Management of teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools

by

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DECLARATION

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Management of teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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SIGNATURE

02 MAY 2024
DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the following individuals who supported me spiritually and financially throughout my life until now:

My late husband, Welcome Feleza, who strongly believed in my success and for encouraging me to further my studies. It is a pity he is no longer here to celebrate the completion of this journey with me. He will always have a special place in my heart.

My late parents: My mother Jabulile Nkomo and my father Solomon Nsimbini. They continued to support me financially even after their deaths, especially while I was doing my undergraduate studies at the University of Johannesburg.

Gauteng Department of Education for sponsoring this qualification, I really appreciate it, studying without having to worry about finances is one of the reasons I made it this far.

My maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Nkomo, for her continuous prayers and her outstanding support.

My entire family, friends, colleagues, and Unity Assembly Church family, who believed in me.

To my son Nkosingizwile Nsimbini, this one is for you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how School Management Teams (SMTs) manage teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools. Two schools from Soweto township in the Johannesburg North District were sampled to participate in this study. Fayol management theory was used as the theorical framework underpinning this study. This is a qualitative study which is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm and the design is case study. Data were generated using semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Two principals and six departmental heads (who are the SMTs managing teacher absenteeism) and four teachers were interviewed. Documents like timebooks, teacher attendance policies, substitute timetables and book control tools were analysed to generate data. The findings of this study revealed that the common factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools were ill-health or taking care of sick family members, bereavement, unjustified reasons, leave entitlement, poor work ethics, poor human relations, stress related to working conditions, poor management of teacher absenteeism, service delivery strikes and the attendance of teacher professional development workshops. This study also found that managing teacher absenteeism is a daunting task owing to the obstacles such as non-submission of medical certificate as well as unclear policies and legislations that give teachers rights to be absent. The consequences of teacher absenteeism were backlog on curriculum coverage which leads to learners' underperformance and ill-discipline of learners. The study established the strategies that the SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools include the use of policies and circulars provided by the Department of Education as a point of reference, the use of tools like timebooks and ATPs and teacher motivation. From the findings of this study, I recommend that further research be conducted with the teachers as the main participants to explore their personal reasons for being absent from school and a large-scale study using quantitative research approach be carried out to provide findings that are applicable to a larger population.

Keywords: School Management Teams, Management of teacher absenteeism, Soweto township schools, Common factors, Strategies, Teacher leadership.

LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
DH	Departmental Heads
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
PAM	Personnel Administration Measures
PSCBC	Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Bodies
SMTs	School Management Teams

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Teacher absenteeism has been and is still a problem in most South African schools. Komoni (2015) argues that there are very few schools that can claim 100% attendance by all teachers. Komoni (2015) further highlights that absenteeism cannot only be defined as being absent from work, common practices like reporting late for work, leaving early from work, extended tea, lunch and even toilet breaks, attending private business during working hours, pretending to be ill and unscheduled leave may be considered as absenteeism. According to Rogers and Vegas (2009), teacher absenteeism seems to be more dominant in schools serving disadvantaged communities, in this case, township schools compared with the schools serving affluent areas.

The World Bank (2006) notes that the teacher's absence rate was 16% in developing countries and 5% in developed countries. For instance, in Uganda absenteeism was 5% higher than New York. Msosa (2020) reports that South Africa has the highest teacher absenteeism rate in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region. Cepada and Grepon (2020) concur that the issue of absenteeism is an international issue especially in developing countries such as South Africa, in which teachers were absent from work for 23 days in rural schools compared to 11 days in urban schools while in rural Mongolia the absence rate was 16% compared to 5% in urban schools. The study showed that 7,5 million teachers were absent in 2019, which is an average of 9 days per teacher annually. Ms Angie Motshekga, the Minister of the Department of Basic Education was interviewed in a Sowetan paper (11 February 2013). In her interview, she reported that during her surprise visit, about 451 schools, over a thousand teachers were absent from work. Ms Motshekga was further interviewed by Sunday Times paper (08 April 2019). She indicated that the national teacher's aggregate absence rate has increased from 8% to 10% on an average day. According to the Southern African

Development Community (SADC), South Africa has the highest rate of absenteeism in the Southern Africa region (World Bank, 2008). Based on these studies, it is evident that teacher absenteeism is a problem, especially in rural and or township schools. Therefore, it needs to be addressed to ensure that effective teaching and learning is happening in schools. Waymack, Joseph and Zielaski (2014) argue that it is imperative for School Management Teams (SMTs) to invest in systems that will encourage teachers to attend school and be in class for effective teaching and learning.

Gabuza (2015) asserts that there are legislative frameworks that the government has established to minimise absenteeism. For an example, the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) Resolution 1 of 2007 provides SMTs with procedures and directives of regulating teacher absenteeism. Despite these measures by the Department of Education (DoE) teachers still do not comply. Therefore, this study will focus on exploring the common factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools, the obstacles that SMTs face in manage teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools, the consequences of teacher absenteeism and identifying the strategies that the SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism to create effective teaching and learning culture in their schools.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Literature review on South African based studies shows that teacher absenteeism is a problem which needs to be addressed for effective teaching and learning in South African township schools (Komoni, 2015; Rogers & Vegas (2009; Msosa (2020). The Minister of the DBE, Ms Angie Motshekga indicated in several interviews that there is a need to address teacher absenteeism (Mbiza, 2019). When teachers are absent from school and from their classrooms teaching and learning is negatively affected. Msosa (2020), added that teacher absenteeism is a major contributing factor in learner underperformance Therefore, the preliminary literature reviewed and the concern of the Ministry of Education gazette that there is a need for research to establish the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism, and the challenges

the SMTs experience in managing teacher absenteeism especially in township schools and identify the strategies the SMTs use to manage teacher absenteeism to provide South African children with equal and quality education. This study sought to find out the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism, the challenges experienced by teachers and the role of the SMTs as school leaders play in establishing strategies to be used in reducing or minimising teacher absenteeism in township schools.

1.3 RATIONALE

Every day in South Africa 10% of teachers do not come to work, meaning more than 135 000 children go untaught daily and this have a serious long-term impact (Mbiza, 2019). Teacher absenteeism is a sign that South Africa is facing a challenge in ensuring effective teaching and learning, implying that there is a serious need for managers to minimise teacher absenteeism to avoid long-term impact. In 2019 the Department of Basic Education (DBE) indicated that the SMTs are not doing enough to manage the high rates of absenteeism and teachers are not attending classes even when they are present at school especially in township schools. Hence, the department is considering bringing back school inspectors to monitor teaching and learning that takes place in the schools (Mampane, 2013).

Apart from literature attests, in my experience as a teacher working in a township school, I have noticed that teachers drag their feet when they are expected to be in class or miss classes if not monitored by the principal. It has always puzzled me as to how the SMTs can help or are helping the principal to manage teacher absenteeism. Hence, I became interested in finding out how SMTs manage teacher absenteeism in township schools because currently from the school I am teaching, teachers are often absent from school, and it seems like there is a serious need to manage teacher's absenteeism.

1.4 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore how School Management Teams manage teacher absenteeism in a township school context.

The objectives of this study are:
- to identify the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools.
- to explore the challenges that the School Management Teams experience in managing teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools.
- to establish the strategies used by the School Management Teams in Soweto township schools to reduce teacher absenteeism in their schools.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Main question

How do the School Management Teams in Soweto township schools manage teacher absenteeism?

Sub-questions
- What are the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools?
- What are the challenges experienced by School Management Teams in Soweto township schools when it comes to managing teacher absenteeism?
- What strategies do School Management Teams in Soweto township schools use to reduce teacher absenteeism?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Theoretical framework is a theory and processes that are applied in research to understand the phenomenon that is being studied (Anafa & Mertz, 2014). In this study, Henry Fayol's management process was applied as the theoretical framework of the study. The main reason that Fayol management theory was chosen as my theorical framework is that Fayol is the pioneer of the

administrative school of management and his model is on how management interacts with personnel (McLean, 2011). Fayol concluded that management should interact with personnel in five basic ways to lead and manage. According to Gabuza (2015), when management interacts with their personnel effectively, it becomes easier to address challenges in an organisation, in this case, addressing teacher absenteeism. The application of Fayol's framework in managing teacher absenteeism follows Fayol's management process which includes planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling (Brooks, 2022). All the five basic ways are explained below and their relevance to this study. Figure 1.1 depicts Fayol five basic ways to lead and manage.
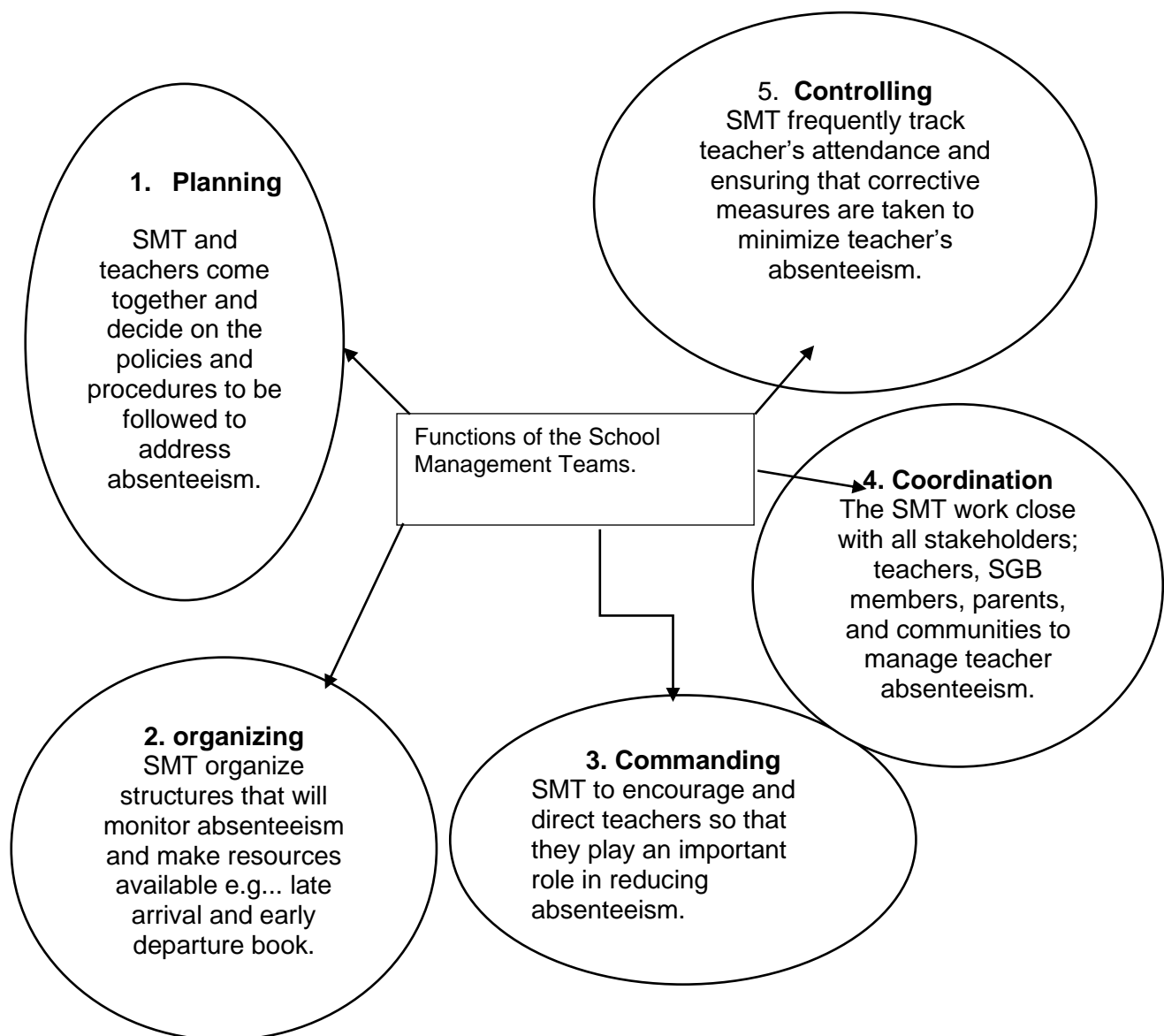
Figure 1.1: The five basic ways to lead and manage (Adapted from: *General and Industrial Management, Henry Fayol, 1918*)

According to Fayol's management process, theoretical framework planning is important because individuals working in the same organisation come together and decide in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it and where to do it to achieve a common goal (Luenendonk, 2019). In this study, my assumption is that the SMTs need to sit down with teachers to discuss existing policies and procedures to be followed in addressing teacher absenteeism rather than imposing the policies on them. Gabuza (2015) argues that when teachers are involved in the planning and making decisions on the policies, it will be easy to hold them accountable when the procedures and regulations they agreed on are not followed such as school attendance.

Fayol management process also speaks about organising. According to Brooks (2022), organising involves development of structures within an organisation. It means that the SMTs in this study were expected to organise structures based on departments for example, in schools there are departments and heads of departments who are managers in those departments. The school managers were also expected to ensure that the departments they are heading have relevant resources to be used in implementing the strategic plans (Luenendonk, 2019). A timebook can be used as a resource to monitor leave taken and keeping accurate records on teacher's attendance. By so doing, the SMT, according to Gabuza (2015), should be able to manage absenteeism.

Ward (2021) asserts that Fayol recommended commanding as a basic way leaders can use to manage their subordinates. Ward (2021) further defines commanding as a way leaders and managers use to ensure that personnel understand their responsibilities within the organisation and work together to achieve common goal. It means that SMTs need to use commanding to ensure that teachers perform their responsibilities successfully and be responsible for their actions (Godwin et al, 2017). There are commanding calls for SMTs to encourage and direct teachers so that they play an important role in reducing absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015).

Fayol management process also emphasises coordination. According to Ward (2021), coordinating in a management theory asserts that managers must ensure that all stakeholders work together as a unity in a cooperative manner to

achieve desired goals. Therefore, the SMTs need to ensure that they bring unity between all stakeholders; teachers, SGB members, parents, and communities. The SMTs are also expected to work closely with the SGB to ensure that they recruit the best teachers and empowering the community to own the school in ensuring that they protect the infrastructure and even offering a place for the teachers to reside local to minimise absenteeism that is caused by the distance that the teachers travel to school (Gabuza, 2015).

Fayol management theory recommended controlling as a way managers and leaders need to use to run effective organisations. Luenendonk (2019) indicates that the controlling process consists of establishment of standards, measurement of performance, comparison of performance with standard and taking corrective actions. This means that the SMTs need to be active in ensuring that the teachers perform to their best ability. This includes teachers being in class teaching instead of taking long tea breaks or bunking classes every chance they get (Komoni, 2015). A timebook is a tool that can be used to frequently track teacher's attendance and ensuring that corrective measures are taken to minimise teacher's absenteeism in schools (Gabuza, 2015). Based on Fayol's controlling management process, the SMTs can also use teacher attendance as one of the measures of performance and to raise teacher accountability in ensuring that proper procedures are followed when leave is taken (Gabuza, 2015).

1.7 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This section explains the methodological processes followed in this study. This study is located within an interpretivist paradigm. Creswell (2009) avers that interpretivism is characterised by a concern of understanding human behaviour and nature of people's experiences in social and cultural lives. As a researcher, I believe that there are various truths and meanings of people's views and versions of their own experiences. In this study, I set to explore the views of the SMTs on teachers' absenteeism and how they manage it in township schools, their ideas on how the problem can be mitigated and their expectations from various stakeholders that were involved in this study. The research approach was qualitative. Creswell (2009) describes qualitative research as research that

attempts to understand the phenomenon within natural settings where humans behave, and events occur. A qualitative approach allowed me to get different views from the SMTs on how they manage absenteeism in township schools, the challenges they experience and the strategies they used to mitigate teacher absenteeism.

