

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB  
SATISFACTION AND ABSENTEEISM: A STUDY  
OF THE SHOP FLOOR WORKERS IN A MOTOR  
MANUFACTURING PLANT

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the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

of

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by

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## **DECLARATION**

Hereby I, Oswald Mashonganyika, declare that this research thesis is my own original work and that all the sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university in order to obtain an academic qualification.

O. Mashonganyika

12 Febraury, 2004

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research hypothesises a statistical positive significant correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism among the shop floor workers of a motor manufacturing plant in the impoverished province of the Eastern Cape in South Africa. According to the literature review, two schools of thought exist that argue on the nature of the relationship. One believes that absence from work is in some way a natural consequence of job dissatisfaction, i.e. arguing for a job satisfaction-absenteeism relationship. The second one argues for a no relationship, arguing that absence is a result of habitual behaviour and or behaviours influenced by socioeconomic factors such as poverty that affect the employees' ability and pressure to attend work.

A sample of 150 workers was randomly selected from the 2500 shop floor workers. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) questionnaires were used to measure the satisfaction index of the workers. The absence statistics for the sample workers were gathered from the organisation's Human Resources department and statistical tests for correlation and regression were conducted on the two variables – JDI and absence data.

Contrary to the expectations of the study, the results showed that overall job satisfaction and absenteeism were not correlated. It concluded that the job dissatisfaction theory of absenteeism is empirically unsupportable and alternative conceptualisations of absence contributors and potentially fruitful research strategies are discussed.

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# 1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Setting of the study

South Africa's international isolation and the subsequent lack of global competition during the apartheid era caused the economy to reach a point of stagnation around the 1970s. This resulted in high unemployment levels, labour unrests and very low business confidence levels, which further throttled the economic growth. Complacent attitudes toward high and costly levels of absence in the organisations crept in and became the order of the day. These factors devastated the capacity of the South African economy to compete internationally and to redress the inequality caused by the apartheid system.

With the advent of a democratically elected government in South Africa in 1994, the first call was to redress those disadvantaged by apartheid. A realistic option was thus through the enlargement of the economic "cake" in order to share more equitably and create the capacity to redress inequality. This then brought about a need for a new system that would promote participation and productivity; a system that would elevate South African organisations to international standards by achieving a competitive cost/productivity balance. One specific demand from this new system has been optimising labour productivity. Employees are often considered to be a company's most valuable asset, and one of the best ways to increase profitability is by increasing the returns on those assets through labour productivity improvements. According to Pons (1993: 13), managers see productivity as "output per man, lost time, work study analysis, quality assurance, price control, etc". Reducing absenteeism is one of the most effective ways of improving productivity but often the most overlooked method of reducing company costs. A reduction in the levels of absenteeism to improve productivity is thus one sure way towards the goal of enlarging the economic "cake". The question that has dodged many is how absenteeism can be improved.

Several research studies (Nicholson, 1977; Muchinsky, 1977; Porter & Steers, 1973), conducted have suggested that employee absenteeism is one of the many organisationally

relevant behaviours that are thought to be the result of job dissatisfaction. Steers and Rhodes (1978) developed a model that focused on employee absence and postulated that there are three primary variables influencing an employee's decision to attend work or not. These variables are (1) personal characteristics, (2) organisational characteristics and (3) the pressure and ability to attend.

In conclusion, Steers and Rhodes (1978) suggested that organisational variables, in the form of the job content and the job context interact with employee values and expectations to determine the employee's satisfaction with the job situation, i.e. job satisfaction. Based on their conclusion, conventional wisdom suggested then that absence from work is the byproduct of employee job dissatisfaction, i.e. people who dislike their jobs will be more likely to miss work than people who like their jobs. Job satisfaction has thus in the recent years been seen by many organisations as important because of its perceived effects on the variables that affect employee absenteeism. This then has increased attention to its relationship to absenteeism.

Unfortunately no known studies have been conducted in South Africa to test the above relationship in the motor manufacturing industry. Table 1.0 is a global illustration of the relationship between absenteeism and productivity in the motor manufacturing industry. As can be seen from the table, the undisputed fact however is that high productivity (less hours worked per vehicle) is associated with lower levels of absenteeism.

