclusion once again is that absenteeism rates of 3.0% and less will not be achieved until senior managers in Cape Town industries have information which is easily accessible (including cost information), which will assist them to draw the right conclusions and make the right decisions regarding their absenteeism rates and trends.

With regard to absenteeism, 100% of shop steward interviewees and 90% of management/personnel interviewees saw absenteeism as representing either a problem, serious problem, or very serious problem. There was no discernable differences regarding the way management/personnel and shop steward respondents viewed the problems caused by absenteeism. The problems can be summarised under three headings, namely, problems to the company, to the manager/supervisor, and to the workers (colleagues of the absent employee). It was found that absenteeism affects operations, productivity, quality, production costs, customer service, and creates tension on the shop-floor.

The writer's conclusion is that absenteeism represents a major problem to Cape Town industries and that methods need to be formulated in order to combat the problem or control absenteeism at more acceptable levels.

The primary responsibility for combatting absenteeism in an industry was seen differently by management/personnel and shop stewards. The most popular response from the former (28% of total responses) was that the supervisor was primarily responsible, whilst the most popular response of the latter (50% of total responses) stated the absent worker as being responsible. The writer's conclusion is that there is a discrepancy with regard to who in an industry is primarily (or ultimately) responsible for absenteeism control.

The twenty companies had a well defined disciplinary procedure: the procedures varied slightly. Fourteen companies seemed to implement the disciplinary procedure for absenteeism offences to different degrees and dismissal was the end result. The other six industries either never, seldomly, or inconsistently invoked the disciplinary procedure. The writer's conclusion is that all the industries had sound industrial relations systems, but in some industries a softer line was taken (with the disciplinary procedure not being allowed to run its full course). It can be conjectured that this would probably lead to higher levels of absenteeism as the deterrent factor of dismissal, inherent in the disciplinary procedure, is no longer a threat.

Similar responses were received from management/personnel and shop stewards regarding the main variables associated with absenteeism. Management responses were: variables outside the factory (43% of total), variables associated with the absent workers (25%) and variables inside the factory (32%). Shop steward responses were 46%, 29% and 25% respectively. Hence, 68% of all management replies and 75% of shop steward responses were concerned with causes OUTSIDE the factory or variables associated with the worker. Both management/personnel and shop steward interviewees perceived ill-health (due to socio-economic reasons) and socio-economic conditions as being the main causes of absenteeism.

Factors internal to the factory were regarded by management and shop stewards as less significant than personal and external factors in regard to absenteeism. What is more, when such factors were mentioned, management and shop stewards' views differed. For example, shop stewards placed more emphasis on poor supervision being a main cause of absenteeism than did management/personnel interviews. Such findings question whether both sets of respondents are giving enough attention to internal factors (causes inside the factory) with, for example, management and supervisory practices being an example of where problems can arise, leading to excessive or uncondoned absenteeism on the shop-floor. The writer's conclusion is that both management teams and shop stewards seem to overlook the important contribution factors inside the industries which affect absenteeism.

The findings from the Worker responses presented in Chapter Four revealed clearly that a number of variables are strongly associated with absenteeism.

Ranked in terms of level of statistical significance, the main variables tested by the Chi-square test discussed in this research paper for association with good and poor attenders and included: length of service ($p < .001$), health status ($p < .001$), travel mode ($p < .001$), problems in the home ($p < .001$), worker's level of motivation ($p < .001$), development opportunity in company ($p < .001$), age ($p < .01$), job category ($p < .01$), ethnicity ($p < .02$), and personal loyalty to the company ($p < .05$).

Asked for their perceptions regarding typical profiles of the poor and sound work attender, very similar responses were received from management/personnel and shop stewards regarding the profile of the sound work attender. However, differences were found with respect to their views on the typical profile of the poor work attender. There were more critical comments about the worker from management interviewees. Furthermore, the shop stewards focused on factors inside and outside the factory which could cause the worker to be absent.

The writer's conclusion is that management/personnel respondents were less able to look at factors beyond the individual such as management style which could result in the typical poor work attender.