The research design employed in this study was case study. Cohen, et al (2011) recommend a multiple site case study for a researcher to balance an in-depth understanding of each case under investigation or gain more insights to make conclusions. The use of multiple sites in this study helped me understand the diverse management styles used by different SMTs members with an intention not to generalise but to compare diverse management structures from different schools. In this study, I used purposive sampling to select the participants. The participants in this study were sampled from two schools in Soweto township. They include a primary school and a secondary school in Johannesburg North district. The method that I used to collect data were semi-structured interviews. My second data collection method was document analysis. I used a thematic analysis procedure to analyse the data.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study is to establish the strategies that the SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools. This study also highlights the challenges that the SMTs experience in township schools regarding managing teacher absenteeism. Recommendations are made from this study that informs DBE to amend their policies to curb the phenomenon of teacher absenteeism. Recommendations were also made to the SMTs, teachers, SGBs and other relevant stakeholders to work as a collective to minimise teacher absenteeism. Furthermore, there are also suggestions for future studies that could produce more knowledge on the management of teacher absenteeism

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.9.1 School Management Teams (SMTs)

Heystek (2004) defines SMT as a team that is responsible for professional management of all school's activities that support teaching and learning. The responsibilities of SMTs are to manage day-to-day running of the school and implementation of school policies recommended by the SGB. The SMT consists of the principal, deputy principal and departmental heads (DH) formerly known as Head of Departments (HoDs).

1.9.2 Township schools

Township schools are located in areas that are previously racial segregated and low-cost housing development designed for black working-class labourers to be close to work within big cities and towns (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011). Most of these schools are no-fee schools because of high unemployment and low socioeconomic status. A no-fee policy is applicable in these schools; hence, they are often associated with poor resources and infrastructures (Bush & Heystek, 2003).

1.9.3 Teacher's absenteeism

Mampane (2013) defines absenteeism as unscheduled absence from work by employees. Mampane (2013) maintains that teacher absenteeism is when teachers are not at school or present at school but not attending classes to teach. Moreover, Komoni (2015) argues that teacher absenteeism can be authorised or unauthorised, either way when a teacher is not available at work, they are absent. This study adopts all the features of teacher absenteeism defined in this section.

1.9.4 Manage

According to Komoni (2015), to manage is an act or a measure that can be used to minimise occurrences of a particular problem or things that can be done to solve a known situation.

1.9.5 Teacher

The South African School Act (SASA,1996) defines a teacher as an individual who is responsible to teach, educate or train others professionally. The Act requires these individuals to register with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) to be recognised as teachers in South Africa. The SMTs are also teachers but with other roles and responsibilities beyond teaching.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This study consists of five chapters. I will briefly describe the chapters below.

Chapter One introduced the study, I continued to present the statement of the problem, rationale for the study, purpose, and objectives of the study, the research questions, theoretical framework of the study, the procedures followed in the study, the significance of the study and definition of terms.

In Chapter Two I presented the literature review discussion. In the literature review, I started by unfolding the concept of teacher absenteeism. This chapter also discussed the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism, the consequences and challenges resulting from teacher absenteeism. I further discussed who should manage teacher absenteeism and the roles of SMTs in teacher leadership and management. The literature review further highlighted the composition of the SMT and their expected roles in managing teacher absenteeism. The chapter further discussed the strategies that the SMTs use to manage teacher absenteeism, and I also linked the SMTs with instructional leadership in terms of managing teacher absenteeism. The chapter further discussed Fayol's framework application in managing teacher absenteeism. Lastly, the chapter discussed the township concept in detail with a map image showing Soweto township.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the research paradigm, research approach and the research design undertaken throughout the research process. This chapter further discussed the research site and the sample, data collection method adopted in this study and the data analysis techniques used. Ethical issues and

trustworthiness of the study are also highlighted which were used in enhancing the quality of the research.

In Chapter Four I presented the research finding and the discussions of the findings as it related to literature. The findings discussed are derived from interviews and document analysis. The findings are presented in themes that are aligned with the research questions. The sub-themes are aligned with the interview question that were generated from the research questions. Verbatim quotations from the participants are used to support the findings.

In Chapter Five, I conclude the study by presenting a summary of the research findings, drawing conclusion based on the findings and making recommendations for policy, practice, theory, and future research.

1.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter introduces the study and provides the background of the study. The rationale for the study indicates my interest in doing this study. The chapter continued to discuss the statement of the problem, rationale for the study, purpose and objectives of the study, the research questions, theoretical framework of the study, the procedures followed in the study, the significance of the study and definition of terms. The next chapter presents a review of global and South African literature on teacher absenteeism and how it is managed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF SMTs IN MANAGING TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One discussed the background information of the study, the problem statement, rationale of the study, the theoretical framework of the study, and the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the research questions were outlined, and the research methodology briefly discussed, as well as the significance of the study. Chapter One also provided a brief clarification of concepts used on my study.

The purpose of this chapter is to classify, present and evaluate what other researchers have written on managing teacher absenteeism. This chapter also discusses teacher school attendance, the role of SMTs and managing teachers, instructional leadership as it relates to the role of SMTs and the context of this study which is a township environment. The literature in this study starts with unfolding the phenomenon "teacher absenteeism" in the following section.

2.2 TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

Mampane (2013) defines absenteeism as an unscheduled absence from work by employees. Teacher absenteeism is a common phenomenon in some schools. Komoni (2015) argues that there are very few schools that can claim 100% attendance by all teachers. The author (Komoni, 2015) maintains that absenteeism cannot only be defined as being absent from work but also present at work while there is failure to perform the expected duties. This means that absenteeism includes teachers who are at the school but not actually engaged in actual teaching and learning (Komoni, 2015). There are teachers who report late for work, leave early from class and sometimes miss classes intentionally. Such a statement relates to common practices like reporting late for work, leaving early from work, extended tea, lunch and even toilet breaks, attending private business during working hours, forging illness, and unscheduled leave.

These practices may be considered as absenteeism. Moreover, Komoni (2015) accentuates that teacher absenteeism can be authorised or unauthorised; either way, when a teacher is not physical at work, they are absent. According to Okurut (2012), lateness and early departures amount to absenteeism if there are effective systems used in schools such practices sum up the teaching time lost.

The World Bank (2008) notes that in the SADC region, out of the 15 countries South Africa and Swaziland are the third highest countries with high rate of teacher absenteeism with about 8% average on teacher absenteeism. The DBE (2010) reported that Gauteng was the third province with the highest average of teacher absenteeism with an absent rate of 9,4% average and the most contributing areas on this percentage were township schools. Cepada and Grepon (2020) indicate that the issue of absenteeism is an international issue especially in developing countries such as South Africa, in which teachers were absent from work for 23 days in rural schools compared to 11 days in urban schools while in rural Mongolia the absent rate was 16% in rural schools compared to 5% in urban schools. The study (Cepada & Grepon, 2020) showed that 7,5 million teachers were absent in 2019, which is an average of nine days per teacher annually. Ms Angie Motshekga, the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa was interviewed in the Sowetan newspaper (11 February 2013), in which she reported that during her surprise visit, about 451 schools, over a thousand teachers were absent from work. Ms Motshekga was further interviewed by Sunday Times paper (08 April 2019) where she indicated that the national teacher's aggregate absence rate has increased from 8% to 10% on an average day. Based on these studies, it is evident that absenteeism is a problem, especially in rural or township schools. Therefore, that needs to be addressed to ensure that effective teaching and learning is happening in schools.

From the foregoing literatures, it is imperative for SMTs to invest in systems that will encourage teachers to attend school regularly to ensure that effective teaching and learning is happening in schools. Taking into consideration of teacher absenteeism phenomenon discussed earlier, it is of utmost importance to study the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism so to explore

effective strategies that SMT can adopt to manage teacher absenteeism in township schools. Factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism are discussed below.

2.2.1 Factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism

The common reason for teachers to be absent from work is ill health (Bipath, Venketsamy & Naidoo, 2019). When teachers are not fit to come to school, they are entitled to take a sick leave (The PAM document, 1999). According to Tshekedi (2022), teacher absenteeism has worsened owing to the lack of clarity on policy. For example, the PAM document allows teachers to take two days sick leave without submitting the medical certificate. Moreover, this could be the reason that majority of teachers take sick leave as an excuse to be absent from work because they would not be required to provide medical certificate as evidence that they were sick. Komoni (2015) found that teachers do not only get absent from work because they are sick themselves, but they may be required to take a family responsibility leave to take care of sick family members and this means they will stay at home to take care of the sick person. This requires SMTs to effectively use policies and internal school programmes to increase teachers' accountability by preventing them in taking one or two days of sick leave without producing the medical certificate. This can reduce a high number of teachers who take sick leave as an excuse to be absent from work.

According to Gabuza (2015), the lack of available teacher housing in proximity is also a contributing factor in teacher absenteeism. Okurut (2012) indicates that teachers who do not reside local often come in late and leave early because of transport issues. They must leave early to get home on time, or they are delayed in traffic travelling to work. A study conducted by Mampane (2013) revealed that 75% of teachers who work in township schools are immigrant. This means majority of them do not reside locally and this increases teacher absenteeism in schools in cases when there is limited transport to the schools. According to Komoni (2015), principals indicated that the absenteeism rate is higher for teachers who do not come from the local community. A study conducted by Gabuza (2015) revealed that absenteeism is common to teachers who do not reside locally. Therefore, the SMTs need to collaborate with the

local communities to offer rental residences to minimise the lateness and absenteeism in commuting teachers (Molefe, 2013). Appointing teachers who are not residents does not only cause absenteeism but also contributes to late coming.

Another factor that causes teacher's absenteeism is stress (Mampane, 2013). According to Spaull (2013), teacher absenteeism is more dominant in schools serving less privileged communities in which the working conditions such as in township schools is very demanding as compared to urban schools. The stressful working conditions in township schools could be a possible reason for teacher absenteeism (Mampane, 2013). Township schools have limited resources as compared to urban schools which could discourage teachers from attending to their classes. Nombo, Nyangarika and Mwesiga (2020) indicate that most public schools especially schools serving poor communities are often associated with overcrowded classes, lack of resources for both learners and teachers, poor infrastructure, and lack of support from the government. Schools in townships are faced with overcrowding classes, lack of resources and ill-discipline learners (Mampane, 2013). Teachers in township schools work under unfavourable conditions that can cause stress and ineffective teaching and learning as well as daily school attendance becomes a burden because of excess work, and the need to improvise to carry out their duties (Phalane & Pitsoe, 2014). Komoni (2015) added that schools with good quality infrastructure and adequate teaching and learning resources have smaller teacher absenteeism rate because teachers are more motivated to be working in those schools. Therefore, stressful working conditions leads to teachers being absent from work to take a break from this sad reality.

Teacher absenteeism seems to be contributed by inequality between rural (township) and urban schooling systems (Bipath, et al., 2019). SASA (1996) has established a model for equal education among children of all races and gender. However, the overall marginalisation of townships does not allow for true equality. The government introduced the no-fee school policy in most public schools serving the poor communities with a hope of offering free education for

all. However, in township schools, this has created more learners and parents to not take responsibility for their own education. Meanwhile in schools where parents are expected to pay fees, they are more responsible in terms of taking care of their resources, engaging with the children's education and ensuring that teachers are always at school doing their job. According to Nombo, et al. (2020), parents from no-fee schools feel that they do not have power to hold teachers accountable as they do not pay any fees, even when the community notices a pattern of absenteeism in teachers, they would not report it. Daily Sun (22 August 2011) and Sowetan (11 February 2013) newspapers published stories about parents handing in petitions to the education department about teachers who are always absent from school and coming to class very late even when they are present at school. Gabuza (2015) reaffirmed that in her experience as a parent with children who attend school in urban and township areas, he hardly receives any complaints from those who attend in urban school about teachers who do not come to class. This indicates that parents in township schools lack knowledge in holding teachers accountable when they are absent from work, and this gives allowance to teachers to abuse their leave days knowing that no one would hold them accountable for their constant absence from school and bunking of classes even when they are at school.

A study conducted by Aaronson, et al (2007) found that developmental and professional growth activities that require teachers to take time off work to attend workshops for development purposes or study leave also causes absenteeism. The DBE encourages teachers to attend workshops and further their studies for personal growth and development as this adds value to the profession and the department's image (Bipath, et. al., 2019). Tshekedi (2022) asserts that in most cases the developmental workshops and trainings take place during teaching and learning contact time. The challenge is that while teachers are away there are limited structures put in place to ensure that teaching and learning is not interrupted by the absence of the teacher. Tshekedi (2022) maintains that it is not only the continuous professional development workshops that disrupt learning in schools; some activities organised by the government like voter registrations and health campaign done during school

hours can disrupt teaching and learning in township schools and give teachers reason to be absent from work.

In a Sowetan interview, Motshekga (Sowetan, 11 February 2019) indicated that the unions also play a role in teachers' absenteeism because they focus more on protecting teachers' rights rather than taking accountability in managing their members (Gabuza, 2015). The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) represents most of the South African teachers and it is the same union seen protecting teachers when facing absenteeism misconduct (Gabuza, 2015). In a study conducted by Komoni (2015) in Kenyan schools reported that when teachers are charged with a misconduct, the unions always protect teachers with intentions of keeping their jobs meanwhile the issue of absenteeism and bunking of classes is never addressed among teachers and the unions. Similarly, Motshekga (Sowetan, 11 February 2019) indicated that most unions go an extra mile to protect teachers when it comes to misconducts such as bunking classes and being absent from work without valid reasons. Therefore, it is evident that unions are not taking punitive measures to minimise teacher's absenteeism, and this makes it difficult for both SMTs and DBE to manage teacher's absenteeism Motshekga (Sowetan, 11 February 2019). Rogers and Vegas (2009) added that in the United States the statute law considers absenteeism over short periods without good reason or leave as a minor misconduct, hence the unions normally protect teachers who abscond from work. Therefore, ineffective role of unions is a contributing factor in teacher absenteeism; instead of raising teacher accountability and responsibility, they protect their members when they are taken to task by the SMTs and DBE.

Nombo, et al. (2020) identified poor leadership and ineffective supervision by managers as contributing factors in teacher absenteeism. Most researchers including Mampane (2013), Komoni (2015) and Gabuza (2015) indicate that poor management and lack of accountability from the SMT leads teachers to take advantage of weak management and monitoring systems. Okurut (2012) argues that the SMTs seem to forget that they are also teachers themselves and they need to set an example to their subordinates. However, some SMTs report late to work compared to the staff members, teachers are quick to identify a weak leadership system and take advantage of the situation. These authors

found that most SMTs they get absent themselves and end up not punishing teachers who are frequently absent as they do not lead by example. Moreover, (Gabuza, 2015) revealed that the monitoring tools are not used effectively by the SMTs especially the timebook is not monitored daily and leave forms are filled without follow-up and most leave forms are submitted without evidence. Therefore, poor monitoring by SMTs contributes to teacher absenteeism.

Other factors that promote absenteeism are laziness, carelessness and ignorance among teachers (Komoni, 2015). Teachers drag their feet when they need to be in class, they take long tea breaks, some miss periods and others take sick leave while not sick. Mampane (2013) highlights that teachers abuse their leave rights by claiming that they are sick when they need to take time off to attend to their personal affairs. World Bank (2008) reports that during the first year of teaching, teachers tend to be more effective but after some years, they lose interest and tend to be absent from work more frequently. Komoni (2015) also found that in Kenyan schools, newly employed teacher's absenteeism rate is low compared to the long-serving teachers. In many schools, the SMTs impose policies and regulations to the staff, hence the long-serving teachers feel demotivated to attend school as there is no teamwork and some social needs are not met (Bipath, 2017).