**Table 1.0: Absenteeism and productivity in the motor manufacturing industry.**

	Japanese in Japan	Japanese in N.America	American in N.America	All Europe
<b>Absenteeism</b>	5%	4.80%	11.70%	12.10%
<b>Productivity</b>	16.8hrs/vehicle	21.2hrs	25.1hrs	36.2hrs

**Source:** IMVP World Assembly Plant Survey, 1989 and J. D. Power Initial Quality Survey, 1989 in Womack, Jones and Roos, 1990: 92

With South Africa's low levels of productivity, unnecessary or voluntary absenteeism cannot be tolerated. Excessive absenteeism can significantly reduce the productivity of an organisation and in the long term affect its profitability and threaten its eventual survival.

Apart from absenteeism affecting productivity, Van der Merwe and Miller (1988: 102), further describe the absenteeism phenomenon as "... a problem with **costly** and pervasive implications, not only for effective functioning and productivity, but also for relationships among the people in an organisation; and more formally for labour relations". Johan Banham, director of CBI, states that Britain, in 1987, lost 5 billion pounds or 105 million workdays to absenteeism (Banham, 1989: 17). Steers and Rhodes (1978) state that the USA in 1978 lost 400 million workdays due to absence. Globally, workdays lost to absenteeism by far exceed days lost to industrial action, e.g. strikes, stayaways (Nicholson, 1977). In South Africa, results of research conducted by Alexander Forbes Disability Management Services (Engelbrecht, 1998) indicate that the average direct cost of absenteeism per worker per year is R2991. This in other words means that absenteeism has a far greater impact on the South African economy than strikes. Research on absenteeism is therefore important owing to the potentially disruptive effect it has on operations within organisations as well as the related costs involved.

The above comparisons and figures indicate the seriousness of absenteeism to different industrial environments and economies. The motor manufacturing industry in the Eastern Cape in South Africa is no exception. Just like most of the industries in the province with an average absence rate of 5.5% (Wolmarans, 1994: 12), the motor manufacturing industry is also beset by the unknown relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction. Making reference to the Alexander Forbes Research findings above, for the company under this research with a workforce of around 3500, the direct costs of absenteeism for the entire plant translate to about R10.5 million per year.

## **1.2 Problem definition and motivation for the study.**

The main objective of all organisations is, with due allowance for demand, to supply the maximum output with the minimum input of the means of production, that is, the profitability objective. This productivity objective comprises the goals of affectivity (to perform the right task) and efficiency (to perform the task in the right way).

It is reasonable to assume that the effectiveness of an organisation consists of the degree to which the needs of both the organisation and its members are satisfied. Organisational needs focus mainly the realisation of its goals, while the employees' involve the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction experienced by the employees with regard to the realisation of their expectations. There is thus a call for a balance between the organisational calls for the workers to be productive and the employees' needs (aggregated as job satisfaction).

It is from the above call that, progressive and successful organisations treat all their employees as valuable human resources. Peters and Waterman (1982: 238) stress the importance of human resources, "... if you want productivity and the financial reward that goes with it, you must treat your workers as the most important asset". Research suggests that absence, labour turnover and strikes are alternative expressions of worker dissatisfaction (Handy, 1968). Hill and Trust (1955) give some theoretical basis for such a view, by conceptualising a "person-work relationship" which if unsatisfactory, could lead to "withdrawal", as manifested for instance in absence and labour turnover. Schoeman (1982: 28) shows that more than 50% of disciplinary incidents in a motor assembly plant arose as a result of absenteeism.

### **1.2.1 The manufacturing company**

The motor manufacturer relevant to this research employs about 3500 employees, about 2500 being shop floor workers who are drawn from the province of the Eastern Cape in South Africa. The Eastern Cape is the second biggest province in South Africa with a population of about 6.5 million, making it the third largest provincial population.

According to a report by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2002), the Eastern Cape is the poorest province in terms of average monthly expenditures (contributing only about 7.5% of South Africa's GDP). The poverty level is estimated at around 48% while unemployment is around 44% (Stats SA, 2002). Despite the high quality of educational facilities, 29% of those aged 20 years and above have received no schooling, while only 5% have completed a higher-level education. Of major concern are the HIV AIDS cases that rose from 1% in 1990 to around 28% in 2002 (Stats SA, 2002). Another index used to measure the basic well-being of people in a community is the Human Development Index (HDI). This index is best seen as a measure of the ability to live a long life, to communicate, to participate in the life of the community and to have sufficient means to be able to afford a decent living, with the basic indicators being life expectancy, adult literacy, the average years at school and per capita income (Stats SA, 2002). The Eastern Cape is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> out of the nine provinces in South Africa (Stats SA, 2002). Such is the environment in which the researched company is located and the demographics of the population under research.

