

Declaration

I declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own work, and the opinions contained herein are my own and not necessarily those of the Cape Technikon.

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Date

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Managing absenteeism for improved productivity and cost-effectiveness

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Definition of the research problem

The researcher identified an absenteeism problem at the Cape Technikon Library and sees the effect of it on a daily basis. It is a costly and disruptive problem and places unnecessary pressure on staff that are at work. From the outset, companies might not realise the cost of absenteeism until they actually measure it. Absenteeism of other staff members create various problems such as low morale, increased stress, break in team work, etc. between the staff that are at work. To reduce the absenteeism rate, certain measures and control systems should be put in place. Absenteeism can either be addressed by putting a reward system in place or making use of punishment contingencies, or using a combination of both. If staff members see that other staff members get away with excessive absenteeism, they will soon follow. Within the context of the Cape Technikon Library, a culture of absenteeism has been created and it is not easy to break that culture. This study considered possible reasons for the absenteeism as well as possible solutions. To improve productivity and cost-effectiveness, the Gross Absence Rate (GAR) should be less than 3% (Van der Merwe: 1988:25). According to Van der Merwe (1988:25) an absence rate of 10% is extremely serious and any absence rate of more than 5% should be regarded as an indicator of a situation needing further investigation. An absence rate of less than 3% can be regarded as satisfactory, although capable of further

improvement. On some days the absenteeism rate at the Cape Technikon Library is approximately 12%.

1.2 Population of Interest

The target population of interest is all the staff working at the Cape Technikon Library and the census size is fifty (46) staff members. The researcher works in the Cape Technikon Library and therefore chose this sample because of the absenteeism problem.

1.3 Hypotheses

The hypotheses are formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1:

$$H_0: \mu_F = \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_F \neq \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is not equal.)

Where f = female and

m = male

Hypothesis 2:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is not equal.)

Where 1 = 20 - 30 years in age,

2 = 31 - 40 years in age,

3 = 41 - 50 years in age and

4 = 51 - 60 years in age.

Hypothesis 3:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5 = \mu_6$$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 \neq \mu_5 \neq \mu_6$$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is not equal.)

Where 1 = Exco,

2 = Librarian,

3 = Snr Library Asst,

4 = Library Asst,

5 = Snr Library Worker and

6 = Library Worker

Hypothesis 4:

Ho: $\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is equal.)

Ha: $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 \neq \mu_5$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is not equal.)

Where 1 = 0 - 5 years,

2 = > 5 - 10 years

3 = > 10 - 15 years

4 = > 15 - 20 years and

5 = > than 20 years.

The researcher made the assumption that there are multiple variables associated with absenteeism and therefore absenteeism between staff with or without children, job satisfaction, stress levels as well as absenteeism between smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers were also measured.

The z-test was used with Hypothesis 1 as well as measuring absenteeism between staff with or without children.

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used with all the other hypotheses and tests.

“The ANOVA, which is a generalisation of the two-sample test for means and enable us to test for the significance of the difference among c sample means.” (Hamburg, 1979:226)

1.4 Approach to solve the problem

The researcher collected the absenteeism statistics from the Cape Technikon Human Resources Department. These statistics cover the period from 1998 to 2000 (3 years). These statistics were used to determine the absenteeism rate per year as well as the average absenteeism rate over the selected period. It also measured increases or decreases in absenteeism over the selected three years of data. These results were compared to the acceptable absenteeism standard/norm. The data was captured and processed by using a computer program called Microsoft Excel.

A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the population of interest. No field workers was used to collect data.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this research were as follows:

- ***To identify the reasons for excessive absenteeism.***

The researcher investigated the absenteeism problem by identifying possible reasons for the excessive absenteeism. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the population of interest. This data was used to determine the possible reasons for the absenteeism problem.

- ***Determine possible solutions for the problem.***

After identifying the reasons for the excessive absenteeism, the researcher investigated possible solutions by looking at the data from the questionnaires, as well as investigate the steps which other organisations implement to decrease the absenteeism rate.

- ***Develop recommendations to the Technikon management which could possibly be implemented institution wide.***

Some of the solutions may be aspects that can be implemented in the Library only, but some of the solutions will have to be implemented institution wide to have an effect. Although this study focusses on absenteeism in the Library only, absenteeism should be addressed institution wide to increase cost-effectiveness and productivity on a larger scale.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Study

2.1 Broad concept of absenteeism

Don Schackne, the President of Personnel Managers and Administration Associates states that absenteeism has become the number one workplace problem. (Perry, 1996:78). According to a study done by Klein (1986:27) on absenteeism within the professional services sector, educational and medical service providers have the highest absenteeism rates.

Hill (1984:342) states that:

“Absenteeism does not include vacation and other leave for which permission has been granted. Rather it is ‘unscheduled leave’, which forces supervisors to make last minute changes in work distribution or schedules for the day, week, or month.”

When an employee is scheduled for work and does not show, it can be seen as non-attendance. (Van der Merwe, 1988:3). Another definition of absenteeism is “the failure of workers to report on the job, when they are scheduled to work.” (Van der Merwe, 1988:3). In other words absenteeism does not include vacation, study or maternity leave. There are however pre-planned absences which are included when absenteeism is measured. These pre-planned absences are incidents where the supervisor was given prior notification of the intended absence, e.g. going to hospital for an

operation. (Van der Merwe, 1988:4).

According to Hill (1984:342):

“First line supervisors find themselves being criticized from above and below as they attempt to control a problem which has baffled the experts in both the public and industrial sectors of the economy.”

Supervisors constantly find themselves in a last-minute scramble to find temporary replacements. (Markowich et al, 1996:115).

Absenteeism has become a costly and disruptive problem and even more disturbing is the fact that at least 50% of absenteeism is not caused by illness or any other acceptable reasons. (Gwaltney, 1994:24).

Buschak et al (1996:26) states that:

“Experts estimate that absenteeism in the United States results in the loss of over 400 million workdays per year - an average of approximately 5.1 days per employee.”

According to Tyler (1997:57) absenteeism is expensive and its consequences are lost productivity, unnecessary sick leave pay and overtime pay. Miller et al (1997:59) states that absenteeism has many negative connotations in the workplace, such as lower productivity, decreased quality, and loss of

workplace team work, as well as increased payroll cost to the employer in the form of overtime.

The cost of absenteeism has been estimated that one day's absence will cost the organisation one and a half to three times the daily rate of pay. (Van der Merwe, 1988:3).

According to Allen (1993:3):

“The number of people who simply do not show up for work on any given day, especially before and after weekends, has been rising in recent years and has assumed worrisome proportions.”

Gwaltney (1994:24) states that:

“When was the last time you called in sick for duty? Were you really sick? If not, did you ever stop to think about what your absence meant to your employer?”

Not only is absenteeism expensive, but it places a heavy burden on employees who attend work regularly.

Perry (1997:89) states that:

“Employees who do loyally come to work eventually realize they are

being conned by the chronic absentees, and no one likes to be conned. That once the staff come to that conclusion, that's it. They feel that management doesn't care when the problem is not addressed."

According to Van der Merwe (1988:25):

"An absence rate of 10% is serious by any standards: in general, any absence rate of over 5% should be regarded as an indicator of a situation needing further investigation. Absence below 3% can be seen as satisfactory, although capable of further improvement."

It is extremely important for companies to make an effort to understand why employees are absent and to put programs in place to help employees to balance work-life issues that can lead to reductions in absenteeism.

(Managing Office Technology, 1997:35). Most companies lack an effective and coordinated employee absence management system. (HR Focus, 1998:9). Many employers are now realising this and are reevaluating the policies and administrative procedures that support their employees compensation and benefit programs. (HR Focus, 1998:9).

According to McHugh (2001:2) there is increased pressure on companies to perform, therefore it is essential that aspects of organisational life, such as absenteeism, be the focus of attention. If not, it will have devastating effects on companies. McHugh (2001:2) continues to say that regardless of the

reason, absenteeism from work is considered a costly burden for organisations and it shows deeply rooted organisational problems which are a symptom of organisational ill health. Many companies have realised that something must be done and are now adopting new strategies to counteract this surge of time-outs. (Boyd, 1997:6).

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2.2 Reasons for absenteeism

Arthur Burns noted that a likely source of the slump in productivity growth is a change in societal values and attitudes that has contributed significantly to poorer job performance in recent years. (Allen, 1983:379).

According to Van der Merwe (1988:7-8) the reasons for absenteeism can be divided into three main categories, ni:

- *Personal factors* that includes age of employee, length of service, marital status, income level, education, health, previous attendance record and personal value of non-work activities.
- *Organisational factors* like size of organisation, size of work group, quality and nature of supervision, shift work, overtime, organisation control systems and absence control policies, incentive schemes and type of work.
- *Attitudinal factors* like unfavourable attitudes towards the job.

McHugh (2001:5) states that:

“High absence levels are related to the prevailing organisational culture which incorporates acceptance of a set level of absence.”

According to Hill (1984:343) there are various reasons for absenteeism including illness, family problems, upbringing and boredom. In a study done by McHugh (2001:2) participants were asked whether or not they believed that

the reasons given for absenteeism, were in fact the real reasons for employee absences. Eighty eight percent (88%) of the participants believed that the reasons given by employees for their absences were in fact not the real reasons. Minor illnesses like colds and flu were most often given by employees as reasons for their absences, when in fact boring jobs, lack of employee commitment and lack of motivation was the real reasons for their absences. According to a study done by the Industrial Society in the UK the main causes for absenteeism according to absent employees were, colds (92%), stomach upsets (76%) and headaches/migraines (57%). In the opinion of managers, the main causes were cold/flu (57%), stress/emotional problems (52%) and Monday morning blues (37%). (MCB University Press, 2001).

Buschak (1996:28) states that:

“Organizations and environmental factors associated with absenteeism included poor employee morale, personnel conflicts, unsatisfactory compensation and benefits programs, unrealistic job expectations, inadequate training, unsafe or stressful workplace conditions.”

According to McHugh (2001:2) work environment can be the cause of employee absences. Steers and Rhodes suggest that an employee's attendance is a function of how motivated they are as well as their ability to attend. (McHugh, 2001:2).

Buschak (1996:28) goes further by stating that certain personality characteristics can be associated with absenteeism by listing the following: reliability, freedom from disruptive alcohol use, and dependability.

Buschak (1996:28) also says that other reasons given by employees for their absence are child or parent care and the need to take care of certain personal business during normal working hours.

According to Markowich (1996:116):

“ personal illness is accounting for only 45% of unscheduled absences. Other reasons were: family issues (17%), personal needs (13%), entitlement mentality (9%), and stress (6%).”

Markowich (1996:116) states that some employees have the mentality that the “time is due to me - whether I’m sick or not” or see sick leave as “use-or-lose benefits.” Boyd (1997:9) also gives the entitlement mentality as a major cause for absenteeism.

According to Darling (1996:31) the two major reasons for absenteeism are firstly, flu (45%) and secondly family issues, which means taking care of sick children, (26%).

“While 72% of companies said they felt worker absenteeism would be greatly reduced if a company offered on-site or back-up day care services, only 6% of companies are following their own advice and

actually providing any of these services.” (Quality Progress, 1996:18).

Darling (1996:31) states that:

“In the past year, according to the study, employees have become a lot less likely to take unscheduled time off because they’re ill and more likely to call in sick to take care of personal business, relieve stress or just because they feel they deserve a break.”

Loren Hulber, the President of Nova Care Employee Services Inc. states that one of the main reasons for employee absence is lack of motivation or their reluctance to come to work. She states that if people don’t want to come to work, they will think of any excuse not to be there. (Tyler, 1997:59).

Illness as a reason for absence is busy declining and other reasons for absence due to personal needs and those due to stress doubled since 1995. (Managing Office Technology, 1997:35). McHugh (2001:5) says that workplace stress is becoming one of the biggest reasons for employee absences. One of the reasons employees are stressed has to do with their relationship with their direct supervisor and manager. Employees also indicated that they did not go to work because they were angry with another employee or even fearful. (Sharing Village, 2001:1). Another reason for employee absences was the fact that the majority of employees do not lose out financially if they are absent from work. (McHugh, 2001:5).

Dyer-Smith (1997:515) states that:

“Boredom has been linked with a host of unfortunate behaviours. The bored are claimed to have worse work records, more accidents, higher absenteeism and a tendency towards such anti-social behaviours as delinquency and substance abuse.”

Bush (1995:437) gives the following reason for absenteeism:

“Given that a major cause of non-attendance at work is illness, it is therefore not surprising that numerous workplace-based studies have documented higher rates of absence from work among smokers as compared with non-smokers.”