The SMTs have a duty of identifying and addressing teacher absenteeism management issues in schools, as teacher absenteeism has been identified as an issue in most schools. Moreover, they are expected to have effective ways to address teacher absenteeism. Based on the factors discussed earlier that contribute to teacher absenteeism, it is evident that the SMTs need to use the range of policies provided to them but the department to regulate teacher absenteeism. Some factors need the SMTs to improve the working conditions to keep teachers in schools working with the stakeholders.

2.2.2 Consequences and challenges resulting from teacher absenteeism

The only time the DBE substitutes a teacher is when the teacher is absent for a long period of time to undergo a major operation that could not be postponed to school holiday period, maternity confinement, or any other prolonged sickness (Bipath, et al., 2009). Moreover, when teachers are absent from school owing to

workshop attendance, there are also no substitute teachers for such occurrences to ensure that when the pertinent teachers are absent from work teaching and learning is not compromised. During the period in which teachers are absent from school, learners are left unattended to teaching and learning also lags which results in poor curriculum coverage and poor academic performance (Okutut, 2012). In a study conducted by Gabuza (2015), the principals highlighted that most of the teachers who take leave they fail to come up with catch-up or recovery plans to cover the lost teaching time which leads to poor academic performance. Hence, it is evident that teacher absenteeism results in poor academic performance because teachers fail to come up with catch-up or recovery plans to cover the lost teaching and learning time.

When teachers are absent from work, the workload increases for the teachers present (Kevin & Knoster, 2016). Teachers who are present at work would have to substitute for the absent teachers using their administration time. This means that the teachers who are substituting the absent teachers may have to carry an extra workload (Ejere, 2010). In most cases, other teachers are encouraged to be absent themselves to avoid being overworked. In addition, the SMTs are also kept away from their work by spending more time on dealing with substituting, supporting and processing of leave forms (Gabuza, 2015). Therefore, SMTs need to ensure that they follow procedure themselves to raise accountability and apply pressure to teachers who do not comply.

Motshekga (2013) in a state address indicated that the DBE is losing more money by finding substitute teachers to replace teachers who take leave. The absence of teachers has serious financial cost implications to the DBE. A budget needs to be set aside to pay substitute teachers when the permanent teachers take long prolonged leave to ensure that learners do not lose teaching and learning time (Motshekga,2013). Therefore, teacher absenteeism costs the department more money in finding the substitute teachers.

Bipath, et al. (2019) found that teachers' absence affects the whole school system. The absenteeism behaviour of teachers may encourage learners also to be absent from school themselves. Rogers and Vegas (2009) highlight that when both teachers and learners are absent overall learner behaviour is

compromised. In a nutshell, teachers' absenteeism is associated with negative learner behaviour. The study conducted by Gabuza (2015) found that the principals and the SMT reported that most teachers report very late that they are not coming to work, and it makes it difficult for them to get a substitute. This means learners will be left unattended until the principal learns that the teacher is absent. Late substitution means learners will be loitering and making noise in the classroom which can be disruptive for the whole school.

Based on the researchers above, it is evident that teacher absenteeism leads to poor academic performance and increases the workload of other teachers. It is costly when it comes to the resources as the department spends more money on finding the replacements of the absent teachers; has a negative influence on the learner's behaviour and disruptive to the whole school system.

2.2.3 Who should manage teacher absenteeism

Ejere (2010) found that the Nigerian government empowers Head Teachers and School Based Committees (SBMC) in terms of being allowed to have more control in disciplining their teaching staff when it comes to managing teacher absenteeism. Ejere (2010) further maintains that the Nigerian attendance policies are used to manage teacher absenteeism effectively in such a way that it keeps teacher absence at minimum since it is impossible to eliminate absenteeism. Elsewhere in literature, Karppinen, Dimba and Kitawi (2021) indicate that the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association recommended that the School Board of Management manage teacher absenteeism by enforcing existing policies fairly and consistently. To curb teacher absenteeism, the Kenyan Secondary Schools Heads Association also gives the School Boards authority to use teacher attendance as one of the criteria during interviews for promotional posts (Karppinen, et al., 2021).

The SASA, 84 of 1996 places the responsibility of managing teacher absenteeism solely on the principal. However, the PSCBC Resolution J of 2007 provides all the SMTs with all the procedures and directives of managing teacher absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015). In addition, the DBE and Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) further provide the SMTs with circulars and policies which clearly indicate the type of leave teachers are entitled to and the

procedures to be followed for those leave to be approved. The DBE gave school principals and SMTs authority to manage teacher absenteeism by empowering and providing them with circulars, attendance and leave policies and strategies to enforce these policies to minimise teacher absenteeism (PAM document, 1999).

According to SACE (South African Council for Educators, 2011), the South African Department of Education has a set of policies that governs the teachers on their job descriptions or conditions of employment. These policies that govern teachers include the leave policies, which are there to safeguard the rights of learners to quality teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers themselves are accountable in managing teacher absenteeism by owning the policies to curb the problem of absenteeism instead of abusing their leave rights. One can conclude that managing teacher absenteeism phenomenon is neither a responsibility of the principal nor the SMTs. However, teachers also need to play a role in managing teacher absenteeism.

2.3 THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

This section discusses the composition of SMT and their expected roles.

2.3.1 Composition of SMT

The SASA Act of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) recommends that the SMT comprises the school principal, deputy principal and DHs formerly known as HoDs.

2.3.2 Role of SMTs

According to the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC Resolution of 2007), the SMT should take responsibility of managing day-to-day running of the school by offering guidance, advice, support and managing teachers, including managing absenteeism. According to the GDE circulars (2009), teachers are expected to report absenteeism directly to the principal timeously for the principal to communicate with the deputy principal in finding a substitute for the absent teacher. The principal also notifies the DH of the absent teacher to decide on

catch-up plan, especially when the teacher is absent for a long period of time (Gabuza, 2015).

The role of the SMTs is to design policies to improve the school and manage teachers (Gabuza, 2015). The SMT is responsible for monitoring, enforcing policies and ensuring teachers are well-informed of the school regulations and procedures of taking leave (Gabuza, 2015). When performing their roles, the SMTs need to have strict requirements when it comes to taking leave and this should be clearly indicated on the policies to enforce compliance with existing policies (Ejere, 2010). Furthermore, Molefe (2013) asserts that the SMTs should monitor the curriculum which includes planning and gathering information to help the school, departments or individuals to assess how well they are doing. Monitoring includes managing the timebook or attendance register which is kept safe in the principal's office to identify teachers who are absent and monitor attendance (Gabuza, 2015). SMTs need to promote collaboration or teamwork to bring teachers, parents and other community members together to work as a team in governance, management, teaching, and learning (Bassona & Mestry, 2019).

2.3.3 Policy guidelines

In South Africa there are policies that are in place to manage teachers to ensure that teachers provide effective and efficient service to the communities they serve (Gabuza, 2015). The Basic Conditions of The Employment Act No. 75 of (1997), Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of (1998) and Labour Relations Act of (1995), clearly state that educators are entitled to a leave and the types of leave are listed in the Acts and enshrined in the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) of (1999). According to this Acts, teachers are entitled to 36 sick leave days in a three-year cycle and for urgent personal matters leave days annually. Teachers are also entitled to take special leave for quarantine purposes. This is a type of leave that is granted to a teacher who has been exposed to a medical condition which requires him or her to be quarantined to prevent the spread to the learners and other colleagues (Mampane, 2013). For an example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, this leave was applicable. Bipath, et al. (2019) assert that teachers are also entitled to take study leave depending

on the time needed to write their examination. However, according to the Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of (1998), this type of leave can only be granted for an approved course. Mampane (2013) indicates that teachers are also entitled to four consecutive months maternity leave on full pay; in case of stillbirth, they are entitled to six weeks leave. This is applicable at least 14 days prior to their due date. According to the Act and policy, teachers are also entitled to family responsibility leave, whereby they are granted three working days per annum if the educator's partner gives birth, spouse gets sick or child, immediate family member dies or life partner (Mampane, 2013). In addition, Gabuza (2015) argues that most teachers are abusing this type of leave as some teachers take it without meeting the conditions and requirements for one to qualify for this type of leave. The policy further grants teachers leave for adoption, whereby a teacher who wants to adopt they qualify for 45 working days if they adopt a child younger than two years (Mampane, 2013). The policies also grant teachers unpaid leave of up to a maximum of 184 consecutive days. However, the DBE replaces the absent teacher with a substitute teacher if a teacher is absent for more than 20 working days (Mothibeli, 2017). Mampane (2013) argues that during the period of finding substitute teacher, learners are left unattended; teaching and learning is compromised in that regard. Mampane (2013) further highlights that the policies grant teachers a temporary incapacity leave and permanent incapacity leave. The author described incapacity leave as a leave that is given to a teacher who exhausted their leave days owing to ill-health. However, a health professional needs to endorse this type of leave and if it is granted, it is treated as an additional sick leave. On the contrary, permanent incapacity leave is granted if a teacher is permanently declared unfit to resume work owing to illness (Mampane, 2013). All the aforementioned types of leave are approved by the HoD after meeting the requirements and submission of the required supporting evidence or documents.

However, teachers must adhere to the circulars and policies to ensure they do not abuse their leave that they are entitled to take and provide evidence of leave taken. There are schools and DBE policies that communicate the penalties for abusing the leave system through circulars. The penalties of

abusing leave include deduction of salary if teachers are absent from work without providing a medical certificate if they took a sick leave or if they have taken more time off work than was legally due to them (Bipath, et al., 2019). According to the DBE circulars and school policies, teachers are expected to report to the principal if they cannot come to work and this should be done before school begins and they need to provide a reason and length of days they need to be off from work (Gabuza, 2015).

The DBE provides the SMTs with procedures and directives of regulating teacher absenteeism (Public Service Resolution 1 of 2007). Moreover, the DBE directs the SMTs to communicate the regulations and the procedures to the teachers to ensure that teachers do not abuse their leave. The policies further maintains that SMTs must account for the teachers' absence and provide support to teachers with attendance problems (Gabuza, 2015). The main objective for the policies is to mitigate the phenomenon of teachers' absenteeism in schools.

Molefe (2013) asserts that another role of the SMTs is to manage human resources. The concept of human resources aims to promote positive and sustainable relationships between colleagues. More importantly, SMTs need to involve teachers in making decisions so that all teachers manage rules and regulations so that they do not complain when it comes compliance (Gabuza, 2015). When the SMTs work as a team with teachers, they will feel responsible and appreciated if they are treated as team players rather than being told what to do and when to do it (Gabuza, 2015).

 SMTs are also expected to manage the school finances in collaboration with the SGB (Bassona & Mestry, 2019). The SGB is given full responsibility for managing the school finances. However, the SMT members are expected to understand the financial status of the school, do their needs analysis per departments, ensure that financial records are kept in line with the departmental goals, use financial records for problem-solving, planning and development of the school (Molefe, 2013). When the school finances are managed effectively, there is a high probability of promoting good infrastructure which is conducive to teaching and learning, teachers may be willing to be at school teaching than

taking time off when the environment is conducive which possibly reduces teacher absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015).

2.3.4 Strategies that the SMTs use to manage teacher absenteeism

Gabuza (2015) indicates that most schools use timebooks to monitor absenteeism, and the timebook can be supplemented by an early departure book and late arrival register in which teachers should indicate the total teaching time lost and the reasons for late arrival or early departure. Such strategy means that the SMTs should have a strict application of rules and an obligation for teachers to produce a medical certificate of all sick leaves taken. Mothibeli (2017) suggests that the SMTs need to review the policies and develop attendance recognition to supplement the timebook. Gabuza (2015) adds that SMTs should enforce compliance by using existing policies.

Another approach suggested in an earlier study by Hood (1998) is the egalitarian approach. The egalitarian approach deals with decentralisation of power which is based on inclusiveness and a possibility of power sharing (Narayan & Mooij, 2010). Decentralisation of power means that the SMTs should ensure that all stakeholders (School Governing Body (SGB), community, and staff) play a role in decision making to reduce absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015). Teachers need to be empowered to perform to their maximum ability. This can be done by allowing them to participate in decision-making. According to SASA, Act. No 84 of 1996, SGBs are given power to create conducive teaching and learning environment. The SGBs need to ensure that there are adequate infrastructures facilities and equipment needed to create a conducive working environment to improve the attendance of teachers (Ejere, 2010). Communities can assist by ensuring that the structures are not vandalised, and they can assist teachers who travel long distances by providing accommodation. When teachers reside in the local location, it can minimise late coming and absenteeism in situations where there are strikes and roads closure. Communities can be involved by renting out their rooms to teachers not residing locally. The foregoing literature suggests that the SMTs need to ensure all stakeholders are effectively involved and promote positive and professional relationships amongst all stakeholders.

Keelan (2020) recommends an individual approach as a strategy to minimise absenteeism. This approach encourages and inspires individuals to work together to promote better positions and competition. A culture of competing in schools can be used to raise the level of accountability in terms of teacher attendance, and no one would want to be the weakest link in an environment in which everyone is striving for the best (Gabuza, 2015). In a study conducted by Bipath, et al. (2019), in the five independent schools that were interviewed the SMTs indicated that they noticed a decline in teacher absenteeism after they introduced a 100% attendance cash reward bonus at the end of each term in their code of conduct. The finding implies that the government should consider rewarding individual teachers who are never absent from school. This can be done per term or yearly to minimise absenteeism in township schools. Komoni (2015) avers that teachers who are never absent from work, may be considered first when they are promotional posts to encourage 100% attendance. Offering non-monetary rewards also minimise teacher's absenteeism can be done by acknowledging and praising teachers who are never absent from work in public (Ejere, 2010). Therefore, offering rewards and promoting competition among teachers is a strategy SMTs can adopt to minimise absenteeism (Bipath, et al., 2017).

Komoni (2015) identified another strategy that the SMTs can implement to minimise absenteeism in schools is to remind teachers in each single meeting the importance of 100% attendance. SMTs can also do one-on-one reprimanding by calling the teacher for an upfront and honest conversation with him or her if they are habitual absentees (Gabuza, 2015). According to Bipath et al. (2017), the Department of Education (DBE) and the Department of Health (DoH) need to have a close relationship to have support health awareness programmes which will minimise absenteeism in schools and reduce stress on teachers. Moreover, the government needs to hire enough teachers, increase the teacher's salary and minimise overcrowding in the classrooms as ways of encouraging teachers to ensure effective and continuous teaching and learning (Gabuza, 2015).

2.4 SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

SMTs are both managers and leaders. Gabuza (2015) argues that SMTs are often challenged to shift from management styles that are based on authority to effective and efficiency power sharing approaches in managing and leading schools. Mampane (2013) recommends that SMTs adopt instructional leadership approach to create conducive teaching and learning environment that support the school. Instructional leadership is described by Manaseh (2016) as an educational leadership that focuses on instructional practises over managerial duties and instructional leaders focus on effective teaching and learning in schools.

Mestry et al. (2013) conclude that instructional leadership includes the following components: the principal must be able to communicate high expectations for teachers and learners, supervise instructions, monitor assessment and learner progress, coordinate the school's curriculum, promote a climate for learning, and create a supportive work environment for all stakeholders including teachers, learners and parents. Each component is discussed in detail in the next paragraphs.

The role of the principal as one of the SMT members in instructional leadership is to communicate high expectations for teachers and learners (Molefe, 2013). Okurut (2012) reveals that to communicate effective with teachers and learners, principals should lay down rules and procedures to be followed by teachers. Gabuza (2015) recommends that principals need to be always present at work or school to have a good influence on other staff members and they must possess effective leadership skills to control the signing of leave forms to manage teacher absenteeism. This means that the school principal is expected to perform instructional leadership role in the school to ensure that teachers are present at school and teaching and learning is taking place.