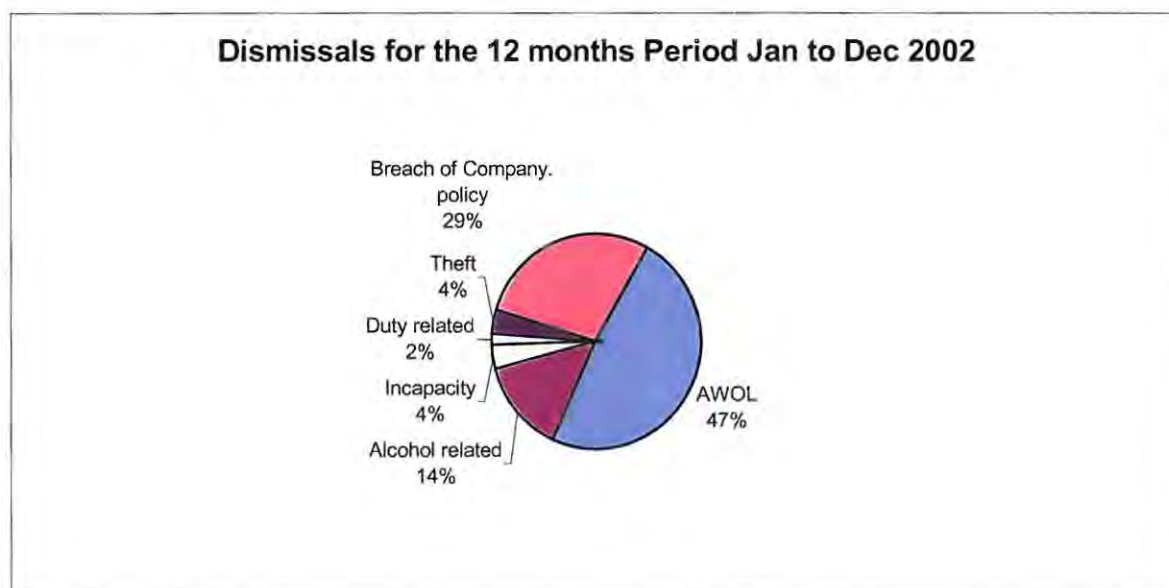
Job activities within the motor manufacturing plant are classified as specialised, each worker's duties are characterised by very few tasks that are repeated often during the workday and require few skills and little mental ability (Robbins, 2001). This means that each worker becomes a master in the particular activity and hence his/her absence from a line station can lead to any of the following:

- Replacement by a multi-skilled employee, if available;
- Replacement by an equally specialised employee from an absence relief pool, if available;
- Replacement by a "freshly trained" employee (not experienced) from the absence relief pool – this tends to happen most of the times.
- If neither of the above is available, any other "qualified" employee within the station will have to perform the extra duties.

This more than often results in line stoppages and poor quality products (resulting in costly rework exercises) which impact on the production output, seriously lowering

productivity. It is obvious then that absenteeism in such an environment has to be kept at a minimum, hence the need to understand and control it. Research on absenteeism is therefore important owing to the potentially disruptive effect it has on operations within the motor manufacturing industry as well as the related costs involved and the impact on productivity too. Graph 1.0 below gives an illustration of the extent of absent related dismissals in the motor manufacturing plant relevant to this research – a concern that 47% of the dismissals were as a result of repeated absence from work.