Bush (1995:444) reaffirms that employees who smoke have a higher incidence of absence from work. Parkes (1987:282) states that smoking and relative weight appear to be strong predictors of absenteeism.

Rosse (1988:527) states that people who have made up their minds to quit their jobs, may take time off to look for work, to arrange movers, to use up all their accumulated sick leave because they feel the company owes them, or simply because they are no longer concerned about making a good impression.

Paringer (1983:126) states that age also plays a role when it comes to work absences. Paringer makes a connection between age and health and states that the older people get, the more they will be absent because of illness.

According to Steers & Rhodes there is a positive relationship between unit size at work and the incidence of absence. It is implied that absenteeism will be higher in a larger unit size than in a smaller unit size. The explanation for this relationship is that larger work groups tend to have lower group cohesiveness. (Keller, 1983:536).

HIV/Aids is more and more becoming a threat to businesses. The following statistics are published online on HIV/Aids in South Africa (<http://www.hiv aids.co.za>):

“By 2005, South Africa’s population growth, will fall to about 0,8% per year and possibly go into decline thereafter. Aids related death will climb from around 400 000 per year now to about 800 000 - 1 000 000 per year, cutting average life expectancy from 68 to 48 years.”

“Nearly 1 in 10 South Africans now aged between 20 and 40 are expected to die by 2005.”

“By 2010, around 25% of the adult population will be HIV+, that’s roughly more than 6 million people.”

The consequences of HIV/Aids will be as follows (direct quotations):

“HIV/Aids related sicknesses will directly effect productivity in the workplace and the competitiveness of South Africa’s economy.”

“Productivity and profitability are directly and negatively impacted.”

“Absenteeism due to sickness and funerals.”

“Decrease in employee morale.”

“Industrial relations issues.”

According to the American Journal of Public Health (1991:84) work loss after onset of HIV-related illness is a pervasive phenomenon. They also state that:

“Several analysts have noted that the largest component of the cost of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-related illness) is due to lost work rather than to direct expenditures for medical care.” (p 79).

An employee who hasn’t been sick since 1952 said “when you enjoy what you do, you hate not to come to work.” (HR Magazine, 1997:57).

2.3 Effects of absenteeism

Absenteeism has many devastating effects on organizations all around the world. Perry (1996:78) confirms that unscheduled absences have devastating effects on productivity and customer satisfaction.

Hill (1984:343) states that:

“Staff members perceived sick leave benefits as theirs to use as a right and they seemed unaware or impervious to the unfortunate effect of their absence on their co-workers and on the Library in general.”

According to Hill (1984:343) the University of Guelph Library, Ontario, Canada is hardest hit by absenteeism in paying overtime and employing part-time workers to cope with the workload, an unacceptable expense when budget increases were severely limited or non-existent. Absenteeism also results in a division of work load among the co-workers who are at work, or creates backlogs of work. (Hill, 1984:342).

Perry (1997:90) states that:

“The real cost of chronic absenteeism then is: lowered morale among other employees who must shoulder the work load, long revenue from sales not made, the loss of customers who flee to competitors for better service, a decline in business reputation from poor service and the

expense of additional temporary workers.”

According to McHugh (2001:7) the cost of absenteeism includes:

“sick pay, additional staffing costs, overtime, increased administration costs, reduced employee motivation, negative work attitudes, poor interpersonal relationships, lost productivity and increased pressures on service and staff.”

Absenteeism is expensive and it results in lost productivity and unnecessary sick leave and overtime pay. Absenteeism also causes conflicts between co-workers as well as staff turnover. (HR Magazine, 1997:57-62).

Perry (1997:90) states that it is extremely important not to let things slide when an absenteeism problem is identified. He states that managers who do nothing about the absenteeism will soon discover that attendance worsens rapidly. According to McHugh (2001:6) if absenteeism remains unaddressed, it will have a spiralling effect because this will lead to a negative attitude between co-workers who will feel that they should also take sick leave because their colleagues “get away with it.”

HR Magazine (1997:57) states that:

“Left unchecked, absenteeism won’t improve. It’ll only get worse.”

Allan et al states that absenteeism may disrupt the organizations work flow and it will also affect employee performance. (Martocchio, 1995:253).

Markowich (1996:115) states the following effects of absenteeism:

“The moans of dissent as weary co-workers once again pick up the slack and of course the complaints of the customers who are affected by the attendance gap.”

McHugh (2001:6) argued that if the quality of service provided is adversely affected as a result of employee absence, managers and supervisors will have to cope with the complaints from the public/clients and this will increase the stress levels of the supervisors and managers.

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2.4 Solutions for absenteeism

Falcone (2000:139-140) states that company policy is one of the most important starting points to address absenteeism. It is important to review the organization's written policy with the help of legal advisers to ensure that discretion is retained in managing this thorny issue. He also states that it is important to review the organization's past practices with regards to disciplinary actions and terminations related to unauthorized absence in the last two years.

Where absence levels were low, it was explained that it was so because the organisation has a good absence management policy which is fully implemented within the organisation. (McHugh, 2001:5).

Another reason given by McHugh (2001:5) for low absenteeism was a lack of tolerance within the organisation with regards to sickness absence. According to Perry (1996:78-80) many companies do not even know they have an absenteeism problem because they have inadequate records. He also states that poorly designed attendance policies can lead to costly lawsuits for organisations, however organisations are still open to legal problems if they have a written policy and they do not follow it to the letter, without exception.

According to Perry (1996:82) companies should include in their policies that employees who arrive late or miss a day, should file a statement describing the reason.

Perry (1996:82) states that:

“Another solution is the three strikes and you’re out option, sometimes referred to as ‘no fault’. Under this plan the chronic sick time abuser, defined as missing a specific number of days in a specified time period, is warned about the practice in an interview. Advance warning is given that if the employee misses another day the following month, he or she will be given a final warning. If an absence occurs the following month, the employee will be terminated. No excuses will be tolerated. Many consultants view such a ‘no fault’ policy as a solution to one common obstacle to good attendance policies: chronic absentees tend to have good excuses for their failure to show up for work. Accepting such excuses only complicates the solution to the attendance problem.”

In terms of relevant South African labour legislation, Loveday (1998:5-6) mentions the following rulings that was extracted from CCMA reports with regards to dismissals on the grounds of absenteeism.

“In this case the employee had only been absent for two days without permission, he had notified the company of his whereabouts and his reason for being absent, but had nevertheless been dismissed. The arbitrator confirmed his dismissal. The offence and its consequences cannot be evaluated in a vacuum but must be seen in the light of all the prevailing circumstances. This employee had a poor disciplinary record with a number of related timekeeping and other offences.”

“Unauthorized absenteeism can be a valid reason for a dismissal.

Employers need, however, to build the offence and its penalty into their disciplinary codes. There ought to be a graduated system of disciplinary steps taken to prior dismissal for an offence of this type.”

“Schedule 8, Article 3(2) of the LRA endorses the concept of progressive corrective discipline.”

Perry (1996:80) states that in most cases absenteeism can be reduced by just pointing out the problem to the employee in a factual way. Dr Peter Spevak says it is important to show employees that their chronic absences have been noticed. (Perry, 1996:80).

It is important that companies explore their administrative procedures and lines of communication with regards to dealing with absences. (HR Focus, 1998:9).

Martocchio (1995:253) states that:

“One legitimate way managers and supervisors can curtail absence is through disciplinary sanctions that are typically specified in their organization’s formal absence control policy.”

Falcone (2000:139) says that an employer has the right to discipline and fire employees who abuse sick leave within certain guidelines. Martocchio (1995:253) gives the following guidelines to influence absence disciplinary

decisions:

“Absentee absence history, absentee job performance, absentee criticality to the department, absentees ability to attend work, absentee status and approved absence versus absence not approved.”

According to Tyler (1997:59) it is extremely important to have a positive work environment because this will reduce absenteeism.

Managing Office Technology (1997:35) states that:

“In an environment where employees feel loyalty to their supervisors or are committed to contributing to company goals, the culture, in turn, helps decrease unscheduled absenteeism.”

One of the main reasons why some employees avoid unscheduled absences are because of loyalty to their supervisors, other reasons are fear of punishment and a strong work ethic. (Managing Office Technology, 1997:35).

According to Hill (1984:343) the only resource for the University of Guelph Library supervisors was to document all absences during the year as part of the annual performance review.

Skidmore (1984:40-41) used the following three steps to combat unscheduled absences:

“First, we compiled and published for the school board the absentee records for both teachers and non certified staff members. This implied that we intended to do something about it. Next we tied attendance to teacher evaluation. We included attendance as one formal evaluation criteria. Thirdly a cash bonus for good attendance.”

Tygzak says that absenteeism can be reduced when absenteeism statistics are made visible for the whole department to see because employees will not only take note of their own attendance, but also those of their co-workers. Peer pressure can have very effective results. (Tyler, 1997:60).

Briggs (1990:164-165) indicates that the following two very successful measures to reduce absenteeism were put in place within a large, urban, state residential facility in eastern Massachusetts for over 700 residents of which 112 young adults were severely retarded:

“attendance records were evaluated separately in the employee performance review and attendance became a priority decision factor for promotions.”

Some results were seen when counselling was used as a way to reduce absenteeism. (Hill, 1984:342-344) and (Monthly Labour review, 1983:36-37).

Hill (1984:344) states that:

“Counselled employees showed varying levels of amazement and/or defensiveness regarding their absentee record and some even had the grace to show shame. Some took exception to the supervisors’s right to discuss absenteeism as an element of job performance. Absenteeism did reduce because of the counselling.”

Schackne suggests that it is important to look for patterns in absenteeism, e.g. an employee missed one day a month for three consecutive months. This should be discussed with the employee. (Perry, 1996:78).

According to Buschak et al (1996:27):

“One of the first questions asked by management concerning absenteeism is whether to use punitive or reward systems. The research tends to have opposing data. Studies in the 1970's and 1980's often indicated that reward systems may be more effective than punishments. Rewarding good attendees with cash bonuses generally has been ineffective. Sick-time abusers value time away from work more than money, so they are not motivated to modify their behaviour. A few employees will have perfect attendance, and a few will have poor attendance regardless of the situation. Reward systems tend to affect employees in the middle. Rewards systems will have little affect on poor attenders, and some sort of controls will always be necessary.”

In many instances reward systems were implemented to reduce absenteeism.

Tyler (1997:59) states that companies should have some kind of incentive scheme to help employees make the decision to come to work when they have a conscious choice to do so. According to Briggs (1990:163) a reward system was put in place which offered additional preferred time off and cash lotteries for good attendance. Absenteeism was reduced by approximately 22%.

Martocchio (1994:259) states that monetary incentives may be given to a specific unit or department only when the individual absence of each unit/department member remains below a designated level set by the employer. According to Fowler (1998:45) many firms believe that attendance bonuses reduce absence rates.

Briggs (1990:164) states that better results were achieved where reward and punishment systems were combined. A 27% reduction in absenteeism was observed after combining positive reinforcement and progressive discipline procedures. (Briggs, 1990:164).

In Sharing Village (2001:2) the following list of possible incentive programs have been published:

“Allow employees to cash-in unused sick days at the end of every quarter; give an employee two hours of bonus pay for every month of perfect attendance; give an employee two hours leave for every month of perfect attendance payable as an additional paid vacation day; early

“Fridays” or late “Mondays” for every month of perfect attendance; early “Fridays” and late “Mondays” for every quarter of perfect attendance; provide employees on a team or in a section with a buffet lunch; a certificate of achievement; or even a ‘secret’ prize.”

Buschak (1996:28) also argues that employees motivation may increase as the employee enjoys more freedom and responsibility with regards to working hours, e.g. flexi-time. Tyler (1997:59) states that employees would rather have more time away from work than extra cash. Absenteeism dropped to its all time lowest during 1996 in Newton, MA. , which indicated that flexible personal time is paying off. (Industrial Distribution, 1998:19).

Pollar of Time Management Systems warns that:

“it’s important that incentive programs not be created to bribe people to work - which is what they’re getting paid to do.” (Tyler, 1997:62).

Employees are being paid and therefore it is expected that they should be at work. Incentive programs should not be used to get employees to work, their salaries should do that!

Tyckzak states that a reward systems should not be so attractive that employees come to work when they are sick. (Tyler, 1997:62).

According to Markowich (1996:115):

“One effective approach is a paid-leave bank or paid time off (PTO). The PTO concept is very straightforward. Employees receive a bank of time to be used for absences (sick, vacation and personal time). Every time employees need time off, they dip into their reserve of days. So if employees have 20 days of paid time off in the bank, they are empowered to use those days however they wish - and use them wisely. Employees like this self-management aspect, while managers appreciate being able to plan ahead for the absence.”