According to instructional leadership, principals must supervise instructions which is teaching and learning. In most schools' principals use timebook to supervise teachers and monitor teacher absenteeism which requires all teachers to sign-in before work and sign-out after work. Okurut (2012) further notes that to raise accountability, some principals use early departure and late

arrival register in which teachers fill to indicate the total teaching time lost. Principals need to encourage teachers to leave learners with work if they know that they will be absent the following day. In terms of an emergency absence, the school should keep a pre-designed timetable to cover for the teacher that is absent so that there are no learners who are left unattended (Gabuza, 2015). Despite this arrangement, Mampane (2013) found that teacher absenteeism is often associated with poor working conditions. Therefore, it is the duty of the principals working together with the SGB to create a safe working environment by improving infrastructure which includes reducing overcrowding in classes and empower teachers with skills to perform their tasks.

Based on the instructional leadership, principals and DHs are required to monitor assessment and learner progress (Mestry et al., 2013). Ward (2021) argues that being a principal and DH as an instructional leader they need to communicate the vision, targets, objectives, and set high performance expectations. Moreover, principals should discuss the assessment plans with the DHs to monitor assessment programme. After the assessments, results need to be communicated to learners and parents to monitor learner progress.

Mestry, et al. (2013) argue that principals do not need to be curriculum experts. However, they need to lead their schools with full knowledge of the core standards. Principal need to communicate the core duties of the DHs in terms of curriculum management. The function of DHs in the SMT is to manage curriculum in their respective departments (PAM, 1999). DHs should have plans in place to manage their departments to ensure that all objectives are achieved. Teachers who do not come to school regularly might not be able to complete the syllabus on time which affects academic performance of the learners. The DHs need to use the curriculum management tools like Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs), management plans, subject policies, and assessment plans designed by the DBE to monitor teachers in their departments and ensure that the school's goals are achieved as planned. ATPs are used to monitor curriculum coverage. However, teacher absenteeism, late arrival and early departures have a negative impact on curriculum coverage despite the use of this tool. In cases of teacher absenteeism, the role of DHs is to ensure that teachers come

up with a catch-up programme to cover the teaching and learning time lost (Gabuza, 2015).

Instructional leadership recommends that principals create a positive climate of learning climate for learning and create a supportive work environment for all stakeholders (Mestry, et al., 2013). As teaching is a stressful job, Mampane (2013) recommends that DHs need to strive to improve the working conditions of teachers by reducing the workload and create smaller classes to improve teachers' working conditions so that they do not take time off from work because of burnout situations. When an environment is conducive to teaching and learning, this will encourage teachers to be at school as Komoni (2015) indicated that one of the factors that contributes to teacher absenteeism is poor working environment. Moreover, the components of instructional leadership have discussed the possible strategies that the SMTs can use in their leadership and management roles to minimise teacher absenteeism in South African township schools.

2.5 FAYOL'S FRAMEWORK APPLICATION IN MANAGING TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

Fayol concluded that management should interact with personnel in five basic ways to lead and manage. When management interacts with their personnel effectively, it will be easy to address challenges in an organisation, in this case, addressing absenteeism between teachers and SMTs. The management process includes planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling (Brooks, 2022). I discuss how SMTs address teacher absenteeism using the five basic ways to lead and manage recommended by Fayol management process. All the five basic ways are explained below and their relevance to this study. Below is a diagram representation of Fayol five basic ways to lead and manage.

According to Fayol planning is important because individuals working in a same organisation come together and decide in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it and where to do it to achieve a common goal (Luenendonk, 2019). In this study, my assumption is that the SMTs need to sit down with teachers to discuss existing policies and procedures to be followed in addressing teacher

absenteeism rather than imposing the policies to them. Gabuza (2015) argues that when teachers are involved in the planning and making decisions on the policies, it will be easy to hold them accountable when the procedures and regulations they agreed on are not followed such as school attendance.

Fayol management process also speaks about organising. According to Brooks (2022), organising involves development of structures within an organisation. It means that the SMTs in this study needs to organise structures based on departments; for example, in schools there are departments and HOD who are managers in those departments. The school managers should ensure that the departments they are heading have relevant resources to ensure the accomplishment of the organisation's objectives and implementation of its strategic plans (Luenendonk, 2019). A timebook can be used as a resource to monitor leave taken and keeping accurate records on teacher's attendance. By so doing, the SMTs will be able to manage absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015).

According to Ward (2021), Fayol recommended commanding as a basic way leaders can use to manage their subordinates. Ward (2021) defines commanding as a way leaders and managers use to ensure that personnel understand their responsibilities within the organisation and work together to achieve common goal. SMTs need to use commanding to ensure that teachers perform their responsibilities successfully and be responsible for their actions (Godwin et al, 2017). Commanding calls for SMTs to encourage and direct teachers so that they play an important role in reducing absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015).

Fayol management process also emphasises coordination. According to Ward (2021), coordinating in a management theory posits that managers must ensure that all stakeholders work together in a cooperative manner to achieve desired goals. Therefore, the SMTs need to ensure that they bring unity between all stakeholders; teachers, SGB members, parents, and communities. The SMTs needs to work closely with the SGB to ensure that they recruit the best teachers and empowering the community to own the school in making sure that they protect the infrastructure and even offering a place to stay to teachers who do not reside locally to minimise absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015).

Fayol management theory recommends controlling as a strategy managers and leaders need to use to run effective organisation. According to Luenendonk (2019) the controlling process consists of establishment of standards, measurement of performance, comparison of performance with standard and taking corrective actions. The SMT needs to be active in ensuring that the teachers perform to their best ability. This includes teachers being in class teaching instead of taking long tea breaks or bunking classes every chance they get (Komoni, 2015). A timebook is a tool that can be used to frequently track teacher's attendance and ensuring that corrective measures are taken to minimise teacher's absenteeism in schools (Gabuza, 2015). The SMTs can also use teacher attendance as one of the measures of performance and to raise teacher accountability in ensuring proper procedures are followed when leave is taken (Gabuza, 2015).

2.6 TOWNSHIP SCHOOL CONTEXT

Township schools are schools located in areas that are previously racially segregated and low-cost housing development designed for black working-class labourers to be close to work within big cities and towns (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011). According to Mafora (2017), most families residing in Soweto schools are the working class with low economic backgrounds, and they mostly live in four-bedroom houses that were built by the South African government to curb the poverty status of the poorest communities. Some live in other people's houses or self-erected structures that are called informal settlements. In South Africa, urban, rural and township schools operate differently, and their educational systems are different. In a nutshell, townships and rural schools are always disadvantaged in most cases. Most of these schools are no-fee schools because of high unemployment and low socioeconomic status, a no-fee policy is applicable in these schools; hence they are often associated with poor resources and infrastructures (Bush & Heystek, 2003). Mampane (2013) and Komoni (2015) buttress that township schools are associated with poor working condition environment such as poor infrastructure and overcrowding classes as they are funded by the government and their resources are limited compared to urban schools where parents are obliged to pay school fees. Based on the GDE database, Soweto townships are in the Johannesburg North District also known

as D10 which includes schools from Soweto, Parktown, Randburg, Johannesburg Central, Far North, and Cosmo City. However, the focus on this study is on Soweto township schools. The intention of the study was to explore the teacher absenteeism phenomenon in township school and how the SMTs manage the situation.
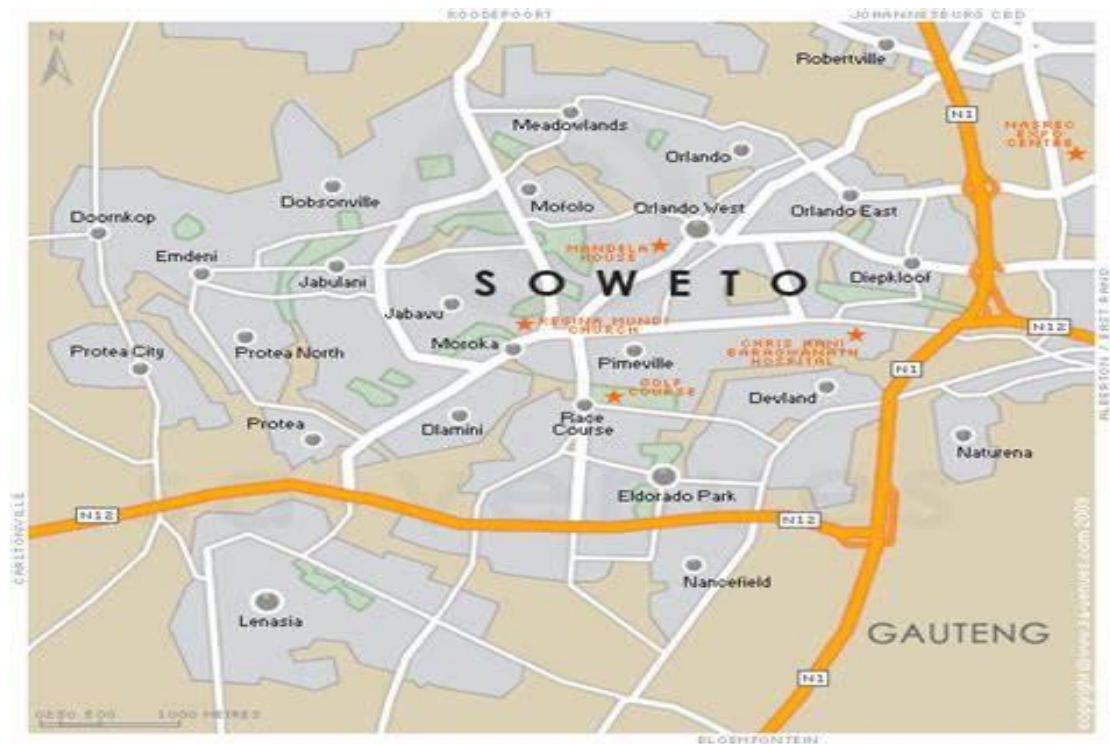
Figure 2.1: Soweto Map

Source: Soweto City - Bing images

Figure 2.1 shows Soweto township areas. The research site for this study is Orlando East and Diepkloof township schools.

2.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter discussed what other researchers have written on managing teacher absenteeism. The role played by the SMTs in managing absenteeism is also discussed. The concept of the township school and associated challenges is presented. Furthermore, the factors contributing to teacher absenteeism and the consequences of teacher absenteeism were addressed. The literature review has provided SMTs with different strategies to manage and control teacher absenteeism integrated with Fayol's management process framework and instructional leadership. This study further explores the reality of teacher absenteeism in township schools. The next chapter presents the research methodology of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two discussed the global and South African literature review on the management of teacher absenteeism in schools. The literatures provide different beliefs and ideas on teacher absenteeism which is the focus of this study. The purpose of this chapter is to describes the research paradigm, approach, design, and methodology used of this study. Furthermore, this chapter also describes the research site, sampling, data collection methods, and ethical issues applied in this study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Guba and Lincoln (2013) define paradigm as a set of ideas which represents a worldview of researchers used to explain the social world. The research paradigm is divided into two types: positivism and interpretivism paradigm. Cohen et al. (2011) differentiate positivism as a method of generalising findings using scientific methods which results in single reality while in interpretivism knowledge is acquired through reasoning using multiple knowledge that exist as a reality. Therefore, this study is located within an interpretivist paradigm. Conversely, Creswell (2009) asserts that interpretivism is characterised by a concern of understanding human behaviour and nature of the experiences of people in their social and cultural lives. I believe that there are various truths and meanings of people's views of their own lived experiences. In this study, I explored the views of the SMTs on teachers' absenteeism and how they manage absenteeism in township schools, their ideas on how the problem can be managed as well as their expectations of involvement of various stakeholders in the issue of teacher absenteeism.

Edmonds and Kennedy (2013) indicate that research has three dimensions namely, ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology deals with the

nature of reality and an ontological interpretivism is relativism (Guba & Lincoln, 2013). "Epistemology refers to the nature of reality between the researcher and what it represents" (Gabuza, 2015). Methodology is about finding out what needs to be known and provides an opportunity for the voice, concerns and practises of the participants to be heard (Cole, 2006). This study adopted the ontological position of interpretivism, which is relativism. Guba and Lincoln (2013) view relativism as a reality that is subjective and differs from one individual to the other. They further highlighted that social phenomena are created from perceptions and actions of individuals. In this study, I was driven to understand the different strategies SMTs use to manage teacher absenteeism by making sense of their experiences in township school context, their involvement in managing teacher absenteeism and their roles as school managers.

The epistemology that this study adopted is that reality is individually constructed; it does not question ideologies (Cohen et al., 2011). In studying the strategies, SMTs members use to manage teachers' absenteeism in township schools. I believed that the individual participants have their own reality, and I needed to make sense of their experiences with reference to managing teacher absenteeism. In the next section, I discuss the research methodology starting with the research approach.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Cole (2006) divides research approaches into two, qualitative and quantitative. According to Cole (2006), quantitative research focuses on the measurement of data that is collected on numbers and the research design that is normally adopted in quantitative is a survey. Conversely, Creswell (2009) describes qualitative research as research that attempts to understand the phenomenon within natural settings where human beings behave, and events occur. The research approach adopted for this study was qualitative. A qualitative approach seeks to understand participants' ideas, thoughts or experiences by viewing different possibilities in depth not limited to single view or thoughts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, qualitative approach allowed me as a researcher to get different views from the SMTs on how they manage

absenteeism in township schools, their roles as managers, the challenges they experience as well as the strategies they used to manage teacher absenteeism through interacting with them. Moreover, this study is more of explanatory research where I explored the factors that lead to teachers being absent from work and how SMTs manage this phenomenon in township schools.

Cohen et al (2011) recommend a qualitative approach as it has several advantages compared to the quantitative approach. He argues that qualitative approach is very flexible as researchers can change question in the field, it has a low-cost budget, and it can assist other researchers to find out the possible causes of the researched problem and it leaves a room for other researchers to further study relevant research questions. However, Thomas (2011) argues that the disadvantage of qualitative research approach is that it uses smaller sample; hence, the results cannot be generalised and there is a chance of data being too old. Cole (2006) also asserts that the findings on the qualitative research cannot be generalised as the data are collected using a small sample cannot apply to a large population. In this study, although the sample is limited to two schools and selected SMT members, the study enabled me to shade light on the phenomenon without generalising findings beyond the context of the study.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design that was used in this study is a case study. Creswell (2009) describes a case study as a strategy of inquiry in which a researcher seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of how participants interact and relate to each other in a specific situation. I specifically used a multiple-site case study with an intention to obtain a diverse range of data from different contexts. Cohen, et al. (2011) recommend a multiple-site case study for a researcher to balance an in-depth understanding of each case under investigation or gain more insights to make conclusions. The use of multiple sites helped me to understand diverse management styles using a different number of SMTs members with an intention not to generalise but to look for similar diverse management structures from two different schools within the same context. However, Shenton (2004) argues that a case study has a risk of bias where a researcher's personal opinions and preferences may be influenced by own

feelings. According to Shenton (2004), a researcher must be careful with the kinds of conclusions drawn when studying something to avoid being biased. In this study, I will ensure that participants are drawn from two different schools as different schools have diverse management styles and not general the findings. I used the findings to find common contributing factors that promote teacher absenteeism and the strategies used in township schools to manage absenteeism. Moreover, I made sure that I had an in-depth understanding of each case. Furthermore, my supervisor also checked the research process for researcher bias in my analysis and the conclusions I made from the study and advised me accordingly.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.5.1 Research site

The research was conducted in two schools, one primary and one secondary school in South Western Townships (Soweto). Soweto is a well-known township of the City of Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, South Africa. Soweto is the largest black township in South Africa, and it is made up of 32 different townships. Townships in South Africa are areas that were previously racially segregated and low-cost housing development designed for black working-class labourers to be close to work within big cities and towns (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011). Most of the township schools are no-fee schools because of high unemployment and low socioeconomic status, a no-fee policy is applicable in these schools; hence, they are often associated with insufficient resources and infrastructures (Bush & Heystek, 2003). This study focused on managing absenteeism in township schools and both schools are in the township context, Soweto. One school is from Diepkloof and one from Orlando East. The aim of my study was not to generalise but to find similar patterns in practice between a primary and a secondary school in Soweto township. Both schools are in the same district of Johannesburg North, but opposite locations within Soweto in proximity of about 20 km for this reason the schools were convenient to be sampled in this study.

