

**ABSENTEEISM OF ADULT LEARNERS AT THE SEKGOSESE  
WEST CIRCUIT IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE:  
A CRITICAL REFLECTION**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled: **ABSENTEEISM OF ADULT LEARNERS AT THE SEKGOSESE WEST CIRCUIT IN LIMPOPO PROVINCE A CRITICAL REFLECTION** is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution of higher education. I further declare that all sources cited or quoted are indicated and acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references.

.....

MV Mello

Date: .....

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## DECLARATION

I the undersigned, declare that I have edited and also scrutinized the language used in this dissertation. Over and above the corrections I have made, I have also made suggestions meant improve the readability of the dissertation. In the final analysis, it is for the student and the supervisor to either embrace them or not.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to find out why adult learners absent themselves from adult basic education programmes and to devise strategies to encourage them to attend classes. In order to achieve the aim of the study, the objective of the study were to investigate the economic and social reasons why adult learners do not attend classes.

The research focus on a critical issue of absenteeism by adult learners at **SEKGOSESE West Circuit** adult centre in Limpopo Province.

Literature review was engaged in the field of Adult Education and related to the research problem. The literature review presented an insight into theoretical frameworks and conceptual frameworks about causes of adult learner's absenteeism. The researcher used sources which included journals, books, articles and dissertations. To collect information. This qualitative study explored the causes of adult learner absenteeism and came with strategies to reduce adult learner absenteeism. Critical theory was used as a theoretical framework. The theory deals with social economic factors and conditions under which people live.

Data was collected through focus group interviews. There were sixteen participants who attend classes at Mosima adult learning centre, and they were selected homogeneously. It was discovered that adult learner absenteeism is caused by lack of motivation, lack of support from departmental officials, lack of adult learner commitment, lack of facilities, lack of qualified adult educators, lack of respect amongst adult learners and adult educators as a serious matter, lack of parental support for those who are still under parental care and lack of transport for adult learners who stay far from the centre. Based on the causes of adult learner absenteeism, recommendations are made for the Department of Education to address these causes in order to elevate adult learner absenteeism and further research efforts are recommended.

It is recommended that the department of education include stationery material in their budget for adult basic education. Adult Basic education educators should also receive adequate training so that they can be able to teach adult learners effectively.

## KEY TERMS

Absenteeism

Adult learner

Adult Educator

Adult Basic Education

Socio-Economic factors

Barriers to learning

Critical reflection

Adult learning centre

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
EFA	Education for All
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
PPA	Postgraduate Philosophy Association



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.2 INTRODUCTION

Adult Basic Education and Training is the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts, Abet is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and ideally, provides access to a nationally recognised certificate.

This study focuses on adult learners' attributes and social factors that influence their attendance of class and sought to recommend strategies to reduce adult learner absenteeism and increase the success rate of adult learning centres. Chapter one gives the background to the study where adult learning is discussed on both the global and local level by highlighting the attendance challenges the learners face on each level. The study's problem statement, objectives, research questions, proposition, justification, and the scope of the study will also be discussed.

Adult learners' absenteeism remains a major concern for adult educators at centres of learning. Absenteeism creates a tiresome, dead and unpleasant classroom environment resulting in those who come to class feeling uncomfortable and the ABET educators irritable (Wadesango, 2011: 89). Absenteeism disturbs the effective teaching and learning environment and affects the overall wellbeing of learners who attend the classes. According to Balfanz & Byrnes (2012:30) the wave of absenteeism is likely to jeopardize the teaching and learning environment at the centres and as such causes a major problem for both teachers and parents.

Barlow & Fleischer (2011: 222) argue that learners' class attendance is far from being desirable. Researchers such as Wadesango & Machingambi (2011:89) and Schalge and Soga (2008:152) have documented high rates of class absenteeism at adult literacy

programmes, even in the United States of America. Adult learner absenteeism also causes rework and waste the time of adult educators. Crede', Roch and Kieszczynka, (2010: 273) suggest that regardless of the reason for adult learner absenteeism, a key issue is that class attendance is beneficial for learning, irrespective of the specific teaching mode or modes used by the instructor.

Barlow and Fleischer (2011:234) are of the opinion that: "learner absenteeism is acknowledged as a potential factor and shortcoming of teaching, but poorly motivated adult learners may not even give themselves the opportunity to find out how inspiring their teachers may be." Adult learners absent themselves from classes which result in ineffective learning and teaching. Absenteeism calls for re-teaching and repetition of class time periods thus taking precious instructional time away from learners who always attend the ABET classes and will contribute to the body of knowledge currently building up on adult literacy, participation and drop-out rates. Absenteeism impedes learner's progress and can jeopardize programs' funding. The importance of regular class attendance in adult learner education is important in the development of human potential and participation in society for transformation.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Education For All Global Monitoring Report (2006: 30) states that literacy is considered a right, an essential tool as it adds value to a person's life. The Adult Basic Education and Training ABET programme is done through officially established centers that are under the auspices of the department of education (Department of Education, 1997:12). In other words, adult learning centers must be registered to function in an official capacity.

The Adult Basic Education and Training ABET programme comprises of four levels. For this study the researcher focused on level four learners. Level four is equivalent to grade nine in public schools. The different levels in the programme focus on various knowledge and skills required for social, economic and political participation. The lessons are taught through technology and skills development activities and programs.

Knowles (1990:41) defines "adult education as empowerment, acknowledging learners' inherent purposefulness and independence". Adult basic education was previously concerned with writing and reading that were only attended by woman with the aim of acquiring skills to write letters to their spouses and not for professional reasons (Department of Education, 1997:12). The adult basic education programmes used unqualified volunteers to teach the unemployed housewives. The aim of teaching the housewives was to provide them with basic literacy skills to read and write letters, sign important documents and help their children with homework (Department of Education, 1997:12).

Presently, there are various legislative frameworks and government policies that inform and support adult basic education in South Africa. Examples include South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995, National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (1996), Education white paper no, 4, the 1998 National Multi – year implementation plan for adult education and training. The Adult Basic Education and Training ABET Act of 2001 affirm the role of ABET as the process of social change and development. According to the South African Department of Education, (2007:1) adult basic education is increasingly being recognised as shown by the cabinet's approval of a budget of R6.1 billion to run a mass literacy campaign in order to eradicate illiteracy in South Africa.

Adult learners who attend classes are mostly those who dropped out of the mainstream education system. The classes commence late in the afternoon after the mainstream classes have finished with the teaching and learning activity. This is so because adult learners use the same classroom facilities as used by their own children. Most adult learners do not attend regularly because they are looking after their young children who are still small to attend school or even those who have returned from school. Adult learners fail to attend lessons during collection of social grants. A number of adult learners are absent from school due to health reasons (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011:80). Adults suffering or affected by chronic illnesses such as HIV and diabetes need to consistently visit health care centres.



This study focuses on the Sekgosese West Circuit which is situated in Limpopo province in the Northern region of South Africa. People in this circuit are unemployed and depend on the government social grant for survival. Those who work on the nearby farms especially women are earning insufficient wages. There are six adult basic education centres in the circuit. The researcher dealt with Sekgosese West Circuit only because it was easily accessible and also familiar to the researcher. Lastly, the researcher chose the centre because it is convenient to gather data since the researcher is based in this area.

Adult basic education learners utilize the mainstream classrooms at the centre because the Adult Basic Education and Training ABET programme is operating in the school. The department of Education provides teachers and materials to run the programme.

To reiterate, the programmes for adult learners are operating in the school buildings in all the centres in the circuit. The lessons are taught in the afternoon when the mainstream/public school periods are over. The researcher is curious to find out why adult learners do not attend their classes regularly and also to find out what the causes are why adult learners do not attend the classes apart from those known ones as stated in different literary sources such as Knowles (1990), Barlow and Fleischer (2011) and Wadesango & Machingambi, (2011).

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Wadesango, and Machingambi (2011: 89) make reference to the adverse effects of absenteeism such as creating a boring classroom environment for students attending, irritating lecturers, wastage of time, resources and educational funding. In essence absenteeism not only affects absent students but even those who attend school. Quality interactive learning time is lost to re-teaching and attending to homework of those students who do not attend class. The study identified the problems adult learners experience which contributed to their absenteeism. Regular attendance improves student

performance and makes teaching and learning more effective for adult learners and adult educators.

The significance of the study is to provide an insight into the views of adult learners about absenteeism. This would assist in the understanding of the causes of adult learner absenteeism which would help adult learners to improve attendance of classes and to empower them. Findings from the study will benefit both adult educators and coordinators resulting in better delivery of lessons. In addition the study will provide information to improve the adult learning environment and contributes to the current body of literature on adult education and training.

## **1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

The key concepts of this study include absenteeism and adult basic education. These terms form the core of this research study because the study revolves around them.

### **1.4.1 Absenteeism**

According to Moseki (2004:25) "absenteeism implies failure to attend school or any important academic activity, such as a sports day, without a valid reason. This means that absenteeism can be condoned given valid reasons and is not treated as an educational challenge. Wheatley and Spillance (2001:122) elaborate that unauthorized absenteeism refers to absence from school for reasons that are generally not known to the school or by parents. Absenteeism can be authorised in the case of parents or learners requesting in advance to be excused on a particular day. The same applies to adult learners who can also obtain permission from the authorities to avoid being absent from their study programmes. Adult learners also absent themselves from their study centers without any valid reasons and this is unacceptable for it results in poor performance. The focus of the study is particularly on those students who decide to avoid attending classes.

According to Bond (2004: 8) absenteeism can be defined as “persistent, habitual, and unexplained absence from school”. In relation to working absenteeism it can be defined as “a habitual pattern of absence from work” according to Atkinson, Halsey, Wilkin and Kinder ( 2000:36).

For the purposes of this study absenteeism is defined as a habitual pattern of absence from classes without notice. It is being frequently away from the adult learning centre by an adult basic education learner to attend to other commitments than learning.

#### **1.4.2 Adult – learner**

An adult learner is a person who has reached maturity or an adult who is fully grown up and who is legally responsible for their actions and who is learning or who is finding out about a new subject (Horny, 2010:20). Knowles (1998:68) states that the concept “adult learner” refers to an adult who is involved in education. It can be basic education or practical learning but is meant for an adult learner to master a new skill.

More specifically, Knowles in Schalge and Soga (2008:153) define "an adult as independent, self-directed individual who is capable of taking responsibility for his/her own learning". The study will focus on adult learners who are participating in the Adult Basic Education and Training programme at the Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo Province of South Africa.

#### **1.4.3 Critical reflection**

Critical reflection refers to the process of analysing and challenging the validity of presuppositions and assesses the appropriateness of knowledge, understanding and beliefs given in the context according to Mezirowin Kenny (2010:1).

Critical reflection involves a review of the knowledge and experience of the researchers' who did intensive and extensive study on adult basic education programmes that deal especially with absenteeism by adult learners. The researcher has experienced persistent

absenteeism of adult learners at Sekgosese West circuit in Limpopo where the research will be conducted. The researcher makes the assumption that absenteeism is caused partly by issues coming from the learner and partly by issues coming from the administration of the ABET programmes but the study will provide more reasons as to why adult learners absent themselves from classes. This aspect will be discussed in the research findings.

The study will collect data from adult learners on their experiences regarding why they absent themselves from classes. Finally a critical review of relevant literature and theories on absenteeism in adult basic education programmes will be done in chapter two to complete the critical reflection process.

#### **1.4.4 ABET-educators**

ABET Educators are teachers who teach adult learners who study part time or full time to improve their qualifications.

### **1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The researcher observed that in the adult basic education programme there was poor attendance, a high number of drop outs and a general lack of motivation to take up the classes. Absenteeism caused a decline in classroom attendance, poor performance and eventually affected the sustainability of the adult basic education programmes.

Segal (2008: 1) argues that “absenteeism is a waste of educational resources, time and human potential”. Adult basic education programmes are dependent on funding to pull together teaching resources. The government of South Africa through the department of Basic Education is continuously increasing funding towards basic adult education and training. Absenteeism is blunt wastage of teaching resources and this threatens the continued funding of such initiatives.

Adult education is based on the sharing of learned experiences and absenteeism robs other student who attends classes. Important instructional classroom time is wasted through re-teaching previously absent students thus frustrating students who do attend. The quality of education is reduced therefore threatening the very essence of the programme.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The researcher investigates the reason why adult basic education learners absent themselves from classes. The following two research questions are posed:

- What factors of the adult basic education and training ABET programme causes learners of level 4 to be absent from class?
- What social and economic factors causes adult learners of level 4 to be absent from class?

## **1.7 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study is to determine why adult learners absent themselves from adult basic education programmes and to suggest strategies to encourage the learners to attend classes.

## **1.8 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are:

- To identify the economic and social reasons of why adult learners do not attend classes;
- To investigate the ABET programme factors that cause learner absenteeism; and
- To establish the influence of absenteeism on adult learners' motivation.

## **1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH METHODS**

### **1.9.1 Research design**

Research design is the way in which a research study is developed. De vos, Strydom and Fouche (2005:79) suggest that research design is used to elicit participants' accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions by producing descriptive data in the participants' own spoken words.

In this study a qualitative research design will be employed. A qualitative design is best for this study because it enables the researcher to interact with the participants thus capturing in detail the information they give. The researcher will use both primary and secondary sources to gather information. The adult learners will form the primary sources of data, while relevant literature will be used as secondary sources.

Creswell (2012:16) states that qualitative research design is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore. The researcher will explore the problems of adult learners' absenteeism to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of absenteeism.

The researcher will use a qualitative research design because there is a need to explore the phenomenon from the perspective of adult basic education learner's reasons for being absent from class. As the central phenomenon of absenteeism is the key concept in this study, it requires a critical reflection because the researcher needs to know how to view these adult learners and to understand how to encourage them to study.