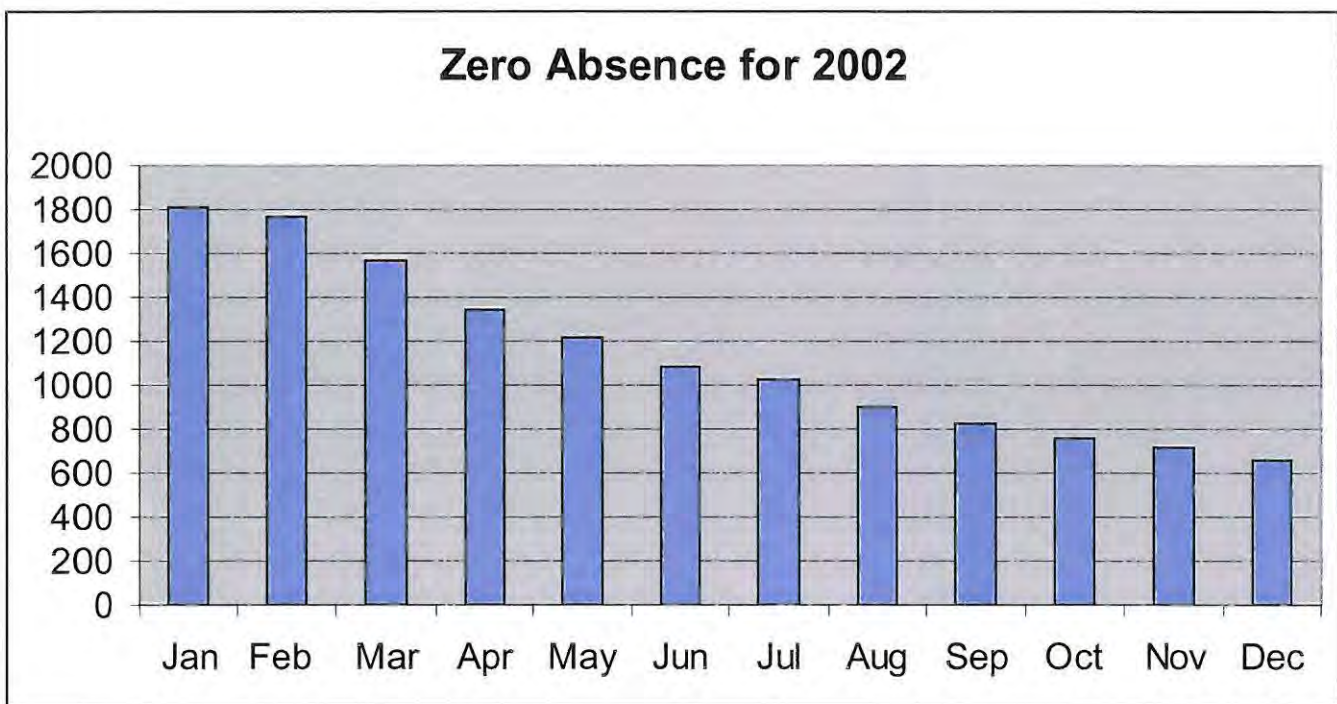
**Graph 1.0: Dismissals for the 12 months period**



The high absence prevalence in several car manufacturers in South Africa (including the researched company) has resulted in the implementation of costly exercises to try to curb absenteeism. One of the most common schemes being the attendance incentive scheme, in which employees with minimal absence qualify for draws and can win prizes ranging from cash prizes, refrigerators to motor vehicles. Unfortunately, most of these schemes apart from being costly have been failures in that absenteeism has remained a problem. Table 1.1 below is an illustration of the attendance trend of employees with zero-days absence in the researched company over twelve months from January to December 2002. This trend led to the following comment from the HR manager in the company over the

statistics, “The number of employees qualifying for the annual attendance car draw is consistently decreasing. I’m wondering if the ... attendance scheme is having any effect at all. In view of the very high absenteeism currently being experienced, I think it would be prudent for the Absentee Task Team to get together to review the situation...” (Memo HR, 2002).

**Table 1.1: Monthly zero absence figures (January to December 2002)**



Graph 1.0 and Table 1.1 are clear illustrations of the extent of absenteeism in the motor manufacturing plant where this research is conducted.

It can be said that a wide array of personal employment issues influence the attitude of workers to attend or be absent from work. Managers and administrators, together with academics who have studied the dilemma of employee absenteeism, agree that a rewarding environment, sound relations, human orientated leadership styles and a positive work ethic are important qualities that contribute to high morale and the level of employee attendance.

While growing interest in the understanding and control of absenteeism has become evident in the motor manufacturing industry, the problem is that to date no research with its relationship to one of the most important contributors of work performance - employee job satisfaction, has been done in the South African motor manufacturing industry.

### **1.3 Aim of the study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction in a motor manufacturing plant in South Africa; once found, then identify the job satisfaction facets that have the most impact on absenteeism and how these facets impact upon different types of absenteeism. The overall goal is to enable the motor manufacturer to influence different facets of job satisfaction with the idea of reducing absenteeism in general and to be able to deal with specific types of absenteeism.