3.5.2 Sampling

The participants in this study were sampled from two Soweto township schools; a primary school and a secondary school in Johannesburg North District. The two schools were selected because the SMT members in these schools have more than five years in school management and the aim was to select knowledgeable and experienced participants who had the potential to provide in-depth knowledge on the issue of teacher absenteeism. Moreover, the two selected schools had a minimum teacher absenteeism rate in the last year during the annual survey in circuit one of the Johannesburg North districts (Data Driven Districts programme, 2022). In this study, I used purposive sampling to select the participants. Cohen, et al. (2011) describe purposive sampling as a feature used in qualitative research which allows researchers to hand-pick cases to be included in the research based on characteristics that they are looking for. I sampled two schools, one school had a total of 32 staff members with 1 principal, 1 deputy principal, 4 DHs and 26 teachers. The other school had a total of 52 staff members,1 principal, 1 deputy principal, 8 DHs and 42 teachers. The sample used in this study consists of the principals from the two schools and three DHs formerly known as HoDs from each school and four teachers from both schools which makes a total of 12 participants. I sampled two principals and six DHs because they are managers in the schools, and they form part of the SMTs, and the four teachers were included because they are the objects of this study. According to the PAM document, the role of the SMTs is to assist the principal in managing teacher absenteeism. Both schools had more than three DHs, I selected three DHs with the longest years of experience in managing teachers.

3.5.3 Data collection methods

The first method I used to collect data was interviews. An interview is a simple enquiry which allows the researcher to the participant's world and giving an understanding of what certain behaviours in that context mean (Creswell, 2009). Seidman (1991) supports the idea of investigating a phenomenon using interviews as it enables the researcher to introspect and reflect on the collected data. It allows the researcher to clarify any misgivings related to the answers

and questions are planned to give participants a chance to provide more relevant information. Furthermore, Seidman (1991) argues that during interviews other activities that take place are voice recording and notetaking. However, at times when the interviewer uses voice recording, participants can be unwilling to express their feelings freely knowing that their responses are recorded. In addition, when an interviewer uses note taking method during the interview, it might disrupt the effectiveness of the communication especially if sensitive and confidentially questions are asked, the participant might withhold information to avoid being misunderstood (Siedman, 1991). Given these challenges, the interviewer can choose not to take notes or delay taking the notes to allow the participants to be flexible or speak freely without intimidation but there is a risk of the interviewer to forget important details (Gabuza, 2015, Cohen et al., 2011 & Siedman, 1991).

There are different types of interviews that a researcher could use. Cohen et al., (2011) distinguished interviews into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Seidman (1991) defines structured interviews as an approach where an interviewer has a set of specific questions asked to the participants and their answers are recorded on a table or standardised list. A questionnaire is more suitable for this type of interview. A semi-structured interview is a data collection method which allows the interviewer to ask open-ended questions giving a room for a conversation to get rich data from participant, it gives an interviewer an opportunity to make follow-up questions, why and how questions instead of direct answers (Guion, Diehl & McDonalds, 2001). Patton (2002) defines unstructured interview as in-depth interview which comes with no predetermined list of questions and questions follow from previous responses.

This study used semi-structured interviews so that I do not limit participants' responses to get more details on why and how events happen. A total of 12 individual face-to-face interviews were conducted in this study. Each participant was interviewed within the school premises. Each interview lasted between 25 and 30 minutes. I also developed interview schedule with all the questions that I used to interview the sampled SMTs. I asked the participants predetermined questions to be able to keep to the focus of the study and avoid collecting data

which is not relevant to the study if the interview is long and not focused. In this regard, Patton (2002) recommends short interviews because long interviews decrease the quality of the responses and gives room for a lot of repetition. According to Creswell (2012), semi-structured interviews are easy to administer, have greater accuracy with results, are easy to visualise and analyse, and respondent identity is protected throughout. Patton (2002) also highlights that some interview questions might be left unanswered, or respondents may provide untrue information, or the respondents might have hidden agendas and not all answers can be analysed easily.

The second data collection method in this study was document analysis. Document analysis is a selective and controlled method of seeing and observing a phenomenon as it happens (Cohen, et al., 2011). Creswell (2012) recommends a document as an instrument to collect data and it provides the research with a rich source of information. Therefore, I used available documents from the schools including school attendance policy, time book, substitute timetables and any other relevant documents to help me generate more descriptive data on teacher attendance and control of teacher absenteeism. Creswell (2012) highlights that using existing instruments has high validity and reliability. However, Patton (2002) argues that most common pitfalls of using document analysis is that data sources might be inaccessible, or not properly catalogued or proprietary information and some data sources are incomplete for example timebooks or leave forms may have limited data or missing information.

To ensure that these documents have reliable information, I needed to do an observation first maybe for a week to check if the principal monitors the attendance and checks if teachers sign timeously instead of having teachers coming in very late only to sign an earlier time. Gabuza (2015) observed that most teachers in a certain school were signing in and out at the same time, which raised concerns whether these teachers were in the admin office at the same time where the timebook was kept. This was evidence that coming in and going out of teachers was not monitored effectively by the principal, "it looked like a fill-in exercise rather than capturing teacher's records of the actual coming

and going time" (Gabuza, 2015: 57-58). Creswell (2012) indicates that legal and ethical constraints on access to certain documents may pose as a risk of using document analysis.

3.5.4 Data analysis

According to Cohen et al. (2011), data analysis involves the reduction and interpretation of data. There are many types of data analysis methods such as thematic, content and grounded theory analysis among others. In this study, I used a thematic analysis procedure to analyse the data. According to Creswell (2012), thematic analysis is a data analysis method of analysing qualitative data a researcher usually gathers to solve their research problem. Furthermore, Clarke and Braun (2015) articulate that thematic analysis provides procedures for generating codes and themes from qualitative data. Codes are the smallest unit of analysis while themes provide a framework for organising and reporting the researcher's analytic observations (Clarke & Braun, 2015). I adopted Creswell's (2012) five steps of analysing qualitative data namely selection of participants and site identification, gaining access to the data, developing data collection forms, determining the data collected and using ethical considerations in administering the research.

All interviews were transcribed so that I was able to do the coding. After coding, the data, I examined the data in detail to identify emerging patterns and themes. Themes were developed based on the questions asked during the interviews. Creswell (2012) recommends that themes and subthemes be created after understanding the collected data in the research field based on the questions and results after interviews. Thereafter, I categorised the data into different sets and compared the themes and sub-themes of the research questions.

3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical considerations deal with what is wrong or right and what is good or bad in the process of doing research (Gabuza,2015). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), researchers need to protect their participants' rights in all stages of their research. Therefore, before I conducted the research, I obtained

ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa (Unisa) to conduct my research. I also needed to get permission from the GDE, the principal of the schools, the SGBs and consent was to be obtained from the SMTs members who participate who participated in the study.

After obtaining ethical clearance and the permission to access the schools, I ensured that I got consent from the participants. Creswell et al (2007) define informed consent as a document that informs participants their right or choice to engage in a particular study informing them about the procedures and the risks involved. I developed a letter of consent to give to participants before the interviews. It is important to give participants a chance to familiarise with the contents of the study before committing themselves in participating on the research (Creswell, 2009).

Another aspect to consider in ensuring ethical consideration is voluntary participation. After getting a permission from the GDE to conduct my research I will ensure voluntary participation by informing all the participants of their rights and freedom to withdraw from the study anytime they wish not to continue participating without any consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured in this study by using pseudonyms. The real identity of the participants was not included in the collected data. According to Mampane (2013), confidentiality and anonymity are two concepts that protect the privacy of participants in research. Pseudonyms will be used to identify the data from the different participants. A letter of consent will be issued to participants to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, all voice recordings and interview transcripts were kept in a safe place.

I also needed to protect the participants from harm. It is solely the responsibility of a researcher to ensure that participants would not be exposed to any physical or psychological harm during the study (Mampane, 2013).

3.7 ENHANCING QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH

According to Guba and Lincoln (2013), trustworthiness is the measure in a qualitative study. To ensure trustworthiness of the study, Creswell (2012)

recommended four measures of trustworthiness in qualitative research: namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is the extent to which the findings are truthful (Creswell, 2012). To ensure credibility, I triangulated the data from the interviews and those from document analysis to reduce bias that comes from using single method. Participants were given an opportunity to check the accuracy of the interview transcript if the words used match with what was said. This process is called member checking.

Transferability refers to the extent in which a reader or other researchers can generalise the findings of the research based on their individual context to address the issue they are researching (Cohen et al, 2011). To ensure transferability, I chose participants from the same background. In this context the SMTs worked in schools located in Soweto township. This is to allow transferability to be done within similar contexts since the findings from this study cannot be generalised beyond the context of the study due to the small sample.

 Dependability means that if the same study with same participants using similar methods is carried out it will attain same results (Creswell, 2012). I ascertain dependability of this study by providing a detailed report from the interviews and keeping all recordings and transcripts as Shenton (2004) recommended a detailed report so that another researcher researching on the same topic may repeat my work or advance his or her research. I also had an audit trail that show the decisions that I took during the research procedures.

Confirmability is described as a way a researcher acknowledges that their research is not objective and admits their biases. To ensure confirmability all interviews were recorded. Gabuza (2015) recommended keeping recordings to present more reliable data to avoid bias reporting which might have been caused by trying to remember conversations.

3.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter describes the research paradigm, research approach and the research design undertaken throughout the research process. This chapter further discussed the research site and the sample, data collection method adopted in this study and the data analysis techniques used. Ethical issues and trustworthiness of the study are also highlighted. The findings of this study are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the research methodology used to explore the management of teacher absenteeism by the SMTs in two Soweto township schools under the Johannesburg North District. This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the data collected during the interviews and from document analysis. The discussions are guided by the main research question which is how do the SMTs in township schools manage teacher absenteeism? Three themes were developed from the research sub-questions and are presented in sub-themes as shown below.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 4.1 provides profile of the research site and the profiles of the participants. Pseudonyms used for the first school was School A and the second school was School B. The pseudonyms for the principals are Principal A and Principal B respectively and the DHs from School A were DH A-C and school B Departmental Heads were DH D-F. And the teachers from School A were Teacher A and B, and School B were Teacher C and D. Table 4.1 is the detailed table profiling the schools and participants.

Table 4.1 Biographical data

Site and Quintile	Number of teaching staff	Participants	Years in the SMT	Teaching experience (years)	Highest qualification	Age	Number of teachers managed
School A Quintile 2	27	Principal (Principal A)	15	27	BScEd	36-50	27
		Departmental Head (DH A)	13	32	BEd honours	51+	6
		Departmental Head (DH B)	14	21	BAEd	36-50	7
		Departmental Head (DH C)	13	34	BAEd	36-50	10
		Teacher A	N/A	10	BEd	below 35	N/A
School B Quintile 2	32	Teacher B	N/A	8	BEd honours	below 35	N/A
		Principal B Deputy principal	5	8	BEd honours	below 35	8
		Departmental Head (DH D)	13	24	BAEd	51 +	6
		Departmental Head (DH E)	9	11	BEd	36-50	8
		Departmental Head (DH F)	6	23	PGCE	36-50	11
		Teacher C	N/A	10	BEd	below 35	N/A
		Teacher D		8		below 35	N/A

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Table 4.2: Research questions and interview questions

Research question. Biographical questions	Interview question. How many years of experience do you have as a teacher? What is your highest qualification? What age bracket are you in?
What are the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools?	In your opinion why do teachers absent themselves? What factors contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools?
What are the challenges experienced by the SMTs in managing teacher absenteeism?	What challenges do you think Departmental Heads experience in managing teacher absenteeism? What are the obstacles regarding reducing teacher absenteeism?
What strategies do SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism?	What strategies do you think your school can use to reduce teacher absenteeism? What external sources do you think may help in managing teacher absenteeism in your school? What can the Department of Education do to help in reducing teacher absenteeism in township schools?
	Is there anything else that you would like to tell me regarding managing absenteeism of teachers?

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Table 4.3 Research questions, themes, and sub-themes

1.What are the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools?	Theme 1: Factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools. Sub-Theme 1: Personal factors Category 1: Illness of teacher or family member Category 2: Bereavement Category 3: Unjustified reasons Sub-Theme 2: School factors Category 1: Stress related work conditions Category 2: Poor management of teacher absenteeism Sub-Theme 3: External factors Category 1: Service delivery strikes Category 2: Teacher professional development
2. What are the challenges experienced by the SMTs in managing teacher absenteeism?	Theme 2: The challenges the SMTs experience in managing teacher absenteeism. Sub-Theme 1: Backlog on curriculum coverage and learner performance. Sub-Theme 2: Non-submission of medical certificate or evidence of absence. Sub-Theme 3: Ill-discipline of learners. Sub-Theme 4: The policies and legislations give teachers a right to be absent.
3. What strategies do SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism?	Theme 3: The strategies used by the SMTs to reduce teacher absenteeism. Sub-Theme 1: Use of policy documents. Sub-Theme 2: Use of tools – Timebook and APT. Sub-Theme 3: Use of Motivation.

4.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents and discusses the findings of this study using the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data collected during the semi-structured interviews. The study revealed that many schools are battling in managing teacher absenteeism.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools

This theme presents and discusses the finding of the first research question - What are the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools? The focus of this theme, therefore, is on the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools. There are two sub-themes, each sub-theme is divided in categories which are discussed within each sub-theme.

4.5.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Personal factors

In this sub-theme of personal factors, three categories were identified as explained below.

Category 1: Illness of the teacher or family member

This sub-theme revealed that the most common reason that contributes to teacher absenteeism is due to personal factors like ill-health and taking care of a sick immediate family member. The participants said:

> *…ill-health or sickness has been reported by most teachers, personal commitments in a sense that they may have to take care of a sick child that direct needs the teacher to take time off (Principal A).*

> *Common reason teachers indicate when asking permission to be excused from work is illness or they must take care of a sick family member (Principal B).*

> *Teachers get absent because of sickness; others get absent from work because of taking care of a sick family member and attending your child emergencies (Teacher A).*

The foregoing quotations are evidence that there is nothing that the SMTs can do when one reports that they are sick or that they must care for the health of a family member. Moreover, the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council

(PSCBC, Resolution 1 of 2007), stipulates that teachers are entitled to 36 days sick leave in the three-year cycle which is approximately 12 days per year. Bipath, et al. (2009) likewise revealed that common reason that teachers are absent from work is ill-health and Komoni (2015) in his study found that teachers do not only get absent because they are sick themselves but sometimes, they are required to take care of the sick family member. In another study, Mampane (2013), argues that teachers may not be necessarily sick. However, the working conditions in township schools are very demanding which could lead to teachers consulting to medical doctors so that they get time off away from a burden of unfavourable working conditions and excess work. Mampane (2013) further highlights that teachers abuse their leave rights by claiming that they are sick while they are not.