Paul Gibson, an attorney and analyst with CCH Inc, a leading provider of HR information, states that the system of paid-leave banks for employees have been the most effective solution to combat employee absences. Paid-leave is a bank of leave that includes sick, vacation and personal days. It is said that employees would rather use the leave for a three week vacation than one or two days sick leave here and there. (Boyd, 1997:6).

Gibson observed that:

“Traditional sick leave plans do not address the real issues that are driving employee absenteeism. Companies need to examine why people take unscheduled absences within their particular organizations, and then they should develop programs that help address these issues if they're to effectively control unscheduled absences.” (Managing Office Technology, 1997:35).

According to Buschak et al (1996:28-29):

“There is a five-step action plan for achieving acceptable employee attendance. Educate, monitor, counsel, follow-up and corrective action.”

Oxrieder (1987:29) states that all organisations should establish a health and fitness program for their employees. This wellness program should include aerobic exercise classes, blood pressure checks and lectures on such topics as stress management and nutrition.

Perry (1997:90) lists the following steps to reduce absenteeism:

“Confront the issue, establish a policy for all employees, start with a factual approach, institute progressive discipline, get to the root of the problem and provide solutions where appropriate.”

Keller (1983:538) states that employees who took the responsibility for their health and had good health habits were found to have lower rates of sickness, which leads to lower absenteeism.

According to Fowler (1998:44) absenteeism can not be reduced without the effective involvement of the line managers/supervisors. It is important for managers and supervisors to maintain contact with sick employees, generally by telephoning them from time to time to find out how they are doing as well as getting possible dates for their return. A “return-to-work interview” with the

absentee is crucial to evaluate the reason for absence and for the line manager/supervisor to keep detailed records.

He further states that:

“Return-to-work interviews are probably the most influential element in ensuring that absences are not treated casually.” (p 44).

_____ o0o _____

2.5 Conclusion

According to the above literature study it is clear that absenteeism is a worldwide problem that is expensive and disruptive. There are many reasons for absenteeism, as well as different ways of combatting absenteeism. Each company or department in a company should look at its specific situation and decide what will be the best way of handling the problem. Although absenteeism reasons and solutions might be different from organisation to organisation, there are aspects that should be in place in any organisation, e.g. absenteeism policies, procedures of how to deal with absenteeism, disciplinary actions, etc. Many researchers describe the results of punishment and/or reward systems as ways to decrease absenteeism. It is very important to note that employers should not “bribe” their employees to come to work, for which employees are already paid for. Absenteeism should be addressed the moment it is identified. If not, the problem will just become worse. Absenteeism can be addressed with positive results.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Absenteeism statistics

The researcher received the absenteeism statistics from the Human Resources department at the Cape Technikon. These statistics cover the period from 1998 to 2000 (3 years) and were used to determine the Gross Absence Rate (GAR), the Absence Frequency Rate (AFR) as well as the average absenteeism rate over the selected period. The reason for using the GAR and the AFR is as follows:

Gross absence rate (GAR)

The GAR is equivalent to a “time-lost index” and indicates the lost-time as a percentage of the total possible working time. (Van der Merwe. 1988:12-13).

The formula for the GAR is as follows:

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

According to Van der Merwe (1988:13) a disadvantage of this formula is that it is an overall figure and not very accurate when used in smaller groups, especially groups under 50 people. This formula is a statistic that is heavily weighted by long sick absences. Therefore it is suggested by Van der Merwe (1988:13) to record single absences of longer than ten working days as ten days only.

The population of interest for this study were 46 staff members and therefore the Absence Frequency Rate (AFR) have been measured to overcome any influences of long illnesses on the GAR.

Absence frequency rate (AFR)

The formula for the AFR is as follows:

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

This rate expresses the number of absence incidents per person per year and is expressed as a ratio. It is important to read the GAR and AFR together to see the extent and the frequency of the absences. (Van der Merwe, 1988:14).

The researcher also measured increases or decreases in absenteeism over the selected three years of data. These results was compared to the acceptable absenteeism standard/norm which is as follows:

Van der Merwe (1988:25) states that:

“Thus a Gross Absence Rate of 10% is serious by any standards: in general, any absence rate of over 5% should be regarded as an indicator of a situation needing further investigation. Absence below 3% can be seen as satisfactory, although capable of further improvement.”

“An AFR of over 1,0 indicates absence-taking that is far too widespread, and suggests a permissive absence policy, where absence is condoned, or hardly noticed. Even at 0,5 there is still considerable room for improvement and a first target should be to bring frequency rates below this level.”

The raw data was captured and processed by utilising a spreadsheet from a computer program called Microsoft Excel.

3.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated by the researcher to draw conclusions between absenteeism and the different variables associated with absenteeism.

Hypothesis 1:

$$H_0: \mu_F = \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_F \neq \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is not equal.)

Where f = female and

m = male

The z-test [two-tailed, where alpha (α) = 0,05] was used to accept or reject this hypothesis

The researcher drew a correlation between the gender of the staff members in the library and the absenteeism statistics during the three years of data.

Example:

Year	Male (days absent)	Female (days absent)	TOTAL
1998			
1999			
2000			
TOTAL			

Hypothesis 2:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is not equal.)

Where 1 = 20 - 30 years in age,

2 = 31 - 40 years in age,

3 = 41 - 50 years in age and

4 = 51 - 60 years in age.

Example:

Age (years)	Days Absent 1998	Days absent 1999	Days absent 2000	TOTAL
Below 20				
20 - 30				
31 - 40				
41 - 50				
51 - 60				
More than 60				
TOTAL				

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to accept or reject this hypothesis.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns			
Between rows			
TOTAL			
F			
F ₋₀₅			

Hypothesis 3:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5 = \mu_6$$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 \neq \mu_5 \neq \mu_6$$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is not equal.)

Where 1 = Exco,

2 = Librarian,

3 = Snr Library Asst,

4 = Library Asst,

5 = Snr Library Worker and

6 = Library Worker

The researcher drew a correlation between the post levels of the staff members in the library and the absenteeism statistics during the three years of data.

Example:

Post Levels	Days absent 1998	Days absent 1999	Days absent 2000	TOTAL
Exco				
Librarian				
Snr Lib Asst				
Lib Asst				
Snr Lib Worker				
Lib Worker				
TOTAL				

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to accept or reject this hypothesis.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns			
Between rows			
TOTAL			
F			
F _{.05}			

Hypothesis 4:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5$$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 \neq \mu_5$$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is not equal.)

Where 1 = 0 - 5 years,

2 = > 5 - 10 years

3 = > 10 - 15 years

4 = > 15 - 20 years and

5 = > than 20 years.

The researcher drew a correlation between the length of service of the staff members in the library and the absenteeism statistics during the three years of data.

Example:

Length of service (years)	Days Absent 1998	Days absent 1999	Days absent 2000	TOTAL
0 - 5				
More than 5 - 10				
More than 10 - 15				
More than 15 - 20				
More than 20				
TOTAL				

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to accept or reject this hypothesis.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns			
Between rows			
TOTAL			
F			
F_{.05}			

During the literature survey it became clear to the researcher that there are multiple variables associated with absenteeism and therefore low job satisfaction, work stress, staff with or without children and smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers were also measured. A questionnaire was used to collect data on the job satisfaction and work stress levels of the staff working in the Cape Technikon Library. The questionnaire will be discussed in more detail below.

3.3 Development and analysis of questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed to obtain qualitative and quantitative information from the population of interest. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: biographical details, reasons for absenteeism, job satisfaction and work stress. The questionnaire is included in the text below in order to illustrate the relevant issues/concepts within the framework of this study.

Absenteeism Questionnaire

Cape Technikon Library

The information received in this questionnaire is strictly confidential and will be treated as such!

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine possible reasons for the absenteeism problem in the Cape Technikon Library.

Section A: Biographical Details

1. Gender:

Male	Female
------	--------

2. Year of Birth: 19

--	--

3. Current Position: Please indicate with an ✖:

Director	
Snr Librarian	
Librarian	
Snr Library Assistant	
Library Assistant	
Snr Library Worker	
Library Worker	

4. Years working in the Library: Please indicate with an ✖:

0 - 2 years	
More than 2 - 5 years	
More than 5 - 10 years	
More than 10 - 15 years	
More than 15 - 20 years	
More than 20 years	

5. Current marital status (Please indicate with an ✖):

Single	Married	Divorced	Widow / Widower
--------	---------	----------	-----------------

6. Do you have children?

YES	NO
-----	----

7. Are you a

Smoker	Non-smoker	Ex-smoker
--------	------------	-----------

Section B: Reasons for Absenteeism

8. In your opinion, which of the following are reasons why people in the Library take sick leave?

Please indicate with an ✖:

REASON	Most often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Illness				
Stress				
Family crisis (child/parent care)				
Personal business to attend to.				
Take sick days otherwise you will lose it.				
Conflict with your supervisor.				
Transport				
Boring work				
Working hours				
Other (specify):				

9. Do you think that some of your colleagues are taking sick days without really being ill?

YES	NO	UNSURE
-----	----	--------

10. Please motivate your answer in nr 9.

11. Do you think that there is an absenteeism problem in the Library?

YES	NO
-----	----

12. Please motivate your answer in nr. 11.

13. If your answer is yes in nr 11, what do you think are the reasons for the absenteeism problem in the Library?

14. What solutions can you suggest?

Section C: Job Satisfaction

15. How do you feel about your job?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
----------------	-----------	--------------	-------------------

16. How do you feel about the work you do in your job - the work itself?¹

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
----------------	-----------	--------------	-------------------

17. How do you feel about working in the Cape Technikon Library?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
----------------	-----------	--------------	-------------------

Section D: Work Stress

18. My job causes me a great deal of personal stress and anxiety.²

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

19. My co-workers cause me a great deal of personal stress and anxiety.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

End of questionnaire.

¹ (Andrews, 1976:33)

² (Steel, et al. 1995:1616)

The information received from the questionnaires was analysed as follows:

The researcher divided the population of interest into groups and organised group sessions of 30 minutes each where the staff members of the Library completed the questionnaires. The biographical section in each questionnaire provided sufficient information to link each staff members absenteeism statistics to the information received from their questionnaires. Over and above the hypotheses, correlations were also drawn between:

- absenteeism with or without children.

$$H_0: u_c = u_{wc}$$

(Absenteeism between employees with children is equal to employees without children.)

$$H_a: u_c \neq u_{wc}$$

(Absenteeism between employees with children is not equal to employees without children.)

Where c = staff with children and

wc = staff without children.

Example:

Year	Absenteeism of staff with children (days)	Absenteeism of staff without children (days)	TOTAL
1998			
1999			
2000			
TOTAL			

The z-test [two-tailed, where alpha (α) = 0,05] was used to accept or reject this hypothesis.

- absenteeism and being a smoker, non-smoker or an ex-smoker

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$$

(Absenteeism is equal between smokers, non-smokers and ex-smokers.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3$$

(Absenteeism is not equal between smokers, non-smokers and ex-smokers.)

Where 1 = smokers

2 = ex-smokers and

3 = non-smokers.

Example:

Year	Smoker absenteeism (days)	Ex-smoker absenteeism (days)	Non-smoker absenteeism (days)	TOTAL
1998				
1999				
2000				
TOTAL				

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to accept or reject this hypothesis.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns			
Between rows			
TOTAL			
F			
F_{.05}			

The questionnaire also identified reasons and possible solutions for absenteeism in the Library from the Library staff.

The researcher also measured the following:

- absenteeism and job satisfaction
- absenteeism and work stress

The information for job satisfaction and work stress was obtained from the questionnaires. All library staff members indicated their job satisfaction and work stress levels on the following scale:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------

The researcher translated the data into a percentage that reflects the degree of job satisfaction and work stress levels in the Cape Technikon Library.

CHAPTER 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

The researcher had a 98% return rate from the questionnaires (45 out of 46).