### **1.9.2 Theoretical framework**

The researcher will use critical theory as a theoretical framework for the study because it is appropriate for this study. Critical theory is a school of thought that stresses the reflective assessment and critic of society and culture by applying knowledge from the

social sciences and the humanities. According to Max Horkheimer (1982:244) critical theory is a social theory oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding and explaining it. The researcher consider critical theory as appropriate to this study because it deals with knowledge and understanding necessary to bring about change. This way critical theory will be of help in motivating adult learners to change from being absent to attending class.

Rivera Vicenco (2012:728) suggests that critical theory is often appropriate when an author works within sociological terms yet attacks the social or human sciences. The researcher would apply critical theory in the study as it is appropriate in making adult learners reflect on their absenteeism.

The critical theory is useful since it can help adult learners to understand the concept of absenteeism and its detrimental effects. It can also prompt the learners to reflect even more on how to deal with the challenges that causes them to be absent from class (Fay, 1987:27) Adult learners will develop passion and commitment towards their chosen careers.

Adult learners will be encouraged to express their career wishes accurately and be able to refrain from being absent from class. An important indicator of the validity of the critical theory in respect of adult learners is the extent to which adults would believe that the theory captures their hopes and dreams. Adult learners in this regard will be able to view absenteeism as a waste of time and resources.

In addition, the critical theory provides people with in-depth knowledge on given phenomenon (Habermas, 1987). This study will ensure that adult learners have knowledge and understanding of the drawback of absenteeism. In the end the theory will help adult learners to learn how to interpret their experiences in regard to being absent from class.

## **1.10 RESEARCH METHODS**

### **1.10.1 Focus group interviews**

In this study, the researcher will use two focus group interviews to collect data. Each focus group will consist of ten participants. The participants will be sampled from one centre at the Sekgosesse West Circuit, which is operating in the school where the researcher is working.

During the visits at the identified centre, interviews will be conducted with the adult learners after school when the other children have gone home. A focus group interview is a form of qualitative research in which a group of participants is asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, ideas or packaging.

The researcher prefers this method because it will help adult learners to share information. It allows interviewees to study causes of why adult learners' are more often absent from class. Furthermore, it allows for a more natural conversation pattern than typically occurs in a one to one interview. It is fairly low cost compared to surveys, as one can obtain results relatively quickly and increase the sample size by interviewing several learners.

A focus group interview can be defined as a discussion during which there are a small number of respondents, usually not less than four and not more than twelve. Bless and Higson – Smith (2000: 110) suggest that a focus group is conducted under the guidance of moderator or researcher to talk about topics which are seen as important and relevant to the investigation. The method chosen is appropriate because it allowed the researcher to collect data directly from the subjects themselves by sitting with the respondents and hear their views, voices, perceptions and expectations in detail.



According to White (2005:81) the importance of a focus group interview is that it allows the researcher to interact and interview the respondent in their natural settings. The area of focus is Mosima adult learning centre. The researcher will also use purposeful sampling in the study. Creswell (2010:118) believes that purposeful sampling is a key activity in qualitative research. He also states that researchers should have a clear reason for selecting a type of sampling.

Mc Millan and Schumacher (2010: 363) state that focus group interviews are used to obtain a better understanding of a problem or an assessment, where qualitatively sampled group of people is interviewed rather than each person individually. Focus group interview also involves 8-12 homogenous group participants. The researcher will select 10 adult basic education level 4 learners from the adult learning centre.

### **1.11 LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review is a scholarly article compiled from current publications based on a given topic. Research articles and peer reviewed documents with theories, concepts, and research methods on adult basic education programme will be consulted to build the current body of knowledge. The researcher will review literature on adult learners and absenteeism.

### **1.12 SAMPLING**

Purposive sampling of participants for the focus groups will be utilised. The aim of purposive sampling is to identify individuals who are knowledgeable on the subject matter of absenteeism. According to Creswell (2010:118) purposive sampling is a key activity in qualitative research. He also states that researchers should have a clear reason for selecting a type of sampling. The researcher will select two focus groups of adult learners at the adult learning centre who has experienced the absenteeism at the centre.

### **1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:117) state that a researcher should generally be open and honest with participants about all aspects of the study. This means that the researcher should have a full disclosure of the purpose of the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:119) state that research should never result in physical or mental discomfort, harm, or injury to the participants. The researcher will undertake to not reveal information that is otherwise regarded as private or poses a threat to the survival of the participant.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:121) state that anonymity means that the researcher cannot identify the participants from information that has been gathered. The researcher will obtain consent from the participants and undertake to maintain anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and deception according to the requirements of the research ethical code of conduct. The researcher will request permission from the Limpopo Department of Education and principal of the Mosima adult education centre to conduct research in the center. The dates of the interview will be set with the consent of the principal of the adult learning centre at Mosima. Participants will be given informed consent forms to fill in and sign in order to prove that they are willing to participate in the project.

Participants will not be forced to take part in the research and will be given the right to privacy. McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 15) suggest that the main focus of educational research is placed on human beings therefore, it is the researcher's ethical responsibility to protect the rights and welfare of the participants.

According to Bouma et al (2009: 170) the participant must be informed that taking part in the study is voluntary. Therefore, this means the researcher will inform the participants about the aims and purpose of the research and no one will be forced to participate.

#### **1.14 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The researcher will conduct the research at an adult basic education centre situated at Sekgosese West Circuit of Limpopo Province of South Africa mainly because of the financial constraints.

#### **1.15 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The study focuses on the attendance of learners participating in the adult basic education training programme in Sekgosese West circuit in Limpopo. The center is situated in Botlokwa along the N1 road from Polokwane to Makhado. It is one of the many adult basic education centres in the province and country as a whole.

Limpopo province is one of the nine provinces of South Africa. The province is found in the northern part of the country. Limpopo province is a territorial unit and an administrative division within South Africa. The province has local government structures that run administrative issues.

The learners involved in this study will be level four learners of the adult basic education centre. Learners hail from a variety of race-groups, and are of different genders, and languages. The centre was chosen for its convenience in terms of travelling distance from where the researcher lives.

#### **1.16 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS IN THE STUDY**

##### **Chapter 1: Background of the study**

This chapter sets the tone for the study. The chapter is based on adult learners attending basic education programme and what caused them to be absent from class. The theoretical framework is Critical theory. The problem statement, objectives, research

questions, limitations and delimitations of the study were discussed. A discussion on the qualitative research method, focus group interviews and literature review is also included.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter 2 provides a literature review on previous research findings in connection with adult learner absenteeism. The theory of adult education according to Dewey (1948), (Tweedell, 2000: 23) Freire (1998) and Knowles (1990) andragogy will be presented.

## **Chapter 3: Research design, methodology and research methods**

Chapter 3 discussed the methodology and research methods used to conduct the research project. Under discussion was the qualitative research design. The focus group discussion method of data collection will be discussed.

## **Chapter 4: Data collection and analysis**

Chapter 4 described the conditions under which data was collected. The interview findings were presented under two broad themes, namely, the school based factors and social, economic factors causing learner absenteeism. This chapter will provide the responses to the research questions.

## **Chapter 5: Recommendations**

Chapter 5 provides the researcher's recommendations based on the results found in Chapter 4. The recommendations are meant to assist the adult learning centres and individual learners to be able to avoid being absent from class. The researcher summarise the findings of the research in relation to what was found in the literature review and the identified topics which requires further investigation.

## **1.17 CONCLUSION**

Chapter one established the framework for the research. The chapter clearly outlined the objectives and research questions for the study. In the next chapter, the researcher will review related literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter the context and the rationale of the study were explored by the researcher. The researcher outlined the background, significance and research questions of the study. This chapter presents the relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks to answer the research questions. The chapter also looks at literature on absenteeism in adult basic education programmes. The review of literature covers topics on how adult learners view absenteeism and why they do not attend their class regularly.

Cresswell, (2014:28), states that a literature review provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results with other findings. It is also an explanation of the theoretical framework underpinning the research study, in this case adult basic education according to Johnson and Christensen (2004:62). The review of literature therefore is concerned with establishing the current theories on adult education.

#### **2.2 ADULT LEARNING THEORY**

##### **2.2.1 Introduction**

Adult learning theory can trace its philosophical roots back to the experiential learning philosophy of John Dewey (Tweedell, 2000: 11). Dewey's (1948: 20) philosophy of education stressed the importance of experience in the learning process, the participation of the learner in the learning process and the importance of perceiving learning as a lifelong process.

Specifically, Dewey (1948:77), states that "there is no point in the philosophy of education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of participation of the learner in

the formation which direct his activities in the learning process". This means that the effectiveness of adult learning programmes depends on the involvement of the learners in the learning process. The effectiveness of the adult learning programmes is heavily dependent on the learner participating fully and meaningfully. The participation of the learners therefore dictates how the lesson succeeds or not, and by extension how the learning programme would unfold.

Against this background the participation of the learners in the adult basic education and training programme ABET is expected to have a bearing on the way they influence the programme. The involvement of the adult learners is depended upon their meaningful participation. Houle (1961: 25) identifies three types of adult learners namely (a) adults who are goal oriented, (b) adults who are activity oriented, and (c) adults who are learning oriented. The activity oriented adult learners are those who participate in learning for reasons which are not related to the knowledge, for example to have socialization or to find a new relationship.

Goal oriented adults are those learners who want to achieve or have an objective to achieve in participating in the programme, such as to complete a degree or a certificate. Learning oriented adult learners are those who seek knowledge for their own satisfaction. This explanation is important for this study because it shows the different characteristics of the adult learners in the adult learning centers. Personal factors have a large bearing on the attitude towards the centers as well as attendance of class for adult learners. In addition to encouraging participation of learners in adult education there is a need to understand the attitudes of individual learners.

Lindeman, (1926:22), argues that education is based on situations defined by learner needs versus predetermined curriculums. The main reason is that learners will not participate in the learning activity unless they grasp the meaning of education they are given in a classroom. Lindeman supported the view that a small group discussion was a central component to quality adult education and that such an environment lead to adult learners attending classes voluntarily.

On the other hand, Rogers (1967; 18) believes that we could not actually teach anyone anything, but as adult educators we could facilitate the learning process. His theory of experiential learning was based on addressing the need of the learner best accomplished through a personal and mutually respectful relationship. According to (Knowles, 1984: 10) assumptions of self-directedness, experience, and problem centered learning are directly rooted in Roger's theory of experiential learning. Knowles (1984: 12) concept of adult learning suggests that as learners grow and mature, they become more capable of being self-directed.

An understanding of the theories of adult education is important for this study since the mode of knowledge delivery can determine the interest or success of the learners. All modes of delivering education to an adult audience are based on a theory. Theories vary and so are the modes of delivery of lesson-plans. Not every theory suits every learner as illustrated above. There are a number of different learners differing in their personalities ranging from goal oriented, learning oriented and activity oriented. These learners require different theories of education to be applied on them.

According to the North West Centre for Public Health practice (2012:4), an adult learner is one who should be trained in a respectful manner where he or she is given an opportunity to share his or her experiences with others. This means that adult learners should be assisted effectively so that they can be free to interact with their ABET educators and their peers. They should not be belittled (undermined) because they learn through doing.

In reality adult learners attend classes according to the levels of instructions they are registered for. This means that a center has differing levels, namely, level one up to level four. THE Department of Higher Education and Training (2009:1), states that the first formal general Education and training certificate which is level four examinations for adult learners was introduced in 2001. Adult Basic Education and Training has got policy frameworks which inform the conduct, management and administration of the formative



and summative -assessment. All the learning areas are offered through the medium of English and Afrikaans.

City and Guilds (2004:4), states that level four is the qualification intended to extend specialist interest and understanding of literacy, promoting a theoretical and conceptual understanding of English language development and use as well as a high level of personal English usage. The curriculum comprises of theoretical frameworks aimed at developing an understanding of the concepts of the systematic study of language.

### **2.2.2 The theory of Malcolm Knowles**

Malcolm Knowles developed the andragogical model which was based on several assumptions that differed from the accepted pedagogical models. He introduced the term Andragogy in 1996 from Dusan Savicevic Sopher (2003:1) and tested and refined his theory in various settings: business, industry, professions, workplace, and religious education.

Knowles, (1990:253-254), revealed that Andragogy is the true method of adult learning. The term “Andragogy” summarises a number of central beliefs concerning the unique character of adult learning. In Andragogy theory words becomes a fact, words become responsible acts, accountable deeds and the practical fact which arises out of the necessity of illuminated by the theory (Anderson & Lindemam, 1927:2-3).

Knowles (1984b:23), presented six examples of how to apply andragogy in practice. Andragogy is concerned with the unique and distinctive characteristics of adult learners and the prescription of specific procedures that should be used or applied for processes of adult education. Andragogy states that adults have different learning characteristics that differ from how children learn.

An adult “perceives herself or himself to be essentially responsible for her or his own life” (Knowles, 1980:24). The researcher agrees with the theory because adult learners are to

be taught to be self-directed not to be teacher-centred. Andragogy is a theory with the best technique that can support adult learners to be active in self-directed learning.

The researcher is of the opinion that the problem-based and experiential learning would benefit adult learners because they will be able to view the causes of their absenteeism through experiential learning as a drawback. Boucouvalas (2008:4) highlighted the view that Knowles gave a better understanding of how a group, community or society should be treated andragogically. Bright and Mahdi (2010), experienced adult student pursuing an academic program interacted with each other as they collaborated. The collaboration took place between American and Arab adult students who had different cultures.

Merriam & Boumgartner (2007:1) argue that Andragogy lacks the fundamental characteristics of a science because it cannot be measured.