This finding implies that the SMTs need to focus their effort of ensuring that the health and wellness of staff members are taken into consideration when managing the daily running of the school. The SMTs may indirectly help the teachers to be more regular in school by providing a conducive working environment. According to Gabuza (2015), if the DBE can invest in wellness programmes, medical screening, fitness, and health education, it can encourage good health on teachers which may reduce the risk of teachers becoming ill and reduce the challenge of teacher absenteeism. Such support efforts need to be planned of the academic year.

Category 2: Bereavement

The participant in both schools indicated that another common factor that contributes to teacher absenteeism is bereavement. The participants indicated that teachers take family responsibility leave to bury their loved ones. The quotations from the interviews are as follows:

> *Teachers take time off to attend a burial of a close family member (Principal A).*

> *Some teachers indicate that they have family crisis they need to attend to or death in the family (DH D).*

> *Teachers get absent because of sickness. Some they indicate that they must attend funerals (DH F).*

Based on the foregoing quotations, the SMTs should ensure the application of relevant policies when it comes to family responsibility leave because funerals can happen every weekend. According to Fayol's framework, the SMTs need to interact effectively with their personnel through planning. The SMT and teachers need to come together and decide on the policies and procedures to be followed to address teacher absenteeism (Brooks, 2022). The data from document analysis show that both schools have teacher attendance policy. However, their policies were outdated, and they did not have a directive on how the family responsibility leave works and the requirements for one to qualifies for it. The policies just listed the different types of leave and the length of days one qualifies for. I believe that family responsibility leave should be taken when the teachers lose a close family member or a family member who was dependent on the teacher. According to Komoni (2015), most family responsibility leaves are submitted without supporting evidence to indicate the relation of the deceased and the teacher. They use a mere death certificate which does not provide concrete evidence that indeed the deceased was the teacher's responsibility. It seems that there is a need for close supervision and monitoring of leave related to bereavement. Finlayson (2009) highlights that unmonitored use of leave can cause more leave being taken by teachers as long as they see a gap to manipulate the system.

Category 3: Unjustified reasons

Gabuza (2015) highlights that some teachers have a pattern of being absent every Mondays after a payday weekend. Some take extra two days before holidays or after holidays. This is evidence that teachers choose when they should be absent without valid reasons. The following quotations show the concerns raised when teachers are absent without even disclosing why they were absent from work, only to say they had personal commitments they cannot disclose to their SMTs.

> *Others get absent because they must attend emergency personal matters, without disclosing what exactly (Principal B).*

Some report that they have personal matters to attend normally they do not disclose what exactly (DH F).

Although teachers are entitled to certain privacy when it comes to teaching and learning, the lack of transparency could be a problem as implied in the foregoing quotations. This is because teachers are expected to be present at schools to carry out the teaching and learning responsibilities. According to the Daily Sun (22 August 2011), parents complained about teachers who do not come to school regularly. One parent indicated that those who drink possibly would not come to work on Monday because of hangover; they do not take work seriously. Komoni (2015) also mentioned that some unjustified reasons of teachers being absent from school include laziness, carelessness and ignorance. Motshekga (Sowetan. 11 February 2019) indicated that when it comes to misconducts of laziness such as bunking of classes and being absent from work without a valid reason, the unions always protect teachers which becomes difficult for both the SMT and DBE to manage teacher absenteeism. Therefore, it calls the SMTs to identify those patterns, record and report for the concerned teachers to take accountability of their actions. The SMTs need to apply Fayol's management phase of organising, by organising structures that they will use to monitor absenteeism such as having floor heads among teachers who will monitor unattended classes and making monitoring resources available such as late arrival and early departure register. From the document analysis, School B had a late and early departure register. However, the registers were not updated, and no one was monitoring the registers. Some of the teachers seem to be side stepping the policy guidelines instead of acting according to the policy. Maphosa et al. (2012) highlight that it is a duty of the SMTs to instil ethos of public service and a sense of professionalism among teachers. Gabuza (2015) asserts that there are cases whereby teachers take advantage of a weak management systems in such a way that there are genuine reasons for taking leave and others are not genuine. In the present study, some teachers' responses suggest that they are entitled to take leave; they even organise their leave in advance without reporting to the SMTs in advance. These quotations are some reasons that show evidence of poor work

ethics, entitlement and poor human relations in the workplace which contributes to teacher absenteeism.

Some teachers bunk school to avoid work and responsibilities especially the young teachers who do not respect their work (Teacher A).

Most teachers get absent because the management do not care or have effective consequences to the teachers who decide to stay away from work (Teacher C).

Teacher A argues that some teachers do not respect their work, especially young teachers. This shows that sometimes teachers abuse the system, teachers who do not comply with their period of leave could be covered by granting unpaid leave. This finding suggests that principals should be truthful when submitting the leave forms to the DBE this is because the Employment Act clearly stipulates that the principals have a power to recommend leave without pay if they provide truthful reports when submitting the leave forms. On the contrary, Teacher C puts a blame on the SMTs as they show poor compliance with rules and procedures when it comes to managing absenteeism in schools. Therefore, SMTs should lay down clear rules and procedures to be followed by teachers and punish absentees by submitting truthful reports to recommend an unpaid leave to minimise teacher absenteeism (Gabuza, 2015). In this study, the absence of accountability on the side of the teacher and policy implementation expected from the SMTs may continue to encourage teacher absenteeism for personal reasons. To increase accountability Fayol's management framework recommends commanding as a basic way to lead, whereby the SMTs encourage and direct teachers so that they play an important role in reducing teacher absenteeism (Ward, 2021).

4.5.1.2 Sub-theme 2: School factors

The second cause of teacher absenteeism is school-related issues. Two categories of thoughts emerged from this sub-theme, and these are presented in the paragraphs that follow.

Category 1: Stress related to working conditions

This category has revealed that poor working conditions such as learner indiscipline, lack of parental involvement and overcrowding classes leads to work stress and poor working conditions. Township schools are mostly associated with learner disruptive behaviour and overcrowding classes which contribute to teachers being absent from work because of the work stress experienced from managing such classes. The quotations from participants to support the statement of work stress contributing to teacher absenteeism in township schools following:

> *Most teachers absent themselves because of sickness that is caused by work stress. In the townships working conditions are very poor and very little parental engagements (DH E).*
>
> *Work stress also keeps us away from school, dealing with learners who are drug addicts and ill-discipline learners (Teacher A).*
>
> *The poor working conditions in township schools and being underpaid do not motivate us to be at school (Teacher B).*
>
> *Other reason to be absent from school is the ill-discipline of the learners in township schools; many learners there are drug addicts. We absent ourselves to avoid stress from them. Some classes are overcrowded, and you must deal with disrespectful learners and unsupportive parents"*
> *(Teacher D).*

The preceding finding shows that poor working conditions is one of the contributing factors of teacher absenteeism. It is evident from the preceding quotations that most teachers experience stress on a daily basis which pushes them from taking time-off from work. Such a finding was also reported by Mampane (2013) where he highlighted that schools in townships are mostly faced with overcrowding classes, lack of resources, poor infrastructure, and ill-discipline of learners owing to drug abuse. This finding implies that the SMTs in collaboration with the DBE need to improve school environment by ensuring

that they improve the infrastructure in township schools, encourage smaller class sizes by hiring more teaching staff and have effective substitute teachers available to substitute absent teachers. Furthermore, it is the duty of the SMTs to create a learning environment that is conducive to both teachers and learners in the township schools to mitigate teacher absenteeism. Therefore, it seems that the SMTs need to adopt coordination as Fayol's management process recommendations, by working closely with all stakeholders, teachers, learners, SGB members, parents, and communities to ensure that the school is well maintained, learners maintain order in classes, parental engagement in terms of discipline and other relevant support activities teachers require from stakeholders. With regards to learner discipline that causes teacher absenteeism, one can argue that there is a possibility that teachers are not equipped with classroom management skills, or they lack re-enforcing support from the parents and SMT to enable them to maintain order in the classroom.

In this category, poor management on teacher absenteeism by the SMT is also a contributing factor in teacher absenteeism. The following quotations from participants indicate that teachers absent themselves because of weak management system, they are taking advantage of it as there is no accountability from their supervisors:

> Teachers want to attend personal matters during working hours and feel entitled to leave on their days that the department has put aside for teacher to use when they need to (DH A).

> The management do not care or have effective consequences for the teachers who decide to stay away from work (Teacher C).

> And another reason is the workload; you find that you are always present at school but now you must substitute the forever absent teacher, while you are always present at work. The management don't care about your feelings (Teacher B).

The foregoing quotations suggest a lack of accountability system by the SMTs as a contributing factor on teacher absenteeism. As a result, it is impossible for the SMTs to effectively manage teacher absenteeism in the absence of a strict policy that states what is expected of the teachers and strategies to be used to implement the teacher attendance policy. Mampane (2013) revealed that poor management systems may give allowance for more teachers to absent themselves from work. While in a study conducted by Gabuza (2015), schools that do not have proper attendance policies experience the high rate of teacher absenteeism which is associated with poor management systems. The analysed documents showed that both schools have the teacher attendance policies. However, they are only good on paper because there were no consequences indicated in the policy regarding what should be communicated to the teachers regarding what is likely to happen if they were found breaking the rules listed on the policies. A further complication is that some teachers never read and signed to acknowledge that they read the contents of the policy. These findings show that the DBE and SMTs should work together in ensuring that the policies and other management tools are being reviewed and they are effective in managing teacher absenteeism to increase accountability of the teachers whose action contradicts the policy. Chapter J of the Employment Act (Act. No 76, 1998) stipulates that if a teacher is unable to report to work for duty, she or he must take accountability by reporting to the principal and supervisor such that the principal together with the SMT have the responsibility to the issue and prevent absenteeism using policies guidelines. The lack of accountability of the absenteeism of teachers in this study is against the Employment Act.

4.5.1.3 Sub-theme 3: External factors

Apart from personal and school-related factors, there are also external factors that are barriers to the regular teacher school attendance. Two categories of thoughts emerged from this sub-theme, and these are presented in the following categories.

Category 1: Service delivery strikes

This category focuses on the service delivery strikes that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools. This category reports that teachers are

absent from school because of service delivery strikes especially in the townships. There is always a crisis in township schools such as lack of electricity or water shortages that leads to communities to shut down roads that lead to travelling from and to schools making it impossible for the teachers to attend school and perform the duties expected from them. The following quotations were raised by the participants when discussing the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools:

> *There are issues in the townships when it comes to service delivery which leads to service delivery strike that leads to roads closure (Teacher D).*
>
> *Some teachers reported that they are absent because of service delivery strike that leads to roads closure …Teachers get absent because of service delivery boycott strikes play a major contributor when it comes to transport; teachers struggle to move from one point to another when roads are closed by service delivery strikes (DH B).*

The preceding quotations show how external factors like strikes directly cause teachers' inability to attend school owing to road closure. Okurut (2012), suggests that the SMT should have one-on-one talk with concerned teachers to encourage them to stay in proximity of the school so that whenever there are service delivery strikes, they are able to get to work on time without being delayed on traffic congestion due to road closure. Staying in proximity of the school may not only encourage teachers to be able to attend school during service delivery strikes but also prevent late coming and early departure due to long distance travelling from home to work. The theoretical framework (Fayol's framework of coordination as a basic way to lead), suggests that the SMTs work with community members in ensuring that the communities assist in providing boarding house for the teachers who are in need to minimise late coming and teacher absenteeism owing to roads closure and other strike inhibitors.

Category 2: Teacher professional development

The DBE also plays a contributing role to teacher absenteeism although in official capacity in arranging workshops during teaching and learning time. Following are the quotations of the participants which is evidence that workshops are also contributing factor to teacher absenteeism. Moreover, study leave has also been indicated as a contributing factor, as for this type of leave teachers normally do not take more than five days; hence the DBE does not make substitutes compared to long prolong leave such as maternity leave.

> *Teachers get absent because of their studies whereby they take leave to write their examinations, and some take leave to attend their graduation ceremonies (DH C).*

> *Some teachers take time off from work to write their examinations and they also take time off to attend their graduation after completion (DH D).*

> *Some leave work early because of workshops that are located far from the workplace; hence, they must leave early to make it on time (DH F).*

From the preceding quotations, it seems that there is lack of alternative measures to be taken to ensure that learners do not lose teaching time to the professional development of teachers. Aaronson (2007) found that development and professional growth activities designed by the DBE requires teachers to take time off work to attend to the workshops for developmental purposes. This finding also implies that the DBE should prevent disruption of scheduling teachers' workshops during teaching and learning hours; workshops can be scheduled during the weekends. The PAM document (1999) reaffirms that teachers have the notional time they need to be in contact with the learners and working hours outside the national time, which are extra hours that they need to abide with them as per the Employment Act of Educators in South Africa. The SMTs should also encourage teachers who take study leave to have recovery

plans to catch-up on the lost teaching time or rather leave work for them with the relevant subject teacher.

The Fayol's management process theoretical framework suggests that planning is important because individuals working in a same organisation come together and decide in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and where to do it to achieve a common goal (Luenendonk, 2019). This implies that the SMTs need to plan effectively especially when it comes to policies and explain the attendance expectations that teachers need to follow at the beginning of the year which cover the mutual interest of the teachers and instruction expectations. Teachers need to be transparent and negotiate for time away from school without compromising the interest of the learners. Therefore, unjustified causes of teacher absenteeism must be discouraged. The SMT also needs to communicate the policies to the teachers and encourage teachers to own the policies so that it becomes easy for them to comply with them. Proper planning may also allow the SMTs to have prior arrangements in terms of finding appropriate substitutes teachers for the absent teacher and have tighter procedures to deal with accountability to manage teacher absenteeism.

4.5.2 Theme 2: The challenges the SMTs experience in managing teacher absenteeism

This theme presents and discusses the finding of the second research question:

What are the challenges experienced by the SMTs in reducing teacher absenteeism?

The focus of this theme, therefore, is on the challenges the SMTs experience in managing absenteeism and the obstacles regarding reducing teacher absenteeism. Four sub-themes of thoughts emerged from this theme, and these are presented in the paragraphs that follow.

4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 1 Backlog on curriculum coverage and learner performance

The participants on this study indicated that backlog on curriculum coverage and learner underperformance is a challenge the SMT experience when it comes to managing teacher absenteeism. The following quotes show the challenges of backlog on curriculum coverage when teachers are absent from work and the impact it has on learner performance:

> *Curriculum coverage will be affected as teachers will have a backlog where they do not finish the curriculum at the allocated timeframe. And this affects the learners' results (Principal A).*

> *Teacher absenteeism contributes to underperformance of learners… The workload increases where you need to catch-up, and you end up not addressing challenging topics or offer extra support as intervention. The workload increases to other teachers who will have to step in as substitute, because they will leave their own work of which they planned to catch-up on during their free periods. Now they must be in class to substitute the absent teacher (DH F).*

The foregoing quotations attest that teachers who absent themselves from work have a challenge in completing the curriculum on time; hence, the backlog on curriculum coverage which negatively impacts learner performance. The SMTs have tools to use in monitoring of teachers' work. Therefore, it is the SMTs' responsibility to ensure that teachers teach when they are at school, and they follow the teaching plans to cover the curriculum on time as prescribed in the ATPs. The documents reviewed affirmed that the schools had the ATP and curriculum management tools. The DHs of both schools monitor curriculum using the curriculum coverage tool together with the ATPs. However, there was no evidence on the reviewed documents that shows catch-up or recovery plans for the teachers who were always absent from school. According to Gabuza (2015), monitoring of work impacted positively on teacher absenteeism. Ward (2021) asserts that Fayol management theoretical framework recommended

commanding as a way managers use to ensure that teachers understand their responsibilities. This means when teachers are absent, they will know exactly what they need to do in terms of catch-up plans on the lost teaching times. Moreover, the SMTs need to motivate teachers to be at school regularly and be in class on time to ensure that curriculum coverage is up to date to improve overall learner performance, because the foregoing quotations attest that curriculum backlog is associated with poor academic performance by the learners.