Asked which departments had the worst absenteeism records in the factory (and reasons for this), the following management/personnel reasons for their poor records were cited: types of jobs performed in the department (20.6% of all replies), worst physical environment (19%), largest department (16%), large female workforce (16%), and poorly managed department (7.9%). Shop steward responses were: largest department (23.7%), female workforce (14.5%), demanding job (10.5%), and poor management style (7.9%).

Both management/personnel and shop stewards gave similar responses when they asked if they had noticed any trends in absenteeism over the last three to five years. Only four trends were frequently mentioned, namely: Mondays see high levels of absenteeism, pay-days are good for attendance. Winters cause absence through illnesses, and transport difficulties in winter. The writer feels that such findings should help managers and personnel practitioners to further investigate such trends so as to validate the perceptions of interviewees, this could lead to closer control of factory absenteeism.

Ninety-five percent of personnel respondents and ninety percent of management respondents believed there was an association between management style and absenteeism. The majority of interviewees perceived a high association between autocratic management behaviour/practices and high absenteeism.

There were few positive, imaginative management strategies and tactics with regard to combatting the problem of absenteeism. Most tactics revolved around disciplinary action. The strategies that impressed the writer included: recognition for good attendance, support from management for workers' problems, informal shop-floor meetings between workers and management (green-areas), and management providing transport to employees. Fifteen of the twenty factories operated some form of incentive scheme related to work attendance.

Asked how absenteeism could be combatted, the main management/personnel responses were: a move to a more participative management style (17.5% of total replies), training/education of workers (12.3%), improved supervisory control of absenteeism (12.3%), and better attendance bonus/rewards (11.3%). Shop steward replies were: improve the attitude of the supervisor (14.4%), attendance bonuses (11.7%), improve the relationship between the supervisor and worker (11.7%), and educate the worker (9.0%). The writer sees an association between the management/personnel and shop steward responses and feels that the suggestions are worthy of serious consideration by factory managers.

The recommendations shown in Chapter Five contain a systematic approach as well as other recommendations to combatting absenteeism in industries.

Absenteeism is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon which is influenced by a number of factors which have been mentioned in this chapter. It is hoped that this research project can help to inform all managers, shop stewards and workers on the serious effects and consequences of absenteeism, as well as identifying the main variables associated with absenteeism.

APPENDICES

ABSENTEEISM STUDY : BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE1. Organisation Structure2. Who's Who? _____

_____3. Product/Markets

_____4. Total Salaried and Weekly/Hourly Paid Complement

Salaried	
Weekly/ Hourly-Paid	
Total	

5. Sex Of Hourly-Paid Workers6. Departments (largest to smallest)

Male (Coloured)	
Female (Coloured)	
Male (Black)	
Female (Black)	
Male (Europeans)	
Female (Europeans)	
Other (Indians)	

	Approx No's
6.1	
6.2	
6.3	
6.4	
6.5	
6.6	
6.7	
6.8	
6.9	
6.10	

7. Special Questions7.1 Hours Worked By Weekly/Hourly-Paid Workers:
_____7.2 Shift Work? (elaborate)
_____7.3 Seasonal Work?

7.4 Difference in Volumes (Outputs) for Different Seasons:

7.5 Special Environmental Factors:

Heat		Cold		Noise		Dangerous Work		Other	
------	--	------	--	-------	--	----------------	--	-------	--

7.6 Benefits Offered To Weekly/Hourly-Paid Employees

	Yes	No	Description		
Pension			Qualification:		
Medical Aid			Qualification:		
Maternity Leave			Qualification:		
Paternity Leave			Qualification:		
Sick Leave			Qualification:		
Incentives/Bonuses			Qualification:		
Other Benefits			1.	2.	3.

7.7 Trade Union

Yes	No

If Yes, which Union/s:

1.
2.
3.

If no, is there an Employee Body?

Yes	No

What is the name of the Employee Body and its constitution?