Knowles theory of Andragogy, as a method emphasizes the role of the adult educator as a facilitator who is responsible for creating a comfortable physical climate as well as a psychological climate of mutual trust and respect, collaborativeness, supportiveness, openness and authenticity, and pleasure (Knowles, 1984:1). Andragogy, as a philosophy creates an image of adult learners based on the assumptions that:

- (1) As adults mature their self-concepts move from dependence towards self-directedness.
- (2) Adults enter educational activities with life experience which is a resource for learning.
- (3) Adults are “ready to learn” when they experience a need to know something or to change a life situation.
- (4) Learning must be immediately relevant to adult learners and (5) adults are internally motivated to learn. Therefore, Andragogy as an ideology promotes individualism as a virtue and individual growth as the purpose of education and emphasizes self-fulfilment and private interest over public ends (Pratt, 1993).

### 2.2.3 Andragogy

According to Anderson and Lindeman (1927 a 2-3) andragogy theory is converted from facts to words which become responsible acts or accountable deeds. Andragogy is about adult learners entering the world in a condition of complete dependency.

Andragogy is the art and science of helping adult learners while pedagogy is the art and science of teaching children. Andragogy is a model based on several assumptions that differ from the pedagogical models. They are:

- (1) The need to know.
- (2) The learner's self-concept.
- (3) The role of the learner's experience.
- (4) Readiness to learn.
- (5) Orientation to learning.
- (6) Motivation (Knowles 1990, p57-63).

According to Knowles (1990: 57-63) the goal or task of the adult learners is to determine if the direct or indirect method of instruction is suitable to adult learning. An effective method must address specific needs of learners which are of immediate concern. To this end, the instructor and instructional designer need to facilitate the opportunities for the learner to experience growth, despite the learner having control of learning through self-directed means. Andragogy reorients adult educators from educating adult learners to helping them to learn. Knowles places an emphasis on the concept of the safe environment. The learner must be within an environment that values self-directed learning. Knowles envisioned that learning as a lifelong endeavour means that learners need to be surrounded by other self-directed learners and grouped in a manner that they can learn new perspectives from others with different, but applicable experiences.

According to (Knowles,1984) the subject matter is sequenced logically and cantered on the subject versus personal needs, and the motivation to learn the subject matter is mostly external, such as from parents, teachers or thread of failure. Knowles (1980:8) called

upon educators to employ a seven step process in order to implement upon the assumptions of Andragogy.

These steps included the following:

- Cooperative learning climate where the adult educator should create a good relationship with the adult learners when teaching in the classroom, so that they can interact in a cooperative manner.
- Planning goals mutually. Adult educators need to establish a working relationship that allows the adult learners to share ideas in designing achievable goals of the programmes.
- Diagnosing learner needs and interests. Adult educators need to help adult learners on activities that learners need and which adult learners have interests in studying them.
- Helping learners to formulate learning objectives based on their needs and individual interests.
- Designing sequential activities to achieve these objectives. Adult educators should encourage adult learners to play an active part designing sequential activities in order to reach their objectives set before.
- Carrying out the designed objectives to meet the aim of the learning project through selected methods, materials, and resources. Adult educators should help adult learners in carrying out these designs to meet objectives by using selected methods, learning materials and resources.
- Evaluating the quality of the learning experience for the adult learners that include reassessing needs for continued learning. Adult educators should teach adult learners meaningfully and also assess the quality of learning experience they have continuously in order to prepare them for lifelong learning. (Knowles:1980:8)

Brookfield, (1995:116), argues that many of the criticism of andragogy stem from the lack of empirical evidence to support the assumptions, as it has been called a “theory, method, technique, or a set of assumptions” (Davenport & Davenpot, 1985:152). Later, Knowles

viewed his assumption of Andragogy as a “system of concepts” rather than a theory, and the influence of many educational theorists is evident in these assumptions (Knowles, 1984:8). The constructivist theory of education is also obvious in Knowles’s work.

Malcolm Knowles first began labelling his work in adult education as Andragogy in the late 1960’s (Knowles 1980). Knowles discovered through his work with adults that instructors needed to care about the actual interests of learners instead of focusing on what instructors believed were learners interest (Carlson, 1989). Knowles (1980) argue that the best educational experiences were cooperative guided interactions between the teacher and learner with many available resources, and during the experiences the adult teacher helps guide the learner to develop his or her own potential.

## **2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The theory of Paulo Freire**

Paulo Freire’s impact on adult education, non-formal education and critical literacy has been recognized by scholars the world at large. Freire experienced the impact of poverty on educational opportunities because he was raised in a middle class family. According to Freire (1990:76-77), problem posing education can only occur within respectful relation between the educator and the learners. This means that problem-posing education relies on a respectful relationship between the ABET educator and the adult learner so that adult learners should feel free when interacting with their ABET educator outside and inside their classrooms. Relationships between adult learners and Abet educators are critical to this study since they influence the attitude the adult learners towards classroom activities. A lack of respect between ABET educators and students destroy the classroom environment leading to boredom and misunderstandings.

Freire further suggested that through problem-posing education the facilitator-adult learner relationship can be successful through dialogue (Freire, 1990:67). The researcher believes that the theory of democratic teacher-learner relationship is relevant to the study

because when adult learners are actively involved with their classroom activities they will communicate with their ABET educators freely and attend their classes regularly.

Freire, (1990:66), also suggests other teaching methods whereby the teacher imposes predetermined information which is fed into the lesson objectives and allows the members of the group to freely engage in discussions. He also added that “narration leads the adult learners to memorize mechanically the narrated content”. This means that the adult learner would become a passive participant in class and this would affect his or her self-confidence. The learners must be able to apply their own knowledge when faced with new learning material. The problem-posing method would be the best for adult learners because they would be able to ask questions and develop their knowledge thus boosting their confidence. Freire’s Critical Theory will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

## **2.4 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

The study focuses on the three main causes of absenteeism namely: society, poverty and low self-esteem according to Reed (2008:25), Waldfogel and Washbrook, (2010:35) and Wadesango and Machingambi (2011:123). These three causes have been mentioned in earlier studies of Barlow and Flescher (2011:234) and Pero Cebollero and Jaria-Chaco’n (2013:282) as factors affecting class attendance for adult learners either at tertiary level, distance learning and / or formal school settings.

### **2.4.2 Society**

Reed (2008:25) argues that unsafe neighbourhoods, inconsistent law enforcement, media pressure, and a lack of support service are the external factors related to adult learner absenteeism. The researcher supports the above statement because adult learners who do not have access to community support and also do not feel protected by local law agencies would lose hope and courage to attend classes regularly.

The income level of an adult learner has an impact on the level of understanding or performance. Waldfogel and Washbrook (2010:35) found that adult learners from low-income homes who had done vocabulary test were behind those from the middle-class income homes. This study suggests that the higher the income level of the adult learners the better their understanding of the positive impact of attending classes regularly.

Adult learning programmes should be planned in such a way that they provide training in effective parenting skills with the view of encouraging adult learners to learn about health skills. To do this effectively, the adult educators should be encouraged to work in partnership with health professionals so that they can support vulnerable adult learners and their families.

Adult learners also may absent themselves because of low-socio economic status. Because if they are staying far away from the school they might not have money for transport to go to class. Most adult-learners are parenting their siblings because they are orphans. When their siblings or children are ill they are bound to absent themselves from class to go for consultation to the doctors.

Weideman et al(2007:72), argue that adult learners absenteeism is higher on days which grants and pensions are paid out as adult are required to accompany older member of their families to collect the social grant. Their society undermined the privilege to attend classes. They prefer to collect social grants for their children and elders first before thinking of school.

Thompson (2008:36), states that absenteeism places learners at risk as they would be unable to achieve their educational, social and psychological potential. This is so especially that female adult learners are disadvantaged as they are held back at home to care for their younger siblings. This problem is also rife in the centre where the researcher is teaching because female adult learners absent themselves from classes due to chores like babysitting.

Wadesango and Machingambi, (2011:123), state that adult learners do not attend classes due to unfavourable learning environment and several social factors. Adult learners absent themselves from classes due to lack of support from their partners. Society looks at adults as responsible parents who should look after the welfare of their children before committing their time to such activities as self-improvement through education.

### **2.4.3 Poverty**

Basic adult education programmes are offered freely through government funding. However Weideman et al. (2007:73) argue that absenteeism may be caused by socio-economic factors relating to food security and problems and this may be coupled with lack of transport to go to the centre.

The research study will be conducted in the rural area of Limpopo province where a greater number of people live in poverty. Leibbrandt, et al, (2011:3) mention that the poor people receive a far inferior quality education when compared with their wealthier counterparts. Most adult learners from the rural areas do not have access to quality education like their wealthier counterparts in urban areas. This discrepancy might contribute to the poor attendance of class especially for the group of adult learners in this study. Adult learners experiencing poor quality education skip class because they do not derive satisfaction from their efforts.

### **2.4.4 Adult learner low self-esteem**

Personal factors such as self-esteem and emotional disposition play an important role in how adult learners perceive education. According to Kearney (2008:259) "adult learners exhibiting low self-esteem, school refusal, anxiety and behaviours that manifest with emotional difficulties often engage in physical and verbal aggression". These emotional outbursts are often met with disciplinary action resulting in adult learner suspension. This impact negatively on adult learner's ability to attend and participate in class.



Reid concurs (2005:59-82) that studies which examined individual differences in scholastic behaviour and achievement by looking at adult learners' personality traits have shown that adult learners with low self-esteem are likely to exhibit problematic absenteeism. Negative attitude exhibited by either students or facilitators contributes to a fall in class attendance. Leyba and Massat (2009:20), state that the climate of school, especially in regards to the classroom climate is important for the adult learner engagement. If adult learners and educators are not working hand in hand, then attendance of learners will be affected. Whenever adult learners' needs are met, adult learners will be more engaged in class activity and also in their school.

Kronholz, (2011:33-38), states that adult learners who live in homes with nothing to eat missed two days of school more than adult learners who are well nourished. Adult learners in the above mention statement are at risk because they are likely not to attend class regularly.

#### **2.4.5 Learner Characteristics**

Cook & Ezenne, (2010:48), define adult learner-centred factors as individual characteristics that withhold the student from attending classes. There are also other factors that affect adult learner absenteeism. According to Fayombo et al., (2012:90) adult learners' lack of interest in studies is one factor that affect adult learner absenteeism. Ramodike (2008:2), who supported Bati et al (2013:597) also indicated that another cause of adult learner absenteeism is a lack of self-motivation. Therefore, the adult learners' personal interest and self-motivation should be enhanced and positively developed. Adult learning educators should create support programmes that are geared at stimulating adult learners' interest.

Thekedam (2013:1032), argues that adult learners should first change their negative attitude towards their learning in order to gain interest in their studies.

Hidayat et al., (2011:1), state that adult learners who perform poorly usually have high absenteeism rates. Adult educators should encourage learners to attend classes, as the literature suggests that adult learners who spend more time in the classroom perform better academically than learners with high rates of absenteeism.

## **2.5 BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

Baltimore Mental Health Systems (BMHS), (2011:9), state that learners with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) experience many problems in classes that mainly stem from their inability to concentrate. Learners affected by Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are exhibiting tardiness and absenteeism due to sleep problems caused by the disorder. ADHD is a barrier to learning and affected students can end up skipping school.

Exposure to violence limits academic progression by either increasing depression or disruptive behaviour (Youngblade et al, 2001:9-10). This means that learners who experience depression have lower energy and motivation and poor concentration. If adult learners are exposed to violence, especially in their schools, the rate of absenteeism increases.

According to Jense, (2011) language barriers can be one of the barriers to learning for example a learner coming from another territory can experience difficulties in acquiring knowledge through a foreign medium of instruction. Educators of adult learners should encourage adult learners by helping them to develop good or positive relationship with other learners.

Basch ( 2010:1) states that adult learners who live in urban areas with high rates of poverty are exposed to a greater concentration of risk factors such as high unemployment, crime, juvenile violence, and school dropout. Therefore, they face higher risk of poor physical and socio-emotional outcomes. (Basch 2010:1) lists some of the major health conditions and issues faced by adult learners in Baltimore city and their

effect on class attendance. The researcher also has witnessed adult learners at the Sekgosese West Circuit who absent themselves from classes due to disease. Brookmeyer et al (2006:199) states that adult learners who perceive school as an unsafe place are more likely to avoid going to classes.

Coleman- Jensen, et al., (2011:1) states that as the likelihood of food insecure increases poverty which has detrimental effects on academic functioning, physical and mental health of adult learners will also increase. Therefore, adult learners who experience food-insecurity are likely to absent themselves from class.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

Chapter two focused on the adult learning theory of Malcolm Knowles to understand the adult learners who absent themselves from attending ABET classes. Factors causing absenteeism were also discussed. The literature reviewed in this chapter revealed that adult learner absenteeism is caused by the following possible factors such as low self-esteem, poverty, basic adult education learning resources, teacher related factors, sociological and economic factors.

Critical theory as the conceptual framework that underpins this study was also discussed to enable the researcher to critically reflect on the socio economic factors that prohibit the adult learner to attend the classes.

Chapter three will focus on the research design and methodology that underpins this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter sets out to provide a discussion on the research design, methodology and methods that will be used in addressing the research problem and aim of the present study. In so doing, the qualitative nature of the research design employed in the study will be set out, while Critical theory as the theoretical framework undergirding the study will be presented. Then will follow a discussion on the research methods employed in this qualitative study in the collection and interpretation of the collected data.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this study a qualitative approach of inquiry was applied in order to gain a deep understanding of how participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how their meanings influence their class attendance at the adult learning centre. The Postgraduate Philosophy Association (PPA) (2014:4) argues that qualitative research is aimed at providing an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to gather the data directly from the subjects themselves by interviewing the respondents in order to hear their views, voices, perceptions and expectations referring to their class attendance. The researcher also discovered that adult learners have different attitudes and behaviours.

