

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABSENTEEISM AND ON - SITE EMPLOYER -
SPONSORED CHILDCARE**

by

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Abstract

As the literature on work–family conflict grows and absenteeism increasingly comes into the spotlight, one cannot help but ask the question: “What is an acceptable absenteeism rate and how can an organisation control and manage absenteeism?” With current absenteeism rates as high as 12% and with an estimated R12 million lost per annum because of absenteeism, the idea of an on-site employer-sponsored childcare facility seems viable.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer- sponsored childcare. The following dimensions of absenteeism will be examined over a period of a year: absence frequency, absence intensity, attitudinal absence and medical absence. The results of two companies, one with a facility and one without, will then be compared in order to establish the relationship between absenteeism and an on-site facility.

To date, evidence remains mixed and the ongoing challenge of establishing real return on equity remains a major barrier to the support of on-site employer-sponsored childcare.

Key terms

Absenteeism, types of absenteeism, causes of absenteeism, model of absenteeism, family-friendly practices, employer-sponsored childcare, childcare, work-family conflict, cognitive behavioural paradigm

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare. Chapter 1 deals with the background to and rationale for the research, the problem statement, the aims, paradigm perspective, research design and research method, as well as the chapter layout.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO AND RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

To many in the world of work, absenteeism is one of those stubborn problems for which "there is no clear culprit and no easy cure" (Rhodes & Steers, 1990, p. 1). Furthermore, as a general phenomenon, absenteeism does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of gender, race and religion. Bydawell (2000, p. 15) postulates that "employers have the right to expect good attendance from their employees as employment is a contract between two consenting parties".

The question most people ask is: "What is an acceptable absenteeism rate?" In terms of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, an employee is entitled to 30 working day's sick leave in a three-year period. According to Bydawell (2000), if all the employees in a company collectively take their full entitlement, the company's absenteeism rate will run at approximately 4%, which is generally believed to be an acceptable rate. Some companies allow employees to exceed their 30 days, but in these instances this would be regarded as unpaid leave. Usually organisations do not take these additional days into account when calculating their absenteeism rate, which results in an inaccurate assessment of the situation. Bydawell (2000, p. 15) purports that "in reality, many companies run at absenteeism rates as high as 12 % without even realising it."

Absenteeism seems to be a behaviour that organisations can never eliminate, but rather control and manage. George and Jones (2002, p. 94) note that “organisations should not have absence policies that are so restrictive that they literally force workers to come to work even if they are ill. Organisations may want to recognise that a certain level of absence is indeed functional.”

According to Aamodt (2004), a 2002 survey conducted by the Commerce Clearing House (CCH) revealed that employees in the USA took an average of 6,2 sick days per annum. He further states that the current figure is approximately 7,8 days in the UK.

In South Africa, absenteeism in the workplace is receiving increasing attention and organisations are taking a closer look at the costs of absenteeism as well as issues such as employee loyalty and commitment (Du Plessis, Visser & Fourie, 2003). It is estimated that about 4,5% of the South African workforce is absent on any given day, and in certain companies this figure is as high as 18% (Vaida, 2005). Furthermore, a study conducted by Occupational Care South Africa has revealed that South African companies are losing millions of rand a year because of absenteeism in the workplace. Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003) indicate that South African managers consider absenteeism to be their most serious discipline problem. If not managed and controlled, absenteeism can “spread like an epidemic, creating a range of disciplinary problems for organisations” (Hoque & Islam, 2003, p. 19).

The main problem is possibly that many employees regard sick leave as a benefit like annual leave, and they are entitled to take it, irrespective of the condition of their health. This has implications for organisations because it is difficult for an organisation to operate smoothly if employees fail to report for work. According to Robbins, et al. (2003), having sick leave programmes in organisations, that is, providing paid sick leave, actually reinforces the wrong behaviour, namely absence from work. The authors argue that organisations should rather reward employees for attendance, not for being

absent. Moreover, the importance of satisfactory attendance and its benefits should be clearly communicated to all employees (Bydawell, 2000).

However, it is highly unlikely that organisations will completely eradicate absenteeism. Ericson (2001) maintains that organisations should look at ways in which they can accommodate the needs of their diverse workforce in order to attract and retain the best employees. He (2001, p. 91) states that “if people were only absent from their jobs when they needed to be, such as for family commitments, or when they are truly ill absenteeism would not be the major problem that it is today”. However, the issue of absenteeism is a multifaceted one and a phenomenon that requires a multi-pronged approach.

One strategy used by a small but growing number of firms to assist with absenteeism is to provide employer-sponsored childcare (ESCC) (Connelly, DeGraff & Willis, 2004). According to Connelly et al. (2004), measuring the benefits of ESCC programmes for employers is challenging given the complex interactions between working conditions. Hence even companies with ESCC programmes have found it difficult to quantify the value of childcare benefits. Despite this, employers offering direct childcare benefits report the positive impacts of childcare programmes on workers' performance, such as reductions in turnover, absenteeism and recruitment costs.

According to Kelly (2003), the capacity of an organisation to provide ESCC depends on the organisation's size, age and sector. Larger organisations have economies of scale that make it easier and more reasonable to investigate and offer childcare. Theory (Kelly, 2003) is also a guideline, and claims that older organisations have more difficulty changing their structures and practices. This suggests that younger organisations are more likely to adopt ESCC (Kelly, 2003). Private sector organisations face a further challenge justifying the benefits of ESCC both internally and to investors owing to the fact that childcare programmes are relatively new, and have not been shown to be crucial for meeting financial goals, thereby implying that public sector organisations are more likely to provide childcare facilities (Kelly, 2003).

Although there has been growing enthusiasm for ESCC, an assertion that childcare improves worker productivity and lowers absenteeism rates have been mixed (Kossek, Dass & De Marr, 1994; Kossek & Nichol, 1992). Regarding absenteeism, only Milkovich and Gomez (1976) found a positive significant difference between users and nonusers, as opposed to subsequent works of Goff, Mount and Jamison (1990). Further research has also implied that childcare benefits are more likely to significantly affect employee attitudes and behaviour, such as recruitment and retention but not absenteeism (Kossek & Nichol, 1992).

These results have been ascribed to the fact that centers cannot care for sick children, and absences due to child illness may in fact increase. However, given that centre users would be likely to have fewer problems with childcare arrangements, and that the children would be transported to the same location as the parents, overall absences among users would be lower (Kossek & Nichol, 1992).

While the results on the effects of ESCC on absenteeism remain mixed, it appears that not using the centers and having to wait to use a benefit that one desires may result in a “frustration effect” (Kossek & Nichol, 1992). According to Rothausen, Gonzalez, Clarke and O'Dell (1998), the phenomenon of “family-friendly backlash” is occurring, with childless workers becoming resentful about family benefits.

Rothausen et al. (1998) believe justice theories could help to explain this potential resentment. These theories state that individuals have certain values and norms about how employee rewards should be allocated. “Benefits offered only to workers with children, or only to some workers with children, violate both equity and equity-based reward allocation values” hence workers who do not receive these benefits may experience resentment which is then manifested in less positive attitudes about the benefits and the organisation (Rothausen et al., 1998, p. 686).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the increasing flow of women into the workplace and the growing conflict many parents face in balancing work-family demands, the need and demand for ESCC are growing as part of an organisation's total rewards package. However, research conducted to date has revealed no consensus on the benefits of an on-site ESCC.

Considering the above, the aim of this study is to identify what the relationship between absenteeism and on- site employer-sponsored childcare?

The following specific questions will assist in this regard:

- What is meant by absenteeism?
- What is meant by on-site employer-sponsored childcare?
- What are the levels of absenteeism in organisations?
- What is the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare?
- What recommendations can be made in practice and for further research?

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

This research consists of a general aim and a specific aims.

1.4.1 General aim

The general aim of this research is to determine the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare.

1.4.2 Specific aims

The specific theoretical aims of this research are

- to conceptualise absenteeism
- to conceptualise on-site employer-sponsored childcare
- to determine the theoretical relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare.
- to determine the influence of demographic variables on absenteeism.

The empirical aims of this research are

- to determine the levels of absenteeism
- to determine the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare.
- to make recommendations on the use of ESCC and further research

1.5 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

The paradigm perspective refers to the intellectual climate or variety of metatheoretical values or beliefs and assumptions underlying the theories and models that form the definitive context of this research (Mouton & Marais, 1990).

The cognitive behavioural paradigm may be described as an initial attempt to integrate the three major philosophical traditions of idealism, realism and existentialism (Ivey, D'Andrea, Ivey, & Simek–Morgan, 2002). Those operating from a cognitive behavioural paradigm will be interested in knowing how the individual develops ideas about realities, chooses and decides from the many possibilities and acts and behaves in relationship to reality (Ivey et al., 2002).

Ivey et al. (2002) outline five central tenets of the cognitive behavioural paradigm:

- (1) Behaviour is reciprocally determined by an individual's thoughts, feelings, physiological processes and resultant consequences.
- (2) Cognitions do not cause emotional difficulties; they are rather part of a complex interactive process.
- (3) Individuals try to understand how they construct reality.
- (4) Emotions play an important role.
- (5) There is an emphasis on collaboration and the discovery process.

Individuals operating from this worldview employ a systematic method of examining themselves and the environment and jointly engaging in interventions that alter their conditions (Ivey et al., 2002).

When incorporated with Muchinsky's (2000) spillover model, the cognitive behavioural paradigm provides a framework that helps to facilitate one's understanding of the experience of work-family conflict and the interventions of individuals to reduce such a state.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this research design is to (1) find answers to the research question and (2) control variance (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

In this research, the dependent variable is employee absenteeism. The independent variable is the presence of an on-site ESCC. Moderating variables include, but are not limited to

- the number of days absent due to other factors
- the availability of alternative childcare facilities
- the use of an on-site ESCC centre by employees

The type of research to be conducted is quantitative and on the basis of statistical analysis will provide a descriptive explanation of the relationship between absenteeism and on-site ESCC centers.

The unit of analysis identified for the purposes of this research is the absenteeism of individual employees.

Reliability and validity will be ensured using the following technique

- purposeful stratified sampling through the use of the following three subgroups for comparison: (1) users of the on-site ESCC (2) nonusers of the on-site ESSC and (3) a company without an on-site ESCC

1.7. RESEARCH METHOD

This research will be conducted in three phases, namely the literature review, the empirical study and the conclusion, limitations and recommendations.

1.7.1 Phase 1: literature review

Step 1: Define absenteeism and the nature of absenteeism

Step 2: Define on-site employer-sponsored childcare and the nature of on-site employer sponsored child care.

Step 3: Define the theoretical relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare.

1.7.2 Phase 2: empirical study

Step 1: Population and sample group

- The population and sample group consist of three subgroups. Group 1 - currently employed full time in an organisation in the media industry with a full time on-site

ESCC facility and who use the facility. Group 2 - currently employed full time in an organisation in the media industry with a full -time on-site ESCC facility, and who do not utilise the facility. Group 3 - currently employed full time in an organisation in the financial services industry, without an on-site ESCC facility. The sampling method to be used is stratified purposeful sampling.

Step 2: Measuring instruments

The measure of absenteeism will be discussed in terms of types of absenteeism, dimensions of absenteeism and causes of absenteeism.

Step 3: Data collection

Employee absenteeism records and demographical data will be obtained from the human resources department. The following measuring instruments will be used in the research:

- employee absenteeism records for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2007 for the organisation with an on-site employer-sponsored childcare centre: groups 1 and 2.
- employee absenteeism records for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2007 for the organization without an on-site employer-sponsored childcare centre: group 3.

Step 4: Data processing

The data will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme for Windows version 16.0 (Pallant, 2001).

Step 5: Hypothesis

The substantive hypothesis of this research can be formulated as follows:

There is a negative relationship between absenteeism and the availability of an on-site employer-sponsored childcare facility.

Step 6: Results

The results will be reported on and interpreted in line with the findings of the statistical analysis and then integrated with the literature.

1.7.3 Phase 3: conclusion, limitations and recommendations

Step 1: Conclusion

The formulated aims will be reported on in the discussion and conclusion.

Step 2: Limitations

The limitations of the study will be reported on.

Step 3: Recommendations

Recommendations for further practice and further research will be made.

1.8. CHAPTER LAYOUT

The layout of the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Overview of the research

Chapter 2: Absenteeism

Chapter 3: On-site employer-sponsored childcare.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 5: Research results

Chapter 6: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the background to and rationale for the research were discussed, the research problem, research aims, paradigm perspective, research design and research method were explained.

CHAPTER 2

ABSENTEEISM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, absenteeism will be discussed from a theoretical perspective within the relevant literature. The chapter begins with a definition of absenteeism, followed by a discussion of the types, dimensions of and causes of absenteeism. Lastly, a model of absenteeism will be presented. The chapter will conclude with a chapter summary.

2.2 DEFINITION OF ABSENTEEISM

Previous literature has defined absenteeism in terms of both causes, as well as physical presence. In terms of causes, the most common theories proposed are that absenteeism is largely a behavioural response to dissatisfaction with certain aspects of one's job (Goldberg & Waldman, 2000). A second stream of literature rejects the role of job satisfaction as a cause of absenteeism, focusing instead on the role of demographics, work and nonwork - related constraints (Goldberg & Waldman, 2000).

De Beor, Bakker, Syroit and Schaufeli (2002) provide further definitions of absenteeism in terms of causes. The first theory, withdrawal theory, regards absenteeism as withdrawing from adverse working conditions. The second explanation is based on so called "stress" theories, which assume that employees are unable to cope with certain work conditions and therefore develop stress symptoms.

In contrast, the definitions below reflect a definition of absenteeism in terms of physical presence:

- Patton and Johns (2007) define absenteeism as an individual's lack of physical presence at a given location and time when there is a social expectation for him or her to be there.
- Martocchio and Jameson (2003) define absenteeism as a single day of missed work.
- Absences occur whenever a person chooses to allocate time to activities that compete with scheduled work, either to satisfy the waxing or waning of underlying motivational rhythms or to maximise personal utility (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998).
- Absenteeism can be defined as the failure of an employee to report for work as scheduled, regardless of the reason (Robbins, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2001).

In light of the above definitions, for the purposes of this research, absence can be defined as the absence of an employee on any given day during prescheduled working hours in order to meet nonwork related needs.

2.3 TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM

Van der Merwe and Miller (1988) classify absenteeism into three broad categories that help one to understand the nature of the concept. These include, sick absence, authorised absence and unauthorised absence.

2.3.1 Sick absence

Sick absence means that an employee claims ill health as the reason for his or her absence. Requirements regarding doctor's certificates vary and are determined by company policy or the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA). This act stipulates that a certificate needs to be produced after two days of sickness absence. Most managers have found that certification is not a guarantee of genuine absence because it has become easy for people to gain access to medical certificates. Van der Merwe and Miller (1988, p. 10) maintain that "having a critical attitude to short sick

absence, and indicating to employees that their absence behaviour is regularly monitored, is likely to result in a better norm of attendance.”

2.3.2 Authorised absence

When with permission an employee is absent they provide an excuse for their absence, be it for holidays, study leave, special leave, and the like. Normally such a request is included in the absence policy (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988, p. 11).

2.3.3 Unauthorised absence

All absences not falling into the two previous categories, and for which no reason is provided, or accepted, are regarded as unauthorized. When this type of absence, assumes problematic proportions, the employee in question needs to be informed in order to bring his or her attendance in line with acceptable norms. Employees who arrive at work later in the day or who leave earlier are normally not recorded on the leave records of employers, and the supervisor is usually aware of such absences (Wolmarans, 1994). According to Vanden-Heuvel (1997), absence to care for an ill family member or absence for any other family reason is classed as unauthorised absence.

For the purposes of this study, a combination of three above - mentioned absences was used. This was to ensure that all types of absence were taken into account when analysing and interpreting the results.

2.4 DIMENSIONS OF ABSENTEEISM

According to Rhodes and Steers (1990), there are at least two reasons why the study of attendance behaviour requires careful attention before drawing a conclusion in any particular organisation. First, there is often a lack of clarity about the meaning or meanings attached to absence behaviour. Second, it is necessary to recognise that there are multiple and often conflicting ways to measure absenteeism and in order to

understand the nature of employee absenteeism, it is necessary to understand the dimensions of absenteeism (Rhodes & Steers, 1990).

According to Huse and Taylor (1962), if it is assumed that one wishes to measure the dimensions of absenteeism empirically, four indices among others, can be used:

- (1) absence frequency – total number of times absent
- (2) absence intensity – total number of days absent
- (3) attitudinal absences – frequency of one day absences
- (4) medical absences – frequency of absences of three days or longer

Chadwick-Jones, Brown, Nicholson, and Sheppard (1971) adopt a different approach to examining the dimensions of absenteeism and use the following seven indices:

- (1) absence frequency
- (2) attitudinal absence
- (3) other reasons – number of days lost in a week for any reason other than holidays, rest days and certified sickness
- (4) worst day – difference scores between number of individuals absent on any week's "best" and "worst" days
- (5) time lost – number of days lost in a week for any reason other than leave
- (6) lateness – number of instances of tardiness in any week
- (7) "blue Mondays" – the number of individuals absent on a Monday, minus the number of individuals absent on a Friday of any week

Huse and Taylor's (1962) indices will be used for the purposes of this research.