4.2 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

$$H_0: \mu_F = \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_F \neq \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is not equal.)

where f = female and

m = male

Year	Male (days absent)	Female (days absent)	TOTAL	Ave
1998	153 (38%)	249 (62%)	402	201
1999	206 (46%)	239 (54%)	445	223
2000	207 (37%)	357 (63%)	564	282
TOTAL	566	845	1411	706

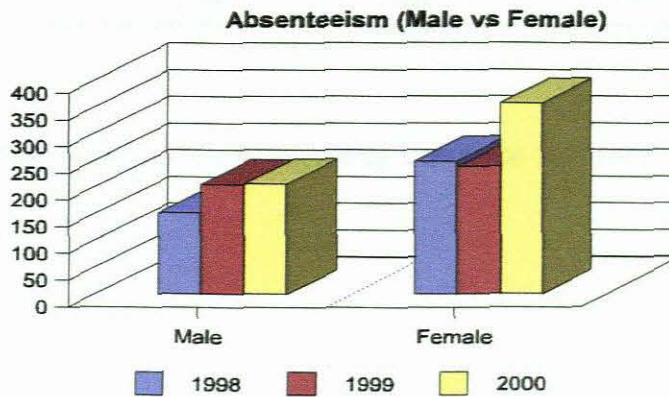
The researcher made use of the z-test to get to the following:

$$Z = -0.88629$$

z Critical = 1.95996 [Two-tailed, where alpha (α) = 0,05.]

Therefore $\mu_F = \mu_M$, i.e. H_0 is accepted at the 0,05% level of significance, therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different for male and female.

Figure 1:



It is important to note that Figure 1 illustrates in bar chart format the comparative levels of absence (in days) between male and female employees. This graph does not reflect the relationship between the groups.

Hypothesis 2:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is not equal.)

where 1 = 20 - 30 years in age,

2 = 31 - 40 years in age,

3 = 41 - 50 years in age and

4 = 51 - 60 years in age.

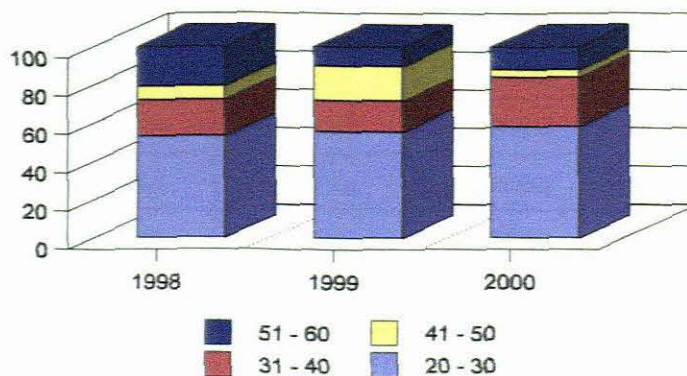
Age (years)	Days Absent 1998	Days absent 1999	Days absent 2000	TOTAL	Ave
20 - 30	211 (27%)	248 (31%)	329 (42%)	788	263
31 - 40	76 (26%)	71 (24%)	145 (50%)	292	97
41 - 50	28 (22%)	80 (61%)	22 (17%)	130	43
51 - 60	82 (42%)	46 (23%)	68 (35%)	196	65
TOTAL	397	445	564	1406	468

The researcher made use of the Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA) to get to the following values.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns	3696,5	2	1848,25
Between rows	98807,5	9	10978,61
TOTAL	102504	11	
F (2, 9)	0,17		
F _{.05} (2, 9)	4,26		

Since $0,17 < 4,26$, the null-hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between age groups.

Figure 2: Absenteeism vs Age



It is important to note that Figure 2 illustrates in bar chart format the comparative levels of absence (in days) between age and the incidence of absence. This graph does not reflect the relationship between the groups.

Hypothesis 3:

Ho: $\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5 = \mu_6$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is equal.)

Ha: $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 = \mu_5 \neq \mu_6$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is not equal.)

where 1 = Exco

2 = Librarian,

3 = Snr Library Asst,

4 = Library Asst,

5 = Snr Library Worker and

6 = Library Worker.

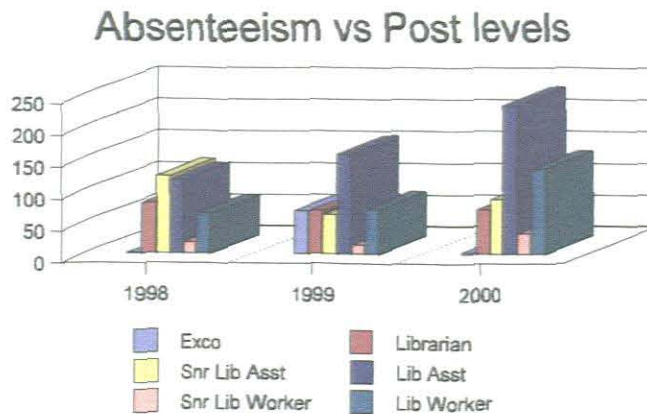
Post Levels	Days absent 1998	Days absent 1999	Days absent 2000	TOTAL	Ave
Exco	2 (3%)	69 (92%)	4 (5%)	75	25
Librarian	80 (36%)	69 (31%)	71 (32%)	220	73
Snr Lib Asst	122 (45%)	63 (23%)	87 (32%)	272	91
Lib Asst	116 (23%)	158 (31%)	234 (46%)	508	169
Snr Lib Worker	18 (27%)	15 (23%)	33 (50%)	66	22
Lib Worker	64 (24%)	71 (26%)	135 (50%)	270	90
TOTAL	402	445	564	1411	470

The researcher made use of the Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA) to get to the following values.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns	2347	2	1173,5
Between rows	56627	15	3775,1
TOTAL	58974	17	
F (2; 15)	0,31		
F_{.05} (2; 15)	3,68		

Since $0,31 < 3,68$ the null-hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between post levels.

Figure 3:



It is important to note that Figure 3 illustrates in bar chart format the comparative levels of absence (in days) between post levels and the incidence of absence. This graph does not reflect the relationship between the groups.

Hypothesis 4:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5$$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 \neq \mu_5$$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is not equal.)

where 1 = 0 - 5 years,

2 = more than 5 - 10 years,

3 = more than 10 - 15 years,

4 = more than 15 - 20 years and

5 = more than 20 years.

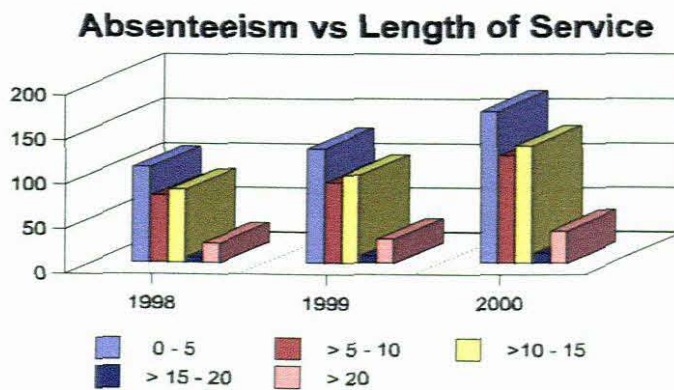
Length of service (years)	Days Absent 1998	Days absent 1999	Days absent 2000	TOTAL	Ave
0 - 5	109 (26%)	129 (32%)	171 (42%)	409	136
More than 5 - 10	77 (27%)	91 (31%)	121 (42%)	289	96
More than 10 - 15	83 (26%)	99 (32%)	132 (42%)	314	105
More than 15 - 20	7 (25%)	9 (32%)	12 (43%)	28	9
More than 20	23 (26%)	28 (32%)	37 (42%)	88	29
TOTAL	299	356	473	1128	375

The researcher made use of the Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA) to get to the following values.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns	3147	2	1574
Between rows	35711	12	2976
TOTAL	38858	14	
F (2; 12)	0,53		
F_{.05} (2; 12)	3,89		

Since $0,53 < 3,89$ the null-hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between length of service.

Figure 4:



It is important to note that Figure 4 illustrates in bar chart format the comparative levels of absence (in days) and length of service. This graph does not reflect the relationship between the groups.

4.3 Analysis of data from questionnaires

The researcher had a 98% return rate from the questionnaires (45 out of 46).

4.3.1 Absenteeism with or without children.

$$H_0: \mu_c = \mu_{wc}$$

(Absenteeism between employees with children is equal to employees without children.)

$$H_a: \mu_c \neq \mu_{wc}$$

(Absenteeism between employees with children is not equal to employees without children.)

where c = staff with children and

wc = staff without children.

Year	Absenteeism of staff with children (days)	Absenteeism of staff without children (days)	TOTAL	Ave
1998	280 (77%)	82 (23%)	362	181
1999	307 (71%)	126 (29%)	433	217
2000	425 (75%)	139 (25%)	564	282
TOTAL	1012	347	1359	680

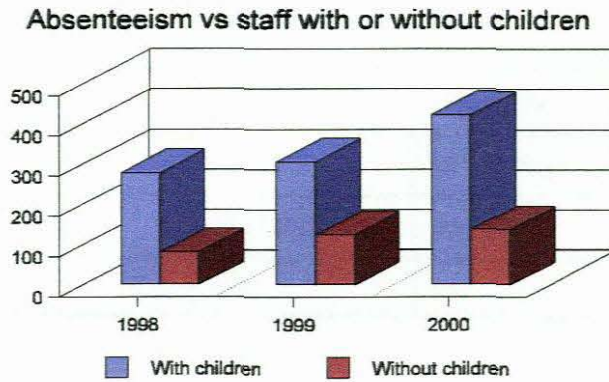
The researcher made use of the z-test to get to the following:

$$Z = 3.161267$$

$$z \text{ Critical} = 1,959961 \text{ [Two-tailed, where } \alpha (\infty) = 0,05.]$$

Therefore $\mu_c = \mu_{wc}$, i.e. H_a is accepted at the 0,05% level of significance, therefore there is sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different for staff with children than staff without children.

Figure 5:



It is important to note that Figure 5 illustrates in bar chart format the comparative levels of absence (in days) between staff with children and staff without children. This graph does not reflect the relationship between the groups.

4.3.2 Absenteeism and being a smoker, non-smoker or an ex-smoker

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$$

(Absenteeism is equal between smokers, non-smokers and ex-smokers.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3$$

(Absenteeism is not equal between smokers, non-smokers and ex-smokers.)

where 1 = smokers,

2 = ex-smokers and

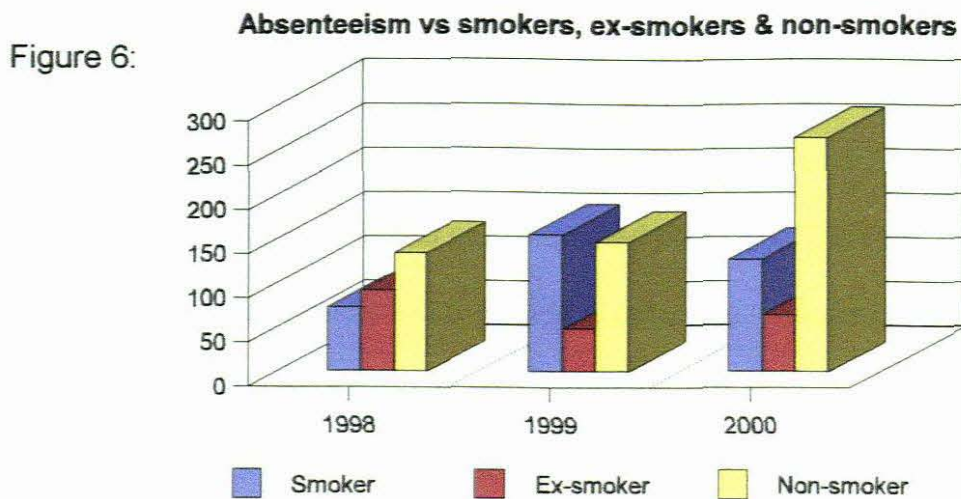
3 = non-smokers.

Year	Smoker absenteeism (days)	Ex-smoker absenteeism (days)	Non-smoker absenteeism (days)	TOTAL	Ave
1998	73 (24%)	92 (31%)	134 (45%)	299	100
1999	155 (44%)	49 (14%)	147 (42%)	351	117
2000	127 (28%)	65 (14%)	264 (58%)	456	152
TOTAL	355	206	545	1106	369

The researcher made use of the Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA) to get to the following values.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	mean square
Between columns	19247	2	9624
Between rows	14672	6	2445
TOTAL	33919	8	
F (2; 6)	3,94		
F _{.05} (2; 6)	5,14		

Since $3,94 < 5,14$ the null-hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers.



It is important to note that Figure 6 illustrates in bar chart format the comparative levels of absence (in days) between smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers. This graph does not reflect the relationship between the groups.