### **1.4 Outline of the study**

The study is divided into seven chapters. Beside this introductory chapter in which the problem is defined and the research motivated, the aim and method of the study provided, the chapters are organised as follows:

#### **1.4.1 Chapters 2 and 3 - Literature review**

The literature review section is divided into two main chapters, a review on the literature on absenteeism and job satisfaction. The chapter on absenteeism has the following topics:

- The definition of absenteeism
- The typology of absenteeism
- The cost of absenteeism
- Theories on the causation of absenteeism

The chapter on job satisfaction has the following topics:

- The meaning and nature of job satisfaction
- Dimensions of job satisfaction
- Theories of job satisfaction

The literature review incorporates the constructs of both absenteeism and job satisfaction and further goes on to critique both definitions. It also offers an operational definition of absenteeism adopted by the researcher and suggests the utilisation of an open systems framework in discussing the disparate attributes of absence theory. It delves into the reasons why job satisfaction is such an important industrial psychology variable, its pervasiveness, and offers a definition that stimulates debate on the topic. Both reviews conclude with propositions from literature aimed at guiding the investigation of the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction undertaken in this study.

#### **1.4.2 Chapter 4 – The relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism**

This chapter describes and gives an insight into the theoretical understanding of the relationship. It also covers the practical aspects, sighting examples of research conducted so far on the relationship and their findings.

#### **1.4.3 Chapter 5 - Research methodology**

The research methodology chapter describes the methodology employed in the investigation of the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism. It identifies and briefly describes the paradigm of the research and then goes on to describe how the sample was determined; the administration of the questionnaires; the history of the measuring instrument used (the Job Descriptive Index), its reliability and validity; and the research ethical considerations.

#### **1.4.4 Chapter 6 - Analysis and discussion of results**

This chapter contains the results, i.e. a description of the results followed by the analysis of the relationship (interpretation of the results) and explanations on what the researcher put to the results. A comparison is done of the results obtained to other research results conducted on the same topic.

#### **1.4.5 Chapter 7 – Summary, recommendations and conclusion**

The thesis ends with a summary, the concluding remarks and recommendations on further research on the relationship of absenteeism and other influential psychological and sociological variables.

## 2 CHAPTER 2: ABSENTEEISM

### 2.1 Introduction

“It is well known that when you do anything, unless you understand its theory, its circumstances, its nature, and its relations to other things, you will not know the laws governing it, or know how to do it; you will not know when to or where to put it into practice or be able to do it well” (Mao Tse-Tung, 1937).

An aspect of vocational behaviour that is of relevance to all vocations is that of withdrawal behaviour. Specifically, withdrawal behaviour refers to employee absenteeism and turnover. Absenteeism is of such concern to both the individual and the organisation that many empirical studies have been devoted to this line of enquiry, and several reviews of literature have summarised research in this field (Johns and Nicholson, 1982; Steers and Rhodes, 1984; As, 1962).

The reason for this is the new realisation that a company’s greatest asset is its people and that according to business law improving the returns achieved on assets can increase profitability. In terms of employee costs, this could mean increasing productivity, or reducing time lost through employee absence. With a lot of pressure being put on business to be competitive, this means then that organisations have to look for new ways in which to increase efficiency and reduce costs, and one sure way is through effective control of absenteeism. With South Africa’s low levels of productivity, unnecessary or voluntary absenteeism cannot be tolerated, as excessive absenteeism can significantly affect the profitability and survival of organisations.

The concept of absenteeism has a long history, originating from the French word “absence” and the Latin word “absentia”, both meaning “the state of being absent or away from (from any place)” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1993). Easily defined as it might appear, no universally accepted definition has been adopted, the argument being

that it means “ ... different things to different people at different times in different situations” (Johns & Nicholson, 1982:134).

It is therefore important to fully understand the phenomenon of absenteeism if one is to effectively monitor and control it. The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to absenteeism. It starts by analysing the nature of absenteeism and why it is a pervasive phenomenon. It further explores the types of absences, their measurement criteria and associated costs and ends with the different models that attempt to explain its causes.

## **2.2 The nature of absenteeism**

Absenteeism is a universal phenomenon with a ubiquitous nature in that it variably occurs in all organisations. Immense interest has consequently grown in the study of this phenomenon. At the macro level, research has focused on the sociological and economic dimensions, that is relating absenteeism to levels of employment, poverty and economic cycles of growth and recession, e.g. Twomey’s (1986) research on the impact of poverty on absenteeism on Australian Aborigines. On the micro level, research has focused on the psychological dimension; the individual antecedents of withdrawal behaviour, e.g. George’s (1989) study on the impact of mood on absence; Jackson’s (1944), study on the relationship between age and absenteeism and Noland’s (1945) research on the relationship between family size and absenteeism.