Muchinsky (1977) commented that owing to the complex nature of and the measurement of absenteeism, careful consideration should be exercised in comparing studies, because many of them use different definitions of absenteeism. In addition, the

issue of accurate record keeping of absenteeism exacerbates the problem of studying absenteeism effectively (Harrison & Hulin, 1989).

Further compounding the problem of measuring absenteeism is the fact that the various measures used in empirical studies are not typically related to each other. Harrison and Martocchio (1998) indicated that researchers should clearly describe their rationale for the timing of their measurements of other variables, and the length of absence aggregation periods.

In their research, Harrison and Martocchio (1998) outlined the idea that the levels of individual absenteeism accumulated over any time period are most likely to reflect variables that are defined and relatively stable over that period. They focused on the following three time periods as a source of variance in absenteeism:

2.4.1 Long-term absence

According to Harrison and Martocchio (1998), long term is defined as a time span of more than one year. As in all definitions, a one-year dividing line is somewhat arbitrary. However, the one-year interval period for absenteeism does have a degree of ecological validity, in other words, in addition to yearly rhythms being strong external “pacers” of behaviour patterns, many organisations use a fiscal or calendar year as their absence accounting period – determining when sanctions kick in and how strong they will be. Individuals themselves use such annual periods to regulate their absence taking (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998).

2.4.2 Mid-term absence

Mid-term sources of absence are absenteeism that can be deemed to have a time span of between three months and one year. This period includes quarters and single years, which are common intervals for absenteeism records and attendance patterning. For

mid-term periods, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and social situations were defined as the stable variables (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998).

2.4.3 Short-term absence

Short-term absence is absenteeism can be defined as having a time span of a few days to three months (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998). This covers the range of most decision-based studies, as well as the so- called “attendance spell” approach used in the predicting the length of time until someone takes his or her next absence. Variance due to attendance decision parameters, acute work and life stressors or relative dissatisfaction can be highlighted in a short-term aggregation period. A useful way to view this entire set of ideas is a cascade of time-based effects. Long-term influences flow into mid-term ones. In turn, mid-term influences pour into short-term ones.

One notable development in absence research has been a growing awareness of the importance and (mis)treatment of the concept of time (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998). Hence, it was necessary, in the initial section, to review time-based systems for organising theoretical propositions about absenteeism.

Causes must precede effects. Unfortunately, this axiom is frequently violated in work on absenteeism (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998). Future work aimed at understanding the origins of absence should therefore measure those purported causes before absenteeism occurs, using a lag period relevant to those causes. Furthermore, absence researchers should clearly describe their rationale for the timing of their measurement of other variables. To this end researchers require a time-based framework to help them make meaningful aggregation choices (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998).

For the purposes of this research, absenteeism will be determined by the frequency of absence spanning a one year period (mid-term absence).

However, different causes are more or less detectable, given the time frame over which absenteeism is cumulated. The same is true of absenteeism consequences. This idea is outlined in more detail below.

2.5 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

Schneider and Waite (2005) argue that for most individuals there is considerable overlap between work and family, and nowadays the pressures of work and family are increasing, leading to higher levels of absenteeism. In response, organisations endeavor to reduce work-family conflict.

Work-family conflict can be defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects” (Schneider & Waite, 2005, p. 335).

Elloy (2004) elaborates on the concept by distinguishing between three forms of work-family conflict. First, the time needed for one role makes it difficult to devote sufficient time to other roles. Secondly, the strain from one role makes it difficult to fulfil the requirements of another. Thirdly, the specific behaviours of one role make it difficult to fulfil the requirements of another.

According to Muchinsky (2000), there are three conceptual models to explain the relationship between work and family.

The spillover model asserts that there are links between what occurs in the workplace and in the family environment. It proposes that a person's work experiences influence what he or she does away from work. Spillover is the notion of a positive relationship between work and family variables (Muchinsky, 2000). The compensation model proposes an inverse relationship between work and family. It assumes what is provided by one makes up for what is missing in the other (Muchinsky, 2000). The segmentation model, however asserts that work and family are distinct spheres, purporting that an

individual can be successful in both without any influence on one another. The two spheres run parallel but for all practical purposes, are separate from each other (Muchinsky, 2000).

According to Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport (2006), three critical and interrelated factors are central to work-family conflict. Firstly, paid work has become increasingly demanding and invasive. This may be because of poverty levels, new forms of work and working patterns and the intrinsic satisfaction of some forms of work. The invasiveness of paid work diverts time and energy from other equally important parts of life. Secondly, the time and energy expended in caring for others, is an important concern. In the recent past, it has been women who have struggled to fit in caring responsibilities, (e.g, their children) with other activities. Thirdly, the ways in which men and women experience and negotiate their roles, identities and relationships with each other is also relevant.

According to Harrison and Martocchio (1998), 6 loosely defined classes of variables are hypothesised to be the causes of absence. First, there are long-term causes which include the following (1) personality and (2) demographic variables. Secondly, the mid-term causes include (3) job satisfaction, (4) organisational commitment and (5) social context. Thirdly, the short-term causes which include (6) decision making mechanisms.

2.5.1 Personality

Aamodt (2004) has formulated an interesting theory of absenteeism, which argues that absenteeism is a result of an individual's personality traits. Further research suggests that enduring personality traits account for absenteeism's moderate stability over time and situations. According to Porter and Steers (1973), employees with extreme levels of emotional instability, anxiety and low achievement orientation, aggression, independence and sociability are likely to be the most frequent absentees. Hogan and Hogan (1989) assert that those with fairly high levels of hostility, impulsiveness, social insensitivity, and alienation are more prone to engage in delinquent work behaviours such as absenteeism. According to Aamodt (2004), if more research were to support

this theory, taking cognisance of personality dispositions in placement decisions would become a feasible organisational intervention in combating the costly and disruptive problem of absenteeism.

2.5.2 Demographic variables

Demographic variables are widely used in the study of absenteeism and turnover (Goldberg & Waldman, 2000; Price, 1995). Price (1995) further postulates that demographic variables can assist in the construction of causal models and in the management of organisations. Information of this kind, for example, can help with recruitment and selection decisions in organisations. The most common demographic variables used in research will be discussed, namely age, marital status, number of dependants and gender.

The Steers and Rhodes (1990) model introduced a series of propositions implying that an individual's demographic characteristics (personal factors, family characteristics, gender and race) indirectly influence absenteeism through sets of medial variables (such as expectations and job satisfaction) and proximal constructs (attendance motivation and ability to attend). These proximal constructs are also predicated to interact – the effects of attendance motivation are neutralised by low ability to attend. An underlying premise of Steers and Rhodes's (1990) model is that an employee's short-term motivation and ability to attend work are the direct precursors of attendance.

2.5.2.1 Gender

To the extent that gender is treated as a group category instead of an individual trait, expectations for behaviour, including absenteeism, are likely to be influenced by widely held gender stereotypes.

It is acknowledged that many women in paid employment have two jobs - one at the workplace and another at home. Traditional role expectations mean that women often

place the family first and consider caring for them to be their primary role (Field & Bramwell, 1998).

According to Miller (1984, p. 279), “nearly every published study dealing with sick absence for women as compared to men shows a significantly higher rate for women”. In Miller’s (1984) study on average, across all age groups, women had more sick absences than men. However, sick absences for women were not higher than those of men in every age category. For all workers over 55 years of age, women had fewer sick absences than men, and for single workers over 35, women had fewer absences than men (Miller, 1984). According to Miller (1984), these data indicated that responsibility for child rearing is a key factor in higher female sick absences. This conclusion was not only based on the fact that women between 20 and 34 years old were absent more than men, but that married women in those age categories were absent more than single women.

However, to satisfy their labour needs, firms are striving to entice those not in the labour forces to enter. Among the groups consciously targeted are women with young children. This trend has resulted in an increasingly greater demand for childcare and an increased level of work-family conflict for families with young children (Connelly et al., 2004).

There has been an influx of women into the labour force in the last few years and in South Africa, women constitute about 54% of the labour force (Robbins et al., 2003). The authors postulate that women’s preferences are significantly different to those of men in that women tend to prefer part-time work and flexible work schedules in order to accommodate their family responsibilities. It is therefore possible that if these options are not available to women, this could influence their absence patterns in organisations.

However, according to Robbins et al. (2003), the historical role of women in caring for children has changed in the last generation, and nowadays men are taking responsibility for problems associated with childcare. Differences in absenteeism, based on traditional

female roles, will therefore disappear as more women join organisations and pursue long term careers.

What are the consequences of commonly held gender stereotypes on the expectations surrounding absenteeism among women (Patton & Johns, 2007)? According to these authors because the general stereotypes about women, such as their lower commitment to work, their double burden of work and childcare and higher levels of stress it is more expected and acceptable for women to be absent.

2.5.2.2 Number of dependants

Prior to the arrival of children, men and women are equally likely to be in formal paid work. The presence of children, however, results in substantial changes in the propensity to work for both genders but in opposite directions. Some 82% of men are reported to work prior to the arrival of children, and 88% when children are present. The percentage of women working prior to children (83%) declines dramatically to 62% for those with children (Paull, 2006).

Employees often report absence because of events or conditions beyond their control. It is estimated that 40% of absenteeism is unavoidable. One such unavoidable event is when employees' children suddenly become ill and they have to report an unscheduled absence (Aamodt, 2004).

Research on the relationship between number of dependants and absenteeism is mixed. In their research, Hoque and Islam (2003) found a nonsignificant relationship between absenteeism and number of dependants. This could be attributed to the fact that many employees invest in aftercare and day care facilities for their dependants. In contrast, Voss, Floderus and Didericheson (2001) and Goldberg and Waldman (2000) found a modest relationship between absenteeism and number of dependants. Voss and his colleagues found that respondents with small children between the ages 0 and 6 years reported higher rates of absence than those with older children. According to

Robbins et al. (2003), a logical explanation is that when small children are ill, their parents normally stay home to either take them to a doctor or place them in someone else's care.

Paull (2006) contends that the findings of Voss et al. (2001) support the theory that gender differences in the formal labour market stem from the presence of children in the home and that childbirth and children entering school are critical times in women's employment. Birth marks a dramatic decline in participation in work for women, while school entry is a time of considerable turnover in participation. Further studies (Paull, 2006) indicate that the "family – gap" – that is, the differences in work behaviour between women without children and mothers – could be more significant than the gender gap.

2.5.2.3 Marital status

According to Robbins et al. (2003), available research indicates that married employees have fewer absences than their unmarried co-workers. These authors postulate that since marriage imposes increased responsibilities that make a job more valuable and important, married employees will be less likely to miss work. The question of causation, however, remains unclear because it is possible that unmarried employees might also report low levels of absenteeism, given that absenteeism depends on different factors.

2.5.2.4. Age

The impact of the aging workforce on organisations has become a vital research area. This is mainly because of recent legislation, such as the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, which practically outlaws mandatory retirement (Kacmar & Ferris, 1989; Robbins et al., 2003). In addition, the continuing threat of potential age discrimination lawsuits has created awareness around the aging work force. Moreover, Robbins et al. (2003) maintain that in South Africa, the impact of HIV and AIDS will have a crippling effect on the work force.

This implies that South African organisations will be faced with an aging workforce because of a decline in the number of young employees entering organisation owing to the impact of HIV and AIDS. Employers will thus have to become more aware of the values, abilities and skills of older workers. The presence of an older workforce has implications for organisations because this has an impact on organisation variables such as productivity, turnover and absenteeism (Robbins et al., 2003).

Currently, the literature posits that absenteeism is negatively related to age (Johnson, Crohan & Crawford., 2003; Lau, Au & Ho, 2003; Voss, et al 2001). This implies that absenteeism is higher among younger employees. According to Martocchio (1989), the rationale for this is greater job commitment among older employees. Furthermore, Siu (2002) and Voss et al. (2001) found that short periods of sick leave are more common among younger employees, probably because older employees usually have greater responsibilities at work and tend not to request sick leave for minor illnesses.

In contrast to the above view, researchers such as Peiro et al. (1999), as quoted by Siu (2002), found that older workers are more prone to sickness absence than younger workers. The most common reasons cited are health deterioration of older employees and longer recovery when injured (Robbins et al., 2003).

Another contradiction to the age-absenteeism relationship was reported in a study conducted by Hoque and Islam (2003). They found a nonsignificant relationship between age and absenteeism. Rhodes (1983), as cited by Martocchio (1989), concluded that the relationship between age and absenteeism may depend on things such as the type of absence measures used, whether the job is physically demanding and the employee's gender. According to these researchers, employee absences will therefore depend on these type of factors, and not necessarily the age of the employees. Research on the relationship between age and absenteeism is, at best, equivocal.

2.5.3 Job satisfaction

According to Vanden-Heuvel (1997), there are differences in the explanatory factors relating to the likelihood of men's and women's absence or family reasons specifically relating to job satisfaction. More specifically, this study suggests that women's absence for family reasons is associated with their ability to attend rather than their motivation to attend to work (Vanden-Heuvel, 1997). In contrast, for men, family-related absence seems to be determined by factors relating to both their ability and motivation to attend. Job satisfaction also plays a part in determining how likely men (but not women) are to take time off to care for a sick family member (Vanden-Heuval, 1997). Men who are more satisfied with their work, and thus more motivated to attend each day, are less likely to have been absent to care for ill family members (Vanden-Heuval, 1997).

2.5.4 Organisational commitment

Organisational commitment refers to the extent to which an employee feels a sense of allegiance to his or her employer (Muchinsky, 1999). There are three proposed components to this construct, namely the affective components which refers to an employee's emotional attachment to and identification with the organisation (Muchinsky, 1999). The continuance component refers to commitment based on the costs associated with leaving the organisation (Muchinsky, 1999). The normative component refers to an employee's feeling of obligation to remain with the organisation (Muchinsky, 1999).

A large number of studies have examined the relationship between the different kinds of commitment and absenteeism, and it would seem that affective commitment has the strongest relationship with absence behaviour (Burton, Lee & Holtom, 2002). The results for normative commitment are less consistent. Meyer (1997) found that normative commitment was negatively related to absenteeism, while Somers (1995) found no relationship between normative commitment and absenteeism. Further evidence

demonstrates an inverse relationship between organisational commitment and absenteeism (Robbins et al., 2003).

Despite the fact that organisational commitment and its various dimensions have been shown to be directly related to absenteeism, their effect is weak, accounting for less than 10% of the variance explained in absenteeism (Burton et al., 2002).

In linking commitment to an individual's motivation to attend, a clearer picture begins to emerge around absenteeism. According to Rhodes and Steers (1990), affective, normative and continuance commitment should all be positively related to motivation to attend but will differ in their relative strength. It could be expected that if a person has a high level of affect to his or her organisation (affective commitment) he or she would be more likely to be motivated to attend work every day. In addition, if one feels that one should go to work (normative commitment) this will be strongly related to motivation to attend. However, if one feels one has to go to work (continuance commitment), a weaker relationship with motivation to attend can be expected. In the case of continuance commitment, economic conditions, personal finances and other nonorganisational factors are likely to enter into the equation.

2.5.5 Social context

Johns and Nicholson (1982) argue for the influence of the social environment on work absence, rejecting the traditional implicit assumption that absence is a private behaviour that occurs without regard to interpersonal context. The influence of social context on absence is embodied in the authors' conception of a so-called "absence culture", defined as "the set of shared understandings about absence legitimacy and the established 'custom and practice' of employee absence behaviour and its control (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998, p. 313).

2.5.6 Decision making

Firmly anchored in the short term, both economic and psychological researchers have depicted absence as the result of a daily choice process. In the economic approach, employees are assumed to make work attendance decisions in a way that strives towards maximum utility, making themselves as happy as possible, given finite resources of time and money (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998). A common prediction of the economic models is that individuals tend to take as many fully paid absence days in a given period as allowed or not penalised by their employer. In another short - term model, Harrison and Martocchio (1998) borrowed decision making elements from the social psychological theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour. They proposed that when employees are prompted to think about attending work, they consider subjective expected utility, that is, “how much would I like to attend work?”, subjective norm about attendance, that is, “how much do other people expect me to attend work?”; and perceived control over attendance, that is, “how strongly do I feel that I can attend work?” These fluctuating cognitions combine additively to shape attendance intention, which then determines actual attendance.

To summarise, a person’s absence from or attendance at work on a specific day can be deemed to be from short-term motivation, or choice from at least two competing alternatives. Each component of that decision can be linked to mid-term and long-term absence. Attitude towards attendance at work can be traced to organisational commitment, job involvement or relative job satisfaction. Subjective norms about attendance might reflect a work group’s or organisation’s absence culture. Perceived control, which is short term, is closely linked to Steers and Rhodes’s (1990) ability to attend. Relative weights for each decision parameter may differ across personality types and demographic groups.