8. Has The Company Experienced Any Redundancies In The Past 12 Months?

Yes	No

9. Has The Company Experienced Any Short-Time Working?

Yes	No

10. Does The Company Employ A Social Welfare Worker?

Yes	No

11. Does the Company provide Creche Facilities?

Yes	No

CHECKLIST : QUANTIFICATION OF ABSENTEEISM

1.	<u>TOTAL ABSENTEEISM FOR COMPANY - (HOURLY PAID WORKERS)</u> <u>(LAST YEAR)</u>	
2.	<u>TOTAL ABSENTEEISM FOR COMPANY - (SALARIED STAFF)</u> <u>(LAST YEAR)</u>	
3.	<u>EACH DEPARTMENT</u> <u>(LAST YEAR)</u>	
4.	<u>EACH SUPERVISOR</u> <u>(LAST YEAR)</u>	
5.	<u>TRENDS ANALYSIS (over last 5 years)</u>	
6.	<u>SAMPLE ANALYSIS</u> <u>(GOOD/POOR ATTENDERS)</u> <u>BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS</u>	
7.	<u>CERTIFIED AND UN-CERTIFIED ABSENCE</u>	

Company: _____

Date of Interview: _____

A QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGNED FOR WORKER'S VIEWS ON ABSENTEEISM1. BIOGRAPHICAL PARTICULARS1.1 PERSONAL DETAILS

1.1.1 <u>SURNAME</u> _____				1.1.2 <u>TITLE</u> MR MRS MISS		1.1.3 <u>FIRST NAMES</u> _____					
1.1.4 <u>SEX</u> Male Female		1.1.5 <u>ETHNIC GROUP</u> White Coloured Asian Black				1.1.6 <u>AGE</u> <18 19-21 22-25 26-30 31-40 41-50 >50					
1.1.7 <u>CITIZENSHIP</u> _____		1.1.8 <u>MARITAL STATUS</u> Married Single Widower Widow Divorced				1.1.9 <u>DEPENDENT CHILDREN</u> YES NO					
1.1.10 <u>EDUCATION</u> <Std 6 Std 7 Std 8 Std 9 Matric Post-Matric Qualification						1.1.11 <u>LENGTH OF SERVICE IN COMPANY</u> <1 Year 1 - 3 Years 4 - 5 Years 6 -10 Years 11-15 Years >15					
1.1.12 <u>HEALTH</u> POOR SATISFACTORY EXCELLENT						1.1.13 <u>HOME LANGUAGE</u> _____			1.1.14 <u>RELIGION</u> _____		
1.1.15 <u>AREA OF RESIDENCE</u> _____						1.1.16 <u>MILITARY STATUS (IF APPLICABLE)</u> _____					
1.1.17 <u>DRIVERS LICENCE</u> YES NO						1.1.18 <u>TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT</u> WORK INDIVIDUALLY WORK IN A TEAM					
1.1.19 <u>TRAVELLING TIME</u>		TO WORK _____				TO YOUR HOME _____					

2. SUMMARY OF QUICK REACTION SHEET

- 2.1 How would you rate own motivation at work?
- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------|
| EXTREMELY
DEMOTIVATED | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXTREMELY
MOTIVATED |
| | | | | | | | | |
- 2.2 How would you rate your relationship with your immediate boss?
- | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| POOR | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXCELLENT |
| | | | | | | | | |
- 2.3 How would you rate the team spirit within your company (or department)?
- | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| POOR
TEAM
SPIRIT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXCELLENT
TEAM
SPIRIT |
| | | | | | | | | |
- 2.4 How would you rate the opportunity to improve your abilities within the company?
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| VERY
LOW | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXTREMELY
HIGH |
| | | | | | | | | |
- 2.5 How would you rate your personal loyalty to the company?
- | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| POOR | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXCELLENT |
| | | | | | | | | |
- 2.6 How would you say you are treated within the company?
- | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| POOR | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXCELLENT |
| | | | | | | | | |
- 2.7 How would rate your manager's interest within your job?
- | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| POOR | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | EXCELLENT |
| | | | | | | | | |
- 2.8 How would you rate your personal security within the company? (How secure do you feel?)
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| NOT
AT ALL
SECURE | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | VERY
SECURE |
| | | | | | | | | |

QUESTIONNAIRE USED WITH GOOD ATTENDERS

Question	Worker 1	Worker 2	Worker 3	Worker 4
A. <u>Employment</u>				
Length of service				
Job				
Relationship with boss				
Relationship with colleagues				
Describe work environment				
Positive factors re: job				
Negative factors re: job				
What changes would make in job/company				
B. <u>Transport</u>				
How travel to work				
Time up for work				
Activities in home before work				
Cost of travel per week				
Transport difficulties?				