4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Non-submission of medical certificate or evidence of absence

The participants in this study highlighted that another obstacle they face in terms of managing teacher absenteeism was non-submission of medical certificate when teachers take sick leave or any evidence of absence in other leaves that require evidence to be approved.

> *If the teacher is not at school, it also promotes ill-discipline on learners, because the class would not be attended and disturb other classes. However, when requesting the documents so you can approve the leave you do not get anything from them (Principal A).*

> *I think there is no transparency between teachers and their supervisors. Most teachers they fail to reach out to their supervisor to give them the actual reasons why they are absent. Hence, the whereabouts of the teacher when they are absent is questionable because most of the time, they fail to produce a medical certificate to support the fact that they were sick (Teacher A).*

Based on the responses between Principal A and Teacher A, most teachers take leave without providing supporting evidence on their leave forms. This calls for the SMTs to be strategic and be adequate on its mandate for ensuring that teachers take accountability, and they are always professional to minimise absenteeism without supporting evidence. Fayol management process also emphasises on the controlling process that the SMT needs to adopt, which are to establish standards measurement of performance, comparison of performance with standard and taking corrective actions (Luenendonk, 2019).

They can use the existing policies provided by the DBE or formulate their own policies to minimise the high number of teachers who are absent from school without valid reason or evidence.

4.5.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Ill-discipline of learner

In this sub-theme, the participants reported that teacher absenteeism promotes disruptions in classes where you find that learners are ill-disciplined because some teachers are forever absent leaving the learners in their classes unattended. It is not always easy to substitute absent teachers because some of them report the absenteeism very late and, in most cases, the present teachers fail to substitute the absent teacher effectively as they might not be teaching the same subject as the absent teaching. In such a case, the substitute teachers are forced to babysit the learners instead of teaching and learning to take place (Mampane, 2018). When learners are left without work to do during the lessons, discipline becomes an issue in the classroom. Participants indicated that teacher absenteeism promotes ill-discipline in classes.

> *If the teacher is not at school, it also promotes ill-discipline on learners because the class would not be attended and disturb other classes. Even when you find a substitute teacher you find out the regular teacher left without leaving work for the learners to keep them busy in class (Principal A).*

> *We experience distractions from classes of absent teachers because most teachers who get absent, they do not leave work for their learners while it is impossible to get an appropriate teacher to substitute the regular teacher. When I speak about an appropriate teacher, I talk of a teacher who teaches the same subject as the regular teacher (DH D).*

The preceding quotations imply that teachers need to understand that it is their duty to be always at school and ensuring that effective teaching and learning is taking place in the classrooms. The SMTs need to ensure that learning is taking place at school and monitoring the learners who are not loitering around or unattended by teachers. However, it becomes difficult for the SMTs to do the substitute timetable on time to maintain discipline in classes of the absent

teachers. In both schools, teachers reported their absence or late coming very late; hence you find that learners are unattended to during the first two periods because the substitute timetable is not readily available. In School A the substitute timetable is shared via the school WhatsApp group for teachers to know which classes are unattended. However, some teachers tend to ignore the message and pretend that they were not assigned to babysit the class of the absent teacher. The principal keeps the copies of the substitute timetable in his office, and he ensures that teachers who are substituting absent teachers sign next to their names for accountability purposes. This is an effort to control what happens in the classrooms when teachers are absent.

4.5.2.4 Sub-theme 4: The policies and legislations give teachers a right to be absent

The SMTs indicated that the policies and legislations give teachers a right to be absent which makes it difficult to manage teacher absenteeism in schools. The participants said as follows:

There are regulations that allow teachers to be absent if they provide a legitimate reason (Principal B).

The policies and legislations are failing the SMT in terms of managing absenteeism because they allow teachers to be absent and give them provision to submit evidence of their absence… there is a policy that allows for two days leave without producing a medical certificate. I believe that policies are giving teachers a platform to abuse their rights to take leave (DH B).

Most teachers feel entitled of their leave days; some they even plan when they will be absent. When you question this behaviour as a manager, the teacher will indicate that there are policies that indicate their rights to take leave, and the unions protect them with this regard (DH E).

Teachers do not report on time if there are going to be absent and they normally do not leave something for the learners. There are no effective policies that state the consequences of being absent or a formal

procedure that needs to be followed so that teachers that absent
themselves take accountability (Teacher D).

The findings in this theme suggest different interpretations of the policy guideline of teacher school attendance. The teachers seem to take a full advantage of the policy while the SMTs appear frustrated because teachers abuse the policy. There is an issue of accountability of teacher absenteeism which seems to be silent in the policy. Komoni (2015) reported in an earlier study that South African teachers abuse the regulation that allows them to be absent for two days without submitting a medical certificate. Furthermore, in an earlier study, Rogers and Vegas (2009) argue that policymakers should design policies that enforce teacher compliance. The SMTs should encourage teachers to own the policies and involve the teachers when reviewing the policies so that they take accountability when enforcing them. According to Fayol's management theoretical framework, when teachers are involved in the planning and making decisions on the policies, it becomes easier to hold them accountable when the procedures and regulations are misused (Brooks, 2022).

4.5.3 Theme 3: The strategies used by the SMTs to reduce teacher absenteeism

In this theme the focus is on answering the research question: What strategies do SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism? This theme presents the plan used by the SMTs in managing teacher absenteeism and focuses on the strategies the SMTs use to minimise teacher absenteeism. This theme is divided into three sub-themes.

4.5.3.1 Sub-Theme 1: Use of policy documents
The participants indicated that the DBE has provided them with policies, regulations, and tools that they can use to reduce absenteeism. The participants discuss the policy documents to help minimise teacher absenteeism as follows:

Our school has an attendance policy and departmental policies to
manage absenteeism in both learners and teachers (Principal B).

We have circulars and policies that the department has provided us with that speaks to teacher attendance. I use them to plan and encourage teachers to engage on them in terms of how many leave days they can take, and they are also required to report on time so that the deputy or principal could find a substitute for their classes (DH C).

Based on the participants' responses, School A and School B have the attendance policies and are using attendance policies to minimise teacher absenteeism in their schools. However, they do not have effective monitoring tools in terms of tracking teacher absenteeism by using the existing policies. I believe that effective use of policies with good tracking can minimise teacher absenteeism in township schools because schools can have the policies but if they are not used effectively, they will be only good on paper. Fayol's management framework underscores the importance leadership in the management process. It means that the SMT members should possess effective leadership and management skills in terms of using policy documents to control teacher absence through laying down clear rules and procedures to be followed by teachers (Brooks, 2022).

4.5.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Use of Timebook

Another strategy that the SMTs indicated in the interviews was that they use timebook and ATP to monitor teacher absenteeism effectively. The participants indicated that the SMTs regularly monitor the timebook, and they have an option whereby the absent teacher is required to provide a written reasons for early departure or late arrival so that teachers are accountable.

We have a timebook, an early departure and late arrival book that we use at schools. To monitor absenteeism, we use the tools that the department has provided us to monitor absenteeism (Principal A).

We use the timebook which teachers are required to sign in and out… and in class to avoid being behind with the Annual Teaching Plan as this will lead to them having to put extra hours to cover the ATP (DH D).

In this sub-theme, both schools are using the timebook as a control tool that encourages accountability as well as keeping attendance records. Both principals indicated that the information recorded in the timebook is also used to appraise as well as warn teachers who are habitually absent or late comers. However, what I have noted when doing document analysis is that the times recorded on their timebooks are not a true reflection of the teachers coming and leaving work. For an example at School A I have noticed that few teachers arrived at 7h50 but they recorded 7h30 an earlier time just because their school policy states that school starts at 7h30. According to their timetable, the first period starts at 7h45. However, most teachers arrived between 7h50 to 8h00 busy signing the register using the 7h30 time and learners were still loitering around as majority of their teachers were around the admin block signing in and others making copies. This finding suggests a gap in monitoring the time that teachers arrive at school. The timebooks seem not to be used effectively to control working hours. According to Fayol (1918), theoretical framework the SMTs need to frequently track teacher's attendance and ensuring that corrective measures are taken to minimise teacher's absenteeism through controlling. This can be done using both the timebook and ATP. The ATP can be used to track curriculum coverage which can also help in monitoring teacher absenteeism. ATP is used to monitor content coverage owing to teacher absenteeism and each teacher should be made accountable by having a recovery plan to make-up for the lost time owing to teacher absenteeism or late coming.

4.5.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Use of Motivation

In this sub-theme, most of the participants highlighted that motivation plays a major role in reducing teacher absenteeism phenomenon in township schools. The following are the participants responses:

> *Well firstly I must be a motivational person to the teacher who is always*
> *absent, then I advise that teacher that a career in teaching is a call from*
> *God which means when you are in on time and present at school you are*

honouring God's wish and moreover as a teacher you are a parent (DH A).

I motivate teachers to be always present. If they are absent, I make them submit a recovery plan to cover the lost teaching time and teachers do not like extra workload or work overtime; hence several of them decided to limit being absent from work (DH A).

I always encourage teachers to not miss school without valid reasons (DH)

And talking to the teachers about coming to work regularly and motivating them to be always at school (DH E).

The foregoing quotations show how motivation is used to encourage teacher school attendance sharing with them the benefits of being at school regularly. DH A highlighted that teachers need to take good care of children by making a point that teaching is not just a job but a calling. Motivation is part of leadership in Fayol's management theory as it is part of the commanding and coordination functions. Ward (2021) also asserts that schools as organisations should set standards for themselves and meet them by encouraging teachers to be role models.

4.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presented the findings and discussions of the data collected during the interviews. The discussions were guided by the main research question: How do the SMTs in township schools manage teacher absenteeism? Three themes were developed from the research sub-questions and were presented in sub-themes as well as categories. The next chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented and discussed the findings of this study. The discussions were guided by the main research question: How do the SMTs in township schools manage teacher absenteeism? Three themes were developed from the research sub-questions and were presented in sub-themes as well as categories in the previous chapter. This chapter presents the reflections on my research journey, followed by the summary of findings based on the three themes namely, the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools, the challenges the SMTs experience in managing absenteeism and the strategies that the SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism. Limitations and delimitations of this study is also included, followed by conclusion, recommendations from the findings of this study and a final word.

5.2 REFLECTIONS OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

The purpose of the study was to explore how SMTs in township schools manage teacher absenteeism. Being a teacher in a township school and observing the rate of absenteeism among my colleagues trigged my interest in conducting this study. What puzzled me is how other schools are coping in terms of managing teacher absenteeism in their schools especially in the same context-township that has common characteristics.

Enrolling in Educational Management and Leadership course has assisted me in exploring the management of teacher absenteeism given the background knowledge of Management and Leader from my honour's degree. Doing literature review in Chapter Two has helped me to understand the root causes of the problem of teacher absenteeism and gave me an opportunity to analyse

what has been published on the topic as well as the existing gaps. In Chapter Two I have also discovered that teacher absenteeism cannot only be defined as being absent from work. However, practices like reporting late to work, leaving work early, extended tea breaks, toilet breaks, and attending private business during work hours can also be classified as absenteeism. This was an eye-opener based on what I knew and defined as teacher absenteeism. Chapter Two has also helped me learn the contributing factors that lead to teacher absenteeism in township schools, the challenges that the SMTs face in managing teacher absenteeism in township schools and the strategies they adopt to reduce teacher absenteeism. Moreover, while doing this study I came across Fayol's management processes that I have adopted as the framework of this study. Fayol identified the five basic ways to lead and manage absenteeism effectively in the workplace. His framework is relevant and can be useful to the SMTs as they manage teacher absenteeism in their schools.

In doing chapter three, I learnt more about issues of trustworthiness, ethical issues, research design, methodology and methodological limitations of my study. I had to also engage myself in doing analysis of the findings of this study in Chapter Four as well as comparing my findings with literature. The whole research journey made me gain other research skills like analysing literature, academic writing, referencing, and others. In the next section, I present a summary of the findings of this study.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

5.3.1 The factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools

The following section is a summary of the findings of the research question: What are the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools? The findings revealed that the most common reason that contributes to teacher absenteeism is **ill-health and taking care of a sick immediate family member**. Participants indicated that they take leave when they are sick or when their family members get sick. The findings also revealed that **bereavement** is a contributing factor to teacher absenteeism. Participants also

indicated that when they lose their loved ones, they must take leave to attend the funeral and, they may be required to take care of the funeral arrangements. This study further found that there were **unjustified reasons** from teachers that contribute to teacher absenteeism whereby teachers take leave without providing the valid reason or proof to support their absence. The findings also revealed that **poor work ethics, entitlement and poor human relations in the workplace** contributes to teacher absenteeism. The participants indicated that young teachers do not respect their work and others do not comply with their leave days. The poor work ethics was evidence on the late and early departure books, teachers were not filling in when they request to leave work early or arrived late. Moreover, no one was monitoring this to keep record of teachers who arrive late and leaving early. The findings also revealed that **stress related to working conditions** such as overcrowding and learner ill-discipline in townships also contributes to teacher absenteeism. What was also revealed as a contributing factor to teacher absenteeism was **poor management of teacher absenteeism** by the SMTs, they do not have strict policies that state what is expected of the teachers and strategies to be used to implement the teacher attendance policy. When analysing both school's attendance policies, there were no principles or guidelines that stipulates the consequences of not following the procedures of taking leave. The findings also revealed **service delivery strikes** and **teacher professional development workshops as external factors** that contribute to teacher absenteeism, the SMTs do not have control over them. Fayol's management process suggests that if proper planning is done by the SMTs in terms of policies and strict regulations communicated to the teachers, the teachers may be more accountable for their presence in school and such responsibility may reduce teacher absenteeism in schools. Fayol's management theoretical framework further suggests that effective planning and organising by SMTs to have prior arrangements in terms of finding appropriate substitutes teachers for the absent teacher and have tighter procedures to deal with accountability maybe ways of managing teacher absenteeism.

5.3.2 The challenges the SMTs experience in managing absenteeism and the obstacles regarding reducing teacher absenteeism

This section presents the summary of the finding of the research question: What are the challenges the SMTs experience in managing teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools and the obstacles regarding reducing teacher absenteeism? The theme revealed that **backlog on curriculum coverage and learner underperformance** is a challenge the SMT experience when it comes to managing teacher absenteeism, whereby teachers who absent themselves from work failed to complete the curriculum on time which leads to other topics uncovered and learners underperforming. The DHs indicated that when teachers absent themselves, they are required to submit a catch-up to cover the lost teaching time; however, when doing the document analysis, the most frequent absent teachers had no catch-up plans in place indicating how they will cover the lost teaching time. Another challenge that was discussed on this theme is the **non-submission of medical certificate or evidence of absence by the teachers** who take leave. The principals and SMTs highlighted that it becomes difficult for them to approve and sign for this type of leave which the department requires evidence. The participants highlighted that another obstacle regarding teacher absenteeism is that it promotes **ill-discipline on learners**. When the learners' regular teacher is absent, they normally do not leave work which gives them a chance to be free and not do anything in class which promotes disruption in class and learners loitering if a substitute is done late as one of the participants indicated that some of the teachers report very late that they are not coming. It becomes a challenge for the SMTs to always maintain discipline in classes for effective teaching and learning environment. The SMTs indicated that another challenge they have in terms of managing teacher absenteeism are the **policies and legislations** which give teachers a right to be absent. The SMTs highlighted that the school policies on teacher absenteeism are provided by the DBE, and they formulate the internal policies using those provided by DBE. For an example there is a policy that gives teachers a right to take two consecutive days as sick leave without providing a medical certificate and the SMTs can not do anything about it or try change this rule. However, teachers abuse these leave days by taking them to attend their personal affairs or decide to be absent using sickness as an excuse.