2.6 A MODEL OF ABSENTEEISM

The Steers and Rhodes (1990) model of absenteeism is regarded as one of the most influential and often cited models in absenteeism literature. In the model, employee attendance is primarily determined by an employee's ability and motivation to attend (Burton et al. 2002). These two variables are also theorised to interact in such a way that someone's perceived ability to attend moderates his or her motivation to attend. Motivation to attend is influenced by a person's satisfaction with his or her job and various pressures to attend (Burton et al., 2002).

The predictiveness of different components of the Steers and Rhodes (1990) model may depend on the type of situation causing an employee's absence. For example, if someone in an employee's family is ill, the employee may need to stay at home no matter how great the motivation for attendance.

However, if the absence is caused by someone's low motivation to attend, the organisation may be able to take steps to increase his or her attendance (Burton et al., 2002). Taken as a whole, absenteeism caused by family issues, say, a sick child, should be attributed to one's perceived ability to attend but not motivation to attend.

The job situation is described in terms of job scope, job level, role stress, work group size, co-worker relations and opportunities for advancement. Values and expectations are determined by personal characteristics, such as, age, sex, education and tenure. Satisfaction combined with various other pressures to attend such as economic conditions, incentives, work group norms, personal work ethic and commitments to determine the attendance motivation situation (Brooke, 1986).

Attendance motivation is a primary determinant of actual attendance, provided that the employee has the ability to attend. The ability to attend is determined by variables such as illness, family responsibilities and transport problems, which can act as constraints on employee choice.

Attendance motivation and the ability to attend interact to determine actual attendance. Although, not explicitly stated, the determinants of attendance motivation appear to relate to voluntary absenteeism, whereas the ability to attend variables appear to refer to an involuntary absenteeism situation (Brooke, 1986).

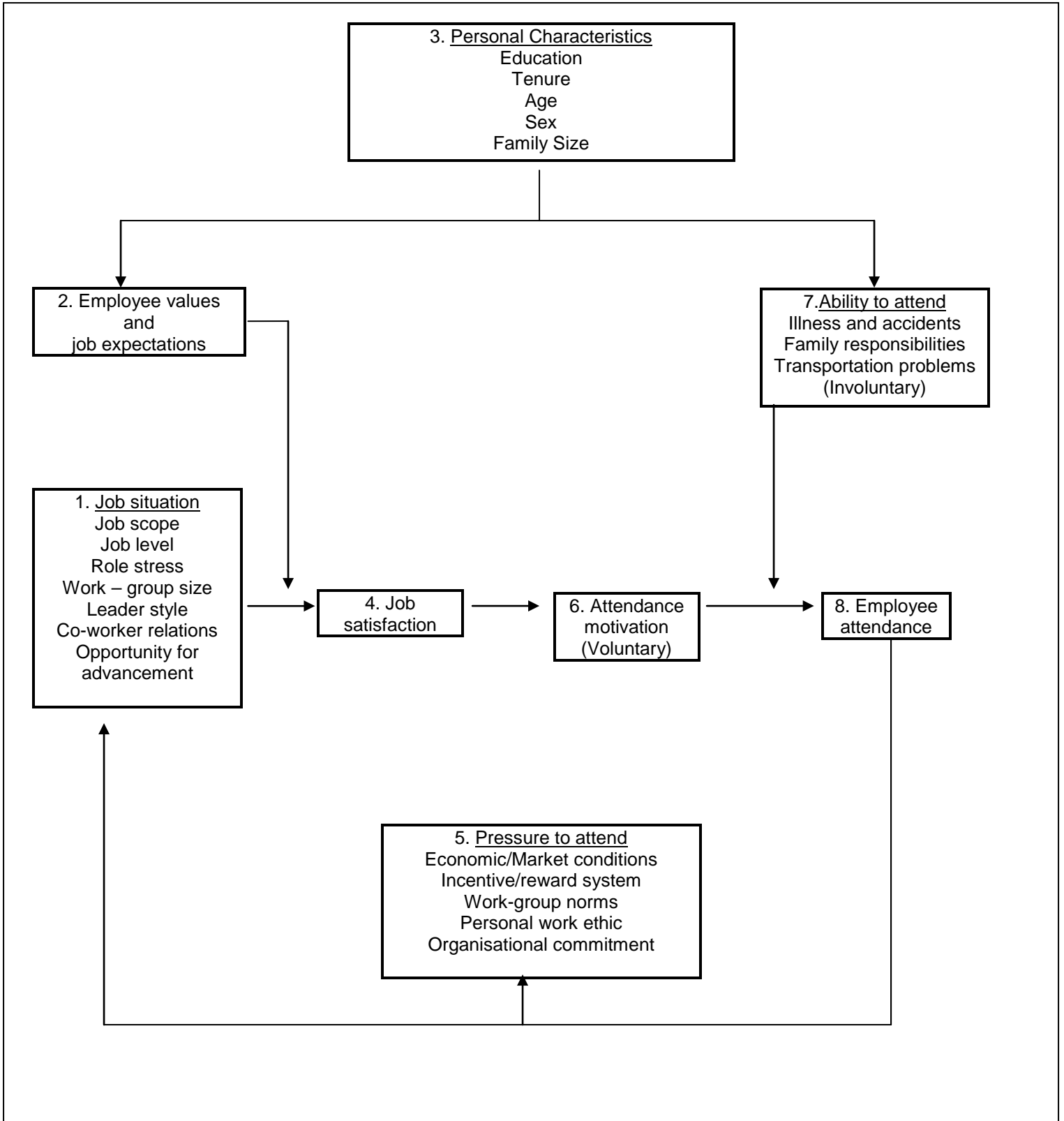


Figure 2.1: The Steers and Rhodes's model of employee absenteeism (1990, p. 46)

According to Brooke (1986), the voluntary end of the continuum represents instances in which the employee chooses between work and nonwork alternatives, and “decides to go fishing”. Absences of this sort are typically of short duration. The involuntary end point refers to instances such as one’s illness or illness of a family member in which there is little or no choice associated with the absence event.

Brooke (1986) defines job satisfaction as the degree to which an individual likes his or her job. In the proposed model, job satisfaction plays a crucial, but indirect role as an intervening variable that mediates the effects of its determinants on the other endogenous variables. Health status refers to the physical and mental states of wellbeing – addressed under “illness and accidents” by Steers and Rhodes (1990). Illness is widely recognised as the primary cause of absenteeism.

Alcohol involvement is the extent to which individuals use alcohol as a coping mechanism – this concept focuses on the effects of employee absenteeism because of alcohol misuse (Steers & Rhodes, 1990).

Job involvement is a cognitive belief that describes the degree to which the individual psychologically identifies with his or her job – related to Steers and Rhodes’s (1990) attendance motivation. Organisational commitment, however, is defined as loyalty to the organisation (Steers & Rhodes, 1990).

One reason why the limited research on motivation to attend and ability to attend has reported mixed results is that absenteeism is multidimensional rather than one-dimensional (Burton et al., 2002). Hence, separating and predicting different types of absenteeism might be useful.

Although empirical evidence is inconsistent, the preponderance of evidence indicates that family variables relate to absenteeism (Burton et al., 2002).

Goff et al. (1990) found that conflict between one's work and family role relates to increased frequency of absenteeism. Further more, Zaccaro, Stephen, Craig and Quinn (1991) reported that larger families do not necessarily lead to increased absenteeism, but that the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism appears to be stronger for employees with smaller families. It is therefore possible that affect towards one's job or level of motivation to attend becomes less important in predicting absenteeism when one has increasing family responsibilities. Taken as a whole, absenteeism attributed to family issues should be related to one's perceived ability to attend but not motivation to attend.

The same is true of transportation problems. No matter how high a person's level of motivation to attend is, if he or she has transportation problems, it is unlikely that he or she will report for work (Burton et al., 2002).

Absence due to illness, however, is more likely to be related to one's motivation to attend than one's ability to attend. It is commonly thought that absence due to illness represents involuntary absenteeism and should therefore be related to one's ability to attend. However, some theoretical and empirical research suggests that absence due to illness may not strictly represent involuntary absenteeism but may in fact be voluntary.

To summarise, those variables within the control of the employee can be linked to voluntary absence. In contrast, those variables deemed to be out of the control of the employee, say, a sick child, are linked to involuntary absence.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter, first defined absenteeism, and then explained the types of absenteeism, the dimensions of and causes of absenteeism. The chapter concluded with a discussion of a model of absenteeism.

CHAPTER 3

ON-SITE EMPLOYER-SPONSORED CHILDCARE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will begin with an overview of the definition of on-site ESCC followed by a description of the various family-friendly programmes that exist, including alternative work schedules, resource and referral services, financial assistance and on-site childcare facilities. This will be followed by a discussion of the benefits of an on-site ESCC facility. The chapter concludes with an example of an on-site ESCC facility and the theoretical integration of absenteeism and an on-site ESCC facility.

3.2 DEFINITION OF ON-SITE EMPLOYER-SPONSORED CHILDCARE

Historically, employers supported families and childcare during wartime. Employers first became involved in childcare initiatives during the Civil War, so that women could help in the war effort. For the same reason, childcare centers boomed during World War I and World War II (Friedman, 2001). After World War II, employer–provided family supports virtually disappeared until the 1960s.

In 1968, the Stride Rite Shoe Company opened a childcare centre in Roxbury, Massachusetts, to ease racial tension in the community. Such pioneering efforts and campaigns by government and community leaders to educate employers about the need for family support achieved little during the 1970s and 1980s (Friedman, 2001). Widespread implementation of employer programmes did not occur until the late 1980s, when a shrinking talent pool forced companies to start competing.

Daycare is generally considered to be “a system of services for children in families who need supplementary care outside of their home for part of the day, the care being

provided by adults who nurture the children; responding to their educational, social and physical needs” (Milkovich & Gomez 1976, p. 111).

According to the Department of Social Development (April 2001), the primary purpose of a place of care is to provide care to children in the temporary absence of their parents. A place of care has a responsibility to enhance the development of the child physically, mentally, psychologically, emotionally, morally, culturally and socially.

Advocates of daycare argue that a well-designed and well-run programme can positively influence parent’s work behaviours by relieving their concerns about their child’s safety and development (Milkovich & Gomez, 1976).

Arthur and Cook (2004), define family-friendly programmes as any programme designed to alleviate individual conflict between work and family.

On-site employer-sponsored childcare can therefore be defined as a childcare facility on the premises of the employer, which meets the educational, social, physical and emotional needs of the employees’ children.

3.3 TYPES OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY PRACTICES

Based on the above, an on-site ESCC facility can be regarded as one type of family-friendly practice. Broadly speaking, these practices have examined the relationship between family-friendly practices and employee affective, cognitive and behavioural outcomes.

These so-called “family-friendly practices” have been hailed by popular press and advocates of social change as methods for ameliorating the conflict between working and raising families (Grover & Crooker, 1995). Family-friendly practices include flexible work scheduling, family leave policies and childcare assistance. The family-responsive workplace has become a means of attracting and retaining a dedicated workforce (Grover & Crooker, 1995).

Childcare problems represent one avenue through which child-rearing responsibilities hinder a woman's ability to successfully combine work and family. Care disruptions and resulting missed work are also significant problems in their own right (Udansky & Wolf, 2008). Care disruptions are likely to entail additional leg work and stress for mothers, who must arrange back-up care and ensure its quality. Missing work owing to disruptions can mean using up valuable vacation and personal days or, for less fortunate mothers, losing pay or even a job. Understanding the prevalence and predictors of childcare disruptions and the resultant missed work, is a necessary first step towards developing policies to help mothers bridge the domains of childcare and employment (Udansky & Wolf, 2008).

According to Sutton and Noe (2005), there are two areas of research relating to family-friendly practices. One area of interest focuses on the conflict individuals face as a result of involvement in multiple roles. The other area of interest relates to the examination of family-friendly practices and their impact on the individual. By integrating these two areas of research, one can start to examine and understand why family-friendly practices intended to eliminate work-life conflict are not always effective in reducing conflict.

Initially there appear to be two main reasons why organisations are unsuccessful in reducing work-life conflict. First, organisations adopt family-friendly practices with little credence according to operational efficiencies. Second, existing practices do not always meet the needs of the employees. Furthermore organisational policies either promote an environment of control or an environment of commitment. A so-called "control" set of policies is designed to reduce direct labour costs or improve efficiency by enforcing employee compliance with specified rules (Sutton & Noe, 2005). In contrast, commitment policies are designed to shape employee behaviours and attitudes by forging a psychological link between organisational and employee goals. Typically family-friendly practices mimic the commitment perspective, thereby adding little value.

Previous research suggests that employees who have difficulty managing their work and nonwork lives may experience productivity losses, including increased absences, turnover and reduced outputs (Sutton & Noe, 2005). In the absence of public support for childcare and statutory entitlements to family leave, many organisations have experienced pressure from employees to introduce what became known as “family-friendly” practices (Gambles, Lewis, & Rapoport, 2006). Moreover, employers’ interest in ‘family-friendly practices have developed alongside other trends, including downsizing and efficiency drives designed to encourage employees to work more intensively (Gambles et al., 2006).

While there has been a shift in terminology from “work-family” and “family-friendly practices” to “work-life” and “work-life balance” and there is agreement that “work-life balance” terminology is potentially more inclusive, this also paints a superficial and over simplistic picture of the many challenges it seeks to address (Gambels et al., 2006). Hence for the purpose of this study, the term “family-friendly practices” as defined by Arthur and Cook (2003), will be used.

Nowadays, employers are able to choose from a variety of family-friendly practices, although each increases in planning, costs and liability for the employer. The first level includes alternative work schedules (Auerbach, 1988). At the second level, resource and referral services are a low-cost option for employers. These services help employees identify childcare resources in their area (Schmidt & Duenas, 2002). At the third level, some employers help reduce childcare costs by securing discounts directly with childcare providers. The fourth level involves employers who find it beneficial to set up an on-site childcare facility (Schmidt & Duenas, 2002). There are a number of options in each of these levels.

3.3.1 Alternative work schedules

Alternative work schedules include the following practices: flexitime, part-time work and job sharing. Employers offering alternative work schedules argue that they are indirectly

supporting childcare by making it possible for parents to care for their children at home most of the time or at least better accommodate the normal operating hours of external childcare providers (Auerbach, 1988).

While flexitime, part-time work and job sharing reduce the amount of extra familial childcare, they do not eliminate it all together (Auerbach, 1988). Flexitime still requires an employee to work eight hours a day, but the starting and finishing times of these eight hours are flexible. In addition, flexitime has traditionally been implemented to reduce absenteeism, tardiness or traffic congestion, and to raise employee morale and productivity, not assist with childcare needs (Auerbach, 1988). Part-time however is more desirable for two reasons: it allows time at home during the day to care for the child as well as reducing the costs associated with external childcare. From the employer's perspective, there is little incentive to introduce part-time work because it proves just as costly as full-time employment (Auerbach, 1988). A third alternative is job sharing, but much like part-time work it has proven to be an expensive exercise for employers.

3.3.2 Resource and referral services

The second major category is resource and referral services, which generally include referral services, employee assistance programmes and parent education. Many parents are in need of guidance in terms of how to choose a provider, what is available in their community and what rights they and their children have to protect them in different childcare situations (Auerbach, 1988). Employers are becoming actively involved in addressing the above questions by providing information and referral services for their employees (Auerbach, 1988). One advantage of referral services is that little or no cost is involved and they address a variety of needs (Auerbach, 1988).

Employee assistance programmes afford employees the opportunity to talk to a professional counsellor about problems in their family or personal life. According to

Auerbach (1988), when concerns about what is happening with one's child during the day translates into tardiness or absenteeism, it becomes a problem for the employer.

Employers providing parent education do so primarily to reduce family-related stress spilling over into the workplace. The information and support provided by such an initiative can assist employees in learning coping strategies and becoming less distracted at work (Auerbach, 1988).

3.3.3 Financial assistance

The form of financial assistance an employer is likely to offer is affected by the size of the organisation, its service, the extent of the parent's needs and existing community resources (Auerbach, 1988). Various forms of financial assistance exist, including vendor arrangements and vouchers (Auerbach, 1988).

Vendor arrangements usually involve an employer arranging for a discounted rate for employees by purchasing a number of enrolment spaces (Auerbach, 1988). While employees may benefit from reduced childcare costs they are limited in terms of the provider they can use (Auerbach, 1988). Vouchers, however, are a way of subsidising childcare without limiting the employee to a particular provider (Auerbach, 1988).