The researcher has realised that most of the adult learners at adult learning centres absent themselves from school. A number of reasons have been cited among them being the collection of social grants at the beginning of every month. The researcher has noted that most adult learners who miss the programme are taking care of their sick family

members. The basic adult learning centres have committed resources to the teaching of adults and absenteeism is equivalent to wasting.

### **3.3 METHODOLOGY/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The researcher used critical theory as a theoretical framework for the study because it is appropriate for this study. Critical theory is a school of thought that stresses the reflective assessment and critic of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and the humanities. According to Max Horkheimer (1982:244) critical theory is a social theory oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding and explaining it. The researcher considers Critical theory as appropriate to this study because it deals with knowledge and understanding of how social change occurs. Critical theory helps adult learners to change from their absenteeism to class attendance.

The critical theory is used for this study because it provides for new research questions on adult learner absenteeism and assists in adding to the knowledge base on adult learning absenteeism. Critical theory applied to adult learning programmes in ABET allows for new information sources on the influence of social issues on adult learner absenteeism. ( Freire:1997:36).

Rivera Vicenco. E. (2012:728) suggests that critical theory is appropriate when a researcher works within sociological context. The present researcher applies critical theory in the study as it is deemed to be appropriate in assisting the researcher to determine what factors influences adult learners when it comes to the problem of absenteeism.

Critical theory assists adult learners to understand their experiences of absenteeism and consequently encourages them to search of the possible solutions in addressing this problem. An important indicator as to the validity of critical theory for this study is the extent to which adults learners will believe that the Critical theory captures their hopes

and dreams in successfully completing their education . Also, in applying Critical theory to their particular situations adult learners will come to see the negative impact of absenteeism on the educational endeavours.

In using Critical theory as the theoretical framework to undergird this study, the researcher has referred to the work of Paulo Freire (1993).Freire encourages adult learners to think critically about their education and their understanding of their needs. Thinking critically about their education impacts on their learning experience and allows them to participate in decision making about their education. In this regard, the researcher believes Freire's work is relevant to the present study because it allows for the exploration of the views of adult learners' on the problem of absenteeism. In exploring these views adult learners will be helped to understand the importance of attending classes regularly so that they can improve their performance in achieving their educational aspirations.

Freire (1973:32), states that the educator must promote “a critical education which could help to form critical attitudes.” Such critical attitudes encourage adult learners to participate in democratic activities which can influence the provision and practice of education in their community. In this regard, the researcher believes that if adult learners can acquire a critical education then they would be encouraged to address the problem of absenteeism. In other words, adult learners should be encouraged to think critically about their education.

The researcher agrees with Freire's statement that “knowledge can only be assimilated through experience”, because adult learners learn effectively by means of their actions, in other words, by doing activities themselves. Wadesango and Machingambi (2011:87) discovered that adult learner absenteeism is due to lack of subject interest and poor teaching strategies by facilitators. Such a lack of subject interest and poor teaching strategies discourages positive learning experiences and contributes to the problem of absenteeism.

Freire, (1993:178), furthermore states that leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize people but they manipulate them, they do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.” In this regard, Freire suggests that adult educators work to understand adult learners through rich dialogue and exploration. Working with rich dialogue and exploration with adult learners opens the door to a deeper understanding of their needs, which leads to making thoughtful decisions about their lives. Consequently, adult learners must be able to participate in decision making that impacts on their everyday life.

According to (Freire, 1973:120) “consciousness” is determined by the socio-economic and political context in which individuals finds themselves, and also by cultural conditions through their upbringing, education and religion which can all be oppressive. As a result, adult learners in learning to think critically should be taught in such a way that there is an interaction between the adult learner and the facilitator of knowledge. In other words, adult learners should learn through or by their actions and be free to act. There should, therefore, be questions and answers between the adult learner and the teacher, and adult learners should be encouraged to speak for themselves so that their views on educational problems such as absenteeism can be heard.

According to Freire , 1973:120) culture is created by human beings themselves through “Praxis”. “Praxis” is the integration of reflection and action, practice and theory, thinking and doing, and in this instance, adult learners should be assisted to do critical thinking to become active participants in their classrooms. If this were to happen, adult learners would be able to think critically about their education and take the necessary action when addressing problems in their education, such as for example, the problem of absenteeism.

Then there is the concept of “banking style” which according to (Freire, 1973:121) means that the facilitator deposits predetermined information into the learners thinking. This means that adult educators give adult learners information about what she or he wants to teach. The knowledge which is transmitted will, therefore, not be addressing the needs of

adult learners but will be derived from what the adult educator thinks is important for adult learners to know.

Freire (1973:121), therefore, proposes the alternative method of “problem-posing” which starts out from the adult learners’ life situation and their reality. This method of problem-posing is concerned with showing adult learners that they have a right to ask questions. The most important part of this method is the dialogue between adult learners and adult educators. In this dialogue the two groups learn from each other. In this instance, it is important for the adult educator to let adult learners ask questions and talk freely in the classroom. In so doing, adult educators will get information from the adult learner and through listening and asking questions themselves. In this method of “problem posing” which can also be referred to as adult education by dialogue, adult educators ask questions rather than merely passing on knowledge to adult learners. It is important for the ABET educators to let adult learners talk freely in their classroom so that together with ABET educators they will discover the importance of exchanging experiences, views and ways of solving the problem of absenteeism. ABET educators through careful listening will obtain information which will assist them to find out more about why learners absent themselves from class. Such a problem-posing approach engages the adult learner to the extent that attendance becomes enhanced and is not negatively affected.

From the above discussion it is evident that Critical theory is an appropriate theoretical framework to undergird the present study which is concerned with the problem of absenteeism in Adult Basic Education and Training. Reasons for this are as follows:

- Critical theory encourages adult learners to think critically about their education
- Critically theory encourages adult learners to ask questions and think about their needs in relation to their education
- Critical theory encourages adult learners to participate in their education



### **3.4 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

Two focus groups will be selected consisting of one female group and one male group. Each group will consist of eight participants. The researcher will invite the participants to participate as members of the focus group. Each participant will receive a letter of invitation to participate (Appendix C). The participants will be selected from disadvantaged and economically poor communities. The participants are unemployed and depend on social grants from the government.

The focus groups will serve as an avenue for collecting data for adult learner absenteeism. In this study the researcher selected people who have experience and an understanding of the causes of absenteeism. The group comprised of sixteen adult learners from the adult centre. The researcher will schedule the times to meet with the group and agree on the venue where the focus group interviews will take place.

Gay, Mills & Airasian (2011:388) state that “..a focus group discussion is a group interview where you collect shared understanding from several individuals as well as to get views from specific people”. Focus groups are particularly useful when the interaction between individuals leads to a shared understanding of questions posed by a researcher. The researcher will make sure that all participants have their say and that a group agreement to take turns will be honoured; that is participants must understand that the focus group is a group-sharing activity and not something to be dominated by one or two participants. The researcher will pose questions to the group and encourage all participants to respond.

Creswell (2007:205) argue that in a focus group the process is also time-consuming perhaps even more so than it is for individual interviews. The researcher needs to be prepared to allocate time for the focus group interview and also the shared understandings that will emerge. The researcher will conduct an interview to capture the responses from the focus group and transcribe the discussion after the interviews took

place. The advantage of a focus group discussion is that the idea behind the discussion is to assist people to explore and clarify their views on absenteeism.

A group discussion is particularly appropriate when the interviewer has a series of open-ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issue of importance with them, in their own vocabulary, pursuing their own priorities and generating their own questions. Focus group discussion can be conducted at a relatively modest cost and in a relatively brief span of time very short if one is willing to listen to tape-recordings rather than read transcripts.

Mc Millan & Schumacher (2010:363) define a focus group as a variation of an interview that is used to obtain a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concern, new product, program or idea. In this study, a qualitatively sample group of participants is interviewed, rather than each person individually. In a focus group interview, the facilitator or group leader should be skilled in both interviewing and group dynamics. The researcher ensured that participants are homogeneously grouped in characteristics that are related to the purpose of the research. Rich information will be gathered from the homogeneously focus groups. Male and female participants were separated so that female can feel more confident in explaining and provide rich information in a homogeneous group. The researcher will also encourage members of each group to think deeply about absenteeism and also to be in a better position to question each other to arrive at a group result.

According to Morrison (1996:34-36) the following need to be taken into consideration by the researcher:

- The researcher must give each participant a chance to speak in a group.
- Asked named (coded) individuals questions and encourages participants to answer questions without being forced.
- Possess the skill of handling a range of very different responses to the same question.

- Control if adult learners with more experience always answer first in a group interview.
- Understand what adult learners mean and what they say.
- Keep the interview relevant and avoid the situation being seen by the adult learner participant as a test.
- Have adult learners reveal what they really think and feel rather than what they thought the researcher want to hear.
- Decide on the number of focus group for single topic; one group is regarded as insufficient to know whether the outcome is unique to the behaviour adult learner absenteeism of the group. The researcher will be patient because she will be taking collecting data not to influence the credibility of her findings negatively. Morrison (1996:34-36)

Focus groups are especially useful as a complement to other methods of data collection. They are very useful because they provide in-depth information in a relatively short period of time. In focus group interview the results are usually easy to understand. The researcher will, however be very careful in making generalisations from the focus group discussions because the sample size is relatively small and the participants are randomly selected from the centre. The researcher will endeavour to know how to facilitate the group discussion. The researcher will at the end of the interview thank the participants for their time and request them to add more information if they want to.

Castle (2010:67) states that all focus group interviews should be taped to concentrate on the interview and in guiding the discussion where necessary. The researcher will use eight female adult learners and eight male adult learners of level four from the centre. The researcher will obtain permission to use the tape recordings from the participants when conducting the interview. The researcher take notes as well to support the tape recordings and to clarify any points made by the respondents. The researcher will make the respondents feel comfortable and relaxed to enable her to engage with them.

The researcher will consider confidentiality and security of the participants when selecting the interview venue. Newly (2010:350) states that focus groups participants should be clear on the agenda of the interviews, that the venue where the interviews will take place is in a setting that is conducive to discussion, that the moderator is a skilled person who can prompt people to speak and promote thinking and reflection. Therefore, the researcher will use interview questions to interview the group. The participants will be given a chance to speak about their views and experiences of absenteeism in a group. The researcher will encourage maximum participation by the participants. The researcher will use the tape recorder on the permission of the participants. Participants will be encouraged to give their views freely.

The researcher will be patient in order to influence the credibility of the findings. Generalisations from the focus group will be avoided. The focus groups will be set up to encourage active involvement in the discussion, rather than encouraging individuals, to voice their opinions. The researcher will also empower participants to speak out.

Cohen, et al, (2011:437) state that focus groups require skilful facilitation and management by the researcher. This means that the researcher will display skilful facilitation and use effective management skills when conducting the focus groups interviews. This is to ensure that the respondents will be motivated to work hand in hand with the researcher.

Kitzinger (1995:1) suggests the following advantages of focus group discussion:

- Group discussion is particularly appropriate when the interviewer has a series of open-ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions pursuing their own priorities.
- The idea behind a focus group method is that group processors can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview.

The most important advantage of focus group interview is their ability to generate rich data through participation interaction. Frey (2005:704) argues that because the interviewee is less able to direct the interviewer, they must simultaneously worry about the script of questions and be sensitive to evolving patterns of group interaction. Therefore, the researcher will in the group setting encourage the participants to be flexible and empathetic and ensure that the participation will be active listeners. The main reason for using the focus group interview is to reflect critically the causes of adult learner absenteeism.

Qualitative researchers use a range of data collection methods during time in the field which includes interviewing. The method for using data collection is influenced by the research question and design. Focus group interviews will be used to conduct or to find out information about the causes of adult learner absenteeism and also to explore certain aspects in greater detail. Mc Millan & Schumacher, (2010:360) states that the primary data of qualitative interviews are verbatim accounts of what transpires in the interview sessions. Thus, in the light of this view, the researcher will record the focus group interviews in order to ensure the completeness of the verbal interaction and to provide material for reliability checks.

The researcher will invite the sixteen adult learners to participate in the focus group interviews. The participants will receive an invitation letter. Invitations will be delivered by hand to the participants at the centre. The researcher will give participants the date the interviews will take place. The researcher will select the venue for the two interviews.

The interview will be conducted at the adult learning centre at Mosima School. All the interviews will be recorded for the purpose of transcribing and analysis.

## **3.5 DATA COLLECTION**

### **3.5.1 Selection of participants**

The researcher will select eight female adult learners and eight male adult learners from the level four ABET programme. The participants will be selected from the adult learning centre at the Sekgosese west circuit in Limpopo. This means that sixteen participants from the adult learning centre will take part in this study. The research will be conducted at this one centre for convenience and financial considerations.

### **3.5.2 Sampling**

Purposive sampling of focus group participants will be used. The aim of purposive sampling is to obtain individuals who has experience and are knowledgeable on the subject matter of absenteeism. According to Creswell (2010:118) purposive sampling is a key activity in qualitative research. The researcher will select the two focus groups of adult learners at the adult learning centre where she is teaching. Participants will be eligible if they are registered as current adult learners at the centre.

### **3.5.3 Measures of trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness in this study will be achieved by ensuring a mutual meaning between the participants and the researcher. Cohen et al. (2007: 476) suggests that strategies in qualitative research address trustworthiness. The researcher regards trustworthiness in this study as a link between what the researcher would record as data and what occurs during the interview process as best as possible. Mutual trust between the interviewer and the subject not only ensures the co-operation of the interviewee but also improves the quality of the collected data.