Good Attenders (continued)

Question	Worker 1	Worker 2	Worker 3	Worker 4
<u>C. Family</u>				
Describe accommodation				
Facilities (accommodation)				
Ownership/Rental etc.				
How many live in?				
How many have jobs?				
Children?				
Who looks after children?				
Number of dependents?				
Problem in home affecting attendance (poor attenders)				
<u>D. Absence Details</u>				
Past 3 yrs. Major illnesses? Details.				
Hospitalised? Reasons?				
Reasons for absence other than sickness. (Yes/No/Reasons)				
Does management provide incentives?				
How would you handle problem of absenteeism if you were management?				
Has your supervisor spoke to you (in the last year) re: your attendance (POOR ATT's) (To good attenders)				
Anything that could be done to improve attendance of other workers				
Other comments?				

QUESTIONNAIRE USED WITH POOR ATTENDERS

Question	Worker 1	Worker 2	Worker 3	Worker 4
<u>A. Employment</u>				
Length of service				
Job				
Relationship with boss				
Relationship with colleagues				
Describe work environment				
Positive factors re: job				
Negative factors re: job				
What changes would make in job/company				
<u>B. Transport</u>				
How travel to work				
Time up for work				
Activities in home before work				
Cost of travel per week				
Transport difficulties?				

Poor Attenders (continued)

Question	Worker 1	Worker 2	Worker 3	Worker 4
C. <u>Family</u>				
Describe accommodation				
Facilities (accommodation)				
Ownership/Rental etc.				
How many live in?				
How many have jobs?				
Children?				
Who looks after children?				
Number of dependents?				
Problem in home affecting attendance				
D. <u>Absence Details</u>				
Past 3 yrs. Major illnesses? Details.				
Hospitalised? Reasons?				
Main causes of absence? (Poor attenders only)				
Reasons for absence other than sickness. (Yes/No/Reasons)				
Does management provide incentives?				
How would you handle problem of absenteeism if you were management?				
Has your supervisor spoke to you (in the last year) re: your attendance? (POOR ATTENDERS)				
Other comments?				

Company: _____ Name of Shop Steward Official: _____

Job Title: _____ Date of Interview: _____

A QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGNED FOR SHOP STEWARDS' VIEWS ON ABSENTEEISM

1. To what extent, do you see absenteeism to be a problem in this company?

Very Serious Problem	Serious Problem	A Problem	Satisfactory	Not A Problem

2. Who is primarily responsible for combatting absenteeism?

Answer: _____

3. Do you see absenteeism reports? _____ What are your comments on these reports?

4.1 What do you think are the main causes of absenteeism? (in order of priority)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

4.2 Can you substantiate your answer?

5. What is the typical profile of the poor work attender?

6. Do you see there are certain reasons of absenteeism (that is, consequences) which are not acceptable to management? If so, what are they?

7. What do you think, is the profile of a typical sound work attender?

8. Is there any reason/s why this company should experience any special type of absenteeism?
 for example - seasonal work
 - shift work
 - climatic conditions in the factory: hot/cold

9. What departments are the main offenders and why?

- 10.1 Do management and the shop stewards discuss the problem of absenteeism within the company?

- 10.2 How often?

- 10.3 Under what circumstances?

11. What else do you think can be done to achieve more acceptable levels of attendance at the work-place?

12. Have you noticed any trends in absenteeism over the last three to five years?

<u>TRENDS</u>	<u>REASONS</u>
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

13. How do management deal with the problem of absenteeism?

14. What the shop stewards' feel about management's approach with regards to dealing with absenteeism?

15. What other recommendations can you suggest that could combat absenteeism?

Company: _____ Name of Manager: _____

Department: _____ Date of Interview: _____

A QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGNED FOR MANAGEMENT'S VIEWS ON ABSENTEEISM

1. To what extent is absenteeism perceived to be a problem in your company?

Very Serious Problem	Serious Problem	A Problem	Satisfactory	Not A Problem

2. Who is primarily responsible for combatting absenteeism?

Answer: _____

3. What is the nature and extent of absenteeism in terms of certified absence (certified by a medical certificate) and non-certified absence?