Although absenteeism is rather easily defined and classified by categories that reflect managerial concern (e.g. authorised absence ), no universally accepted single measure for absenteeism has yet been devised that captures all the different dimensions of the absenteeism problem. Johns and Nicholson’s (1982:134) description of absence as meaning “... different things to different people at different times in different situations”, serves to illustrate the complexity of absence behaviour. In spite of this cloudiness, Steers and Rhodes (1984) argue that at least three areas of absenteeism have been clearly identified, namely, its pervasive nature across organisations and international boundaries;

the high cost involved and its potentially serious consequences for the individual, co-workers and the organisation alike.

### **2.3 The definition of absenteeism**

Over time, the meaning of absenteeism has changed in the sense that to different people the word has different meanings, as stated by Johns and Nicholson (1982). This gives absenteeism a problematic, dynamic and diverse nature. Few writers actually go to the trouble of defining it. The danger in defining absenteeism is apparent from the parable of the Blind Man and the Elephant: "Each blind man coming upon the elephant felt a different part of the animal and so described it differently" (Yolles, Carone and Krinsky, 1975: 39). It is thus apparent that no definition of absenteeism can cover all the approaches to the phenomenon. Gibson (1996: 112) makes a valiant effort, offering that "an absence from work means an inability, an inappropriateness, or an unwillingness to work". He notes that "absence events are a subclass of the events that constitute the behaviour of workers" (Gibson, 1996: 110-111). Mets (1986: 95) states that absence from work is the "... non-attendance of an employee when he or she is expected to work, for any reason at all, medical or other". Fichman (1984: 20) defines absenteeism as "... the allocation of time across non-work activities when an individual is expected to be working". This definition makes no causal attribution. The definition allows one to look at the full range of time allocations of the individual and the functions that they serve when examining the allocation of time away from work. It also permits the study of absence duration and the process of returning to work. Goodman and Atkin (1984) on the other hand argue that absence is a socially defined event. They further argue that a person who fails to appear at work is defined as absent by someone in the organisation. Without the organisation and its concept of attendance, absence has no meaning. In other words "... absence immediately exists only as defined by the organisation and its relationship to the employee" (Goodman and Atkin 1984: 17). Fichman (1984) shares the same understanding.

From the above observations it is apparent that no one definition can cover all the approaches to the phenomenon, as suggested by As (1962: 33) when he says that “absenteeism is a social fact in need of a theory”.

The problem then arises as to which definition or approach to absenteeism should be used as a base for an empirical investigation into the topic. For the purpose of this study, an approach to the definition of absenteeism is used that is orientated towards organisational needs and the need for control.

From an organisational perspective, Brooke’s (1986: 349) concept that “absenteeism occurs when an employee does not report for work when he or she was scheduled or expected to be present” is well received. He goes on to discuss the important issues pertaining to absenteeism, i.e. organisational consequences due to unscheduled non-attendance; the disruption of scheduled work processes, and the resultant loss or underutilisation of productive capacity. The relevant company under research defines absenteeism as failure to report for duty when expected/scheduled to do so.

The United States Department of Labour defines absenteeism as “...the failure of workers to appear on the job when they are scheduled to work... a broad term which is applied to time lost because of sickness or accident which prevents a worker from being on the job, as well as unauthorised time away from the job for other reasons. Workers who quit without notice are also counted as absentees until they are officially removed from the payroll” (Gaudet, 1963: 12). This definition and Brooke’s one above identify the “unplanned/unscheduled and disruptive” nature of absenteeism from an organisational perspective, but still lack to specify the concept of absenteeism. For the purpose of this research, absenteeism is defined as the failure of workers to appear on the job or report for work when they are scheduled to work or expected to be present.

## 2.4 The typology of absenteeism

Unless we understand exactly what absenteeism is and how it should be classified for the company being accessed, it will not be possible to formulate sufficient methods of control as we will not know exactly what issues need addressing. Typology (classification) therefore forms the backbone of the measurement of absenteeism and reveals the conceptual understanding of the nature of the phenomenon. Ilgen (1977) states that companies sometimes can take the formulation of typologies one step too far. "Some firms, in the quest for accurate absence typologies, have created such extensive classification systems, that the risk of misclassifying individual episodes is in fact increased" (Riordan, 1987: 32). This observation illustrates a potential pitfall in seeking a too comprehensive absence typology. It must however be noted that a clear typology is of utmost importance to any company's measurement of absenteeism and to research.