The contribution of the interviewer is to create a milieu where the subject can reconstruct his or her own world under optimum conditions, thus enabling the interviewer to represent this world in the most valid way.

#### **3.5.4 Validity**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2003) validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the meaning of the concept under consideration. Validity was ensured by the completeness with which items cover the important areas of absenteeism. The interview questions are constructed after the literature review was accomplished. In this study, the researcher will test the interview questions for the sixteen adult learners before they will be used. This will be done by ensuring that the research instruments are valid and tested for reliability.

The researcher will apply the following techniques to enhance validity:

- Participants' words will be transcribed verbatim.
- Data collection techniques will be followed to the letter.
- The participants will be given a copy of the transcription of the interview to check if it was correctly transcribed.

Mc Millan & Schumacher, (2006:324) suggests that validity in qualitative research is the degree to which the interpretations have mutual meaning between the researcher and the participants. The researcher will ask permission from the participants to use a tape recorder during the focus group interview.

#### **3.5.5 Reliability**

Babbie and Mouton (2003) defines reliability as a matter of whether particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object would yield the same results each time. The focus group interview questions are such that only data necessary to achieve the research

objective would be collected. Therefore in this study, the focus group interview questions will be used to explore the causes that contribute to absenteeism of adult learners at the Sekgosesse West Circuit in the Limpopo Province.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

Mc Millan and Schumacher (2010:367) state that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories. In this study the researcher will use an inductive process analysis, which means moving from specific data to general categories and patterns.

There are four phases in an inductive analysis. After collecting data the following processes will be followed:

- **Data organization**

The first step of data analysis is data organization in order to facilitate the coding. The researcher will use the research question and sub-questions to collect data. The research instruments such as an interview guide, themes, concepts and categories will be used to act as a guide.

- **Transcribing or recording**

The researcher will make a summary of the interview processes. Audio-taped data will be transcribed. The researcher will use large margins for additional comments and coding, and leave space between interview questions and participant responses. The researcher will highlight what is appropriate to show the questions and the comments of the participants.



- **Categorising**

White, (2005:168) argues that a systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest are used in qualitative data analysis. In this study, the researcher will analyse and compared the data collected. The researcher will identify the sentences and paragraphs from the transcribed interviews and put them together. Mc Millan & Schumacher, (2006:364) argue that qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of analysing data into categories and identifying patterns among categories. The researcher will also interpret the data by noting some things as important and other as unimportant. The data analysis procedure will be as follows:

- All the views that identified in the focus group interview about learner absenteeism will be listed.
- Possible answers to the questions about the causes of adult learner absenteeism will be identified.
- Responses about the different strategies that should be applied in order to reduce adult learner absenteeism will be identified.

### **3.7 ETHICAL MEASURES**

Johnson & Christensen, (2008:101, 118-119) state that the following ethical issues must be identified by researchers: informed consent, avoidance of harm and violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. In addition researchers must avoid deceiving respondents, respect human dignity of which encompass right for full disclosure and debriefing respondents.

In this study, permission was obtained from the school principal, circuit office and the Head of Department of Education to conduct a research in the adult learning centre. Permission is granted by both the school and the circuit shown by a written confirmation sent to the researcher. Letters of consent will be sent to all the people to be interviewed.

Ethical measures undertaken include informed consent of the subjects. Johnson & Christensen, (2008:112) state that informed consent is the procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in any investigation after being informed of the facts that would be likely to influence their decisions. The participants will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

### **3.7.1 Respect**

The researcher will respect all the participants involved in the study. The researcher will inform the respondents about the proposed study and allow them to voluntarily choose to participate or not. The researcher will also inform the participants about their rights to withdraw from the study at any time should they wish to do so without any penalty.

## **3.8 SUMMARY**

In chapter three a discussion on the qualitative method of research was done stating the reasons why this method was selected. A discussion on the reason why critical theory was the underpinning theory of this study followed. The chapter also contains a discussion on focus group interviews. In addition data validity, reliability and analysis issues were discussed in detail. The chapter concluded with ethical matters of the study. The next chapter will present the analysis and interpretation of collected data and the findings of the study. The findings will be presented in themes directed at how adult learners experienced absenteeism at the Sekgogese west circuit in Limpopo province. Chapter four will provide answers to the research questions

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter three of the study dealt with the discussion on the research design and methodology. This chapter provides information on the analysis and interpretation of data gathered from the two focus group interviews. The following are research questions posed for the study:

- What factors of the adult basic education and training ABET programme causes learners of level 4 to be absent from class?
- What social and economic factors causes adult learners of level 4 to be absent from class?

The research questions were based on the ABET programme at Sekgosese West Circuit where the study was undertaken. Data collected was for determining the causes of absenteeism by the adult learners.

#### **4.2 PARTICIPANTS**

##### **4.2.1 Description of participants**

The study involved sixteen respondents in total comprising both male and females. The sixteen respondents are all adult learners who attended classes at Sekgosese West Circuit centre. The aim of the research was to gather information from the adult learners about their views and experiences on learners' absenteeism. The first eight all female focus group was interviewed on the 27 September 2016, and other eight all male focus group was interviewed on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016. During the male focus group interview session, the researcher discovered that two adult learners left the interview

session before the end. Therefore only six responses from the male group were considered for data analysis.

**Table 4.1: A table showing the interview list and demographics of the respondents**

The table below shows the list of all respondents and their demographic information. Participant O and participant P who are males left the group before the end of the interview session.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date interviewed</b>
FG 1	A	34	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
	B	30	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
	C	28	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
	D	32	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
	E	25	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
	F	35	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
	G	28	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
	H	26	Female	Adult learner	27 September 2016
FG 2	I	34	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016
	J	30	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016
	K	32	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016
	L	36	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016
	M	33	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016
	N	27	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016
	O	33	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016
	P	34	Male	Adult learner	29 September 2016

#### **4.2.2 Description of the physical setting**

Data collection process took place at the Mosima adult learning centre from 27<sup>th</sup> September 2016 and ended on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The participants were given consent forms to sign before the commencement of the interview.

Interviews were conducted in a classroom where adult learners attend their classes. The researcher conducted the interviews after school hours in the afternoon when the centre was quiet. The focus group interviews lasted from one to two hours. The researcher used a voice recorder to collect data. The first group of eight females was interviewed on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2016 while the second group of eight males was conducted on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

#### **4.2.3 Data collection of two focus groups**

In this study, data collected by means of semi-structured focus group interviews. Each focus group consisted of eight adult learners purposefully selected from an adult learning centre in the Sekgosese West Circuit.

The two focus groups represented the adult learners in the centre and they had shared experience about the views and causes of adult learner absenteeism. The two groups were divided according to sex, meaning that one group were males and the other group were females, with mixed age group. The aim of the focus groups interview was to gather information from the respondents about their views on adult learners' absenteeism. Participants were encouraged to talk to one another asking questions and commenting on each other's experiences and point of views.

The researcher used an interview schedule (Appendix E) which was directed by the research questions and objectives of the study, and also served as a useful guide during the focus group interviews. The interview schedule consists of three parts linked to the research questions of the study.

Participants were given the opportunity to discuss that which was relevant to the research questions. Part one of the guide was in connection with the causes of adult learner absenteeism. Part two dealt with the research questions in connection with adult learners experience about motivation to attend classes. Part three of the guide was concerned with the research question which dealt with what strategies are needed in promoting class attendance on a regular basis.

Part one of the interview guide consisted of five primary questions which served as topics of discussion during the interviews where the researcher had to categorize the themes during the process of data analysis

Part two of the interview guide was concerned with the adult learners experience about motivation to attend classes. During this part of the interview the researcher intended to seek information dealing with adult learners experience about motivation to attend classes.

Part three of the interview guide was about finding out information concerning the research objective which is concerned with the question of what motivational strategies to implement in order to change learners attitude towards learning which will improve class attendance.

All the two focus group interviews were voice recorded and with the consent of the respondents. Each focus group interview was transcribed in writing and typed and printed it out. In order to have assurance of the data obtained at the two focus group interviews, the researcher used notes as the Secondary data gathering instrument.

The researcher requested all the respondents to review and verify a record of the transcribed data that was gathered during the two focus group interviews, in order to ensure accuracy and the validity of the data. All the two focus group interviews participants indicated that they were satisfied with their interview transcriptions.

The researcher read the two interviews transcripts several times, and sorted out data into three main categories guided by the objectives of the study. The categories were recognized by searching for similar key words, phrases, views and experiences that were indicated. The researcher highlighted the key words, phrases, views and experiences and grouped them together and form sub-themes. In the next section focus is on the process of analysis of data.

### **4.3 THE THEMES**

The study identified two broad areas. The themes are categorized as follows:

- ABET programme based factors that contribute to cause adult learner to absent themselves from the Mosima Adult Centre.
- Adult learners' social and economic factors which contribute to their absenteeism at Mosima Adult Centre.

These themes were further categorized into sub-themes. The school based factors` sub-themes were:

- ABET educators as role models.
- Lack of support from the departmental officials.
- Lack of facilities at the centre.
- Under qualified ABET educators.
- Lack of parental support in some cases because most adult learners are parents themselves.
- Lack of motivation.
- Lack of respect.
- Adult learner social and economic factors` sub-themes were:
- Poor remuneration of ABET educators also affects their adult learners.
- Lack of transport.
- Social environment causes absenteeism.

## **4.4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF FOCUS GROUP A**

In this study, data collected from the two focus group interviews and the analysis of notes is presented and discussed in the following section. The findings from the first female focus group interviews are discussed under the themes mentioned above.

### **4.4.1 ABET programme-based factors**

The programme based factors are factors which are found within the adult learning centre. These factors present challenges to the learners in terms of their education and progress. When analysing the participants` responses the below mentioned themes emerged. The patterns were determined from the similar word repeated and phrases used by the respondents within the theme that deals with their experience.

#### **4.4.1.1 Theme 1 Practitioners as role models**

Respondents A, B, C and E were viewing ABET educators as their role models in education. Participants were of the opinion that ABET educators give them advice, assistance and play a good role in their lives. Judging from the responses given, the facilitators determine the environment around the learning centre. This is a huge factor determining the student morale, drive and motivation to come back to school the next day. The results show that ABET educators are seen as role models and their approach determines class attendance.

**Respondent A:** “They must advise us to come to school and to know how much education is important” (Female Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent B:** “Because their education is lively, they play a big role in our life and their classes are quite friendly” (Female Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)



**Respondent E:** “They do play a good role in our class because they advised us not to give birth to children” (Female Adult learner, twenty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

Leyba and Massat, (2009:20), state that the climate of the programme especially in regards to the classroom climate is important for the adult learner engagement. This is consistent with the results of the study. The students have shown that they look up to the ABET educators and completely trust that they make the class environment hospitable. It is linked with Freire’s theory stating that democratic teacher- student relationship is relevant to the study because when adult learners are actively involved with the ABET educators in their classroom they will be able to communicate freely. (Freire 1990:66)

#### **4.4.1.2 Theme 2: Lack of support from the departmental officials**

The researcher identified the problems from the interview relating to the importance of support from the department officials. The department is expected to visit the centres of adult education in order to monitor the adult learning programme. The aim of the visits is to help and improve the learning conditions of the students. A lack of monitoring from department officials is likely to lead to a deterioration of the learning climate of the adult centre.

**Respondent A:** “By sitting down with them and analysing their challenges of absentia, after stating them, we look for strategies of handling those issues without distracting the adult learning programme” (Female Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent F:** “Capability of knowing your learners is very important because you will know what they are dealing with timeously, so it would not become a problem for the destruction of adult learning programme”. (Female Adult learner, thirty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent G:** “Our head Office she or he can provide someone who is educated and attend here to give us advice of absenteeism”. (Female Adult learner, twenty eight years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

The researcher, from the responses of participants in identification of problems she realized that adult learners want departmental officials to support them. The results reflect that the students make the decisions to attend or not based on the commitment shown by the ABET educators and departmental administrators. Freire says that ABET educators imposes pre-determined information which is fed in to the object, so the departmental officials should commit themselves to adult learners. Freire (1997:36) state that they need to put efforts into social change to transform society.

#### **4.4.1.3 Theme 3: Lack of programme facilities**

The researcher revealed that a lack of programme facilities promoted adult learner absenteeism. Lack of programme facilities caused poor participation of adult learners in their activities in the classroom. Respondents, adult learners, D, C, and E discussed on the lack of school facilities in the following.

**Respondent D:** “The impact is that we are we need thing that we can’t afford and while ignoring our studies” Having peer pressure from friends to discourage us in a way we can’t take our studies seriously and forget our future life”. (Female Adult learner, thirty two years, interviewed on 27 September 2016).

**Respondent E:** “We as student we get assistance from our practitioners in a way that some of them they teach us but not understanding because of highly shortage of stationery and lead us to do research for that problem”. (Female Adult learner, twenty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016).

**Respondent C:** “I think that people must come to school because it is challenging because we don’t have stationery at school”. (Female Adult learner, twenty eight years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

Freire (1973:121) discusses about leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions and they do not organize people meaning that leaders should organise programme facilities for adult learners.

#### **4.4.1.4 Theme 4: Under-qualified ABET educators**

The participants talked about ABET educators who do not attend lesson because they sit and talk in the staffroom. There were respondents who felt that ABET educators were not assisting adult learners by explaining challenging concepts. Concern was raised that they are not effective on their subject matter. A large number of the respondents feel that learners are absenting themselves from class as a show of a lack of confidence in the practitioners. Respondents are questioning the qualifications of the.