3.3.4 On-site childcare facilities

Employer responses to the childcare needs of working parents are influenced by the inadequacies of the childcare market. Not only is there not enough care, but it is often below the quality parents desire and not available during nontraditional work hours. Creating childcare on-site allows employers to design a programme that conforms to work demands, with hours that can accommodate all shifts, and adjustable to meet variable demands. More importantly, employer-sponsored childcare programmes are typically of a much higher quality than most centers in the community (Friedman, 2001).

This is one of the most expensive options for employers but affords the most control (Auerbach, 1988). Employer-sponsored childcare centers assume many forms but generally have the following characteristics in common:

- accepting only children whose parents are employed by the organisation
- accepting children between three months of age and preschool age (6 years old)
- type of educational curriculum, (e.g., Montessori)

Various factors have come to play a role in the adoption of on-site employer-sponsored childcare, including changing perceptions, work force demographics and altered family norms (Kossek et al., 1994).

According to Kossek et al. (1994), despite this, the increasing employer interest in childcare can more easily be attributed to growing views that work and family issues are a business concern than to empirical evidence demonstrating economic benefits.

Given the fact that empirical evidence has failed to prove the economic efficiency of adopting a childcare programme, it can be argued that organisational isomorphic forces have shaped the move towards childcare assistance.

As an alternative, employers are increasingly not opening full-time childcare centres, but back-up or emergency centers designed to handle breakdowns in childcare arrangements. With far less investment than is required by a full-time centre, back-up care yields a more direct return on investment (Friedman, 2001).

3.4 DIMENSIONS OF AN ON-SITE ESCC FACILITY

Based on the definition of on-site ESCC, a childcare facility needs to meet the educational, social, physical and emotional needs of the child.

Physical needs refer to the child's right to food, physical care and good health. The child should participate in activities under suitable and healthy conditions and should have sufficient rest. It is essential that the childcare worker should be aware of the nutritional needs of the various age groups (Department of Social Development, April 2001).

Providing for physical needs includes assisting the child to master certain skills. This includes toilet training and the acquisition of acceptable standards with regard to hygiene, including washing hands, brushing teeth, cleaning nails, brushing hair and so forth.

The space and equipment provided should be planned in such way that, with the appropriate assistance from the staff, the child is afforded the opportunity to discover, explore and master his or her environment and physical needs (Department of Social Development, April 2001).

Since each child has a unique personality his or her needs should be treated as an individual and his or her social and emotional needs taken into account. Through support and guidance, the caregiver should help the child to develop increasing control over emotions, feelings and desires. He or She should also be taught acceptable forms of behaviour that need to be adhered to (Department of Social Development, April 2001).

The opportunities provided to communicate, learn, explore, make decisions and use different kinds of equipment serve as a critical basis for the development and extension of cognitive needs and abilities. Play stimulates the child's thought process, the ability to reason and creativity (Department of Social Development, April 2001).

A holistic approach to early childhood development implies an appreciation of the importance of considering the child's health, nutrition, education, psychosocial and other needs, in the context of the family and community (Department of Social Development, April 2001).

When developing a programme the age and developmental needs of the children should be taken into consideration (Department of Social Development, April 2001), as explained below.

- **Birth to 18 months**

The programme should allow for learning, feeding and changing of nappies. Language development should be a focus area, accompanied by activities that include peeping games and the handling of colourful toys.

- **Eighteen to 36 months**

The programme should include stimulating creative activities, problem-solving opportunities, games using the imagination and language development. Depending on the child's stage development, time should be allocated to toilet training. Children can also start with simple drawing activities and learn simple songs and rhymes.

- **Three to four years**

The programme for this group may be more structured and should provide for a suitable variety of activities. They can play with more advanced apparatus, and group activities such as drawing, painting, singing and listening to stories are advised. Provision should also be made for a variety of fantasy games, a book corner and a nature table. Culture-related activities should not be neglected.

The following activities should be promoted (Department of Social Development, April 2001):

- language stimulation
- motor development
- independent behaviour
- cooperation
- thinking skills

- premaths and reading skills

3.5 BENEFITS OF AN ON-SITE ESCC FACILITY

Only 14% of infants and 17% of toddlers not cared for by their mothers, are cared for in organised childcare centers – either daycare centers or nursery schools – compared to a third of preschoolers (Liebowitz, Klerman & Waite, 1992). The remainder receive care from other family members or non relatives. Care for very young children is less widely available than care for older children, and usually more expensive. Because childcare availability and costs depend on the child's age, the process that determines a woman's work and childcare choice depends on the age of her child (Liebowitz et al., 1992).

According to Hofferth and Collins (2000), quality of care is a vital factor expected to affect mothers' decisions by influencing the costs and benefits of work and home time. Hofferth and Collins (2000) define high-quality childcare as a benefit linked to positive outcomes for children and satisfaction for parents.

In order for the needs of both the employer and employee to be met, a holistic approach needs to be adopted. That is, both the employee and employer need to be considered in the work and family context. Employees' needs, company goals, company finances and community resources also need to be considered (Marques, 1999).

The family needs of employees are not homogenous or static. In other words, child bearing employees need leave for childbirth and infant care, and the parents of preschoolers need high - quality affordable childcare and reduced working hours to meet the emotional needs of young children. In addition, parents of school - going children need afterschool, vacation and summer care (Glass & Estes, 1997). The diversity of these needs often means that the utility of the childcare practices offered are optimal for one class of employees at one point in time, but may have little or no effect on reducing absenteeism for another class (Glass & Estes, 1997).

The question also arises about whether some types of childcare result in more problems than others. Emlen and Koren (1984), as cited in Neal, Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton and Emlen, (1993), found that parents using “market care” outside the home had significantly higher absenteeism rates than those using care at home by a spouse or adult.

To compound this, determining the benefits of employer-sponsored childcare programmes for employers is challenging, given the complex interactions between working conditions (Connelly et al., 2004). Hence, even companies with employer-sponsored childcare programmes have found it difficult to quantify the value of the childcare benefits they are offering (Connelly et al., 2004).

The anticipated effects of ESCC have apparently been formed by history in which ESCC for women workers was acknowledged to be absolutely essential (Miller, 1984). Childcare programmes were believed to have: (1) increased ability to attract employees, (2) lower absenteeism, (3) improved employee attitudes, and (4) improved community relations (Miller, 1984).

There is some evidence that high-quality, family-responsive on-site centers reduce absenteeism, although the results are mixed. Milkovich and Gomez (1976) found that daycare participants’ average monthly rates of turnover and absenteeism were significantly lower than those of the nonparticipants. In other words, lower employee absenteeism and turnover rates were related to the enrolment in the on-site employer-sponsored daycare centre. In a similar study conducted by Youngblood and Chambers-Cook (1984), as cited in Neal et al. (1993), there was a significant reduction in both turnover and absenteeism after on-site care was introduced in a textile firm.

In contrast, Goff et al. (1990) found no evidence that on-site childcare reduces the work-family conflict and absenteeism of employed parents. However, an equally important finding was that employees who were more satisfied with the quality of their child’s care, regardless of location, experienced less work-family conflict. In turn, lower levels of work-family conflict were found to be related to lower absenteeism.

According to Kossek and Nichol (1992), employees who are freed from childcare worries have better attitudes towards managing work and care, are able to concentrate better, and less frequently have to play catch up on the job. On-site care enables workers to have greater control over work-family conflict, thereby reducing the negative spillover between the domains.

One of the most significant factors affecting an employers' involvement in childcare is the proportion of female employees it has. Those with large proportions of women are more likely to provide childcare (Auerbach, 1990). A second significant organisational characteristic that affects interest in childcare is whether or not the employer is unionised. In general, employer-supported childcare programmes are present in nonunionised companies. This is because these programmes are found mostly in growth sectors of the economy that are highly female and traditionally not highly organised (Auerbach, 1990).

A third organisational characteristic relating to level of involvement in childcare is industry type. Financial, communication and service industry employers were more likely to offer or investigate childcare programmes than construction, manufacturing, sales and high-technology companies.

A fourth organisational characteristic of companies that plays a significant part in their attitude towards providing a childcare benefit is their corporate philosophy or culture. In general, employers who are already involved in childcare identify their philosophy as either "progressive" or "family-oriented" (Auerbach, 1990).

In sum, interest in employer-sponsored childcare is most likely in companies that (1) have a high proportion of women, (2) are in the service and finance sectors of the economy; (3) have employees of child-bearing age; (4) are nonunionised, (5) offer creative benefits; and (6) have relatively progressive employment policies and philosophies.

For the employer, the incentive to sponsor childcare falls into the following categories: (1) recruitment and retention, (2) reducing absenteeism and turnover, (3) a sense of social responsibility, (4) an interest in improving public relations, and (5) demands from existing employees (Auerbach, 1990).

In the same way as there are reasons for employers to become involved in childcare, there are equally compelling arguments against providing childcare. The most common reasons mentioned by those who do not support childcare practices are lack of demand, cost and concern about equality. Probably the most significant barrier to employer-sponsored childcare is the perceived lack of demand (Auerbach, 1990). This is a particularly significant barrier because it illustrates the extent to which employees hesitate to mention conflicts between work and family life, even though these directly affect their work performance. Female employees in professional and managerial positions often feel they could have only arrived at their current status by not drawing attention to family needs. At the same time, lower level employees may lack a formal mechanism for making such demands and fear that negative sanctions could result from taking the initiative (Auerbach, 1990).

Cost is also a commonly cited reason. Typically, instead of investigating all options, most companies that consider childcare support approach their investigation with the idea that ultimately they will have an on-site centre. A third barrier commonly mentioned by employers is the problem of equity. Both employers and employees are concerned that their organisations should not provide a service that favours some people and not others (Auerbach, 1990).

While the number of employers offering on-site childcare benefits has increased tremendously, some researchers suggest that offering on-site childcare benefits can cause resentment among childless workers, and/or workers with children who do not use the centre (Rothausen et al., 1998). Kossek and Nichol (as cited in Rothausen et al.,

1998), documented a frustration effect occurring with workers on a waiting list for their employer's on-site childcare.

According to Rothausen et al. (1998), justice theory may help explain this potential resentment. These theories state that individuals have certain values and norms regarding how employee rewards should be allocated. Therefore benefits offered only to workers with children, or hence only to some workers with children, violate both equity and equality-based reward allocation values. Hence - workers who do not receive these benefits may experience resentment (Rothausen et al., 1998).

The frustration effect and its potential effects on attitude and motivation, as well as procedural justice in the administration of childcare benefits, are likely to be critical for future issues for research and policy development (Kossek & Nichol, 1992).

The following question is therefore posed: "In terms of overall added value to the organisation, do the positive attitudinal and behavioural affects on centre users outweigh the negative effects on nonusers who are waiting for access?"

Employers need to see the impact of the programmes they implement on the company's bottom line. Ironically, while employers who are considering work/life programmes demand impact data, most companies that have implemented such solutions do not wish to spend the time or money studying their programmes (Friedman, 2001).

Auerbach (1990) identified the following three main problems in establishing a link between a childcare benefit and productivity gains: (1) defining and measuring productivity, (2) imputing causality between the childcare benefits and outcomes, and (3) determining whether the impacts attributed to childcare are worth the programmes cost to the employer.

Nonetheless, 20 years of study have yielded a solid foundation of research, which suggests that addressing work/life concerns can improve recruitment and retention

efforts, reduce absenteeism and tardiness, and increase job satisfaction and company loyalty. The target and scope of the impact will vary according to a particular strategy and how well it has been implemented and communicated (Friedman, 2001).

Impact studies indicate that work/life initiatives are effective at reducing turnover. Individual company studies have consistently shown that flexible work options increase the number of employees who intend staying with the company, and longer parental leaves with the option of returning to part-time hours, increase the likelihood that new mothers will return to work (Friedman, 2001).

Attendance at work, another outcome that matters to employers, is a function of both the desire and ability to arrive at work. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs and like their co-workers and boss are more likely to show up for work even when personal situations arise. Creating a more supportive work environment is critical to reducing absenteeism (Friedman, 2001). Childcare supports are case in point, since reliable childcare can eliminate breakdowns and the absences that often accompany such crises (Friedman, 2001).

For example, after Honeywell opened an on-site childcare centre, the company examined attendance records for those parents who used the centre. The group of centre-using parents missed 259 days of work in the 12 months before using the centre, but had missed only 30 days in the 12 months after they had starting using it (Friedman, 2001).

According to Sutton and Noe (2005), trade offs are experienced by both individuals and organisations when these family-friendly practices are implemented. Institutional theory suggests that organisations adopt family-friendly practices to gain legitimacy, but adoption of practices often occurs with little consideration of how the practices should be operated (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

Organisations experience at least three pressures consistent with institutional theory: (1) the management control component reflecting sensitivity to normative pressures; (2) an environmental component reflecting mimetic pressures; and (3) a coercive component reflecting coercive pressures. These components are developed on the basis of the human resource managers' experiences emanating from their own demographic background and the industry in which their organisation operates (Kossek et al., 1994).

According to Kossek et al. (1994), human resource professionals as a line management partner are sensitive to normative pressures to enhance occupational legitimacy. Adopting innovative programmes helps enhance this legitimacy. This component is rooted in the professional argument that childcare problems that interfere with work efficiency can be eliminated through employer-sponsored childcare.

Companies may also adopt childcare programmes to mirror the actions of those companies they view as successful (Kossek et al., 1994). The strength of mimetic pressure is demonstrated by the fact that the least costly options are also the most common because many firms follow the actions of leading competitors. In addition, adopting childcare programmes in response to mimetic forces may also enable firms to signal their progressiveness (Kossek et al., 1994).

The coercive component derived from coercive pressure is reflected in the belief that firms should only adopt childcare initiatives if they are absolutely compelled because of societal or governmental expectations. Furthermore, views that childcare may demonstrate a support for equal employment opportunities and affirmative action may apply.

Although organisations respond to normative, mimetic and coercive pressures, the danger is that they take little time to consider how the various family-friendly programmes should be operated and administered (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

Boundary theory is useful for understanding how individuals move between their work and family roles and for understanding the potential impact of family-friendly programmes (Sutton & Noe, 2005). Boundary theory suggests that meeting individual preferences to integrate or segment work and family is a key determinant of role conflict. Family-friendly programmes may not result in positive individual and organisational outcomes owing to the failure to meet employee preferences (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

The purposes of boundary theory are to understand how individuals engage in daily role transitions and the psychological movement between roles, from role exit to role entry (Sutton & Noe, 2005). Boundary theory operates on the basis of four major assumptions. First, it is assumed that roles are relatively stable. Second, it is assumed that there is variance between individuals in terms of the number of roles they prefer to enact. Third, individuals differ in their preference for role segmentation or role integration. In addition, people seek to minimise the difficulty associated with role transitions (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

According to Sutton and Noe (2005), role segmentation suggests that there are major differences in the roles experienced by individuals at work and home. Given the large discrepancies in roles, it is unlikely that one role will influence another. More specifically, under the conditions of segmented roles, the roles are not only highly differentiated but are also tied to a specific setting, and permit few interruptions across roles (Sutton & Noe, 2005). Examples of family-friendly programmes that seem to help individuals segment roles include condensed work weeks, part-time work and job-sharing arrangements. However, some of the costs associated with role segmentation are the difficulty that individuals face when they try to cross role boundaries and the problems relating to the transitioning between roles (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

In contrast, according to Sutton and Noe's research (2005), role integration is defined as roles that are weakly differentiated, not tied to specific places and times and often open to inter-role interruption. In general those programmes that help employees integrate roles are the ones that permit employees to design a working pattern that allows them

the most efficient use of their time and opportunity to fulfill both work and family obligations simultaneously. A case in point would be an on-site childcare centre affording employees the opportunity to have their children close to the job site, which allows them to check on their children throughout the day (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

The concern or cost associated with high role integration is severe blurring in an individual's work and family roles. Stated differently, role blurring, "may cause confusion and interruptions" that may impact on the individual's motivation and/or productivity (Sutton & Noe, 2005).

This discussion demonstrates that because individuals vary in their preferences and needs, simply providing a menu of family- friendly programmes may not help employees to meet their needs.

Seyler, Monroe and Garnard (1995) suggest rational choice theory as an appropriate theoretical perspective for understanding the behaviour of employers as they decide what level of family benefits to provide.

Rational choice theory assumes that individuals are rational, self-interested actors who seek to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs associated with their behaviours (Seyler et al., 1995, p. 172). If the benefits associated with a particular action exceed its costs, the rational individual or firm is likely to adopt that course of action. Moreover, rational individuals or organisations seek specific goals and adopt purposive behaviour designed to maximise the attainment of those goals.

3.6 AN EXAMPLE OF AN ON-SITE ESCC FACILITY

The following example is based on a real on-site ESCC facility that has been in operation for approximately 20 years. The purpose of this example is to draw a comparison between the requirements as per the Department of Social Development and an actual facility.

This particular facility is based on the principles of the Montessori method as described below (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

The principles of the Montessori method of education include the following (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008):

- (1) The whole child is educated - physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually.
- (2) The child is an active learner.
- (3) Intrinsic motivation is encouraged.
- (4) Self discipline is encouraged.