Van der Merwe and Miller (1988) in their classification of absence make use of the concept of the degree of sanction that is accorded to the various forms of absences. They refer to two types of sanctions. 'Sanctioned absence' implies "that in the eyes of the employer, the employee's absence is seen as outside the worker's control, or at worst that it will not be held against him". 'Unsanctioned or delinquent absence' "is seen as deliberate or irresponsible, the employee may have an excuse, but this is not accepted as valid" (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988: 9).

According to Van der Merwe & Miller (1988) three broad categories of absence are distinguished, namely:

- Sickness absence;
- Authorised absence/absence with permission or planned absence;
- Unexcused absence/absence without permission or unplanned absence.

Each of these categories will now be discussed.

#### **2.4.1 Sick absence**

Sick absence is a category of absence where the employee claims ill health as reason for the absence. In the case of genuinely ill employees, sick absence carries the highest (positive) sanction from employers.

The South African Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA, 1977), Section 13 of the Act states that an employee is entitled to six weeks paid sick leave in a period of thirty-six months. Regulations and requirements regarding medical certificates vary according to the organisation's sick absence policy. Certification of an absence is however not a guarantee that the cause of absence is genuine illness. Research has however determined that a way to identify potentially delinquent sick absence is to focus on the individual employee's pattern of sick absence (Mets, 1986).

According to literature, sick absence has become a controversial and problematic form of absence and one of the dominant causes for loss of workdays in industry (Finnemore and du Toit, 1992). Van der Merwe & Miller (1988: 12) state "... that the problem started as doctor's certificates became more readily available to employees". Green (1989: 22) notes another problem "... the concept of allowing X amount of sick days encourages employees to beat the system".

#### **2.4.2 Authorised absence**

According to Van der Merwe and Miller (1988), absence with permission is absence where an employee offers an excuse (other than sickness) and management accepts it. The credibility of the excuse determines the classification of the incident and sanction. Expression of management's sanction normally manifests itself through two types of authorised absence, namely paid authorised absence and unpaid authorised absence. In South Africa, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA, 1977) normally elaborates the circumstances which the paid/unpaid situations should be applied. Authorised absence has two groups, annual leave – usually standard amongst organisation and contingency leave (long service leave, study leave, occasional leave, and other leave)

Although authorised absenteeism is predictable and therefore mostly controlled and budgeted for, it is still important to bear in mind that abuse or lack of control thereof could lead to serious and unnecessary costs being incurred by employers.

#### **2.4.3 Unexcused absence**

All absences not falling into the two previous categories and where a reason is not given, or not accepted, will be regarded as unexcused. Generally this carries no sanction, that is, no authorisation has been given and is regarded as delinquent. Unauthorised absenteeism implies an unplanned, disruptive incident leaving the employer with little or no opportunity to provide replacement. Such behaviour is dealt with by means of progressive discipline and the principle of “no work no pay”. This absence is the most clearly identifiable form under the control of the employees.

#### **2.4.4 Part day absences and latecomings**

Van der Merwe and Miller (1988) do not regard latecoming (for start of day) or part day absences as absenteeism if the time lost is less than half a day. They do suggest however that it be noted in the personal file of the individual for record purposes.

For the purpose of this research, part day absences and latecomings will not be included in the employees' absence statistics.

### **2.5 The measurement of absenteeism**

Many firms measure absenteeism for their own purposes of control. Gaudet (1963) reports that from a sample of 266 organisations surveyed, the most common practice among the survey participants was to report absences by the number of days absent or times absent per individual. Recent research by Steers and Rhodes (1984) suggests that each measure of absenteeism is composed of two components, (1) the category of absence it represents – this is usually defined by management based on policies and employer-employee contractual arrangements. Examples included in this category are certified medical illness, bereavement, contractual absence, etc. (2) The second

component is an absence metric, the commonly used are measures of magnitude, frequency and duration (Rhodes and Steers, 1984).

Below are some of the reasons why firms measure absenteeism, both from a group and individual level perspective.

The reasons for the importance on the organisational level include:

- Helping organisations define the extent of their absence problem
- Identification of trends in the absenteeism over time.
- Defining problem areas in the company.
- Development of managerial strategies to curb the problem.

On the individual level, reasons include:

- Facilitation of record-keeping of individual absenteeism
- Enabling the identification of individuals with an absence problem and individuals in need of counseling.
- Facilitation of managerial decisions, e.g. disciplinary inquiries and employee appraisal.