5.3.3 The strategies used by SMTs to reduce teacher absenteeism

This theme presents a summary on the findings of the research question: What strategies do SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism? The theme has revealed that both schools **use policies and circulars provided by the DBE** to reduce teacher absenteeism. Both school policies were kept in the principal's offices, teachers had no copies, and they never signed them to acknowledge that they will engage and abide to them. This was evidence that both school policies were just good on paper. The participants revealed that the policies need monitoring for them to be used effectively in managing teacher absenteeism. The theme also highlighted that the SMTs use **timebook and ATP** to monitor teacher absenteeism.

The analysed documents show that monitoring was done daily by Principal B where he highlights teachers who sign the timebook late in blue and he was keeping the timebook in his office after 8h00 to track late coming, while in School A there was no monitoring of the timebook; teachers will sign their own times regardless of them coming late or leaving early. DHs from both schools had book control tools that they use to monitor the ATPs and tracking teachers who are behind with the curriculum coverage. However, there was no evidence of catch-up plans indicating how teachers will recover the lost teaching time owing to late coming, early departure or teacher absence. Participants indicated that the timebook tracks teachers whereby they are also required to state their reason of absence, and the ATPs are used to monitor the learners work checking the time lost due to the teacher absence which will inform the SMTs to request the teacher to come up with recovery plans to cover the lost teaching time. This theme also revealed that the SMTs used **motivation** as a tool to reduce absenteeism. Participants indicated that teachers should be reminded that they are role models to the learners so that they live by example. If they are absent from school learners will also absent themselves too. The SMTs indicated that motivation should be used in daily talks when meeting with the staff to motivate teachers in coming to work regularly with the aim of curbing teaching absenteeism.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Theofandis and Fountouki (2018) assert that the limitations of a study are the potential weaknesses or restrictions that are usually out of the researcher's control pertaining the study. I chose to conduct this research on a small geographical area which is Soweto township. However, the SMTs in Soweto may not produce all the strategies used to mitigate absenteeism in all the townships schools in South Africa. Another limitation of this study was time, if there was no timeframe for submission of the dissertation, I would have used a large scale when choosing my sample. A large scale could have involved several districts, number of schools and number of SMTs members. Another limitation to this study was the participants' responses. The SMTs members that I sampled may not have answered all my questions truthfully or try to hide the truth concerning what is really happening in their schools in terms of teacher attendance. This could possibly be that they do not want to appear incapable of managing the teachers. The interviews used in this study may pose a limitation. According to Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2001), interviews require well trained interviewers that are well grounded to the interview techniques. Being a novice researcher, I overcome this limitation by following the guideline and the support that I got from my supervisor during the data collection process.

5.5 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Delimitations are the boundaries that the researcher set for themselves so that their study's aims and objectives do not become impossible to achieve (Theofandis & Fountouki, 2018). Accordingly, this study targeted two schools from the same district. The reason I sampled these schools is because they are close to me, I saved on transport costs and there was no need to take time off from work when conducting my research as they are easily accessible. The participants were the SMTs and teachers only. The aim was to select knowledgeable people in management and the SMT members manage the schools and manage teacher absenteeism while teachers are the objects in the study. The views of the DBE, parents, communities, and the learners regarding teacher absenteeism are not included in this study. Only eight SMTs members and four teachers were selected because the aim of this study is not to represent a wider population; hence my study is limited to a total of eight SMT

members and four teachers from the two schools; one principal from each school, three DH heads from each school and four teachers two from each school, which make a total of twelve participants. Only interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. Questionnaires were not used, and data were not quantified; instead, the rich narratives from the interviews were analysed to answer the research questions.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how SMTs manage teacher absenteeism in Soweto schools. This was done by identifying the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in Soweto schools, the challenges that the SMTs experience in terms of managing teacher absenteeism and identifying the strategies the SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism in their schools.

The findings revealed that the common factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in Soweto schools were ill-health or taking care of a sick family member, bereavement, unjustified reasons, leave entitlement, poor work ethics, poor human relations, stress related to working conditions, poor management of teacher absenteeism, service delivery strikes and teacher professional development workshops. This study found that managing teacher absenteeism is a daunting task owing to the obstacles such as backlog on curriculum coverage which leads to learners underperforming, non-submission of medical certificate or evidence of absence by teachers, ill-discipline of learners, policies and legislations that give teachers rights to be absent. Such challenges required that the principal's device ways of addressing the issues that makes managing teacher absenteeism difficult. The strategies the SMTs use to reduce teacher absenteeism in Soweto schools included the use of policies and circulars provided by the DBE, the use of tools like timebooks and ATPs, and daily motivation. However, the use of the foregoing strategies required teamwork and not the sole responsibility of the SMTs. Hence Fayol's management theoretical frameworks recommended stakeholders working as a collective to manage teacher absenteeism. Hence the recommendations

present actions that need to be taken by each stakeholder to manage teacher absenteeism effectively.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINDINGS

5.7.1 Recommendations to minimize factors that causes teacher absenteeism

- Recommendation directed to the DBE is to invest in wellness programmes, medical screening, fitness, and health education which will encourage good health on teachers; that may reduce the risk of teachers becoming ill and reduce the teacher absenteeism.

- The SMTs should do proper planning in terms of policies and strict regulations should be communicated to the teachers so that they are aware of the consequences of absenteeism.

- Teachers should behave according to their professional code of conduct rules and regulations set by the DBE regarding teacher school attendance as well as regulations for teacher absenteeism.

5.7.2 Recommendations for addressing the challenges the SMTs experience in managing absenteeism

- The SMT needs to enforce accountability for the absent teachers to have a recovery plan for the lost teaching after being absent from school or taking leave. Teachers need to have a recovery plan to cover the lost teaching time when they were not at work. This means extra-classes or Saturday classes for the learners to catch-up so that they do not underperform.

- The DBE needs to offer incentives to teachers who are never absent from work by offering a special bonus for attendance or consider them first when promotional posts are advertised. Attendance can be considered a priority when doing the appointment for the promotional posts.

- The DBE as policy makers they need to work collaboratively with the SMTs in policy formulation to find effective measures to minimize the act of teachers abusing their leave entitlement.

5.7.3 Recommendations for the strategies used to reduce teacher absenteeism

- The DBE needs to amend some policies to close the gap of teachers manipulating them. The policies should be communicated to the teachers so that there is a common understanding of what the policy implies.
- Recommendations directed to the SMTs is that the SMTs need to have effective teacher school attendance monitoring skills so that they keep an accurate record of teacher attendance by ensuring that teachers record the correct times on the timebook, have a separate book where they indicate their reasons of early departure or late arrival and ensuring that tools that record teacher absenteeism tally and complement each other. Such books should be regularly checked by management and appropriate action taken against the teachers who are habitually absent or come late to school.
- Teachers should work as a collective with the SMTs, DBE, SGBs and other relevant stakeholders to minimise teacher absenteeism in township schools and ensure that learners in township gain quality education as other learners in advanced schools.

5.7.4 Recommendations for future research

- There is a need for research that focuses more on how the policy developers can update the policies to manage teacher absenteeism in South African schools because currently these policies have many loopholes that teachers can easily manipulate them to their own benefits.

- Further research should be done with the teachers as the main participants to explore their personal reasons for being absent from school.

- Large scale studies using quantitative research approach may yield findings that could be applicable to a large population.

5.8 A FINAL WORD

This study has revealed that the stakeholders need to work collectively to minimise teacher absenteeism in township schools. Addressing teacher absenteeism is not only the responsibility of SMTs but all stakeholders can play a role in encouraging teachers to regularly attend school and perform their duties of teaching and learning. The study also revealed that teachers are good in manipulating the leave systems if they see a gap; this calls for the SMTs to amend any attendance and leave policies to suit the current situation of the schools to ensure that teachers take accountability when they are found abusing or misusing their leave days. As much as there are challenges in managing teacher absenteeism in township schools, it should not discourage the SMTs from ensuring that teachers follow protocol and comply by the rules as per their roles and responsibilities of employment.

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APPENDIX A: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNISA | university of south africa

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/04/12

Dear Ms NP Nsimbini

Ref: **2023/04/12/56817037/17/AM**
Name: Ms NP Nsimbini
Student No.:56817037

Decision: Ethics Approval from 2023/04/12 to 2026/04/12

Researcher(s): Name: Ms NP Nsimbini
E-mail address: 56817037@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 060 985 5617

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr TA Ogina
E-mail address: Oginateresa8@gmail.com
Telephone: 082 374 9618

Title of research:

Management of teacher absenteeism by the School Management Teams in Soweto township schools

Qualification: MEd Educational and Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2023/04/12 to 2026/04/12.

The medium risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/04/12 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
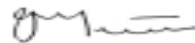
University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2026/04/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:
The reference number 2023/04/12/56817037/17/AM should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,

Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH APPROVAL FROM CIRCUIT

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

R/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	19 May 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023– 30 September 2023
	2023/178
Name of Researcher:	Nsimbini NP
Address of Researcher:	2414 Dlale Street
	Orlando East
	1804
Telephone Number:	011 935 4742 / 060 985 5617
Email address:	nnsimbini@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Management of teacher absenteeism by School Management Teams in Soweto township schools
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	1 Primary School and 1 Secondary School
District/s/HO	Johannesburg North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

18/05/2023

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

Making education a societal priority

1. The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.
4. The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes, and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Dr. Bulatani Mukaluri
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 19/05/2023

2

Making education a societal priority

APPENDIX C: INFORMED PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

2414 Diale Street

Orlando East

1806

30 March 2023

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in research conducted by **Miss Nelisiwe Peaceful Nsimbini**, under the supervision of **Dr TA Ogina,** Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management towards a master's degree in education management at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled **"Management of teacher absenteeism by School Management Teams in Soweto township schools."** The aim of the study is to explore how SMTs manage teacher absenteeism.

This study will entail the SMTs which are the principal and three departmental heads in your school, as their job descriptions involves managing of teacher attendance and two teachers as subject of this study. This research study seeks to explore how the SMTs manage teacher absenteeism at their schools. The researcher resides and works in Gauteng which is a convenience to her. Interviews as SMTs member in Soweto schools after school hours for about 25 to 30 minutes. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to obtain information from you on how you manage the absenteeism of your teachers.

The benefit of this study is that the findings of this study may help SMTs in providing strategies to be used in managing teacher absenteeism in their schools. You as a SMTs member will also get the opportunity of reflecting on your practices regarding managing teacher absenteeism.

There are no potential risks in this study, the name of your school will be protected, and pseudonyms will be used to replace real names to maintain confidentially. The records of the interview will be kept for five years for audit purposes where after it will be permanently destroyed. Hard copies will be shredded, and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer (adapt according to the nature of the study). There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail sharing the final draft of the research findings with the participants for verification before the final write-up and publication of the report. For additional information feel free to contact the following people: -

M.Ed student: **Ms NP Nsimbini (060 9855 617)**

Supervisor: **Dr TA Ogina (012 4202 445)**

Yours faithfully

_____

NP Nsimbini
(M.Ed student)

2414 Diale street

Orlando East

1806

09 May 2023

Dear Principal

Request for permission to conduct research at your school.

I, **Nelisiwe Peaceful Nsimbini** am doing research under the supervision of **Dr TA Ogina** a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management towards a master's degree in education at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participant in a study titled **"Management of teacher absenteeism by the SMTs in Soweto township schools".** The aim of the study is to explore the strategies that the School Management Team use to manage absenteeism of teachers in Soweto township schools. Your school has been selected because of the years of experience that your SMT members have in their leadership position as well as the annual records of teacher attendance in your school in the Johannesburg North district based on DDD reports or Data Driven Districts data base annual reports.

This study will entail the SMTs which are the principal and three Departmental Heads in your school, as their job descriptions involves managing of teacher attendance and two teachers who are the subject of this study. This research study seeks to explore how the SMTs manage teacher absenteeism at their schools. The researcher resides and works in Gauteng which is a convenience to her. The study will entail interviewing SMTs in Soweto township schools after school hours for about 25 to 30 minutes. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to obtain information from SMTs on how they manage the absenteeism of teachers.

The benefit of this study is that the findings of this study may help SMTs in providing strategies to be used in managing teacher absenteeism in their schools. The SMTs will

also get the opportunity of reflecting on their practices regarding managing teacher absenteeism.

There are no potential risks in this study, the name of the school will be protected, and pseudonyms will be used to replace real names to maintain confidentially if the school choose to remain anonymous. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail sharing the final draft of the research findings with the participants for verification before the final write-up and publication of the report. For additional information feel free to contact the following people: -

Project leader: **Ms NP Nsimbini (060 9855 617)**

Supervisor: **Dr TA Ogina (012 4202 445)**

Yours sincerely

_____

NP Nsimbini

Research leader

APPENDIX E: CONSENT/ASSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

You are deciding whether or not to participate by continuing to the next page. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time prior to clicking the send button.

I_____ grant consent/assent that the information I share during the interview may be used by _____ (name of researcher) for research purposes. I am aware that the discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent/assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Participant's Name (Please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: (Please print): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you are and adult who gives permission, you consent then delete assent

Research Title: **Management of teacher absenteeism by SMTs in Soweto township schools**

Introduction and assurance to participants

My name is **Nelisiwe Peaceful Nsimbini**, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA), pursuing a master's degree in education management. As part of the requirements for graduation, I am conducting a study on **how SMTs (SMTs) manage teacher absenteeism in Soweto township schools**, Gauteng Province, South Africa. The purpose of this study is to explore the strategic used by SMTs to manage teacher absenteeism and attendance. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide ideas that can help SMTs to improve teacher school attendance. The interviews will be a one-on-one interview which will take not more than 30 minutes. You have already signed the consent form which means that you have agreed to be interviewed. If you feel you are not comfortable with any question, you are not obliged. You are free to respond to any question according to your perspective. The interview will be recorded. Your responses will be used for the sole purpose of this study. I would like you to say "yes" if you agree.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Research questions	Interview questions
Biographical questions	What is your position as SMT member?

	How long have you been an SMT member?
	What is your highest qualification?
	What age bracket are you in?
	What quintile is your school?
	How many teaching staff members in your school?
	How many members in your SMT?
1. ow do the SMTs manage teacher absenteeism in township schools?	• What is your plan with regards to managing teacher absenteeism? • How do you structure the management of teacher absenteeism? • What leadership role do you play in managing teacher absenteeism? • How do you control/monitor teacher absenteeism? • What are the main reasons or factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in your school?
2. hat are the factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools?	• In your opinion why do teachers absent themselves from school? • What factors contribute to teacher absenteeism in township schools?
3. hat are the challenges experienced by the SMTs in reducing teacher absenteeism?	• What challenges do you experience as the principal in managing teacher absenteeism? • What are the obstacles in reducing teacher absenteeism?

APPENDIX G: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS SCHEDULE

Document	Available	Not available	Updated	Not updated	Comments
Teacher attendance policy					
Time book					
Late arrival and early departure register					
Substitute timetables					
Teacher class attendance or period register					

APPENDIX H: TURNITIN REPORT

APPENDIX I: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

EDITING AND PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE

22 Osche Street

The Reeds

Centurion

0157

30 April 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate serves to confirm that I have edited NP Nsimbini's dissertation entitled,

"MANAGEMENT OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM BY THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN SOWETO TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS."

I found the work easy and intriguing to read. Much of my editing basically dealt with obstructionist technical aspects of language, which could have otherwise compromised smooth reading as well as the sense of the information being conveyed. I hope that the work will be found to be of an acceptable standard. I am a member of Professional Editors' Guild.

Hereunder are my contact details:

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Professional **EDITORS** Guild