The classes are based on what is termed “vertical grouping” whereby the younger children learn from the older children, and the older children reinforce their knowledge by “teaching” the younger children (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

There are three areas in the school:

- (1) The infant/toddler community
- (2) The green group
- (3) The nursery school

The infant care community is aimed at meeting the care and developmental requirements of children between three months and 18 months of age. There are three directresses, with a ratio of 3.3:1 children to adults. Both opportunity and facilities exist in order to allow breastfeeding. The toddler care community consists of children between 18 months and +/- 2,5 years of age, with a ratio of 5:1 children to adults (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

The green group, with a ratio of 10:1 children to adults, focuses on the educational, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of children between the ages of 2,5 and four years of age. Here children have more independence in the sense that they are able to go to the toilet on their own and fetch their own lunch (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

The largest group, the nursery school, with a ratio of 6.6:1 children to adults is aimed at the care and developmental needs of children aged between four and six years of age. Children begin preparation for primary school (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

Children are taught practical life skills to promote independence. Here activities are real home from home activities and are familiar to the child in order to facilitate a connection between home and school. Sensorial skills are taught to refine the senses, on the basis of and the premises that the senses are the cornerstone of the way in which people experience. Here children are taught colours and shapes and learn to manipulate length, breadth and height (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

Mathematics is taught in a fun and exciting way, to enable the child to form a solid base for and concrete understanding of numbers. Language however sets the stage for the child to grow up and develop effective communication skills. Children have the opportunity to experience language through their tactile senses. This makes the learning of language fun and exciting (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

Children are further encouraged to learn about the world, its origins, geographical landforms and biomes, other inhabitants of the world and the cause and effect and preservation of the earth. They further learn about other cultures and traditions (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

The on-site ESCC facility is open from 07:30 to 17:15, Mondays to Fridays. Signing in and signing out of children is compulsory. Provision is made for someone other than the parent to fetch the children. However, the person fetching the child must fill in the

register with all his or her details. All the children's possessions must be clearly marked and the parent must supply a change of clothing for the child in case of an accident (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

Sick children must remain at home, and a clearance certificate is required from a doctor in the case of contagious diseases before the child will be allowed to return. Teachers are not permitted to administer medication of any kind (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

The school only closes during the December/January school holidays. Teaching staff take leave at staggered times during the other holidays, with the school operating on a skeleton staff.

In the event that a child parent is retrenched, dismissed or resigns from the company, the child must be removed from the school as soon as the parent is no longer employed. A complete calendar month's notice must be given in writing before the withdrawal of the child from the on-site ESCC facility (Multichoice Parents Guide, 2008).

3.7 INTEGRATION OF ABSENTEEISM AND AN ON-SITE ESCC FACILITY

Drawing on absence literature's distinction between avoidable and unavoidable absences one can consider two ways in which childcare problems might lead to work absences, that is, because of child illness and provider availability (Gordon & Kaestner, 2008). Employers may perceive missing work because of a child's illness as excusable, because they see a child's illness as being out the control of the parent. Missing work because of arrangements for childcare falling through may be regarded as less excusable by the employer owing to the fact that the employer may believe that the parent should be able to find a more reliable provider.

The type of childcare a mother uses may affect her likelihood of experiencing these more excusable absences. More formalised child settings, say, on-site childcare

facilities, usually have policies that require sick children to be excluded. In contrast, family daycare providers are often more flexible about accepting sick children, but typically provide care as an individual and make arrangements with parents more informally. Thus, when the home based provider needs to attend to personal needs, the parent is left finding an alternative arrangement (Gordon & Kaestner, 2008).

According to Gordon and Kaestner (2008), parents face a trade-off in the effect of childcare problems on employment. Large settings may increase problems because of child illness, while small group care may relate to provider unavailability.

Social support is a key important element of family functioning and is likely to have implications for the quality of childcare that mothers obtain and the options they have when care arrangements fail. Mothers with high levels of support may have better information about local providers, which can lead to better quality arrangements, thus resulting in fewer disruptions (Udansky & Wolf, 2008). Social support may also help mothers find reliable back-up providers when disruptions do occur, which may help reduce absences due to disruptions.

A second factor to take into consideration is work schedules – a mother may also have difficulty arranging childcare because she works nonstandard shifts, when formal care is not easily available (Udansky & Wolf, 2008). Greater reliance on informal care may mean less reliable care and heightened risk of care disruptions and related missed work. Further different types of nonstandard work may also have distinct effects. For example, working varying shifts is likely to increase the difficulty of finding reliable care, whereas evening and weekend work may be a preferred strategy for some parents who depend on relatives for care (Udansky & Wolf, 2008).

Similar to work schedules, childcare arrangements vary widely along a number of dimensions related to the reliability of care. Although formal (registered) childcare providers must comply with legislation, few regulations apply to informal settings (Udansky & Wolf, 2008). Childcare disruptions may occur less frequently in formal

childcare centers because they employ multiple staffs and can therefore stay open when one or more employees fall ill or take vacation. It was also found that childcare provided by a relative was equally stable, whereas care by a relative outside the child's home was somewhat less stable (Udansky & Wolf, 2008).

The fourth and final factor affecting childcare disruptions is socioeconomic status. Parents with high levels of education may have better sources of information about the quality and reliability of care providers in their vicinity and thus be able to make more stable arrangements (Udansky & Wolf, 2008). Furthermore, mothers with higher incomes may be better able to afford childcare and back-up care, but they may also have better benefits, such as vacation and personal days, which makes it less costly for them to take off work when they do experience disruptions (Udansky & Wolf, 2008).

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter on-site ESSC was defined, followed by an overview of the various types of family-friendly practices. The chapter then explored the dimensions and benefits of an on-site ESSC facility. The chapter concluded with an example of an on-site ESSC facility and a theoretical integration of absenteeism and on-site ESSC facilities. Chapters 4 and 5 will deal with the empirical part of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare. This chapter describes the organizations involved and the participants, the sampling procedure, the measuring instruments used and the gathering and analysis of the data. The chapter concludes with the formulation of the statistical hypothesis.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANISATIONS AND PARTICIPANTS

For the purpose of this study, the following two organisations were used: A financial service provider with a total employee complement of 850 people and a multimedia service provider with a complement of 1 300 employees. The first organisation was selected because it had no on-site employer-sponsored childcare facility. The second was selected because it does possess an on-site employer-sponsored childcare facility. The total population group consisted of 2 150 and the total sample group of 216 employees.

The population of the study consisted of three comparison groups, which will be described in terms of demographic characteristics, as well as overall absenteeism characteristics.

The first company consisted of two groups of participants, namely a group who utilised an on-site ESCC facility and a group that formed part of the same company, but who did not utilise the on-site ESCC facility. Absenteeism data were obtained from a second set of employees who worked in a company without an on-site ESCC facility. Absenteeism data were also collected from this group to provide a control group in order to establish norms for absenteeism in companies without an on-site ESCC facility. The results will be

obtained using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations.

4.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURES

In stratified sampling, the population is first divided into strata, and then random samples are drawn from each stratum. When compared to simple random sampling, stratified sampling usually reduces both the amount of variability and the costs of data collection and analysis. Stratified sampling adds control to the sampling process by decreasing the amount of sampling error. Randomised stratified sampling allows one to study strata differences (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

For the purposes of this study the following strata were used:

- permanent employees of the relevant organisation
- ensure of more than one year
- currently with children between the ages of one month and six years

4.4 THE MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

To measure absenteeism, several methods can be used empirically. Huse and Taylor (1962) examined four indices, including the following:

- (1) absence frequency – total number of times absent
- (2) absence intensity – total number of days absent
- (3) attitudinal absence – frequency of one day absence
- (4) medical absence – frequency of absences of three days or longer

4.5 DATA GATHERING

The demographic information for the sample participants was provided by the Human resource department of the organisations involved. The data were divided as follows:

- employee absenteeism records for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2007 for the organisation with an on-site employer-sponsored childcare centre: groups 1 and 2.
- employee absenteeism records for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2007 for the organisation without an on-site employer-sponsored childcare centre: group 3.

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Population pyramids and histograms will be used to present the sample demographic differences in age, gender, marital status and race for each of the three groups, and the significance of the differences between these categorical variables was assessed using Pearson's chi-square tests. Effect size was calculated using Cramer's V to determine the potential impact of these differences on the results of the study and whether these variables would need to be controlled. Cramer's V values, which are close to 0,5, are considered to be a large effect, 0,3 constitutes a medium effect and 0,1 a small effect (Field, 2005).

A profile of the demographic characteristics of the sample was obtained using analysis of the frequencies of respondents in each of the demographic categories: age, marital status, race and gender. The results will be presented using pie charts and bar graphs. This section is followed by an overview of the three different test groups examined in the survey as well as the demographic profile within each of the groups to ensure that they are comparable.

The sample demographics were obtained using analysis of the frequencies of respondents in each of the demographic categories, that is, age, marital status, race and gender. The results will be presented using pie charts and histograms.

The following statistical techniques were applied using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences computer programme for Windows version 16.0 (Pallant, 2001). The data used for the study were obtained from the absenteeism data provided by the companies involved in the research. The different forms of absenteeism data were calculated and combined in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which was converted to an SPSS datasheet. The data were checked for errors and cleaned.

The different features of absenteeism discussed in chapter 2, which were employed in the analysis of the results as well as the discernable absenteeism trends present in the total sample data, will be presented using descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, medians and standard deviation. They will also be presented graphically using histograms and bar charts.

The potential relationships between the different types of absenteeism data were examined using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, which will facilitate an analysis of the extent to which the different types of absenteeism components are interrelated as well as the strength and the directionality of the relationships between them. The sign of the correlation coefficient (+, -) defines the direction of the relationship: a positive correlation coefficient means that as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other also increases; as one decreases the other decreases. A negative correlation coefficient indicates that as one variable increases, the other decreases, and vice versa. The effect size of the correlation will be taken into account to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables. Correlation coefficients that are close to 0,5 are considered to represent a large effect, 0.3 constitutes a medium effect and 0,1 a small effect (Field, 2005).

The potential influence of demographic characteristics on the different types of absenteeism was assessed by examining differences between absenteeism means for

the categorical variables - gender, race and marital status as well as the age of the respondent. To explore whether there were any significant differences for gender and marital status on the measurement instruments, an independent samples t-test was conducted. In order to assess the differences in attitudes for race, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. A Pearson's product moment correlation was used to assess the relationship between age and absenteeism.

The post hoc Dunnett test was also used to compare each of the test groups with an on-site ESCC facility, but either use it or do not use it, to the control group without access to an on-site ESCC facility. This post hoc test is used to test the one-tailed hypothesis that the mean of the control group will be higher than that of both test groups to determine if the presence of an on-site ESCC facility impacts on absenteeism, regardless of whether or not it is used.

4.7 STATISTICAL HYPOTHESIS

According to Kerlinger and Lee (2000), there are essentially two criteria for effective hypotheses and hypothesis statements, namely:

- Hypotheses should be statements about the relationships between variables.
- The hypothesis statements should have clear implications for the empirical testing of the stated relationships.

These criteria mean that hypothesis statements contain two or more variables that are measurable or potentially measurable and that they specify how the variables are related (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000)

The following research hypotheses were formulated in order to cover the objectives of the study and meeting the criteria for the formulation of hypotheses, as outlined above:

H_0 – There is no relationship between on-site employer-sponsored childcare and absenteeism

H₁ – There is a relationship between on-site employer-sponsored childcare and absenteeism.

The hypothesis that the presence of an on-site ESCC facility will contribute to reducing absenteeism in the workplace was examined by comparing the differences in absenteeism between employees who used an on-site ESCC facility to employees who did not use the facility, as well as to a third control group of employees who did not have an on-site ESCC facility at their workplace.

The hypothesis that *the frequency and intensity of absenteeism, especially as a result of sick leave or attitudinal absence would be lower in the sample with access to an on-site ESCC facility compared to the samples that either did not use the on-site ESCC facility or did not have an on-site ESCC facility* was assessed using a one-way analysis of variance. The post hoc Tukey test was used to determine the likelihood of a type 1 error and to indicate where the specific areas of difference lie.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined the research methodology used in this study. It described the organisations and participants, the sampling procedure, the measuring instruments and data gathering and analysis. The chapter concluded with the formulation of the statistical hypothesis for the study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare. In this chapter the findings of the empirical study will be discussed.

First, the demographic profile of the respondents will be discussed. Second, the types of absenteeism examined in the study and the nature of the relationships between them and the influence of demographic characteristics on absenteeism will be highlighted. The chapter concludes with a look at the impact of an on-site ESCC facility on absenteeism.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE

The full research sample consisted of 216 employees. In a number of instances, demographic information was not available for the respondents. Hence listwise procedures to control for missing data were utilised for all analysis methods.

The respondents ages ranged from 22 to 57 years with a mean age of 37 and a standard deviation of 7,31. Age information was not available for 92 respondents and the sample size for this component of the analysis was 124.

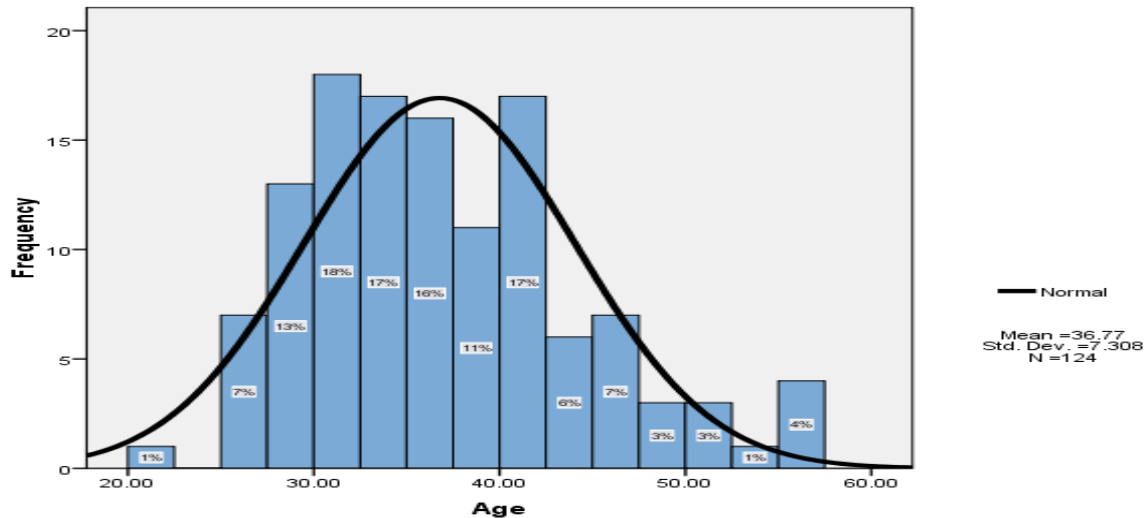


Figure 5.1 Age distribution of participants

The sample was more or less equally distributed across population groups with black respondents representing the majority (32%), followed by Indian respondents (27%), white respondents (23%) and coloured respondents (18%). Information was missing for 20 respondents and the sample size was 196.

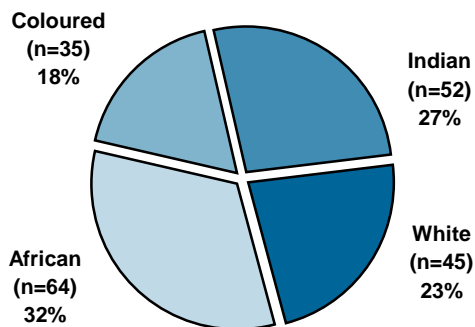


Figure 5.2: Population groups of participants

The sample consisted of more females (68%) than males (32%). However, the males represented a sufficient percentage of the sample to be included in the analysis. Information was missing for 19 respondents and the sample size was 197.

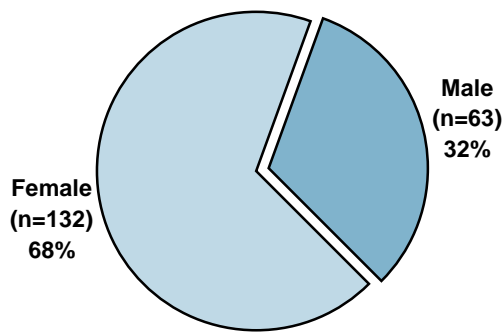


Figure 5.3: Gender groups of participants

Marital status was grouped into two groups, with single, divorced or widowed respondents representing 38% of the sample, and respondents who were married or living with partners representing 62%. No information was missing for this component.