ABET educators

**Respondent B:** “Some teachers they don’t attend lesson nicely because of they were busy talking in their staff rooms when they are going to call them they told you that I will come and after that they did not come to class and we don’t get the assistance”. (Female Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent F:** “Practitioner takes their work seriously so that learners should not waste time coming to school. They must be patient when teaching their learners. Some of them have understanding with learner and they make good relationship”. (Female Adult learner, thirty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent H:** “Sekgosese West circuit must provide qualified teachers because some of the teachers they are not qualified and they give us a lot of work to do, and when we

go and do that work, we fail and become absent". (Female Adult learner, twenty years, interviewed on 27 September 2016).

Freire (1997:36) in his theory talks about empowerment of the disadvantaged communities. The Department of Education should identify courses and workshops to develop unqualified educators. The Department of Education must put effort into social change to transform society.

#### **4.4.1.5 Theme 5: Lack of parental support**

Reed (2008:22) argues that unsafe neighbourhood, inconsistent law enforcement, media pressure, and a lack of support service are the external factors related to adult learners' absenteeism. Overall, adult learners' views on absenteeism from school indicated that parents and home are the factors contributing to absenteeism. Lack of parental support in adult education of their children was mentioned substantially in the interviews. These factors played a negative role in the improvement of adult learner absenteeism.

**Respondent D:** "Most of adult learners have children and they don't have people to help them with children". (Female Adult learner, thirty two years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent C:** "Facing many challenges at home and they do not have chance to come to school." (Female Adult learner, twenty eight years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent E:** "We motivated at home by our parent and teacher by giving the support or education and care and motivated by over career" (Female Adult learner, twenty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

In the findings of this study lack of parental support was stated because adult learners explained that parents do not support them, because they do not recognize or understand the value of attending classes regularly. Knowles (1984:56) theory talks about poverty

and unemployment. It is linked with this theme because you cannot support someone when you are suffering.

#### **4.4.1.6 Theme 6: Lack of Motivation**

Motivation of respondents was reflected on the theory of Knowles on the assumption that adults are internally motivated to learn Knowles (1980:253-254). Ramodike (2008:2) indicated that one of the causes of adult learner absenteeism is the lack of adult learner self-motivation. The interview sought to explore the personal motivation of the learners by asking them personal questions on how they felt about themselves now that they were in school. The responses reflected that the motivation to learn, improve and make their teachers proud was there. This reflects a drive to always attend school thus not likely the cause of absenteeism at this centre.

**Respondent A:** “By showing them the good work we do in class when we attend and help them to understand that we pass the subject, we are going forward to the next level and we have a chance to be what we want to be” (Female Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent B:** “I will motivate other people to class if education is free movement efficient, lessons are friendly. It is quite good to be educated at some point as we get free education” (Female Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 27 September 2016).

**Respondent F:** “We motivate other people to come to school so that they can learn how to read and write” (Female Adult learner, thirty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

Knowles (1990:57-63) states that motivation is one of the assumptions based on Andragogy and it is related with the above mentioned sub-theme. Respondents pointed out that they will motivate adult learners to attend classes so that they have a better life in their future life. Freire (1973:121) talks about problem-posing

method which is concerned on showing adult learners that they have the right to ask questions on the how and why in their lives.

#### **4.4.1.7 Theme 7: Lack of respect**

As directed by adult learning theory to explore about adult learner absenteeism, in this study e.g. North West (2012:4) also talked about respect meaning that adult learners should be trained in a respectful manner and they should respect their ABET educators. According to Freire (1990:76-77) problem posing education can only occur within respectful relationship. The researcher learned that adult learners response were about lack of respect relating to both and adult learners which promote absenteeism.

(ABET) educators

**Respondent E:** “Many people are absent because of their boyfriend” (Female Adult learner, twenty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016).

**Respondent B:** “The impact of the learners is because of many we don’t want to know the reason what they take us to go to school is because of we disrespect our parents and other people that gave us guidance we don’t take them seriously” (Female Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent C:** “To reduce absenteeism is to encourage learners to attend their class regularly. They have to be recognized as our teachers and also provide us with the code of conduct as provided” (Female Adult learner, twenty eight years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

Knowles (1984:1) theory of Andragogy emphasizes that adult educator should create an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and supportiveness to adult learners.

#### **4.4.2 Adult learner economic factors**

Economic factors are factors which cause adult learners absenteeism from an economic point of view which include poor remuneration of practitioners and lack of transport. In this study, the following were identified as economic factors which cause adult learner absenteeism.

##### **4.4.2.1 Theme 1: Poor remuneration of ABET educators.**

According to the data collected the respondents are complaining about ABET educators not teaching them effectively, and practitioners not coming to classes. They also talk about practitioners complains about their remuneration.

**Respondent A:** “Sometimes the teacher must show us seriousness and they tell us that they are not paid, and they just sit down and not teach us, so we will not come to school meaning that we are playing not studying at school. Sometimes a teacher must be a person who is trained, some of the teachers, they are not able to answer questions we asked them in the class they will say we will see and that will be the end of the road ” (Female Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent B:** “The government also must pay teachers good money so that they may teach without complaining” (Female Adult learner, thirty two years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

##### **4.4.2.2 Theme 2: Lack of transport**

In this study, the data collected showed that lack of transport contributed to adult learner absenteeism. Adult learners reported that they stay far away from the adult centre and they walk up to five hours from home to the centre, because they do not have money to pay for transport every day.

**Respondent G:** “I face some challenges because I stay far from school, and does not have money to come to school, you may find that you travel five hours to school and you have to look after my children” (Female Adult learner, twenty eight years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent B:** “They do not come to school because we are from different places and so other people are orphans” (Female Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

#### **4.4.2.3 Theme 3: Adult Learner Social environment**

Data collected shows that social environment contributed in the rise of adult learner absenteeism. Wadesango and Machingambi (2011:123) states those adult learners do not attend due to reasons like unfavourable learning environment and too much socialization. The researcher link the statement with the answer from the respondent stating that their partner did not give them permission to come to school.

**Respondent A:** “Many people are suffering, they do not have parents, that is why they are absent from school, parents do not give them what they want” (Female Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent C:** “When a learner does not come to school because maybe he does not have food” (Female Adult learner, twenty eight years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

**Respondent F:** “They give you homework and you did not do it and then you have to wash clothes for children and we have responsibility for children” (Female Adult learner, thirty five years, interviewed on 27 September 2016)

Data collected from respondents A, C and F indicates that the respondents experience problems about being unable to do homework because workload at home, and also about one experiencing problem of poverty which causes adult learner absenteeism.



One participant responded by asking the researcher that how to overcome learner absenteeism because it has an impact on some of us? The researcher thanked all the participants for their time and all their maximum participation throughout the first focus group interview session. That was the end of the female focus group interviews and the following second male focus group interview will be transcribed in the next paragraph.

## **4.5 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS B**

### **4.5.1 ABET Programme-based factors**

When analysing the participants' responses sub-themes also emerged. The patterns were from repeated words and phrases used by the respondents within the themes that dealt with their experiences.

#### **4.5.1.1 Theme 1: ABET educators as role models.**

There were three participants who viewed practitioners as not serious with their work and being rude in the class. Respondents were of the opinion that should give them guidance, extra time to catch up and they must be patient to learn ABET educators as they are parents. They also talk about good relationship with adult learners.

**Respondent I:** "ABET educators must be there to guide and listen to the learners so that they must understand what problems learners so that they can have a relationship with them about their background where they come from" (Male Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent L:** "The ABET educators must not be rude to learners; if they become rude learners will not come to school. They must be patient so that learners will come to knowing that our teachers are our parents when we are at school. They must also treat us as adults e.g. understanding our family problem, by giving extra time to catch up by the time we are being absent, and also give us textbooks that by the time when we are

home we must read” (Male Adult learner, thirty six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent J:** “They don’t help us” (Male Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

The three participants said that adult educators do not help them and they do not deal with personal issues. Respondent I, L and J complained that adult educators do not help them and they also do not teach them, they come to class and sit down until the time knock off. Knowels (1989:146) state that strength lies in creating opportunities for helping individuals become more proficient practitioners.

#### **4.5.1.2 Theme 2: Lack of support from the departmental officials.**

From the data collected in this study, the respondent are of the opinion that they will tell the circuit to provide schools where there are no centres and this promote that lack of support from the departmental official contributed to adult learner absenteeism.

**Respondent J:** “Showing them peoples who benefited from ABET by reading and writing and tell them that if they do not come regularly they will fall behind and tell them how important is to read and write.” (Male Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent N:** “Show them examples of people who have success in life because of attending class everyday”. (Male Adult learner, twenty seven years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent J:** “I will tell the circuit to give our schools a principle as adult learners if we are absent, we will be chased away from school. I may tell the circuit that they must always come to school to check if our teachers are teaching us so that we may not be absent at school”. (Male Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Freire (1970:90) emphasize system of education as an act of culture and freedom. He developed important concepts such as empowerment, liberatory education and transformation of the world.

#### **4.5.1.3 Theme 3: Lack of school facilities.**

According to Van der Berg, et. al (2011:3) Adult learners absent themselves from class because they do not receive motivation due to inappropriate curriculum from the literature review. Respondents indicated that they were motivating others to attend regularly in order to pass to the other level.

**Respondent M:** “The role of the ABET educators is to keep us in focus in reading our books, doing research outreach, and other is that they must regard us at what we do to encourage us in everything we do so that we can come to school. They must tell us to do group work if there are things that we do not understanding I think is us as learners we come to school” (Male Adult learner, thirty three years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent J:** “I may tell the circuit that they must always come to school to check if our teachers are teaching so that we may not absent at school” (Male Adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Freire(1985:10) advocates for education that develops student’s consciousness of their rights along with their critical presence in the real world. In other words, Adult education should help adult learners to examine the nature of their oppressive situation as well as their capacity to influence that situation.

#### **4.5.1.4 Theme 4: Under qualified ABET educators**

Data collected showed that respondents viewed ABET educators as not qualified and not well trained because they are unable to answer questions which are asked by adult

learners so this can influence or cause adult learner absenteeism. In further state that ABET educators are not serious with their work meaning that they are not qualified with their work.

**Respondent J:** “If ABET educators are not provide lively lessons this could be the influence of absenteeism”(Male adult learner, thirty years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent L:** “Government must take ABET educators to further their studies, to have more knowledge.”(Male adult learner, thirty six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent O:** “I think ABET educators should keep us busy when we come to school e.g. they have to give us notes in each and every subject so that we know what we read, they do not give us. They must come to school every day. They must teach us to do group works, if there is nothing” (Male Adult learner, thirty three years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Respondents J, L and O are complaining about (ABET) educators not teaching them effectively, not coming to class because they do not know their subject matter which contribute to the causes of adult learner absenteeism. Freire’s theory emphasizes community empowerment. Students should have something to contribute to the learning environment not just to memorise. Freire (1997:36).

#### **4.5.1.5 Theme 5: Lack of parental support.**

In this study, data collected showed that participants explained that they does not come class because their parents does not realize the importance of attending class therefore this led to lack parental support which contributed to causes of adult learner absenteeism.

**Respondent I:** “When a learner does not come to school because maybe does not have food.” (Male Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 29 September 2016)

**Respondent P:** “The impact of adult learner is the situation that we have at home so that is why we are affect by the absenteeism at school.” (Male Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent K:** “Because of does not have food” (Male Adult learner, thirty two years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Parental involvement must be encouraged and adult educators should work in collaboration with parents to support them and encourage them to attend classes. Freire (1997:37) states that parents reflecting moving back and forth in a critical way between reflecting and acting on the world.

#### **4.5.1.6 Theme 6: Lack of Motivation.**

The researcher was directed by the interview guide questions that relate to the theory presented by Knowles (1984:12) on Andragogy on the assumption that adults are internally motivated to learn from the literature review. As a person matures the motivation to learn becomes internal.

**Respondent P:** “I do not see the reason why to go to class because I fail homework they may punish you so I don’t have the reason to go to school” (Male Adult learner, thirty four years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent L:** “I will motivate the people outside about the subject tourism because they give us time to travel by school tour to Kwazulu-Natal and other countries to see the big free which is in South Africa only. I will also tell them how I enjoy sharing some ideas with other learners at school I am always stressing free”. (Male Adult learner, thirty six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent M:** “It is good to come to school every day in order to help yourself by checking some other students performs in the class, if you do not know other subject you will know who knows the subject and asked for help to that person” (Male Adult learner, thirty three years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Adult learners must be motivated by admitting them at University level and after completing they must be employed. They must also be given bursaries to further their studies.

#### **4.5.1.7 Theme 7: Lack of respect.**

Bright and Mahdi (2010) state that adult learners and facilitators need to interact and share experiences to benefit from the teaching/ learning experience. Adult learners should be assisted to respect each other in their classes. There was one respondent who talked about disrespect and guidance.

**Respondent L:** “Sometimes the teachers will not be able to help adult because we do not listen to the teachers we tell them that we are adults. The one thing is sometimes teachers are worried because they teach us and the same day they ask us and we do not answer them they are discouraged because we as adults we are not participating. The last thing is that as adult learners we put teachers in danger by complaining that they not teach us but you will find that we are the problem, we used to come to school with cell-phones and play music in class, this will cause us not to listen to the teachers”. (Male Adult learner, thirty six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent K:** “This will cause people not to be employed, and it will also cause our children not to go to school because they will see from us” (Male Adult learner, thirty two years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent M:** “Learners will not learn anything, our country will not develop anything and it cause our children ending up dropping out and they won’t have enough qualification

to better their lives” (Male Adult learner, thirty three years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

There must be a good relationship between adult learners and adult educators because without good relations there will be no progress.