4.1 What are the costs of absenteeism?

4.2 Have you ever done a cost analysis exercise?

5. CONTROL INFORMATION

5.1 PERSONNEL

5.1.1 How is Absenteeism recorded?

5.1.2 How is Absenteeism analysed and reported?

5.1.3 Who receives the reports?

5.1.4 How often does the report come out?

5.1.5 Are you happy with the reporting system, in terms of:

1. Frequency: _____
2. Information: _____
3. Format: _____

5.1.6 Does it highlight:

Graphical/ Tabular Format	Yes	No	Trends (Years) of Absenteeism	Yes	No
Absenteeism by Department	Yes	No	Main Offenders and Sound Attenders of Absenteeism	Yes	No

5.1.7 Is the absenteeism report tabled at weekly meetings?

No	Yes	
	Always	Sometimes

5.1.8 What action is taken (if any) as a result of the report on attendance?

And by whom? _____

5.2 MANAGEMENT

5.2.1 Describe the control information for absenteeism?

5.2.2 Are you happy with the reporting system, in terms of:

1. Frequency: _____
2. Information: _____
3. Format: _____

5.2.3 Does it highlight:

Graphical/ Tabular Format	Yes	No	Trends (Years) of Absenteeism	Yes	No
Absenteeism by Department	Yes	No	Main Offenders and Sound Attenders	Yes	No

5.2.4 Is the absenteeism report tabled at weekly meetings?

No	Yes	
	Always	Sometimes

5.2.5 What action is taken (if any) as a result of the report on attendance?

Any by whom? _____

6. What do you think are the main causes of absenteeism? (in priority order)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Can you substantiate your answers?

7. What is the typical profile of the poor work attender?

8. What is the typical profile of the sound work attender?

9. Which departments are the main offenders? Why?

10. Is there a correlation between such things as management style and management practices and absenteeism?

11. How do you handle the problem of abstenteeism (if at all) within your company? i.e. what strategies and tactics?

12. Do you (management) provide any incentives for high levels of attendance at work?

13. What else can be done to achieve more acceptable levels of attendance at the work-place?

14. Do you ever take into account workers' ideas about improving/changing a situation in the work-place? Give a reason for your answer

15. Is there any reason/s why this company should experience any special type of absenteeism?

- e.g. - seasonal work
- shift work
- climatic conditions in the factory: hot/cold

16. Have you noticed any trends in absm. over the last three to five years?

<u>TRENDS</u>	<u>REASONS</u>
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

17. Is the problem of absenteeism ever discussed in weekly/monthly management meetings? Give a reason for your answer.

18. What recommendations can you suggest that can be made to combat absenteeism?

19. Is there anything else that you want to say, relevant to this study, regarding the subject of absenteeism?




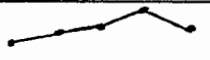


SUMMARY OF SURVEYED ORGANISATIONS

	Dates Visited	No. of days spent on study	Company and Code	Industry	No. of Employees			Interviewees					Details of Interviewees
					Staff	Works	Total	Mgrs	Pers- onnel	S.S.	Sound Attenders	Poor Attenders	
1.	May, '92 5,6,7, 12,13	4 days	(J)	Food	40	206	246	1	2	2	4	4	Plant Manager Personnel Manager Factory Personnel Off.
2.	May, '92 19,20, 21	3 days	(D)	Plas- tics	83	312	395	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Director
3.	June, 92 1,2,3	3 days	(T)	Food	133	1513	1646	1	1	2	4	4	Personnel Manager Factory Manager
4.	June, 92 9,10,11 12,24	5 days	(A)	Cloth- ing	70	400	470	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Manager
5.	June, 92 17,18, 19	3 days	(N)	Dairy	29	168	197	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Human Resources Assistant
6.	June, 92 22,25, 29	3 days	(G)	Food	51	101	152	1	0	0	4	4	Production Manager
7.	June, 92 23,30	2 days	(Q)	Food	60	66	126	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Manager
8.	July, 92 6,7 & 8	3 days	(W)	Shock Absor- bers	101	314	415	1	1	2	4	4	Factory Manager Personnel Manager
9.	July, 92 21,22, 23	3 days	(L)	Cloth- ing	74	428	502	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Manager
10	Aug, 92 11/12/13 11 Sept	4 days	(Y)	Food	187	468	655	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Manager
11	Aug, 92 18/19/ 20	3 days	(B)	Cloth- ing	13	334	347	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Officer