4.3.3 Possible reasons for absenteeism

Question 8: In your opinion, which of the following are reasons why people in the Library take sick leave? (Please indicate with an ✖)

REASON	Most often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Illness	30	10	4	0
Stress	4	15	19	2
Family crisis (child/parent care)	5	16	19	3
Personal business to attend too.	2	9	21	7
Take sick days otherwise you will lose it.	3	10	14	12
Conflict with your supervisor.	2	1	23	10
Transport	1	2	24	10
Boring work	1	7	18	12
Working hours	0	4	14	18
Other (specify):				
Negative management that dampens enthusiasm.	0	0	1	0
Trivial illness	1	0	0	0
Tardiness / laziness	0	1	0	0
Unfair employee benefits	0	1	0	0

According to the above table it is clear that illness was chosen as the biggest reason for absenteeism which was indicated by 98% of the staff. The second biggest reason was family crisis (child/parent care), indicated by 89% and thirdly stress, indicated by 84% of the staff.

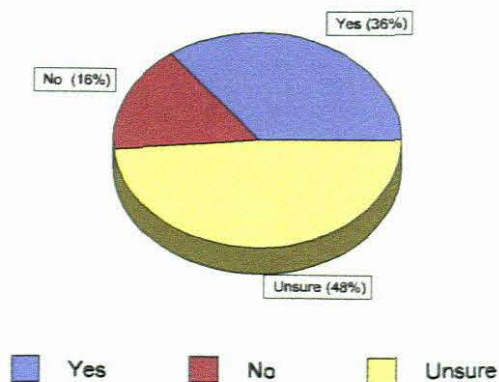
4.3.4 Staff's perception about sick leave

Question 9: Do you think that some of your colleagues are taking sick days without really being ill?

SCALE	RESULTS	RESULTS IN %
Yes	16	36%
No	7	16%
Unsure	22	48%
TOTAL	45	100%

36% of the staff indicated that there are some of their colleagues that take sick leave without really being ill, while only 16% indicated that it was not the case.

Figure 7: Are your colleagues taking sick days without being ill?



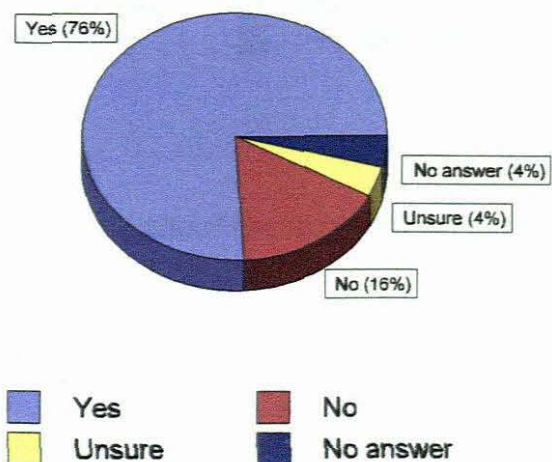
Question 11: Do you think that there is an absenteeism problem in the Library?

SCALE	RESULTS	RESULTS IN %
Yes	34	76%
No	7	16%
Some staff indicated UNSURE	2	4%
Did not answer	2	4%
TOTAL	45	100%

76% of the staff indicated that there is an absenteeism problem in the Library, while only 16% indicated that there is not an absenteeism problem in the Library.

Figure 8:

Is there an absenteeism problem in the Library?



4.3.5 Absenteeism vs job satisfaction

Question 15: How do you feel about your job?

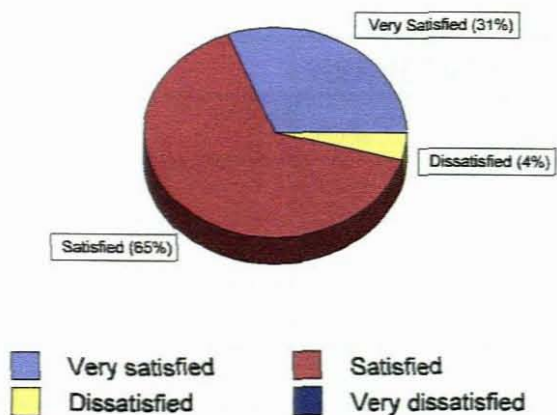
SCALE	RESULTS	RESULTS IN %
Very Satisfied	14	31%
Satisfied	29	65%
Dissatisfied	2	4%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
TOTAL	45	100%

96% of the staff indicated that they are satisfied to very satisfied with their job.

Only 4% indicated that they are dissatisfied.

Figure 9:

How do you feel about your job?



Question 16: How do you feel about the work you do in your job - the work itself?

SCALE	RESULTS	RESULTS IN %
Very Satisfied	11	25%
Satisfied	32	73%
Dissatisfied	1	2%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
TOTAL	44	100%

98% of the staff indicated that they are satisfied to very satisfied with the work itself, while only 2% indicated that they are dissatisfied with the work they do.

Figure 10:

How do you feel about the work itself?



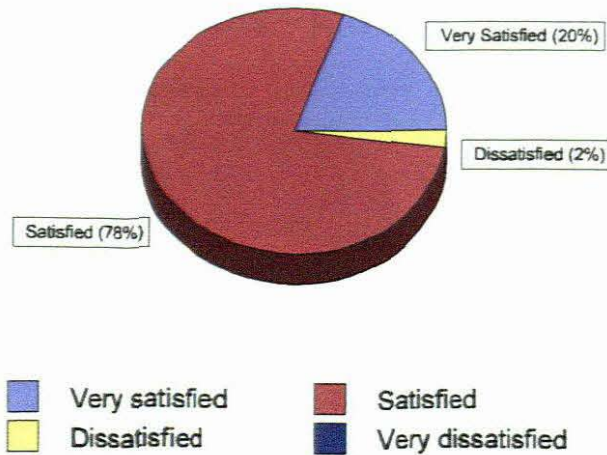
Question 17: How do you feel about working in the Cape Technikon Library?

SCALE	RESULTS	RESULTS IN %
Very Satisfied	9	20%
Satisfied	34	78%
Dissatisfied	1	2%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
TOTAL	44	100%

98% of the staff indicated that they are satisfied to very satisfied with working in the Cape Technikon Library, while only 2% indicated that they are dissatisfied.

Figure 11:

How do you feel about working in the Cape Technikon Library?



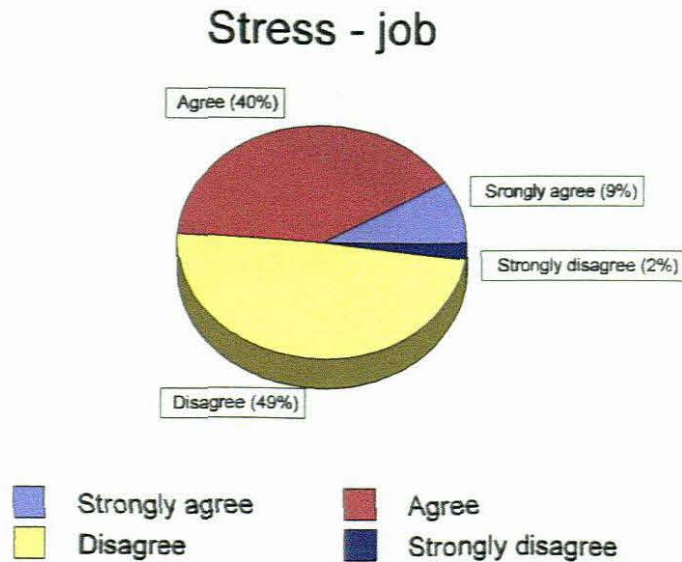
4.3.6 Absenteeism vs work stress

Question 18: My job causes me a great deal of personal stress and anxiety.

SCALE	RESULTS	RESULTS IN %
Strongly Agree	4	9%
Agree	18	40%
Disagree	22	49%
Strongly Disagree	1	2%
TOTAL	45	100%

49% of the staff indicated that their job causes them a great deal of personal stress and anxiety, while 51% of the staff indicated that their job does not cause them personal stress and anxiety.

Figure 12:

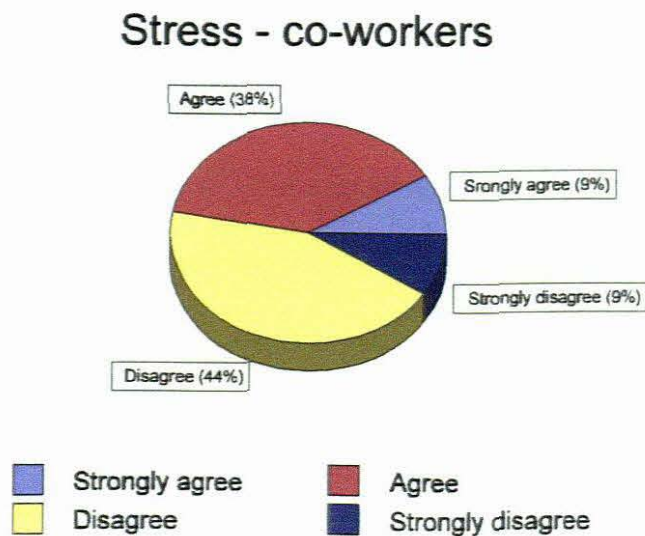


Question 19: My co-workers cause me a great deal of personal stress and anxiety.

SCALE	RESULTS	RESULTS IN %
Strongly Agree	4	9%
Agree	17	38%
Disagree	20	44%
Strongly Disagree	4	9%
TOTAL	45	100%

47% of the staff indicated that their co-workers causes them a great deal of personal stress and anxiety, while 53% indicated that their co-workers do not cause them personal stress and anxiety.

Figure 13:



4.4 Absenteeism statistics/rate

The following are the results for the Gross Absence Rate (GAR) and the Absence Frequency Rate (AFR) for the period 1998 - 2000.

YEAR	GAR (%)	AFR (ratio)
1998	3,9%	5,1
1999	4.3%	4,6
2000	5,2%	4,6

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

$$H_0: \mu_F = \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_F \neq \mu_M$$

(Absenteeism between female and male employees is not equal.)

The H_0 is accepted, therefore there is no sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between male and female staff.

Female group: Over the three year cycle which served as the term of the study period, subjects in the female group was responsible for 845 lost days. Of this, the 249 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 62%; in 1999 the 239 days represent 54% and in 2000 the 357 days represent 63%.

Male group: Over the three year cycle which served as the term of the study period, subjects in the male group was responsible for 566 lost days. Of this, the 153 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 38%; in 1999 the 206 days represent 46% and in 2000 the 207 days represent 37%.

Many researchers have done research in the past about differences in absenteeism between male and female staff. Many researchers have proved that there were statistically significant evidence that days absent are different between male and female staff (VandenHeuvel, 1995:1321). In the case of the Cape Technikon Library however, it could not be proven. The reason for this might be the size of the population of interest (46 employees). In the case of VandenHeuvel (1995:1321), as mentioned above, the sample size was 1401 employees.

Hypothesis 2:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4$$

(Absenteeism between different age groups is not equal.)

The H_0 is accepted, therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between age groups.

It has been proven by other researchers (Paringer, 1983:126) that age does have an affect on absenteeism, but in the case of the Cape Technikon Library staff it could not be proven. The reason for this might be the size of the population of interest (46 employees) of which only 12 employees were older than 40 and 5 of these were older than 50.

Age group 20 - 30: Over the three year cycle which served as the term of the study period, subjects in the age group 20 - 30 illustrated an increasing absenteeism percentage. Over the three year period, this age group was responsible for 788 lost days. Of this, the 211 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 27%; in 1999 the 248 days represent 31% and in 2000 329 days represent 42%. There might be various reasons for this:

- There are too many staff appointed without Library qualifications, therefore staff might work in the Library just to have a job and a salary and not because of an interest in the Library Sciences field.
- It is also possible that the work ethic is declining and that staff are not taking their work responsibilities seriously.

Age group 31 - 40: Over the three year period, this age group was responsible for 292 lost days. Of this, the 76 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 26%; in 1999 the 71 days represent 24% and in 2000 145 days represent 50% (this was due to the fact that one staff member was booked off for a long period of time) . There were no significant fluctuations in this age group. The reason for this might be that staff in this age group are more serious about their career and realises the impact that excessive absenteeism might have on their career path.

Age group 41 - 50: Over the three year period, this age group was responsible for 130 lost days. Of this, the 28 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 22%; in 1999 the 80 days represent 61% (this was due to the fact that one staff member was booked off for a long period due to a serious operation) and in 2000 22 days represent 17%. It is clear that absent days are actually declining in this age group (note the 17% in 2000). The reason for this might be that staff in this age group normally occupy more senior positions and therefore have a stronger work ethic and a sense of responsibility towards their work.

Age group 51 - 60: Over the three year period, this age group was responsible for 196 lost days. Of this, the 82 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 42%; in 1999 the 46 days represent 23% and in 2000 68 days represent 35%. The reason for this might be that staff in this age group are more prone to illness than any other group, therefore the sharp increases and decreases over the three years of data.