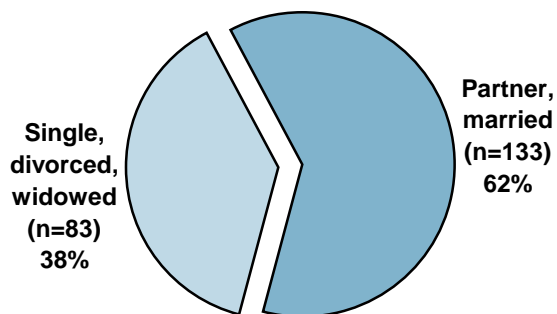


Figure 5.4: Marital status of participants

5.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE POPULATION

The first company consisted of two groups of research participants. Group 1 consisted of participants who utilised the on-site ESCC facility. Group 2 consisted of participants who did not utilise the on-site ESCC facility. Absenteeism data were obtained from a separate set of employees who worked in a company that without an on-site ESCC facility. Absenteeism data were collected from this group to provide a control group in

order to establish norms for absenteeism in companies without an on-site ESCC facility. Only respondents who had children were included in the research groups.

The test sample, which was obtained from the company with an on-site ESCC facility, consisted of 112 respondents with children; 58 of whom utilised the facility and 54 of whom did not. The control group, which was obtained from a company without an on-site ESCC facility, consisted of a random sample of 104 respondents with children.

Table 5.1: Sample size and characteristics of each of the research groups

Sample group	Presence of on-site ESCC facility		Sample size	
Research group 1	Company with an on-site ESCC facility	Employees who use the on-site ESCC facility	1	58
Research group 2		Employees who do not use the ESCC facility	2	54
Control group	Company with no on-site ESCC facility		104	

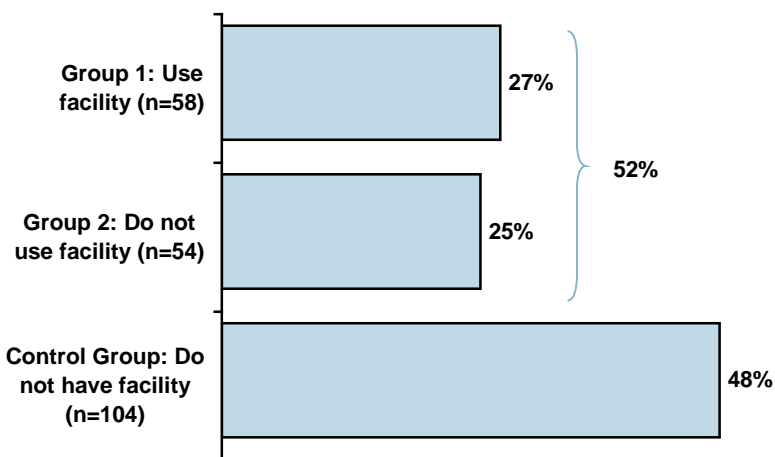


Figure 5.5: Percentage of participants in each group

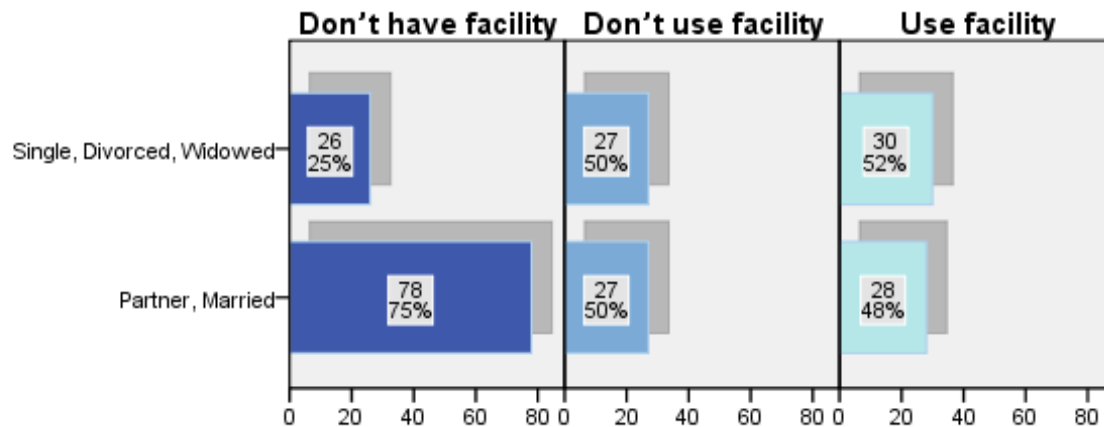


Figure 5.6: Marital status of participants by comparison group

The impact of differences in demographic characteristics of the different comparison groups was assessed using Pearson's chi-square test. There were significantly more married people in the control group without the facility in comparison to the two test groups, [$\chi^2(2) = 15,32$, $p=,000$], Cramer's V however was 0,27 which indicates only a moderate effect size.

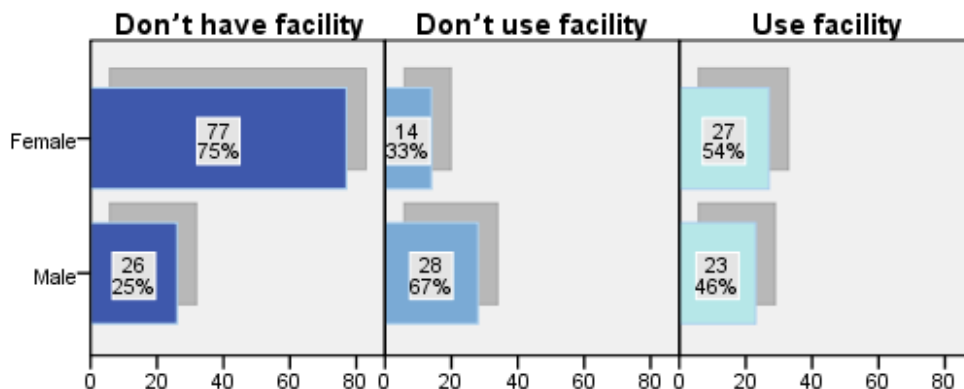


Figure 5.7: Gender of participants by comparison group

There was also a significant difference between the groups with regard to the gender of the subjects [$\chi^2(2) = 6,66$, $p=,036$]. However Cramer's V was 0,19 which indicates a low effect size.

The racial profiles of the three groups were somewhat different [$\chi^2(6) = 32,77$, $p=,000$] with Cramer's V only indicating a moderate effect size ($r = 0,29$). Hence it was not necessary to control for any demographic variables in the remainder of the analysis.

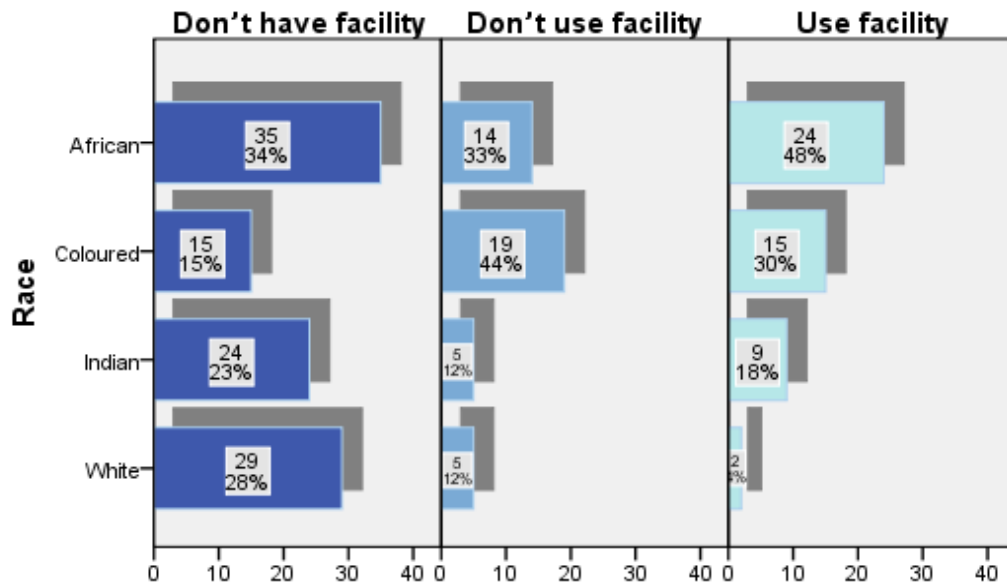


Figure 5.8: Population of group participants by comparison group

The respondents who used the childcare service were between the ages of 30 and 40 with a mean of 35 years, whereas respondents in the other two comparison groups were more normally distributed.

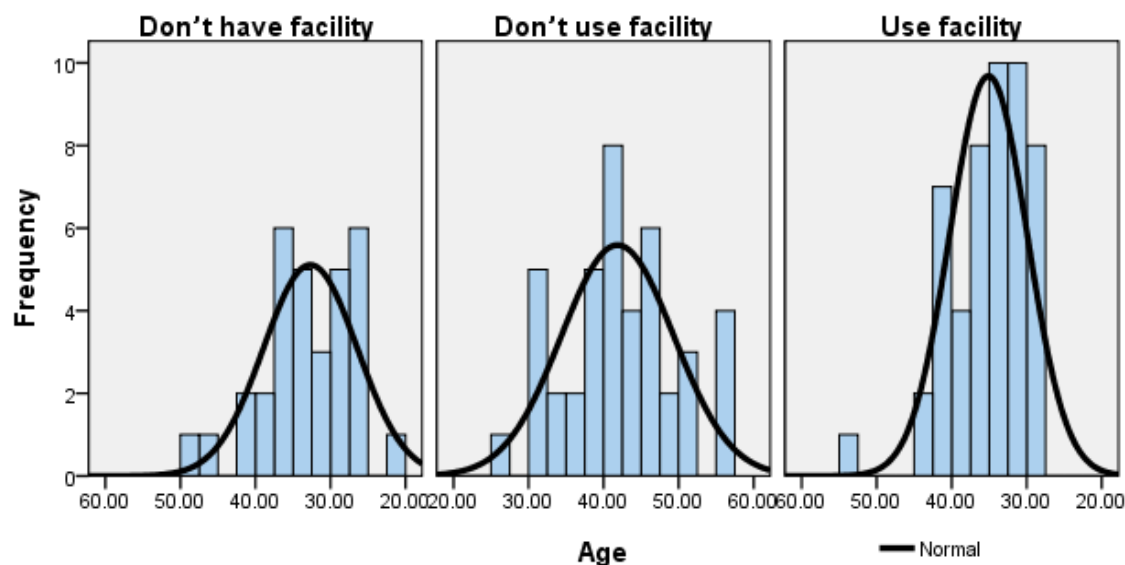


Figure 5.9: Age distribution of participants by comparison group

Table 5.2: Age comparison of each of the groups

		Age			
		Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Standard deviation
Comparison Group	Do not have facility	32,69	48,00	22,00	6,24
	Do not use facility	41,86	57,00	27,00	7,49
	Use facility	35,11	52,61	28,16	5,15

5.4 TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM EXAMINED IN THE STUDY AND THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM

The different types of absenteeism discussed in chapter 2, which were employed in the analysis of the results as well as the discernable absenteeism trends present in the total sample data, will be presented. They will be presented using descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, medians and standard deviation and graphically using histograms and bar charts.

The potential relationships between the different types of absenteeism data will be examined using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, which will facilitate an

analysis of the extent to which the different types of absenteeism components are interrelated as well as the strength and the directionality of the interrelationships. The sign of the correlation coefficient (+, -) defines the direction of the relationship: a positive correlation coefficient means that as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other also increases; as one decreases the other decreases. A negative correlation coefficient indicates that as one variable increases, the other decreases, and vice versa. The effect size of the correlation will be taken into account to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables. Correlation coefficients close to 0,5 are considered to represent a large effect; 0,3 constitutes a medium effect; and 0,1 a small effect (Field, 2005).

The first component of the study consisted of objective observations of absenteeism behaviour over a period of one year from the human resource divisions of the two separate companies utilised in the analysis. Data observations over a one year period were utilised to ensure validity of the findings since mid-term sources of absence are considered to provide stable correlations. The different types of absenteeism measured were collected according to the criteria outlined by Huse and Taylor (1962) in Chapter 2.

5.4.1 Types of absenteeism and absenteeism trends in the sample

The following types of absenteeism and the resulting trends will now be discussed:

- Frequency of absence
- Intensity of absence
- Attitudinal absence
- Medical absence

5.4.1.1 Frequency of absence

The first type of absenteeism data obtained for all three research groups was *absences frequency*, which is defined as the total number of times an employee is absent as

defined in chapter 2. For the present sample absence frequency is defined as the total number of times an employee has been absent, regardless of the reason, over a one year period (Huse & Taylor, 1962). The absence frequency ranges from 0 to 32 times over a of one year period with a mean absence of 3,72 and a standard deviation of 4,89. The majority of employees had only been absent one or two times during the year (58%), whereas 15% of the total sample had not been absent at any time during the year and only 27% had been absent more than twice.

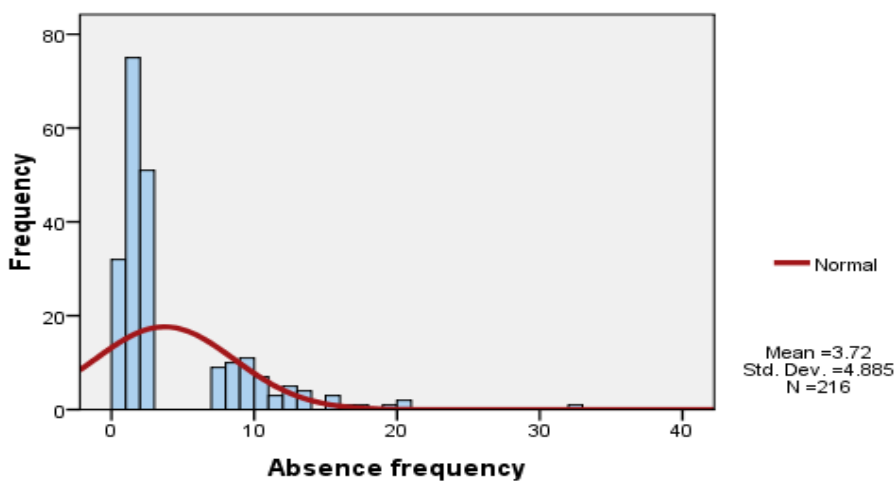


Figure 5.10: Absence frequency for the total sample

5.4.1.2 Intensity of absence

The second type of absenteeism data obtained for all three research groups is *absence intensity* which is defined as the total number of days an employee is absent (Huse & Taylor, 1962). For the present sample absence intensity was collected at a total level as well as the total number of days taken as annual leave during the year, total number of days taken as sick leave and total number of days taken for other reasons.

The total number of days absent ranged from 0 to 125 days with a mean of 13,26 and a standard deviation of 15,28. The median was 10 days and 51% of the sample had been absent for a total of 10 days or less over the previous year. Only 5% of the sample had been absent for 35 days or more.

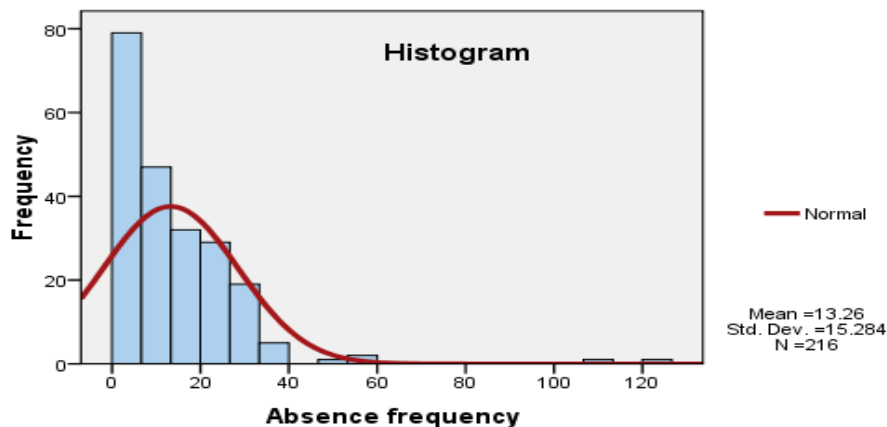


Figure 5.11: Absence intensity for the total sample

The number of annual days of leave taken by the total sample ranged from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 48 days, with a mean of 9,27 and a standard deviation of 9,75. Only 7% had not taken any sick leave and 35% had taken up to seven days which is the median number of annual leave days. The number of day's of sick leave taken ranged from to 28 days with a mean of 1,80 and a standard deviation of 3,6. Slightly less than half of the sample (45%) had not taken sick leave while 44% had only taken two days or less. Twenty four respondents constituted the 11% of the sample which had taken more than two days' sick leave throughout the year. Other leave taken ranged from 0 to a maximum of 103 days with a mean of 1,34 and a standard deviation of 9,28 and consisted of reasons such as family responsibility leave and overtime leave. Only 30% of the sample had recorded this type of leave and of that percentage 27% had been absent from 0,5 to two days in total.