	Dates Visited	No. of days spent on study	Company and Code	Industry	No. of Employees			Interviewees					Details of Interviewees
					Staff	Works	Total	Mgrs	Pers- onnel	S.S.	Sound Attenders	Poor Attenders	
12	30 July, 92 25/26 August	3 days	(F)	Food	20	106	126	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Officer
13	Sept, 92 1/2/3	3 days	(I)	Cloth- ing	48	452	500	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Personnel Officer
14	Sept, 92 22/23/ 24	3 days	(E)	Inks	25	53	78	1	1	2	4	4	Works Manager Personnel Officer
15	Sept, 92 29/30 1 Oct, 92	3 days	(C)	Cloth- ing	18	182	200	1	1	2	4	4	Factory Manager Personnel Officer
16	Oct, '92 6/7/8	3 days	(H)	Cloth- ing	157	562	719	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Human Resources Manager
17	Oct, '92 13/14/ 15	3 days	(K)	Fish- ing	24	78	102	1	1	2	4	4	Factory Manager Human Resources Manager
18	Oct, '92 28/29/ 30	3 days	(M)	Food	63	107	170	1	1	2	4	4	Warehouse Distribution Manager Human Resources Manager
19	Nov, '92 9/10	2 days	(O)	Cosme- tics	182	199	381	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Human Resources Manager
20	Dec, '92 2/3/4	3 days	(P)	Food	103	327	430	1	1	2	4	4	Production Manager Human Resources Manager

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: AMOUNT OF ABSENTEEISM AND ABSENTEEISM TRENDS

	Co. Code	Type of Industry	Ave. Annual % Absence 1992	Average Annual % Absence				Departmental Range (1992)		Ratio Certified Non-Certified Absence (1992)		Trend Last 5 YEARS (Average Annual Absence)
				1991	1990	1989	1988	Highest	Lowest	AS	A	
1	J	Food	4.8%	6.35%	6.25%	n/a	n/a	8.0%	3.1%	62,9%	37.1%	
2	D	Light Eng.	*4.1%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	*4.5%	*2.2%	68,5%	31,5%	
3	T	Fishing	7.5%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	79,2%	20,8%	
4	A	Clothing	4.7%	5.3%	6.8%	n/a	n/a	6.7%	3.7%	72,1%	27,9%	
5	N	Dairy	2.5%	2.4%	2.7%	n/a	n/a	3.9%	0.6%	75,5%	24,5%	
6	G	Food	3.1%	4.1%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	55,2%	44,8%	
7	Q	Food	3.4%	3,2%	2,3%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	53,9%	46,1%	
8	W	Light Eng.	4.4%	3,8%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	88,62%	11,38%	
9	L	Clothing	n/a	n/a	5,3%	6,3%	n/a	9,2%	5,7%	62,2%***	37,8%***	
10	Y	Fishing	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	56,4%***	43,6%***	

11	B	Clothing	5,1%	4,7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	68,3%	31,7%	
12	F	Dairy	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
13	I	Clothing	5,9%	5,7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	92,7%	7,3%	
14	E	Inks	3,5%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	37,4%	4,6%	94,7%	5,3%	
15	C	Clothing	4,8%	5,3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	64,5%	35,5%	
16	H	Clothing	4,0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	42,2%	57,8%	
17	K	Fishing	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	64,6%**	35,4%**	
18	M	Food	5,6%	5,7%	5,8%	7,2%	6,8%	n/a	n/a	84,4%	15,6%	
19	O	Cosme- tics	6,1%	5,8%	6,8%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	99,8%	0,2%	
20	P	Food	6,2%	6,1%	8,7%	5,1	n/a	n/a	n/a	59,4%	40,6%	

* Figures only available from January, 92 to May, 92.

** Whilst there were no absenteeism rates for 1992 available, the writer calculated A & AS figures from absenteeism records of employees.

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