The fact that there is no sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between age groups are worrisome. The days absent for staff between 20 - 30 years over the three years, indicates a rapid increase. Days absent should not be so high between younger employees. The reason for this might also be that younger employees have not yet realised the importance of the work ethic or the responsibility towards their careers.

Hypothesis 3:

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5 = \mu_6$$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is equal.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 \neq \mu_5 \neq \mu_6$$

(Absenteeism between different post levels is not equal.)

The H_0 was accepted, therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between post levels.

Exco group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 75 lost days. Of this, the 2 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 3%; in 1999 the 69 days represent 92% (due to the fact that one staff member was booked of for a long period due to a serious operation) and in 2000 4 days represent 5%. It is clear that the absenteeism levels in this group are very low. The reason for this resolves around the fact that these staff members occupy senior positions and have a stronger work ethic.

Librarian group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 220 lost days. Of this, the 80 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 36%; in 1999 the 69 days represent 31% and in 2000 71 days represent 32%. There were no significant fluctuations in this group during the selected three years. The staff in this group are senior staff members and therefore have a

strong work ethic.

Senior Library Assistants group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 272 lost days. Of this, the 122 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 45%; in 1999 the 63 days represent 23% and in 2000 87 days represent 32%. It is of concern that there was a 9% increase from 1999 to 2000. The reason for this might be that many of the Senior Library Assistants in this group have children. It was proven in this study that absenteeism are significantly higher between staff with children than staff without children.

Library Assistants groups: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 508 lost days. Of this, the 116 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 23%; in 1999 the 158 days represent 31% and in 2000 234 days represent 46%. It is of concern that there was such a steep increase from 1998 to 2000 in this group. The reason for this might be that:

- many of these staff members do not have Library qualifications and are only working in the Library to earn a salary and not because of an interest in the Library Science field.
- the majority of these staff members falls within the 20 - 30 years age group, therefore they have not yet realised the importance of a work ethic and responsibilities towards their careers.

Snr Library Workers group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 66 lost days. Of this, the 18 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 27%; in 1999 the 15 days represent 23% and in 2000 33 days represent 50%. The reason for the steep increase to 50% in 2000 was due to the fact that one staff member was booked off for a long period. Other than that there were no significant fluctuations in this group.

Library Workers group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 270 lost days. Of this, the 64 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 24%; in 1999 the 71 days represent 26% and in 2000 135 days represent 50%. The reason for the steep increase of 50% in 2000 was due to the fact that one staff member was booked off for a long period. Another reason for absenteeism in this group might be because these staff members are doing repetitious work every day, which might become boring and uninteresting after a while.

Hypothesis 4:

$$H_0: \quad \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4 = \mu_5$$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is equal.)

$$H_a: \quad \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \neq \mu_4 \neq \mu_5$$

(Absenteeism between different length of service groups is not equal.)

The Ho was accepted, therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between length of service.

The 0 - 5 years group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 409 lost days. Of this, the 109 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 26%; in 1999 the 129 days represent 32% and in 2000 171 days represent 42%. It is clear that there was a significant increase over the three years. The reason for this might be that these are the newest staff members in the Library and that they are just following the absenteeism culture that already exist. That is why it is so important for staff to see that absenteeism will not be tolerated, otherwise it will just get worse.

The more than 5 - 10 years group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 289 lost days. Of this, the 77 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 27%; in 1999 the 91 days represent 31% and in 2000 121 days represent 42%. It is clear that there was a significant increase over the three years.

The more than 10 - 15 years group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 314 lost days. Of this, the 83 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 26%; in 1999 the 99 days represent 32% and in 2000 132 days represent 42%. It is clear that there was a significant increase over the three years.

The more than 15 - 20 years group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 28 lost days. Of this, the 7 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 25%; in 1999 the 9 days represent 32% and in 2000 12 days represent 43%. It is clear that there was a significant increase over the three years.

The more than 20 years group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 88 lost days. Of this, the 23 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 26%; in 1999 the 28 days represent 32% and in 2000 37 days represent 42%. It is clear that there was a significant increase over the three years.

According to the above figures it is very interesting to see that all groups in relation to hypothesis 4 had percentages in the twenties during 1998, increased to the thirties in 1999 and increased further to the forties in 2000. This indicates that absenteeism has clearly risen over the selected three years. This is also confirmed by the Gross Absence Rate (GAR) of 3,9% in 1998; 4,3% in 1999 and 5,2% in 2000. The reason for these increases might be because absenteeism are left too late before something is done about it. Absenteeism should be dealt with at an early stage. This will not only benefit the employee, but also the employer. Absenteeism should be dealt with before it gets to the stage of dismissals.

5.2 Analysis of data from questionnaires

The researcher had a return rate of 98% from the questionnaires (45 out of 46).

5.2.1 **Absenteeism with or without children**

$$H_0: \mu_c = \mu_{cw}$$

(Absenteeism between employees with children is equal to employees without children.)

$$H_a: \mu_c \neq \mu_{cw}$$

(Absenteeism between employees with children is not equal to employees without children.)

The H_a is accepted, therefore there is sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different for staff with children than staff without children. It is very clear that absenteeism between staff with children is much higher than staff without children. This might be an indication that staff with children use sick leave when they stay at home with their sick children. What is also very significant is that family crisis (child / parent care) was indicated as the second biggest reason for why staff are taking sick leave, indicated by 89% of the staff (this will be discussed further in the chapter, see 5.2.3).

5.2.2 Absenteeism and being a smoker, non-smoker or an ex-smoker

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$$

(Absenteeism is equal between smokers, non-smokers and ex-smokers.)

$$H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3$$

(Absenteeism is not equal between smokers, non-smokers and ex-smokers.)

The H_0 is accepted, therefore there is not sufficient statistical evidence that days absent are different between smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers. The reason for this might be the size of the population of interest (46 employees). Previous research that was done proved that

“smoking is consistently found to have a large and significant impact on absence” (Bush, 1995:437).

The sample size of this research was 54 000 individuals.

Smoker group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 355 lost days. Of this, the 73 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 24%; in 1999 the 155 days represent 44% and in 2000 127 days represent 28%.

Ex-smoker group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 206 lost days. Of this, the 92 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 31%; in 1999 the 49 days represent 14% and in 2000 65 days represent 14%.

Non-smoker group: Over the three year period, this group was responsible for 545 lost days. Of this, the 134 lost days in 1998 constitute a percentage of 45%; in 1999 the 147 days represent 42% and in 2000 264 days represent 58%.

It was interesting to note that both the smoker and ex-smoker group had a decline in 2000, whereas the non-smoker group had an increase in that year.

5.2.3 Possible reasons for absenteeism

According to the responses from the questionnaire, illness was the biggest reason for absenteeism - this was indicated by 98% of the staff, secondly was family crisis (child / parent care), indicated by 89% and thirdly stress, indicated by 84% of the staff. Other reasons that were indicated:

- Personal business to attend to. (71%)
- Take sick days otherwise you will lose it. (60%)
- Transport (60%)

- Conflict with supervisor (58%)
- Working hours (40%)
- Boring work (26%)
- Other reasons that were specifically specified:
 - Negative management that dampens enthusiasm (2%)
 - Trivial illness (2%)
 - Tardiness / laziness (2%)
 - Unfair employee benefits (2%)

According to the above results it is clear that staff are using sick leave for many different reasons.

5.2.4 Staff's perception about sick leave

According to the results received from the questionnaires, 36% of the staff indicated that there are some of their colleagues that take sick leave without really being ill, while only 16% indicated that it was not the case. Comparing these results and the results indicated in 5.2.3 above it is clear that staff use sick leave for more than just illness.

76% of the staff in the library indicated that the Library does have an absenteeism problem, while only 16% indicated that it was not the case. These results show clearly that there is an absenteeism problem in the Cape Technikon Library.

5.2.5 **Measuring job satisfaction**

Three questions in the questionnaire assessed job satisfaction of the staff in the Library. In the first question staff were asked to indicate how they feel about their job, where 96% of the staff indicated that they were satisfied to very satisfied with their job. Only 4% indicated that they were dissatisfied.

The second question assessed how they feel about the work they do - the work itself. 98% of the staff indicated that they were satisfied to very satisfied with the work itself, while only 2% indicated that they were dissatisfied.

The third question asked how the staff feel about working in the Cape Technikon Library. 98% of the staff indicated that they were satisfied to very satisfied with working in the Cape Technikon Library, while only 2% indicated that they were dissatisfied.

According to the above results it is clear that close to all the staff are satisfied with their job, the work itself and place where they work. If this is the case, the cause of the absenteeism problem in the Cape Technikon Library can not be related to job satisfaction.

5.2.6 Measuring work stress

Work stress was assessed by two questions in the questionnaire. The first question assessed whether the employees job cause a great deal of personal stress and anxiety. 49% of the staff indicated that their jobs causes them a great deal of stress, while 51% indicated that it was not the case.

The second question assessed whether their co-workers cause them to experience a great deal of personal stress and anxiety. 47% of the staff indicated that it was the case while 53% indicated that it was not the case.

What is quite interesting is the fact that in both these questions the results were very close to 50%. When these results are added together (51% not stressed with job plus 53% not stressed by co-workers divided by two and 49% stressed with job plus 47% stressed by co-workers divided by two) it indicates that 52% of the staff are not stressed and 48% of the staff are stressed.

These results indicate that half the staff is stressed, whereas the other half is not. After seeing these results the researcher went further to establish whether the 48% staff who indicated that they are stressed fall in the user services group or support services group of the Library. The

user services group are staff who work directly with users and sits in an open-plan environment whereas the support services group are staff who work behind the scenes in closed office environments. The researcher could not find any indication that staff in the user services group are more stressed than staff in the support services group or vice versa.

5.3 Some significant responses from the open-ended questions

5.3.1 *Question 10: Please motivate your answer in Question 9. (Q9: Do you think that some of your colleagues are taking sick leave without really being ill?)*

- It was interesting to note that 18% of the staff mentioned that staff do not show any symptoms the day before the absence or the day after the absence. In other words there were no visible signs of illness and then they still manage to produce a medical certificate.
- Some staff members (7%) mentioned that other staff members have mentioned and confessed to them that they took sick leave because they did not feel like coming to work or they needed to study. This confirms that staff take sick leave without really being ill.

The above confirms that some staff are taking sick leave without really being ill and that their colleagues are aware of it. What is also interesting to note is how easy it is to produce a medical certificate.

5.3.2 *Question 12: Please motivate your answer in Q11. (Q11: Do you think there is an absenteeism problem in the Library? Yes/No)*

The following are some of the comments made by the staff:

- “The problem is major. I feel that the supervisors should deal with an individual who misuses the system. Their absenteeism record should be brought to their attention and henceforth monitored. Supervisors should also discuss the home situation because very often that is where the problems are and therefore the employee is unable to focus on his work. Management should become tougher on absenteeism.”
- “People take time off more often for a lot of reasons including study leave. It creates a problem when having to find someone to work in one’s place and in most cases no replacements are found creating backlogs and low morale amongst the other team members.”
- “People take sick leave too easily. It should average no more than 4 days a year per person, except in major cases.”
- “There is a problem because nearly every day we read on e-mail of people being put off by their doctors and it is common that most people always get a week off.”
- “My feeling is that the library has a high level of absenteeism, and that this is (fairly) often illegitimate, not innocent or legal.”
- “Seems as though the same names appear as being ill.”
- “Some people take sick leave unnecessarily, because they know

that there will be back-up for them.”

It was mentioned by 13% of the staff that there are daily absences in the Library and that it is seldom that the entire staff compliment is at work on a given day.

It is also important to note that this study did not look at staff arriving late for work, but that some staff are unhappy about the fact that there are constantly people arriving late for work. Some staff indicated that something should be done about it.

5.3.3 *Question 13: If your answer is yes in Q11, what are the reasons for the absenteeism problem in the Library?*

The following are direct quotations from comments by the staff, received from the questionnaires:

- “Laziness, tiredness. Very often mothers or fathers take sick leave because the babies kept them awake throughout the night. They also take sick leave instead of leave if the child is sick.”
- “Stress might be the cause for absenteeism.”
- “Sickness, laziness, stress, personal problems.”
- “Illness and in some instances stress related conditions.”
- “Personal problems, don’t value their jobs. Some people feel frustrated because they stagnate.”