#### **4.6.1 Adult Learner and economic factors**

##### **4.6.1.1 Theme 1: Poor remuneration of ABET educators**

Respondents N and L complains about Abet educator’s poor remuneration which influence or causes adult learner absenteeism.

**Respondent N:**“ ABET educators come late to class saying they have no money for transport they walk to class,” (Male adult learner, twenty-seven years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent L:**” They also not come to class regularly, because they say they also work part time. ( Male adult learner, thirty six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Knowles (1984:56) states that andragogy attempts to explain why adults learn differently to younger learners. Andragogy is learner-centred i.e read and write, where adult learners perform tasks they confront. Adult educators should receive a living wage in order to motivate them to work harder.

##### **4.6.1.2 Theme 2: Lack of transport.**

Data collected in this study, respondents explained that they had a problem about money to pay transport to go to class because they stay far away from the adult learning centre that is why they absent themselves from classes, therefore, lack of transport influences or caused adult learners to absent themselves from classes. There was one respondent

who talked about taking five hours to walk to the centre every day from home and this also contributed to lack of transport as an influence to adult learner absenteeism.

**Respondent I:** “Talk to the circuit to provide us with schools in the places where there are no longer centres, and also tell them to provide transport to those learners who are coming from far.” (Male Adult learner, thirty-four years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Respondent L:” We arrive late to class, and tired because we travel on foot a long distance” (Male adult learner, thirty-six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

Respondent I talked about telling the circuit to provide transport to learners who are coming far so that they can be able to attend their classes regularly.

The department of education should arrange transport for adult learners in order to encourage them to attend classes. Some adult learners stay far from the centre and when they arrive they are tired and that discourages them to attend classes regularly.

#### **4.6.1.3 Theme 3: Adult Learner Social Environment.**

Wadesango and Machingambi (2011:123) state that adult learners do not attend classes due to reasons like unfavourable learning environment and too much socialization from the literature review.

Leyba and Massat, (2009:20) state that the climate of school, especially in regards to the classroom climate is important for the adult learner engagement, this support the data about social environment which influence adult learner absenteeism.

**Respondent L:** “I will motivate people in the community that some people are stealing, people who educated they are working, those who are not studying at home during they



eat drugs, Nyaope so they must go to study so they can be better in future”. (Male Adult learner, thirty-six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent K:** “I can motivate the people around my community to come to school to decrease poverty and improve their standard of living when coming to school”. (Male Adult learner, thirty-six years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

**Respondent N:** “Adult learners in our centre are not serious about education and they influence each other” (Male adult learner, twenty-seven years, interviewed on 29 September 2016).

There was one respondent L who was concerned about staying at home not attending classes and this led to taking drugs and Nyaope which influence adult learner absenteeism. The other respondents (K and N) also showed that adult learners are not serious about education and going to school will decrease poverty and improve standard of living, therefore, this contribute in the influence of adult learner absenteeism.

## **4.7 FINDINGS OF DATA**

### **4.7.1.1 ABET Educators as role models**

All respondent’s (A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,M,N,O,P) view on ABET educators role was that they give them advice, assistance, and play a good role in their lives and it linked with the statement of Lebya and Massat (2009:20) that class room of school, especially in regards to the classroom climate is important for the adult learner engagement to reduce absenteeism.

All respondents (A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,M,N,O,P) wanted to develop other learners, and (ABET) educators should have capability of knowing their learner’s problems. There should be sharing of ideas between adult learners themselves.

In answering the research question about the meaning of absence from attending classes at the centre, it was found that there was a problem relating to poverty. In this study, it was found that respondents experience problems relating to failing of doing homework and adult learners staying far from school and do not have sufficient money to pay for transport.

Freire (1997:37) states that horizontal student-teacher relationship, student and teacher working on the same level, Creating an environment which people feel comfortable to share and communicate.

#### **4.7.1.2 Lack of support from the departmental officials**

The study found that the respondents showed that the department send people who benefited from attending classes to motivate adult learners to their centres. The departmental officials need to monitor adult learning programmes by visiting adult learning classes.

In responding to this research question it indicated that there should be assistance or guidance relating to unemployment, drop out of attending classes and avoiding to become a refuge. The circuit should provide adult centres and transport for adult learners who stay far.

#### **4.7.1.3 Lack of school-facilities**

Respondents suggested that ABET educators should attend their classes regularly and the education department should provide enough stationery for the adult learners.

Female respondents suggested that ABET educators should also attend their classes regularly and the department to provide enough stationery. There should be a plan about remuneration of teachers to encourage teachers to teach effectively, the department of education must supply textbooks to learners, and ABET educators to create a good

relationship with learners. It was also found that respondents suggested that group discussions should be introduced.

#### **4.7.1.4 Lack of qualified ABET educators**

The respondents talked about ABET educators who sit in the staffroom and they do not attend classes. Respondents also talked about practitioners being not effective. When asked question they did not provide answers. These incidents lead respondents at the Sekgose West Circuit to request well trained and qualified ABET educators from the department of education.

The researcher found that the issue of unemployment should be addressed. There should be a way to help ABET educators to strive for better qualifications. There should be a manner to be developed to strive for reducing unemployment. It was also found that the circuit should be informed to provide it was also found that the circuit should be informed to provide qualified teachers for adult learning education. It was later found that we must create a principle of adult learners not to absent themselves from the school.

#### **4.7.1.5 Lack of parental support**

The researcher, when answering the research question about the meaning of absent from school, it was found that something relating to parents and home disturb adult learners to absent themselves from school.

It was also found that respondent's answers states that their partners did not give them permission to come to school, this correlates Wadesango and Machingambi (2011: 23) states that adult learners do not attend classes due to reasons like unfavourable learning environments and too much socialization.

The study showed that this played a negative role because parents do not support adult learners because they do not recognize or understand the value of attending classes regularly.

The researcher when answering the research question about the meaning of absent from school, it was found that something relating to parents and home disturb adult learners to absent themselves from school.

It was also found that respondent's answers states that their partners did not give them permission to come to school, this correlates Wadesango and Machingambi (2011: 23) state that adult learners do not attend classes due to reasons like unfavourable learning environments and too much socialization.

#### **4.7.1.6 Lack of Motivation**

The participants were of the opinion that motivation is very important in the class. The study found that there are issues such as alcohol and drugs which are drugs that should be avoided when coming to school. It was also found that there is also a problem of shortage of stationery which is a challenging factor. The study also found that adult learners should be internally motivated from home, which correlates with the theoretical framework of Knowles (1990) theory of andragogy on the assumption that adults internally motivated to learn to learn in the literature review. The study also found that adult learners should be motivated to attend class so that they can have a better life e.g. good work, graduate and to move on to the next level. The findings of the study suggest that alcohol, drug abuse and lack of stationery should be avoided.

When answering the research question about motivation participants were of the opinion that motivation is very important in the class. The study found that there are issues such as alcohol and drugs that should be avoided when coming to school. It was also found that there is also a problem of shortage of stationery which is a challenging factor. The study also found that adult learners should be internally motivated from home, which correlates with the theoretical framework of Knowles (1990) theory of Andragogy on the

assumption that adults internally motivated to learn in the literature review. The study also found that adult learners should be motivated to attend class so that they can have a better life e.g. good work, graduate and to move on to the next level. The findings of the study suggest that alcohol, drug abuse and lack of stationery should be avoided. In this study, it was found that the use of rewards should be used in order to motivate adult learners when they have performed activities. It was also suggested that there should be a means to decrease poverty. There should also be a plan to reduce stealing, taking drugs and nyaope to better learners lives, and also to use motivational strategies e.g. by showing them certificates of experts in that area of adult education.

#### **4.7.1.7 Lack of respect**

The researcher, in answering the research question about what are the impact of adult learner absenteeism in teaching and learning, the findings of the study suggest that assurance of teaching by ABET educators , guidance, assistance and disrespect should be monitored and improved, disrespect should be avoided. It was further found that teaching approaches or strategies should be applied in the classrooms. It was also found that assistance is needed in ensuring that ABET educators teach effectively. It was also found that ABET educators should manage time effectively and that code of conduct should be provided to adult learners.

There should be ways to convince ABET educators to teach learners effectively and to fill the forms whenever they absent themselves from classes. Finally, it was found that adult educators should create a positive climate or atmosphere meaning creating a good relationship of trust with their learners in their classrooms. ABET educators should encourage maximum participation of adult learners when doing activities in the classroom.

## **4.7.2 Social economic factors**

### **4.7.2.1 Poor remuneration of ABET educators**

Data collected in this study show that adult learners talked about ABET educators complaining that they are not paid. Respondents are of the opinion that the department should pay ABET educators a good salary.

Respondents talked about ABET educators not teaching but stating that they are not paid. This implies that practitioner motivation is low. Adult learners are found to be bored and also having developed negative attitudes towards learning.

### **4.7.2.2 Lack of transport**

Respondents who stay far away from the school and walk every day to school felt that it was tough to attend school every day. Students absent themselves from school because they do not have money to pay for transport. Respondents suggested that the department should provide transport to those learners who are staying far away from school.

It was pointed out that intervention strategies must found adult learners who lacked behind because of having no transport. There must be a plan for poverty alleviation. The department should provide transport for adult learners who stay far from schools.

### **4.7.2.3 Social-environment**

Data collected in this study, showed that the respondents have a problem of not attending classes because of washing clothes for their children and also looking after their children because they do not have people to help them. Respondents also talked about staying at home and taking drugs and nyaope as the influence of adult learner absenteeism.

Data collected showed that respondents talked about adult learners who experienced problems about not coming to school because they were taking care of their children. This is regarded one of the influence or causes of adult learner absenteeism.

#### **4.9 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, the researcher presented a description of the participants in the study. She also gave a description of physical setting, how data was collected and how data was analysed; based on the research problem, research question and the literature reviewed in chapter two. In the main, data collected from both two focus group interviews confirmed that adult learner absenteeism gave rise to two main themes. It was clear that absenteeism of adult learner is influenced mostly by school based and social-economic factors.

The following chapter presents the summary and concluding remarks of what the study achieved. The chapter concludes with recommendations to address adult learners' absenteeism from attending adult classes at the adult centre.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the focus is on the summary, conclusions of the findings and recommendations and suggestions for further research on absenteeism of adult learners. The purpose of the research was to investigate the causes of adult learner absenteeism at the Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo Province.

**The research objectives were as follows:**

- To investigate the economic and social reasons as to why adult learners do not attend adult basic education and training classes
- To investigate the ABET programme to determine which factors caused adult learners to be absent from classes.
- To establish the effect of absenteeism on adult learners motivation

**The researcher posed the following questions:**

- What factors contribute to adult learners being absent from classes?
- What are the social and economic factors that cause absenteeism by the level 4 adult learners?

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This study investigated the causes of absenteeism of adult learners doing level four at the single adult centre of Mosima at the Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo West Circuit in Limpopo Province.



The aim of the study was to find out why adult learners absent themselves from classes. The purpose was to assist adult learners to reduce their absenteeism and to improve their class attendance by interviewing two focus groups of female and male adult learners at Mosima Adult Centre. Literature study on adult learners' absenteeism was reviewed. The researcher categorised the themes based on the research questions. The themes were discussed in order to answer the research questions.

The main research question was: What are the adult learners' social and economic factors that cause absenteeism of level 4 adult learners?

The sub-questions were formulated from the above main research question as follows:

- What are the causes of adult learner absenteeism?
- What is the impact of absenteeism on adult learners' performance?
- What are the motivational strategies which can be used or applied to reduce adult learner absenteeism?
- How does absenteeism of adult learners affect their motivation?

There was a link between the researcher's findings and the literature studied and the following factors can be given as examples:

- The researcher found that lack of parental support in adult learners' education causes absenteeism. The literature studied also support the findings: Wadesango and Machingambi (2011:23) state that adult learners do not attend classes due to reasons like unfavourable learning environments and too much socialization.
- According to the study practitioners acted as bad role models and this was one of the factors that contributed to absenteeism. This view was also supported by Leyba and Massat (2009:20) that classroom morale is important for the adult learner engagement to reduce absenteeism.

A study by North West University (2012: 4) defines adult learner as one who should be trained in a respectful manner where he or her has an opportunity to share his or her experience with others. Adult learners need role models to teach them in order for them to keep engaged.

- A lack of unqualified ABET educator was one of the factors which contributed to adult learners' absenteeism.
- Lack of transport was also one of the factors that contributed to adult learner absenteeism. According to the study, there are adult learners who walk up to five hours every day to the adult centre because they do not have money to pay for transport.
- Lack of school facilities and poor remunerations of ABET educators contributed to poor attendance. The study revealed that adult learners do not have enough stationery to use. Again, the study revealed that ABET educators do not teach them effectively because of poor remuneration.
- The researcher discovered that the causes of adult learners' absenteeism in this study are more or less the same with those in the literature studied. It was also found that there are also factors which are not mentioned in the literature review but found in the study that is:
  - Lack of transport.
  - Lack of school facilities.
  - Lack of unqualified ABET educators.
  - Poor remuneration of ABET educators.

## **5.3 CONCLUSION**

### **5.3.1 School-based factors**

The respondents mentioned lack of parental support as one of the causes of adult learner absenteeism. Most of adult learners are orphans, so they do not have parents to support them. Those who have parents have no interest in the education of their children.

When they are supposed to go to school to attend classes the parents expect them to do all the washing, look after children and do all house chores. Parents do not understand the value of adult education.

### **5.3.2 Lack of Motivation**

Most of the respondents said that they lacked motivation that is why they don't feel the need to attend class regularly. Most of them are not working so they think if the government can create jobs for them when they complete, they can be motivated. Respondents revealed that they are bored at the centre as ABET educators are rude to them.