5.4.1.3 Attitudinal absence

The third type of absenteeism data obtained for all three research groups was *attitudinal absence*, which is defined as the frequency of one day absences (Huse & Taylor, 1962). The frequency of attitudinal absence in the total sample ranged from 0 to 23 times with a mean of 1,76 and a standard deviation of 2,98. The median incidence was once with 42% of the respondents having been absent for one day only once and 28% not having

been absent for only one day at all. One in three employees in the total sample, however had been recorded as being absent twice or more for only one day.

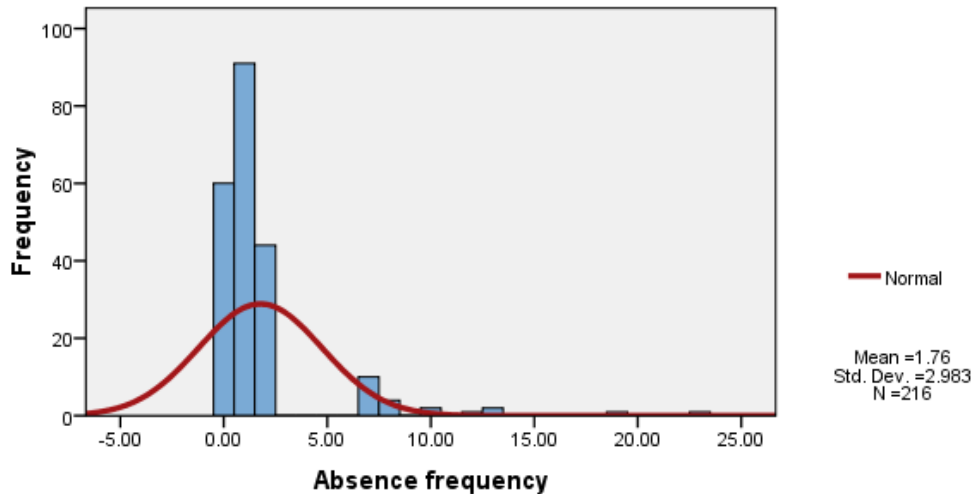


Figure 5.12: Frequency of attitudinal absences for the total sample

5.4.1.4 Medical absence

The final type of absenteeism data collected were *medical absences*, which are defined for the purposes of the study as the frequency of absence of three days or longer that are attributed to sick leave (Huse & Taylor, 1962). The frequency of medical absences in the total sample was low and only 21% of employees had been recorded as being medically absent. Of the respondents 78% had never taken sick leave for more than three days and only 1% had taken medical absences more than twice. The analysis conducted on this type of absenteeism was therefore limited.

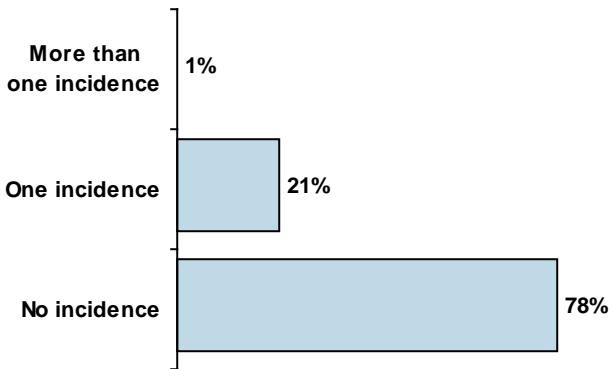


Figure 5.13: Frequency of medical absences for the total sample

Table 5.3: Summary of the descriptive information for the different types of absenteeism present in the total research sample

	Mean	Standard eviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Absence frequency	3,72	4,88	2,00	0,00	32,00
Absence Intensity					
Total days absent	13,26	15,28	9,75	0,00	125,00
Annual days absent	9,27	9,75	7,00	0,00	48,00
Number of sick days absent	1,80	3,63	1,00	0,00	28,00
Number of other days absent	1,34	9,28	0,00	0,00	103,00
Attitudinal absence	1,76	2,98	1,00	0,00	23,00
Medical absence	0,21	0,42	0,00	0,00	2,00

5.4.2 The relationship between the different types of absenteeism

To commence the investigation into the relationships between the absenteeism constructs, the correlations between the different types of absenteeism are presented in table 5.4. From the table it is evident that all types of absenteeism correlate strongly with each other except for number of other days absent which does not relate to the incidence of sick or annual leave taken. There is also a strong relationship between attitudinal absence and absence frequency ($r=0,78$, $p<,000$).

Several significant positive correlations were found between the various types of absenteeism. A positive significant correlation of ,499 was found between total days absent (absence intensity) and total number of times absent (absence frequency). Continuing in the same vein, further positive correlations were found between annual days absent and absence frequency (,478), annual days absent and total days absent (,732), number of sick days absent and absence frequency (,206) and number of sick days absent and total days absent (,283). Further positive correlations were found between number of other days absent and absence frequency (,187) and number of other days absent and total days absent (,696), attitudinal absence and absence frequency (,781) and attitudinal absence and total days absent (,298) and medical absence and absence frequency (,267) and medical absence and total days absent (,291).

These interactions may all be moderated by an employee's ability and motivation to attend which is further compounded further by the fact that these two variables are theorised to interact as per the Steers and Rhodes (1990) model of absenteeism (see figure 3.1). Attendance motivation is said to be the primary determinant of actual attendance, provided that the employee has the ability to attend. Ability to attend is said to be determined by outside factors not in the employees' control. Attendance motivation and ability to attend interact to determine actual attendance.

Although not explicitly stated, the determinants of attendance motivation appear to relate to "voluntary" absenteeism, whereas the ability to attend variables appears to refer to "involuntary" absenteeism situation. Goff et al. (1990) found that conflict between one's work and family role was related to increased frequency of absenteeism. Absence due to illness (medical absence), however is more likely to be related to one's motivation to attend rather than one's ability to attend. It is commonly thought that absence due to illness represents involuntary absenteeism and therefore should be related to one's ability to attend. However, some theoretical and empirical research suggests that absence due to illness may not strictly represent involuntary absenteeism but may in fact be voluntary (Steer & Rhodes, 1990).

Further positive correlations were found between attitudinal absence and number of sick days absent, between medical absence and number of sick days absent. In addition, positive correlations were reported between attitudinal absence and number of other days absent, between medical absence and number of other days absent and finally between medical absence and attitudinal absence.

Positive correlation of this kind can be expected when examining past studies that have found affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment to have an influence on the motivation to attend (Burton et al., 2002). Further research shows that men and women differ in the motivation to attend, which in itself is influenced by job satisfaction. Vanden-Heuval (1997) suggest that women's absence for family reasons is associated with their ability to attend, while men's absence for family reasons is influenced by both ability to attend and motivation to attend. These findings can be further supported by the assumption that in attitudinal absence the absence may be voluntary, where as medical absence may be involuntary and can genuinely be attributed to illness.

In contrast to the above positive correlations, a negative correlation was found between number of sick days absent and other days absent. This negative correlation could be attributed to the simple fact that those who are inclined to not take sick leave and less likely to take other days simply for the sake of a day off work. One could surmise that these individuals demonstrate a high motivation to attend as well as ability and have a fair level of job satisfaction.

Table 5.4: Correlation between the different types of absenteeism

		Absence frequency	Total days absent	Annual days absent	Number of sick days absent	Number of other days absent	Attitudinal absence	Medical absence
Absence frequency	Correlation	1,000	,499**	,478**	,206**	,187**	,781**	,267**
	p-value		,000	,000	,002	,006	,000	,000
Total days absent	Correlation		1,000	,732**	,283**	,696**	,298**	,291**
	p-value			,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Number of annual days absent	Correlation			1,000	,088	,097	,189**	,055
	p-value				,198	,156	,005	,425
Number of sick days absent	Correlation				1,000	-,015	,178**	,372**
	p-value					,828	,009	,000
Number of other days absent	Correlation					1,000	,183**	,186**
	p-value						,007	,006
Attitudinal absence	Correlation						1,000	,184**
	p-value							,007
Medical absence	Correlation							1,000
	p-value							

** Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed).

N=216

5.5 THE INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON ABSENTEEISM

The potential influence of demographic characteristics on the different types of absenteeism was assessed by examining differences between absenteeism means for the categorical variables: gender, race and marital status as well as the age of the respondent. To explore whether there were any significant differences for gender and marital status on the measurement instruments, an independent samples t-test was conducted. In order to assess the differences in attitudes for race a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. A Pearson's product moment correlation was used to assess the relationship between age and absenteeism.

5.5.1 Gender

The research sample under study (female 68% and male 32%) showed no significant difference between males and females in terms of overall absenteeism. The results show that the average total days absent for females participants was 15,16 and for male participants 11,62 over a one year interval. Table 5.5 indicates the means and standard deviations of absenteeism by gender.

In contrast to the above, previous research has indicated that absenteeism is higher among women than men (Fried et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 2003; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990 as quoted by Siu, 2002; Robbins et al., 2003). Explanations for this finding are that working women have multiple roles as female home makers, care providers for children and sometimes caring for the elderly. Hardy et al. (2003), Lau et al. (2003) and Voss et al. (2001) support this theory because their research also reports that women are generally absent more often than men because of domestic problems as well as general health issues.

Various factors could have contributed to these disparate findings, including the continuously changing perceptions of women and their roles both within the world of work as well as their domestic role.

Table 5.5: Absenteeism means and standard deviations by gender

		Gender					
		Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Absence frequency	Female	132	4,28	4,97	2,00	0,00	20,00
	Male	63	3,08	5,18	1,00	0,00	32,00
Total days absent	Female	132	15,16	17,97	11,25	0,00	125,00
	Male	63	11,62	9,45	9,00	0,00	33,00
Annual days absent	Female	132	10,16	10,57	7,00	0,00	48,00
	Male	63	8,82	8,80	6,50	0,00	29,00
Number of sick days absent	Female	132	2,02	3,77	1,00	0,00	28,00
	Male	63	1,65	3,66	0,00	0,00	17,00
Number of other days absent	Female	132	2,01	11,82	0,00	0,00	103,00
	Male	63	0,36	1,08	0,00	0,00	8,00
Attitudinal absence	Female	132	1,82	2,64	1,00	0,00	13,00
	Male	63	1,89	3,91	1,00	0,00	23,00
Medical absence	Female	132	0,24	0,45	0,00	0,00	2,00
	Male	63	0,19	0,40	0,00	0,00	1,00

	t-Test	Sig.
Absence frequency	t(118)= 1,534	,128
Total days absent	t(191)= 1,803	,073
Annual days absent	t(193)= ,876	,382
Number of sick days absent	t(193)= ,651	,516
Number of other days absent	t(193)= 1,105	,271
Attitudinal absence	t(193)= -,149	,882
Medical absence	t(193)= ,786	,433

5.5.2 Marital status

Three significant differences were found for types of absenteeism between respondents who had partners or were married, or respondents who were singled, divorced or widowed. Employees who had partners or were married were absent with greater frequency and had a larger number of total days absent than those who were single. The study shows that the average absence frequency for single, divorced or widowed respondents was 2,90. In contrast the

average absence frequency for partner or married respondents was 4,23. In terms of total number of days absent, single, divorced or widowed respondents on average were absent 10,34 days per annum and partner or married respondents were absent on average a total of 15,09 days per annum. The effect sizes for these differences however were small. A moderate effect size was found for annual leave taken with employees with partners or who were married taking significantly more annual leave than employees who were single. Table 5.6 indicates the means and standard deviations of absenteeism by marital status.

The findings are in contrast to previous studies such as that of Robbins et al. (2003), which have found that men and women with children who were or had been married exhibited similar absence from work and that any additional children did not lead to higher absence. For single mothers, absence was not generally higher than for married/divorce men or women with children, although absence for single mothers did increase with additional children (Patton & Johns, 2007). Consistent with this, Hogue and Islam (2003) and Lau et al. (2003) found that marital status is not a significant factor in determining the proneness of an employee to absenteeism.

According to Robbins et al. (2003), available research indicates that married employees have fewer absences than their unmarried co-workers. The authors postulate that marriage imposes increased responsibilities that make a job more valuable and important, hence married employees will be less likely to miss work. The question of causation however, remains unclear because it is possible that unmarried employees might also report low levels of absenteeism, given that absenteeism is dependent on different factors.

Table 5.6: Absenteeism means and standard deviations by marital status

		Marital Status					
		Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Absence frequency	Single, Divorced, Widowed	83	2,90	3,82	1,00	0,00	19,00
	Partner, Married	133	4,23	5,39	2,00	0,00	32,00
Total days absent	Single, Divorced, Widowed	83	10,34	15,34	7,00	0,00	125,00
	Partner, Married	133	15,09	15,02	13,00	0,00	109,00
Annual days absent	Single, Divorced, Widowed	83	6,67	7,51	2,00	0,00	28,00
	Partner, Married	133	10,89	10,63	8,00	0,00	48,00
Number of sick days absent	Single, Divorced, Widowed	83	1,48	3,79	0,00	0,00	28,00
	Partner, Married	133	1,99	3,53	1,00	0,00	17,00
Number of other days absent	Single, Divorced, Widowed	83	1,54	11,29	0,00	0,00	103,00
	Partner, Married	133	1,23	7,82	0,00	0,00	87,00
Attitudinal absence	Single, Divorced, Widowed	83	1,78	2,90	1,00	0,00	19,00
	Partner, Married	133	1,75	3,05	1,00	0,00	23,00
Medical absence	Single, Divorced, Widowed	83	0,17	0,38	0,00	0,00	1,00
	Partner, Married	133	0,24	0,45	0,00	0,00	2,00

	Effect size		
	t-Test	Sig.	Eta squared
Absence frequency	-	,037	0,020
Total days absent	t(214)= 2,103	,026	0,022
Annual days absent	-	,001	0,050
Number of sick days absent	t(214)= 3,412	,316	0,005
Number of other days absent	t(211)= 1,005	,812	0,000
Attitudinal absence	t(214)= ,239	,941	0,000
Medical absence	t(195)= ,075	,223	0,007

5.5.3 Race

No significant differences were found between race and the different types of absenteeism. Table 5.7 indicates the means and standard deviations of absenteeism by race.

To date little research has yielded any concrete results on the relationship race and absenteeism. The relationship between race and absenteeism remains an open debate which requires further research.

Table 5.7: Absenteeism means and standard deviations by race

		Race					
		Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Absence frequency	African	64	4,36	5,43	2,00	0,00	32,00
	Coloured	35	3,97	5,33	1,00	0,00	20,00
	Indian	52	3,83	4,98	2,00	0,00	20,00
	White	45	3,18	4,37	1,00	0,00	16,00
Total days absent	African	64	12,88	17,11	9,50	0,00	125,00
	Coloured	35	16,13	19,60	14,00	0,00	109,00
	Indian	52	13,47	14,51	9,50	0,00	59,00
	White	45	14,34	11,70	15,00	0,00	36,00
Annual days absent	African	64	8,38	8,55	2,75	0,00	29,00
	Coloured	35	9,14	9,68	6,50	0,00	30,00
	Indian	52	9,52	11,45	6,75	0,00	48,00
	White	45	12,14	10,34	9,50	0,00	33,00
Number of sick days absent	African	64	1,45	2,29	1,00	0,00	12,00
	Coloured	35	2,99	6,24	0,50	0,00	28,00
	Indian	52	2,07	3,46	1,00	0,00	16,00
	White	45	1,47	2,90	0,00	0,00	12,00
Number of other days absent	African	64	2,02	12,83	0,00	0,00	103,00
	Coloured	35	3,11	14,66	0,00	0,00	87,00
	Indian	52	0,79	3,34	0,00	0,00	24,00
	White	45	0,18	0,49	0,00	0,00	2,00
Attitudinal absence	African	64	2,11	3,81	1,00	0,00	23,00
	Coloured	35	1,86	2,80	1,00	0,00	12,00
	Indian	52	1,69	2,62	1,00	0,00	13,00
	White	45	1,60	2,69	1,00	0,00	13,00
Medical absence	African	64	0,22	0,42	0,00	0,00	1,00
	Coloured	35	0,29	0,52	0,00	0,00	2,00
	Indian	52	0,27	0,45	0,00	0,00	1,00
	White	45	0,13	0,34	0,00	0,00	1,00

	ANOVA		Sig.
Absence frequency	F(3,192)=	,485	,693
Total days absent	F(3,192)=	,343	,794
Annual days absent	F(3,192)=	1,309	,273
Number of sick days absent	F(3,192)=	1,553	,202
Number of other days absent	F(3,192)=	,748	,525
Attitudinal absence	F(3,192)=	,290	,833
Medical absence	F(3,192)=	1,102	,350

5.5.4 Age

A significant relationship was reported between age as a continuous variable and three of the absenteeism measures. Age was found to display a weak negative correlation with number of annual days absent indicating that younger respondents are more inclined to take annual leave. Moderate negative correlations were also found with frequency of absence and attitudinal absence which implies that younger respondents are more inclined to take one day off at a time, and do so more frequently. Table 5.8 indicates the means and standard deviations of absenteeism by age.