- “The organisation’s rules are not strict enough and there is a history of absence so people adopt an attitude that if one can do it, so can I. The management is not really dealing with the problem.”
- “Stress, conflict with supervisor, exhaustion, general physical illness.”
- “Lack of commitment, technician’s ‘liberal’ conditions of service, public transport problems.”
- “It is very easy to stay away from work. The supervisor just organises for someone else to stand in.”
- “Might be because of a personal agenda on that particular day. The law is protecting them, no medical certificate needed for less than two days. Maybe personal problems with colleagues or supervisors.”
- “We are only 50 members of staff serving a student population of +- 10 000. It puts enormous stress on the staff.”
- “Some staff do not feel the consequences of being sick, e.g. build-up of work to be done - that makes it easy to be sick.”
- “Entitlement (for sick leave). Some people might be experiencing problems at home which they are unable to discuss with supervisor. Not enough responsibility towards job.”
- “Maybe people are dissatisfied or unhappy in their jobs.”
- “Air-conditioning is very bad. Sometimes it is the weather.”
- “People feel they are entitled to it - use it or lose it philosophy.”

Have a sick child to take care of.”

- “Non-committed staff. People work here to have a job, they (some) are not interested (or qualified) in supplying a service, therefore they do not enjoy their jobs.

Many different reasons are mentioned, but it is clear that illness is indicated as the biggest reason for absenteeism. Staff also indicated that their colleagues take sick leave too easily, e.g. trivial illnesses. Staff should be made aware that sick leave should only be used when they are so ill that they can hardly get out of bed, not just for a slight headache, a runny nose, etc.

5.3.4 *Question 14: What solutions can you suggest?*

The following are direct quotations from comments by the staff received from the questionnaires:

- “Management should acknowledge that problems exist and try and satisfy them or work through them with employees.”
- “That steps be taken against the individuals and those individuals to present a doctor’s certificate even when absent for only one (1) day.”
- “Counselling to get to the bottom of the problem. To have a policy in place where money is deducted from your salary if it was found that the individual stayed out unnecessary. What does it

mean to be sick? Being sick is often associated with a cold, runny nose, diarrhea, headache, stiff-neck. Being sick to me means that one is only sick when you are unable to get out of bed.”

- “Sort out problems with the air-conditioner so that the temperature remains at an ‘unsickening’ level.”
- “Library management (supervisors) must find out what the problem is if someone is continuously sick and not just take sick leave certificates.”
- “More control, more communication.”
- “The rules allow all this sick leave and it is a right that suits people.”
- “Much more strict rules supported by HR. Supervisors to be able to reprimand without fear of retributions from unions, etc.”
- “Strengthen the hands of the supervisors by supporting their efforts to control this and apply rules of the broader organisation.”
- “People get retirement counselling why not get counselled about work, the working life, a career when they first start working?”
- “Suggest that people who are sick more often change doctors and to produce sick certificate after one day. Incentives for the people who are at work all the time.”
- “Appoint people with Library qualifications above staff that do not have Library qualifications, if possible.”

Some staff indicated that management should acknowledge that there is a problem and that something should be done about it. Staff also indicated that the air-conditioning in the Library might be a cause of staff illness and that it should be looked at.

5.4 Absenteeism statistics/rate

According to Van der Merwe (1988:3) a Gross Absence Rate (GAR) over 5% should be regarded as a situation that should be investigated further. Absence below 3% can be seen as a situation capable of further improvement.

According to the results the GAR was 3,9% in 1998; increased to 4,3% in 1999 and increased even further to 5,2% in 2000. It is clear that absenteeism is increasing and it is worrisome. If staff members see that nothing are being done about is, it will continue to get worse. This is confirmed by Perry (1997:90) and McHugh (2001:6).

The AFR was 5,1 in 1998; decreased to 4,6 in 1999 and remained at 4,6 in 2000. This figure expresses the number of absence incidents per year and is expressed as a ratio. According to Van der Merwe (1988:13)

“an AFR of over 1,0 indicates absence-taking that is far too widespread.”

It is therefore clear that the number of absence-taking incidents in the Library is extremely high (it is much higher than 1,0). It confirms that there are too many one and two day absences. Van der Merwe (1998:13) indicates that an AFR should be less than 0,5. Strong action should be taken against individuals who show a pattern of constant short absences.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 **Recommendations to the Cape Technikon Human Resources Department**

- i) Link absenteeism to Performance Management . Staff should know that excessive absenteeism will be held against them when it comes to performance management. Absenteeism that was incurred because of hospitalisation and/or operations should not be taken into account. Constant short absences (one or two days) cause the most disruption and that is where the problem lies. Briggs (1990:164-165) confirms that

“attendance records were evaluated separately in the employee performance review.”

Briggs goes further by stating that attendance should become a priority decision factor for promotions.

- ii) Staff with more than ten (10) absent days a year should be further investigated.
- iii) Re-look the current sick leave policy of the Cape Technikon. The following is extracted from the Cape Technikon Conditions of Service (Government Gazette, 1994 - see Annexure A):
 - “no employee shall be granted sick leave with full pay until

- he has completed thirty (30) days service and then only in respect of absences subsequent to the completion of such service.”
- “sick leave shall be granted only in respect of the absence from duty of an employee owing to an illness, indisposition or injury through no fault of his own and not owing to his failure to take reasonable precautions.”
 - “If an employee is absent from duty for a continuous period exceeding three (3) days owing to illness, he may be granted sick leave with or without pay only if he submits a certificate from a registered medical practitioner which -
 - describes the nature of the illness;
 - states that he is not capable of performing his official duties; and
 - indicates the period necessary for his recuperation.”
 - “The council may require an employee to submit a certificate in respect of periods of three (3) days or less.”
 - “Subject to the provisions of subparagraph (c) [see Annexure A] sick leave with or without pay in respect of which a certificate referred to in subparagraph (a) [see Annexure A] is not submitted, shall be granted only for not more than ten (10) days on aggregate during any calendar year and further absences shall be covered by the granting of accumulative leave with pay or, or if the

employee has no accumulative leave to his credit, of special leave without pay.”

- “Sick leave shall be 90 days with full pay and 90 days with half pay in each cycle.” (cycle = 3 years)

It is recommended that:

- iv) the sick leave policy be changed to:
 - divide sick leave into two categories, where one is only for hospitalisation and/or operations, which could remain as 90 days with full pay and 90 days with half pay in each cycle. The second category should be for the one to two day illnesses. This category should have a maximum of ten (10) sick days available per year at full pay, thereafter it will be without pay or accumulative leave.
- v) The Human Resources department should look at the absenteeism statistics for the whole institution and compare the results to the standard/norm. This will give an indication of the size of the problem, if any. The cost of absenteeism for the Technikon should also be calculated.
- vi) HIV/Aids is going to play an increasingly larger role in future with regards to absenteeism and lost productivity within the work

place. It is important that the Cape Technikon put procedures and policies in place to deal with these consequences.

5.5.2 Recommendations to the Cape Technikon Library

- i) Implement the following absenteeism procedure in the Library.
 - A staff member must inform his/her supervisor before 08:30 in the morning of his/her absence for that day. The staff member should speak to his/her supervisor directly, not just leave a message with another colleague. If the staff member cannot get hold of his/her supervisor at that moment the staff member can leave a message with a colleague, but the supervisor should call the staff member back on that day to ask what the reason for the absence is.
 - If the staff member is ill for more than one day the supervisor should phone the employee on the second absent day to show concern, also verifying the reason and getting dates for his/her possible return.
 - Every supervisor should have an absenteeism file with the full absence history of their subordinates.
 - When the absent employee returns to work, the supervisor should have a "return to work" interview with the employee. Currently it is so easy just to complete a sick

leave form and submit to the supervisor for signature. During this interview the supervisor should make notes about the date and duration of the sick leave, the reason for the sick leave (write down the specific illness or symptoms the employee had) as well as if absence was with or without a medical certificate. It is in these records where supervisors can identify certain patterns such as absences on particular days such as Mondays and Fridays; how many one to two days absences occur within a month, as well as the reasons given for the absences. When any patterns are identified the supervisor should discuss this with the Exco of the Library. At this point the Human Resources department should be informed. The Human Resources department has all the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with these situations as described by the law.

- ii) Have individual interviews with all the staff members that had ten (10) and more absent days during 2000. These staff members should know that absenteeism is being analysed and this will make them aware of that. Staff members who are absent for more than ten (10) days because of hospitalisation or operations should be excluded from these interviews. The absenteeism problem lies with the short one to two day

absences. That should be investigated. Perry (1996:80) confirms that it is important to show employees that their chronic absence have been noticed. Therefore it is important to react quickly when an employee shows an increase in absence. It is better to treat the symptoms at an early stage before it gets so bad that an employee is dismissed. The employee will benefit from this.

- iii) Have an absenteeism record in the tea room where at the end of each month all the absences during the month are indicated. This will make the absences more visible and staff will see the bigger picture. Peer pressure can be very effective.
- iv) Many discrepancies were found in the absence records. The absence records of the Library did not correspond with the absence records of the Human Resources department and vice versa. This procedure in the Library should be re-looked at to ensure correct records.
- v) The absence policy should be discussed with the staff and it should be made clear that:
 - staff are not allowed to take sick leave when they stay away from work because of a sick child. Staff should use their own leave for this or make use of the special leave

that is available for this. Supervisors should take note and be aware of this and communicate it to their subordinates.

- if staff are absent for ten (10) days a year without a medical certificate, further absences shall be covered by accumulative leave [see Annexure A - Cape Technikon Conditions of Service, page 28, paragraph (e)].
 - the Council can require from an employee to submit a medical certificate for every day absent [see Annexure A - Cape Technikon Conditions of Service, page 28, paragraph (b)].
- vi) Management should consider addressing the issue on a regular basis at formal forums, such as general staff meetings, workshops, library management team meetings, etc.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

It is clear that there are many different reasons for absenteeism and just as many different solutions to the problem. The reasons and solutions will also differ between different departments and/or organisations. Therefore it is important for departments and/or organisations to look at their specific situation and put in place what is best for them.

What became very clear to the researcher during this research was that it is extremely important for staff to see that absenteeism will not be tolerated. The moment they see that nothing is done, it will only get worse. The sooner that management and supervisors act on absenteeism, the better for the department, institution and the employees. Absenteeism should not be left so late that employees are dismissed because of it. Therefore it is very important that the HR department and Library Management (supervisors) implement the necessary policy and regulations to decrease absenteeism. If staff members are absent less frequently it might decrease the stress levels of staff that must continuously stand in for others.

Another very important factor to take into consideration is the effect that HIV/Aids is going to have on institutions/organisations in the future. The statistics are shocking and organisations should prepare themselves for increases in absenteeism as well as decreased productivity. This is extremely worrisome and can have devastating effects on the bottom line of the institution.

It is important to link absenteeism to Performance Management. Staff should know that excessive absenteeism will be held against them when it comes to performance management. The problem lies with constant short absences.

It is also important to have a “return to work” interview with staff members when they return to work. Currently it is so easy just to complete a sick leave form and submit to the supervisor for signature. This will enforce the message to staff members that absenteeism is taken seriously.

It is important to realise that there are many success stories in business where absenteeism was reduced to an acceptable rate. In other words it has been proven before that absenteeism can improve tremendously with the correct attitude, firmness by supervisors and implementation of certain procedures and policies. The Library needs to change the absenteeism culture in the mind sets of people - in this manner the Cape Technikon will reap a number of positive benefits.

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Annexure A

Maternity leave

47. (1) Female employees, after completion of two (2) years service shall qualify for paid maternity leave and payment shall be limited to a maximum of $\frac{1}{3}$ of such employee's gross monthly salary for a period of three (3) months: Provided that such an employee shall be granted maternity leave with pro rata payment only twice in the course of her service at the technikon.

(2) An employee shall take at least one (1) month's leave before the anticipated date of confinement and at least six (6) weeks after the confinement or stillbirth of a child.

(3) An employee shall give at least one (1) month's notice of the date on which the leave will commence.

Leave gratuity

48. Accumulated leave standing to the credit of an employee may, with the approval of the council, be taken in the form of leave by such employee, or otherwise on retirement be paid out to him in the form of a leave gratuity.

SICK LEAVE**General provisions: Sick leave**

49. (1) Sick leave shall accrue to an employee on the first day of a cycle or on the date of his assumption of duty where such date falls within a cycle, and with effect from that day the full sick leave for the cycle in question may be granted to him, provided the other provisions of these rules are complied with: Provided that no employee shall be granted sick leave with full pay until he has completed thirty (30) days service and then only in respect of absences subsequent to the completion of such service.

(2) Subject to the medical requirements of the case, the date on which any sick leave of an employee shall be deemed to commence and the date on which it shall be deemed to end shall be those as determined by the council which may, in determining the period of the leave, take into consideration the interests of the technikon.