### **5.3.3 ABET educators as role models**

Respondents experienced problems when doing home-work and this resulted in them failing their home homework and complained about ABET educators not teaching them effectively.

### **5.3.4 Unqualified ABET educators**

It was found that respondents complained about unqualified ABET educators as one of the causes of adult learner absenteeism. Respondents complained about ABET educators who are not well trained who do not come to class regularly as they sit in the staffrooms not teaching. Most of the ABET educators in adult education centres are not qualified as teachers.

### **5.3.5 Lack of school facilities**

The research revealed that there was lack of school facilities and this was one of the causes of adult learner absenteeism. Respondents complained about not having enough stationery and textbooks to read.

### **5.3.6 Lack of respect**

Respondents complained about ABET educators who disrespected them and did not give help when it was needed.

## **5.4 ECONOMIC FACTORS**

### **5.4.1 Poor-remuneration of ABET educators**

Respondents talked about ABET educators not teaching them saying that they do not get paid. Respondents mentioned that ABET educators do not help them when they ask for assistance.

### **5.4.2 Lack of transport**

Respondents showed that there is a problem about lack of transport as one of the causes of absenteeism, because other learners are staying too far away from the centre and they walk up to the centre five hours every day as they do not have money to pay for transport.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS ON SCHOOL-BASED FACTOR**

### **5.5.1 Lack of parental support.**

The researcher suggests the following intervention strategies:

- The centre manager should make some efforts to encourage adult learner to see the value of class attendance.
- Parents need to be trained and conscientised about the need to attend classes, so that they can understand that adult education is for their own benefit.
- Parents must also play their important part by understanding the value adult education.

- Centre managers should also give parents explanation about the value of adult education.
- Community structures should highlight the importance of adult education while also highlight the danger of adult learner absenteeism in the community.
- Systems should be in place to monitor and report attendance to parents, for them to discuss with their adult learners.

### **5.5.2 Lack of motivation.**

The researcher suggests the following:

- Adult educators should try to make their classes interesting by implementing the roles and responsibilities to their learners effectively in teaching.
- Adult educators should always monitor and support adult learners by encouraging them to work hard when doing their class activities.
- Adult learners should be motivated by telling them where to go after completing their classes.
- Seminars should be arranged and stakeholders like circuit managers, curriculum advisors and some teachers with higher qualifications can be invited to encourage adult learners to come to school regularly.
- Motivational speakers can also be invited to come and motivate them.
- The government should give them bursaries to continue with their studies.

### **5.5.3 ABET educators as role models**

The researcher recommends the following:

- ABET educators should create positive relationship between adult learners and themselves.
- ABET educators should teach adult learners effectively.

- ABET educators should display a mutual trust between adult learners and themselves.
- ABET educators should monitor and support adult learners to work diligently.
- ABET educators should invite specialist in adult education to assist them in teaching adult learners.
- ABET educators should attend workshop to uplift and improve their knowledge.
- ABET educators may improve their teaching and learning skills and knowledge by attending seminars and refresher courses.

#### **5.5.4 Unqualified ABET educators**

The researcher suggests the following strategies:

- There should be a way to help practitioners to strive for better qualifications.
- The circuit should be asked to provide qualified teachers in different streams so that adult learners can be benefit.
- The department should create workshops and regular training and support where adult educators can be developed in their teaching and management skills.
- The department of education should also visit adult centres regularly not during examinations only to support the centres.
- The department officials should monitor and support adult centres regularly.
- The teacher adult learner ratio should be minimal as adult learners need specialized attention.
- Adult educators must be encouraged to attend seminars and symposium to improve their knowledge in teaching.
- The department should create adult education bursaries so that practitioners can go to universities and colleges to improve the qualifications

#### **5.5.5 Lack of ABET programme facilities**

The researcher suggests the following recommendations:

- The department should provide each adult centre with enough stationery and textbooks.
- The department also should provide adult centres with computers and other electronic devices to make learning easier, and also a library.
- The department of education should provide adult learners with their own accommodation to avoid operating in the school buildings.
- The department should consider budgeting for adult learning centres.
- The department of education should consider building one adult learning centre per village.
- The department of education should hire enough practitioners to adult learning centres.

#### **5.5.6 Lack of respect.**

The researcher recommends the following strategies.

- ABET educators should respect adult learners and their rights.
- There should be a good communication between adult learners and their ABET educators.
- Adult learners must stick to the code of conduct for adult learners.
- Adult learners must be encouraged to develop mutual trust with their ABET educators.
- Adult learners must be encouraged to work hand in hand with their educators.

## **5.6 ECONOMIC FACTORS**

### **5.6.1 Poor remuneration of ABET educators**

The researcher suggested the following strategies:

- Adult educators should be paid properly like a qualified teacher so as to raise their morale.
- Both the Circuit and District should support the adult centres by assisting educators to get their salaries regularly.
- The department of education should pay ABET educators regularly so they can teach effectively without stress.
- The centre Manager should pay ABET educators regularly.
- ABET educators should display their roles and responsibilities in their different centres.

### **5.6.2 Lack of transport**

The researcher suggests the following intervention strategies:

- The department of education should arrange transport for those who stay far from adult centres, so that they can be able to attend regularly.
- Centre managers should apply for subsidy for transportation of adult learners who stay far from the centre.
- The department should help adult learners with other alternative plans for coming to the centre.

## **5.7 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This is a research of limited scope and as such it merits further research. The study focused on the causes of adult learners` absenteeism at a single centre. Therefore, further studies can include other adult centres and other mainstream education centres were possible.

This study was conducted in one province and can be rolled out to other provinces. The study revealed that adult educators also absent themselves from classes; further research can also include adult learning educators. Since the researcher`s study was



conducted at rural adult centre, further research can also be done in urban adult learning centre. The researcher used qualitative method to conduct this project; further research can also use a mixed method to ensure that the results are broadened.

## **5.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY.**

The main limitations of this study were that the research was conducted in a single adult basic education learning centre. Another limitation was that the study catered only adult learners who attend in the centre because of travelling distance.

A further limitation was that the study was not a representative of all other six adult basic learning centres in the Sekgosese West circuit. The views of the adult learners at the centre cannot be generalized to reflect views of adult learners at other adult centres. Another limitation was that the 16 participants interviewed were few and also that all the respondents comes from the same adult centre and in the same circuit of education. Respondents from other adult centres might have contributed much in response to the research questions. The views of others who were not interviewed could have enriched the findings if they were given the opportunity. The second focus group interview was shifted to be conducted on the 29<sup>th</sup> instead of the 28<sup>th</sup> because adult learners were going to write a test that day. During the second male focus group interview, there were only six participants left; two male respondents went out without permission during the conversation.

## **5.9 CONCLUSION**

In spite of the limitations discussed in chapter one above this study has successfully investigated the views and perceptions of adult learners on their tendency to be absent from class in the adult centre at the Sekgosese West Circuit. The research objectives mentioned in chapter one above was achieved among the selected participants at the adult learning centre where the two focus group interviews occurred. The data collected represented the views of the reality experienced by the participants on the issue of

absenteeism by adult learners. The important information gathered can be useful in informing other researchers in this field for further investigation.

This study shows that adult learners are experiencing challenges with the education they receive and with the shortage of stationery and textbooks. The department of education must also include stationary material in their budget for adult basic education. Adult basic education educators should also receive adequate training so that they can be able to teach adult learners effectively. There is a need to improve facilities as we live in a digital world and as such adult learners should be equipped with computers and other electronic devices to make their learning effective. Adult educators need to be supported in their roles and responsibility by providing enough training and education resources.

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## APPENDIX A

P.O Box 200  
Dwarsriver  
0812  
16 March

2016

The Head of Department  
113 Biccard Street  
Polokwane  
0709

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SEKGOSESE WEST  
ADULT CENTRE SCHOOLS

**TITLE: Absenteeism of adult learners at the Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo  
Province. A critical reflection**

Contact person's name: Makola M.C

Contact person's Department: Education

Contact person's telephone number and email address: 015 290 9448

E mail: makolamc@edulimpogov.za

I Mrs Mello Masefora Victoria am doing research at University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Absenteeism of adult learners at Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo Province.

The aim of the research is to explore the views of adult learners of Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo about contributing to reduce adult learner absenteeism.

Your school has been selected because we need to explore the views of adult learners at Sekgosese West Adult Centre in Limpopo Province.

The study will entail focus group interviews.

Benefits of the study may be that adult learners who participate will have more understanding of absenteeism. The participants will also be able to understand the importance of regular class attendance.

Potential risks are low as the research involves participants who are adults and not considered to be a vulnerable research population. The research will collect information

that would generally be regarded as non-sensitive. The information will generally be collected anonymously. The

Investigation is of largely controversial topics undertaken through interviews.

Feedback procedure will entail access to dissertation in the library.

Yours sincerely

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B

University of South Africa  
P.O Box 392  
Pretoria  
0003  
16 March 2016

Sekgosese West Circuit  
P.O Box 308  
Ramokopa  
0811

### REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.

Request for permission to conduct research at Mosima Primary School.

TITLE: Absenteeism of adult learners at the Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo Province. A critical reflection

16 March 2016

Kgobe KA

Department of Education

Cell no: 082 5535 359

Dear Mrs Kgobe KA

I Mrs Mello Masefora Victoria am doing research towards a master of education in Adult Education at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled absenteeism of adult learners at Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo Province.

The aim of the study is to reduce adult learner absenteeism and encouraging the importance of class attendance.

Your school has been selected because it has a centre which offers adult education.

The study will entail one single adult learning centre at Sekgosese West Circuit and focus group will be conducted from the adult centre. The researcher will use a detailed literature review to explore various aspects of adult learner absenteeism available in international and local literature.

Feedback procedure will entail access to dissertation in the library.

Yours sincerely

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Masefora Victoria Mello

Position: Acting HOD at Mosima Primary school.

## APPENDIX C

P.O BOX 200  
Dwarsriver  
0812

06 April 2016

Title: Absenteeism of adult learners at the Sekgosesse West Circuit in Limpopo Province. A critical reflection

Dear Prospective Participant.

My name is Masefora Victoria Mello and I am doing research with Professor Higgs Leonie in the Department of Masters in Adult Education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Absenteeism of adult learners at the Sekgosesse West Circuit in Limpopo Province.

I am conducting this research to find out absenteeism of adult learners at the Sekgosesse West Circuit in Limpopo Province.

I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic. I obtained your contact details from your school. Only ten (10) participants are invited to participate. With your kind permission the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. The interview will take one hour (60 minutes) in a place mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. Questions to be expected are attached. The Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Potential benefits of taking part in this study are that after the transcription has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or to clarify any points. The only foreseeable risk is that of inconvenience. There are no other risks as the research involves participants who are adults and not considered to be vulnerable research population. The research will collect information considered non-sensitive. The information will generally be collected anonymously. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However with your permission your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure the research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/ or conference proceedings but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard for future research or academic purposes. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

There are no incentives for participating in this study.

If you would like to be informed about the final research findings, please contact Mello Masefora Victoria on 0723590973 or email; [maseforavictoriamello@gmail.com](mailto:maseforavictoriamello@gmail.com)

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact [higgslg@unisa.ac.za](mailto:higgslg@unisa.ac.za) tel: 0124294733.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. I look forward to speaking with you. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows on APPENDIX E.

Thank you.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mello Masefora Victoria

**APPENDIX D**

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Participant name), confirms that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable)

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publication and /or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the audio tape.

I have received and signed a copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) Mello Masefora Victoria

---

Researcher's signature

Date

## APPENDIX E

University of South Africa  
P.O Box 392  
Pretoria  
0003  
16 March 2016

Mosima Primary School  
P.O Box 1395  
Dwarsriver  
0812

### REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.

Request for permission to conduct research at Mosima Primary School.  
TITLE: Absenteeism of adult learners at the Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo  
Province. A critical reflection  
16 March 2016  
Mokakabye C  
Department of Education  
Cell no: 0729165226

Dear Mrs Mokakabye C

I Mrs Mello Masefora Victoria am doing research in Adult Education at the University of South Africa. I invite you to participate in a study entitled absenteeism of adult learners at Sekgosese West Circuit in Limpopo Province.

The aim of the study is to address adult learner absenteeism and encouraging the importance of class attendance.

Your school has been selected because it has a centre which offers adult education.

The study will entail a limited study of one adult learning centre at Sekgosese West Circuit to conduct focus group interviews with adult learners from the adult centre. The researcher will use a detailed literature review to explore various aspects of adult learner absenteeism available in international and local literature.

Potential risks are not available as the investigation is of largely uncontroversial topic which is undertaken through interviews. The participants are adults and not considered to be a vulnerable research population. The research will collect information that would generally be regarded as non-sensitive. The information can generally be collected anonymously or participants may not insist on keeping the collected information strictly confidential.

Feedback procedure will entail access to dissertation in the library.

Yours sincerely

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Masefora Victoria Mello

Position: Acting HOD at Mosima Primary school.



**APPENDIX F**  
**FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. In your own experience how can you explain absenteeism of adult learners in your centre?
2. What do you think are the causes of adult learner absenteeism in your centre?
3. What does the code of conduct say about adult learner absenteeism?
4. Which strategies can you use to reduce adult learner absenteeism in Sekgosese West Circuit?
5. What are the impact of adult learner absenteeism in teaching and learning according to you?
6. How can you motivate other adult learners in Sekgosese West Circuit to realise the importance of regular class attendance?
7. In your opinion, how can you assist other adult learners at Sekgosese West Circuit to identify problems which lead to their absenteeism?
8. How often do you receive assistance from practitioners on how to deal with adult learner absenteeism?
9. What challenges do you experience when adult learners are advised to attend classes regularly?
10. Is there anything that was not asked about adult learner absenteeism but you think the researcher should know?