Currently, the literature posits that absenteeism is negatively related to age (Johnson et al., 2003; Lau et al., 2003; Voss et al., 2001). This implies that absenteeism is higher amongst younger employees. According to Martocchio (1989), the rationale for this is greater job commitment among older employees. Furthermore, Siu (2002) and Voss et al. (2001) found that short periods of sick leave are more common among younger employees, probably because older employees usually have greater responsibility at work and tend not to request sick leave for minor illnesses.

In contrast to the above view, researchers such as Peiro et al. (1999) as quoted by Siu (2002) found that older workers are more prone to sickness absence than younger workers. The most common reasons cited are health deterioration of older employees and longer recovery when injured (Robbins et al., 2003).

Another contradiction to the age-absenteeism relationship was reported in a study conducted by Hoque and Islam (2003). They found a non significant relationship between age and absenteeism. Rhodes (1983) as cited by Martocchio (1989) concluded that the relationship between age and absenteeism may depend on things such as the type of absence measures used, whether the job is physically demanding, the employee's gender and inconsistencies in

absence classification. According to these researchers, employee absences will therefore be dependent on these types of factors, and not necessarily on their age. Research on the relationship between age and absenteeism is, at best, equivocal.

Table 5.8: Correlations between absenteeism and age

		Age
Number of other days absent	Pearson Correlation	-,052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,565
Number of sick days absent	Pearson Correlation	-,035
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,702
Annual days absent	Pearson Correlation	-,198*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,028
Total days absent	Pearson Correlation	-,175
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,053
Absence frequency	Pearson Correlation	-,276**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002
Attitudinal absence	Pearson Correlation	-,269**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,003
Medical absence	Pearson Correlation	-,058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,519

*. Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed).

a. Listwise N=124

5.6 THE IMPACT OF AN ON-SITE ESCC FACILITY ON ABSENTEEISM

The hypothesis that the presence of an on-site ESCC facility would contribute to reducing absenteeism in the workplace was examined by comparing the differences in absenteeism between employees who use the on-site ESCC

facility with employees who do not use it as well as to a third control group of employees who do not have an on-site ESCC facility at their workplace

Using a one-way analysis of variance he hypothesis that *the frequency and intensity of absenteeism, especially as a result of sick leave or attitudinal absence would be lower in the sample that has access to an on-site ESCC facility compared to the samples that either do not use the on-site ESCC facility or do not have an on-site ESCC facility* was assessed. The post hoc Tukey test was used in order to determine the likelihood of a type 1 error and to indicate where the specific areas of difference lay.

The post hoc Dunnett test was also used to compare each of the test groups with an on-site ESCC facility facility, but either use it or did not use it, with the control group that did not have access to a on-site ESCC facility. Since Levene's test was significant for the homogeneity of variances test Welch's F was used.

5.6.1 The impact of an on-site ESCC facility on the frequency of absenteeism

A significant difference was found between the three groups with regard to the frequency of absenteeism. The effect size was strong ($r^2=0,111$) and comparisons using the Tukey and Dunnet post hoc tests indicated that the mean frequency of absenteeism for respondents without access to a on-site ESCC facility was significantly higher than respondents with access to a on-site ESCC facility and did not use it as well as those that did use it. There were no significant differences between employees with access to an on-site ESCC facility but either used it or did not use it.

Table 5.9: Impact of an on-site ESCC facility on the frequency of absenteeism

Absenteeism variable	Group	N	M	SD	ANOVA	Sig.	Effect size (eta squared)
Absence frequency	Do not have facility	104	5,37	6,19	F(2,213)= 16,93	,000	0,111
	Do not use facility	54	1,70	1,55			
	Use facility	58	2,64	2,93			

5.6.2 The impact of an on-site ESCC facility on the intensity of absenteeism

A statistically significant difference was found between the three groups with regard to total days absent as well as number of annual days absent, but not for number of sick days absent. The effect size was strong for both total days absent and annual days absent and comparisons using the Tukey and Dunnett post hoc tests indicated that the mean frequency of absenteeism for respondents without access to a on-site ESCC facility was significantly higher than respondents with access to a on-site ESCC facility and do not use it as well as those that did use it. There was no significant differences between employees with access to an on-site ESCC facility but either use it or do not use it.

It was not possible to examine the number of other days absent because none of the respondents with access to an on-site ESCC facility but who did not use it had recorded absence for other reasons.

Table 5.10: Impact of an on-site ESCC facility on the intensity of absenteeism

Absenteeism variable	Group	N	M	SD	ANOVA	Sig.	Effect size (eta squared)
Total days absent	Do not have facility	104	19,85	18,86	F(2,213)= 23,7	,000	0,177
	Do not use facility	54	5,70	6,51			
	Use facility	58	8,50	6,51			
Annual days absent	Do not have facility	104	14,52	10,92	F(2,213)= 38,18	,000	0,272
	Do not use facility	54	3,88	4,87			
	Use facility	58	4,86	4,88			
Number of sick days absent	Do not have facility	104	1,82	3,28	F(2,213)= 0,18	,836	0,002
	Do not use facility	54	1,56	4,24			
	Use facility	58	1,97	3,68			

5.6.3 The impact of an on-site ESCC facility on attitudinal absenteeism and medical absenteeism

A moderate significant difference was found between the three groups with regard to attitudinal absenteeism. Comparisons using the Tukey and Dunnett post hoc tests indicated that the mean frequency of absenteeism for respondents without access to an on-site ESCC facility was significantly higher than respondents with access to it but who did not use it. There was no differences between employees with access to an on-site ESCC facility but either use it or do not use it nor was there a difference between employees without an on-site ESCC facility and employees who use an on-site ESCC facility. There were no significant differences found between groups with regard to medical absences.

Table 5.11: Impact of an on-site ESCC facility on attitudinal absenteeism and medical absenteeism

Absenteeism variable	Group	N	M	SD	ANOVA	Sig.	Effect size (eta squared)
Attitudinal absence	Do not have facility	104	2,28	3,96	F(2,213)= 4,75	,036	0,031
	Do not use facility	54	1,06	1,16			
	Use facility	58	1,50	1,72			
Medical absence	Do not have facility	104	0,23	0,45	F(2,213)= 1,05	,424	0,008
	Do not use facility	54	0,15	0,36			
	Use facility	58	0,24	0,43			

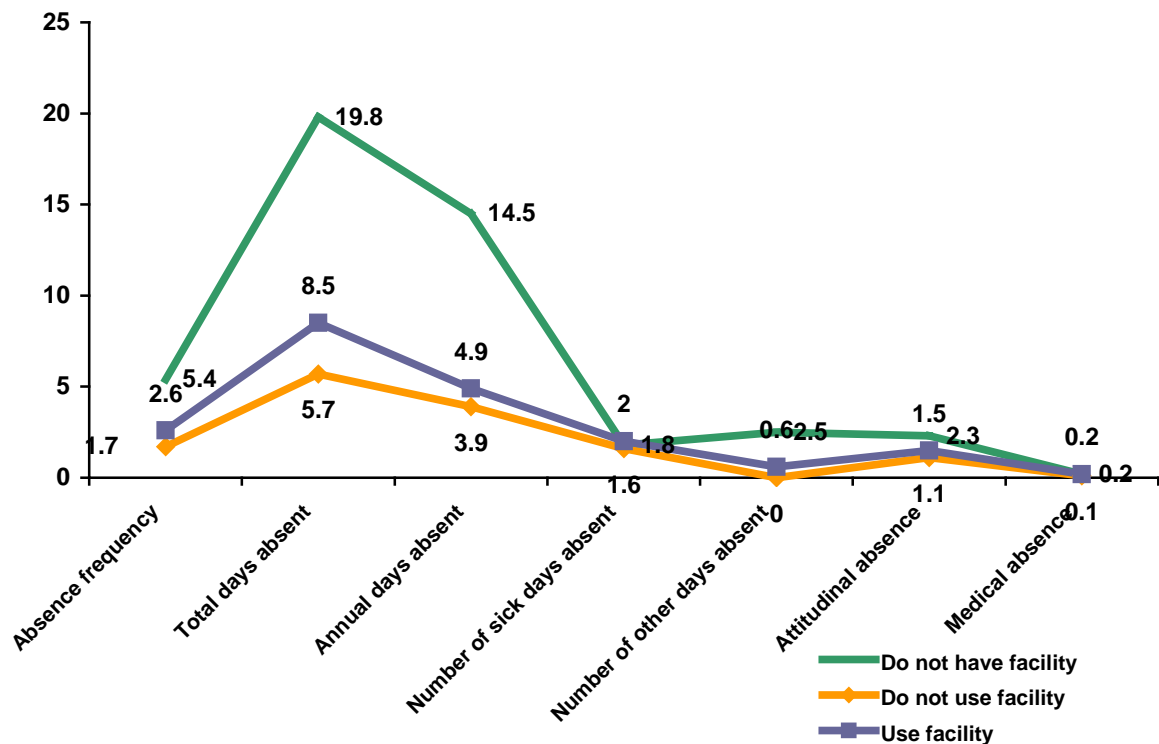


Figure 5.14: Absenteeism trends for each of the research groups

Table 5.12: Absenteeism means and standard deviations by research group

		Group					
		Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Absence frequency	Do not have facility	104	5,37	6,19	2,00	0,00	32,00
	Do not use facility	54	1,70	1,55	1,00	1,00	9,00
	Use facility	58	2,64	2,93	2,00	1,00	15,00
Total days absent	Do not have facility	104	19,85	18,86	19,50	0,00	125,00
	Do not use facility	54	5,70	6,51	2,00	1,00	28,00
	Use facility	58	8,50	6,51	7,75	1,00	25,00
Annual days absent	Do not have facility	104	14,52	10,92	16,00	0,00	48,00
	Do not use facility	54	3,88	4,87	1,00	0,00	21,00
	Use facility	58	4,86	4,88	2,00	0,00	17,00
Number of sick days absent	Do not have facility	104	1,82	3,28	1,00	0,00	16,00
	Do not use facility	54	1,56	4,24	1,00	0,00	28,00
	Use facility	58	1,97	3,68	1,00	0,00	17,00
Number of other days absent	Do not have facility	104	2,47	13,29	0,00	0,00	103,00
	Do not use facility	54	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
	Use facility	58	0,58	1,11	0,00	0,00	8,00
Attitudinal absence	Do not have facility	104	2,28	3,96	1,00	0,00	23,00
	Do not use facility	54	1,06	1,16	1,00	0,00	8,00
	Use facility	58	1,50	1,72	1,00	0,00	10,00
Medical absence	Do not have facility	104	0,23	0,45	0,00	0,00	2,00
	Do not use facility	54	0,15	0,36	0,00	0,00	1,00
	Use facility	58	0,24	0,43	0,00	0,00	1,00

These results are consistent with the findings of Friedman (2001), whose research indicated that after Honeywell had opened an on-site childcare centre and they examined attendance records for those parents who used the centre, the group of centre-using parents had missed 259 days of work in the 12 months before using the centre, but had missed only 30 days in the 12 months after they had started using the centre. The earlier studies of Milkovich and Gomez (1976) are supported by the more recent studies of Friedman (2001), who found that day care participants' average monthly rates of turnover and absenteeism were significantly lower than the non-participants. In other words lower employee absenteeism and turnover rates were related to the enrolment in the on-site employer-sponsored day care centre. In a similar study conducted by Youngblood and Chambers-Cook (1984) as cited in Neal et al., 1993, there was

a significant reduction in both turnover and absenteeism after on-site childcare was introduced in a textile firm.

The above findings contradict those of Goff, et al. (1990) who reported no differences in absenteeism and turnover after the introduction of an on-site facility. These results have been ascribed to the fact that centres cannot care for sick children. However, given that centre users would be likely to have fewer problems with childcare arrangements, and that the children would be transported to the same location as the parents, overall absences amongst users would be lower (Kossek & Nichol, 1992).

To summarise those with access to an on-site ESCC facility, irrespective of whether or not they use it, showed reduced absence in terms of total days absent, annual days absent and absence frequency. In terms of sick absence no significant differences were found between those employees with access to an on-site ESCC facility and those without.

5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the results of the statistical analysis, including, the demographic profile of the participants, the types of absenteeism and the relationship between them and the influence of demographic characteristics on absenteeism. The chapter concluded with a look at the impact of an on-site ESCC facility on the various types of absenteeism.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the following: the conclusion, limitations and recommendations for further research.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between on-site employer-sponsored childcare absenteeism. Research conclusions will now be drawn with regard to the literature survey and the empirical study for each of the research aims.

6.2.1 Literature survey

The general aim of the literature survey was to establish the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare.

The theoretical aims of this research were:

- to conceptualise absenteeism in two companies
- to conceptualise on-site employer-sponsored childcare in two companies
- to determine the theoretical relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare in two companies

The first aim, namely to conceptualise absenteeism was achieved in chapter 2. Absenteeism was defined as absences that occur whenever a person chooses to allocate time to activities that compete with scheduled work, either to satisfy the

waxing or waning of underlying motivational rhythms or to maximise personal utility (Harrison & Martocchio, 1998).

The second aim, namely to conceptualise on-site employer-sponsored childcare was achieved in chapter 3. The third aim, to determine the theoretical relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare was achieved in chapter 3.

Chapter 2 provided a detailed explanation of the various dimensions of absenteeism. Aamodt (2004) suggests that enduring personality traits account for absenteeism over time and situations. Several demographic variables were discussed including gender, number of dependants, marital status and age. However, the results are mixed regarding the influence of demographic variables on absenteeism. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, social context and decision making were also explored in relation to their influence on absenteeism.

In chapter 3 it was demonstrated that the demand for on-site employer-sponsored childcare is increasing because absenteeism is acknowledged as an organisational problem and work family conflict is increasingly moving into the spot light. The work of Arthur and Cooks (2004) was used to conceptualise family-friendly practices. Family-friendly practices were defined as any programme designed to alleviate individual conflict between work and family.

Chapter 3 highlighted one of the most significant barriers to the establishment of an on-site employer-sponsored childcare facility. Auerbach (1990) identified three main problems in establishing a link between a childcare benefits and productivity gains: (1) defining and measuring productivity, (2) imputing causality between the child-care benefits and outcomes, and (3) determining whether the impacts attributed to childcare are worth the cost of the programme to the employer.

The empirical aims of this research were as follows:

- to determine the levels of absenteeism in two companies
- to determine the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare in two companies.

Both of the empirical aims were achieved in chapter 5.

6.2.2 Empirical study

The aim of the research was to establish the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare. The research also endeavored to determine the levels of absenteeism in the two companies involved in the study.

The empirical study demonstrated that there were significant differences between the three groups with regard to the frequency of absenteeism. Furthermore a significant difference was detected between the three groups with regard to the total days absent, as well as the number of annual days absent. In all three findings those respondents without access to an on-site facility showed significantly higher absenteeism rates than respondents with access to an on-site facility regardless of whether or not they used it.

A significant difference was also reported for attitudinal absence and medical absence, with the respondents without access once again recording higher levels of absenteeism.

From this analysis it is clear that there is a relationship between on-site employer-sponsored childcare and absenteeism, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The limitations of the research are discussed with regard to the literature survey and the empirical study.

With regard to the literature survey, the following limitations were encountered:

- There is limited consistent literature on the relationship between absenteeism and on-site employer-sponsored childcare. For example only Milkovich and Gomez (1976) found a positive significant difference between users and nonusers unlike the more recent work by Goff, et al., (1990).
- Research conducted to date has revealed no consensus on the benefits of an on-site employer-sponsored childcare facility (Connelly et al., 2004).
- There is no single, comprehensive agreed upon definition of absenteeism, which has resulted in absenteeism being measured in multiple and conflicting ways (Patton & Johns, 2007; Martocchio & Jameson 2003; Robins, et al., 2001; and Harrison & Martocchio, 1998).

With regard to the empirical study, the following limitations were encountered:

- There are differences in the number of annual days granted to each group of respondents as per company policy.
- Both sets of data had days of absence that were unaccounted for.
- The accuracy and integrity of the data were only as valid and reliable as those responsible for their inputs and their diligence and accuracy in recording the data.
- Owing to the complex nature of absenteeism and the measurements around absenteeism, careful consideration should be exercised in drawing comparisons between studies, since many studies use different definitions of absenteeism (Muchinsky, 1977). In addition the accuracy of record

keeping of absenteeism adds to the problem of effectively studying absenteeism (Harrison & Hulin, 1989).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the background of the above, the following recommendations can be made in terms of practical as well as further studies on the relationship between absenteeism and employer-sponsored childcare.

- how to determine the real value added or return on equity of an on-site employer-sponsored childcare facility
- the frustration effect and its potential impacts on employee attitudes
- the long-term effect of an on-site childcare facility on absenteeism, turnover and morale
- other alternatives available in terms of childcare
- the effects of marital status on absenteeism
- the relationship between absenteeism and race

6.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the conclusions, and the limitations of the research. The chapter concluded with recommendations for further research.

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