(3) An employee may, on his written application, be granted accumulative leave standing to his credit in lieu of sick leave with pay or sick leave without pay: Provided that such application shall be submitted not later than thirty (30) days after he has resumed duty: Provided further that—

- (a) at the written request of an employee, such accumulative leave may be converted into special leave with half pay on the basis of two (2) days with half pay for each day of accumulated leave standing to his credit;
- (b) the number of days leave so granted to an employee other than a member of the academic staff shall not exceed 365 days in a cycle;

Kraamverlof

47. (1) Vroulike personeel kom na voltooiing van twee (2) jaar diens vir betaalde kraamverlof in aanmerking en betaling word beperk tot 'n maksimum van $\frac{1}{3}$ van so 'n werknemer se bruto maandelikse salaris vir 'n tydperk van drie (3) maande: Met dien verstande dat sodanige werknemer slegs twee (2) keer tydens haar dienstyd by die technikon kraamverlof met pro rata-betaling toegestaan word.

(2) 'n Werknemer neem minstens een (1) maand verlof voor die verwagte datum van die bevalling en minstens ses (6) weke na die bevalling of doodgeboorte van 'n baba verlof.

(3) 'n Werknemer gee een (1) maand kennis van die datum waarop die verlof 'n aanvang sal neem.

Verlofgratifikasie

48. Oplopende verlof tot krediet van 'n werknemer kan met die goedkeuring van die raad in die vorm van verlof deur so 'n werknemer geneem word, of andersins met aftrede in die vorm van 'n verlofgratifikasie aan hom uitbetaal word.

SIKTEVERLOF**Algemene bepalings: Siekteverlof**

49. (1) Siekteverlof val toe aan 'n werknemer op die eerste dag van 'n tydkring of op die datum van sy diensaanvaarding waar so 'n datum binne 'n tydkring val, en met ingang van daardie dag kan die volle siekteverlof vir die betrokke tydkring aan hom toegestaan word, mits aan die ander bepalings van hierdie reëls voldoen word: Met dien verstande dat geen siekteverlof met volle betaling aan 'n werknemer toegestaan word voordat hy dertig (30) dae diens voltooi het nie en dan slegs ten opsigte van afwesigheid na voltooiing van sulke diens.

(2) Behoudens die geneeskundige vereistes van die geval, is die datum waarop siekteverlof van 'n werknemer geag word te begin en die datum waarop dit geag word te eindig die datums soos bepaal deur die raad wat by die vasstelling van die tydperk van die verlof, die belange van die technikon in aanmerking kan neem.

(3) Aan 'n werknemer kan, in plaas van siekteverlof met betaling of siekteverlof sonder betaling, op sy skriftelike versoek oplopende verlof tot sy krediet toegestaan word: Met dien verstande dat so 'n aansoek nie later as dertig (30) dae nadat hy diens hervat, ingedien word nie: Met dien verstande voorts dat—

- (a) op die skriftelike versoek van 'n werknemer die bedoelde oplopende verlof in spesiale verlof met halwe betaling omskep kan word op die grondslag van twee (2) dae met halwe betaling vir elke dag oplopende verlof tot sy krediet;
- (b) die getal dae verlof wat aldus aan 'n werknemer uitgesonderd 'n lid van die akademiese personeel toegestaan word, nie 365 dae in 'n tydkring oorskry nie;

- (c) the council shall be satisfied that the employee is at that stage not permanently unfit for the performance of his normal duties; and
- (d) if such leave has been granted to an employee and he has received payment in respect thereof, it shall not be reconverted into sick leave with half pay or without pay.

(4) If an employee to whom accumulative leave with pay has been granted, takes ill while on such leave, that part of the leave during which he was ill may, subject to the provisions of paragraph 50 be converted into sick leave: Provided that—

- (a) an employee shall apply in writing for such conversion within thirty (30) days of the expiry of such leave;
- (b) in the case of a member of the academic staff, the period during which he was ill was more than seven (7) days.

(5) Unused sick leave prescribed for any particular cycle shall lapse at the end of that cycle and shall not be carried forward to the next cycle.

(6) If an employee, who has been granted the maximum sick leave provided for in these Rules, is unable, for reasons of health, to resume his duties, the council may—

- (a) on submission of a satisfactory certificate referred to in paragraph 50 (3);
- (b) if such employee at that time is not permanently unfit to perform his normal duties; and
- (c) if such employee has no accumulative leave to his credit,

grant him further sick leave with full pay for a period at the council's discretion, or without pay for a period not exceeding ninety (90) days in any cycle: Provided that such grant may be made in respect of separate periods of absence and in respect of different kinds of illnesses.

Granting of sick leave

50. (1) Sick leave shall be granted only in respect of the absence from duty of an employee owing to an illness, indisposition or injury through no fault of his own and not owing to his failure to take reasonable precautions.

(2) Sick leave shall be granted in respect of nervous complaints, insomnia, debility or similar ill-defined illnesses or indisposition only if the employee's state of health—

- (a) incapacitates him for duty; and
- (b) does not arise from his failure to take accumulative and vacation leave.

- (c) die raad oortuig is dat die werknemer op daardie tydskop nie permanent ongeskik vir die verrigting van sy normale pligte is nie; en
- (d) indien bedoelde verlof aan 'n werknemer toegestaan word en hy ten opsigte daarvan betaling ontvang het, dit nie weer in siekteverlof met halwe betaling of sonder betaling omskep kan word nie.

(4) Indien 'n werknemer aan wie olopende verlof met betaling toegestaan is, siek word terwyl hy met hierdie verlof is, kan daardie gedeelte van die olopende verlof waartydens hy siek was behoudens die bepalinge van paragraaf 50 in siekteverlof omskep word: Met dien verstande dat—

- (a) die werknemer binne dertig (30) dae na verstryking van daardie verlof skriftelik om die omskepping daarvan aansoek doen;
- (b) in die geval van 'n lid van die akademiese personeel, die tydperk wat hy siek was meer as sewe (7) dae was.

(5) Ongebruikte siekteverlof wat vir 'n bepaalde tydkring voorgeskryf is, verval aan die einde van daardie tydkring en word nie na die volgende tydkring oorgedra nie.

(6) Indien aan 'n werknemer die maksimum hoeveelheid siekteverlof waarvoor in hierdie Reëls voorsiening gemaak word, toegestaan word en hy weens gesondheidsredes nie sy pligte kan hervat nie, kan die raad—

- (a) by die voorlegging van 'n bevredigende sertifikaat bedoel in paragraaf 50 (3);
- (b) indien so 'n werknemer op daardie stadium nie permanent ongeskik vir die verrigting van sy normale pligte is nie; en
- (c) indien so 'n werknemer geen olopende verlof tot sy krediet het nie,

na die raad se goeddunke verdere siekteverlof met volle betaling aan hom toestaan of aan hom verlof sonder betaling vir hoogstens negentig (90) dae in enige tydkring toestaan: Met dien verstande dat so 'n toekenning gedoen kan word ten opsigte van afsonderlike tydperke van afwesigheid en ten opsigte van ongesteldhede van verskillende aard.

Toestaan van siekteverlof

50. (1) Siekteverlof word net toegestaan in verband met 'n werknemer se afwesigheid van diens weens 'n siekte, ongesteldheid of besering wat nie aan sy eie toedoen of gebrek aan redelike voorsorg te wyte is nie.

(2) Siekteverlof word vir senuwee-aandoenings, slaaploosheid, swakte of a dergelike minder goed omskewe siekte of ongesteldheid toegestaan slegs indien die werknemer se gesondheidstoestand—

- (a) hom vir sy werk ongeskik maak; en
- (b) dit nie voortvloei uit sy versuim om van olopende en vakansieverlof gebruik te maak nie.

(3) (a) If an employee is absent from duty for a continuous period exceeding three (3) days owing to illness, he may be granted sick leave with or without pay only if he submits a certificate from a registered medical practitioner (or a registered dentist) which—

- (i) describes the nature of the illness;
- (ii) states that he is not capable of performing his official duties; and
- (iii) indicates the period necessary for his recuperation.

(b) The council may require an employee to submit a certificate referred to in subparagraph (a) in respect of periods of three (3) days or less.

(c) If the absence of an employee is due to illness and there are good reasons for the non-submission of a certificate in terms of subparagraph (a) the council may exempt such employee from the submission of such certificate in respect of sick leave for a continuous period not exceeding fourteen (14) days.

(d) Exemption from the submission of a certificate in terms of subparagraph (c), shall be recorded on the application for leave.

(e) Subject to the provisions of subparagraph (c) sick leave with or without pay in respect of which a certificate referred to in subparagraph (a) is not submitted, shall be granted only for not more than ten (10) days on aggregate during any calendar year and further absences shall be covered by the granting of accumulative leave with pay or, if the employee has no accumulative leave to his credit, of special leave without pay.

(4) Notwithstanding the submission of a certificate referred to in subparagraph (3) the council may refuse to grant sick leave with pay in respect of any absence from duty to which the certificate relates, in which case the council may determine that the absence was unauthorised and the provisions of paragraph 33 (2) shall apply.

Special sick leave

51. (1) An employee who is absent owing to an injury sustained in an accident arising out of and in the course of his duties or owing to a disease contracted in the course of and as a result of his duties, may be granted special sick leave with full pay for the period he is incapacitated for his duties.

(2) Special sick leave in terms of this paragraph shall not be granted if the accident is attributable to the serious and wilful misconduct of the employee as defined in the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 1993 (Act No. 130 of 1993).

(3) The provisions of paragraph 50 (3) shall *mutatis mutandis* apply to the granting of special sick leave.

(3) (a) Indien 'n werknemer vir 'n aaneenlopende tydperk van langer as drie (3) dae weens siekte van diens afwesig is, kan siekteverlof met of sonder betaling aan hom toegestaan word slegs as hy van 'n geregistreerde geneesheer (of geregistreerde tandarts) 'n sertifikaat indien waarin—

- (i) die aard van die siekte omskryf word;
- (ii) verklaar word dat hy nie in staat is om sy amppligte waar te neem nie; en
- (iii) aangetoon word watter tydperk vir sy herstel nodig is.

(b) Die raad kan van 'n werknemer vereis dat 'n sertifikaat bedoel in subparagraaf (a) ten opsigte van tydperke van drie (3) dae of minder ingedien word.

(c) Indien 'n werknemer weens siekte afwesig is en daar grondige redes bestaan waarom 'n sertifikaat ingevolge subparagraaf (a) nie ingedien kan word nie, kan die raad sodanige werknemer ten opsigte van 'n aaneenlopende tydperk van siekteverlof van hoogstens veertien (14) dae van die indiening van sodanige sertifikaat vrystel.

(d) Vrystelling van die indiening van 'n sertifikaat ingevolge subparagraaf (c) word op die verlofaansoek aangeteken.

(e) Behoudens die bepalings van subparagraaf (c) word siekteverlof met of sonder betaling ten opsigte waarvan 'n sertifikaat soos bedoel in subparagraaf (a) nie ingedien is nie, toegestaan vir 'n totaal van hoogstens tien (10) dae gemiddeld gedurende enige kalenderjaar en verdere afwesigheid word gedek deur die toestaan van oplopende verlof met betaling of, as die werknemer geen oplopende verlof tot sy krediet het nie, van spesiale verlof sonder betaling.

(4) Ondanks die indiening van 'n sertifikaat bedoel in subparagraaf (3), kan die raad weier om siekteverlof met betaling toe te staan ten opsigte van enige afwesigheid van diens waarop die sertifikaat betrekking het en in so 'n geval kan die raad bepaal dat die afwesigheid ongemagtig is en geld die bepalings van paragraaf 33 (2).

Spesiale siekteverlof

51. (1) Aan 'n werknemer wat afwesig is weens 'n besering opgedoen in 'n ongeval wat uit sy diens ontstaan en in die loop daarvan plaasvind of weens 'n siekte wat in die loop van en as gevolg van sy diens opgedoen is, kan spesiale siekteverlof met volle betaling vir die tydperk wat hy ongeschik is om diens te verrig, toegestaan word.

(2) Spesiale siekteverlof ingevolge hierdie paragraaf word nie toegestaan nie indien die ongeval aan die ernstige en opsetlike wangedrag van die werknemer soos omskryf in die Wet op Vergoeding vir Beroepsbeserings en -Siektes, 1993 (Wet No. 130 van 1993), toe te skryf is.

(3) Die bepalings van paragraaf 50 (3) geld *mutatis mutandis* vir die toestaan van spesiale siekteverlof.