Statistical measurement is thus very important in the management and control of absenteeism. The following section discusses the different statistical methods used by organisations to measure absenteeism.

### **2.5.1 Types of measurement used by companies**

Given the pervasive nature of absenteeism, several researchers have come up with different types of absence measures. Muchinsky (1977: 317) remarked that “the single, most vexing problem associated with the absenteeism as a meaningful concept involves the metric or measure of absenteeism”. Lyons (1972: 279) describes the research on the measurement of absenteeism as “ a hodgepodge of conceptually and operationally differing definitions”. This is supported by Gaudet’s (1963) research which reveals that at least 41 different measures of absenteeism have been used in the past, starting with

Behrend's (1959) research which is the first to employ multiple indices of absenteeism. This is followed by Huse and Taylor (1962) who examine four indices of absenteeism: (a) absence frequency – total number of times absent; (b) absence severity – total number of days absent; (c) attitudinal absences – frequency of 1-day absences; and (d) medical absences – frequency of absences of three days or longer. Of these, Van der Merwe and Miller (1982) identified three dominant types of measurements that have been widely adopted. These are the Gross Absence Rate (GAR), the Absence Frequency Rate (AFR) and the Severity Rate and will now be outlined below.

### 2.5.2 Gross absence rate (GAR)

This measurement is the equivalent of the “time-lost-index” and the historical “absenteeism ineffective rate” (AIR) and basically measures the extent of absenteeism. The GAR is normally measured at the end of a period, e.g. the end of a month. Lost time is expressed as a percentage of the total working time, i.e. the hours or days lost through absence as a percentage of the total number of hours or days which the individual or group would have worked if no such absence had occurred.

The formula is:

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

(Chadwick-Jones, 1982: 55; Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988: 13;)

The GAR is often referred to simply as the absence rate, and is the most widely used and often quoted (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988: 13). Its disadvantage is that it is an overall figure, expressed as a percentage and so gives no indication of the type of absence occurring (reason or duration) and tends to be distorted by single long absences in smaller groups. To overcome these disadvantages, the Absence Frequency Rate is used as a supplement.

### 2.5.3 Absence frequency rate

This measurement is frequently used to focus on and analyse disruptive incidents of absenteeism and has been found to be the most reliable (Chadwick-Jones, 1982). The rate is expressed as a ratio of the number of absence incidents per person per month (regardless of length). In contrast to GAR, where weight is given to long absences, which is often unavoidable and sanctioned, the AFR stresses absences of shorter duration. This measure is best used to illustrate voluntary absences, which are shorter in duration but higher in frequency.

The formula is:

$$\text{AFR} = \frac{\text{Total number of absence incidents over a period}}{\text{The average workforce for the period}}$$

(Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988: 13)

When used together with GAR, it gives more insight into the type, nature and duration of absence. A low index indicates few absence and vice-versa.

### 2.5.4 Severity rate

This is the average length or duration of the absences (disability day per absence). The formula is as follows:

$$\text{SR} = \frac{\text{Time lost due to absenteeism}}{\text{Number of absences}} \times 100$$

## 2.6 The cost of absenteeism

“Absenteeism is recognised as a costly and pervasive problem in both the public and private sectors” (Scott, 1982: 225). Calculating the cost of absenteeism is as difficult as isolating the causes of the phenomenon. This is so because the cost of absenteeism has

many facets that, for the most part, depend on the context and extent of absenteeism experiences throughout the organisation, industry and economy. The difficulty of calculating the cost of absenteeism seems to stem from the absence of a standard formula for its calculation and the uniqueness of each company's labour and production processes and policies.

While aggregate figures on the cost of absenteeism are available, they are often misleading and contradictory, as most organisations have different methods of cost calculation that all too often do not account for all the various indirect expenses incurred. Thus the cost of absenteeism is typically much higher than most companies imagine. Furthermore many organisations do not want to admit that they suffer the burden of absenteeism. In South Africa the estimated direct and indirect cost of absenteeism ranges from 8-10% of payroll, only 2-5% of which can be accounted for by direct costs (Wolmarans, 1994). It has also been estimated that one day's unauthorised absence costs an organisation 1.5 – 3 times the daily rate of pay and that for every 1% of the workforce absent the production levels fall by 2.5% (Chadwick-Jones, 1982).

One of the earliest studies of industrial absence expenditure (in the U.K) was limited to the cost of health services (Sargent, 1989). This survey found that for all the industries the average cost was \$4.43 per employee per year. Perhaps even more interesting “ this study shows that the cost of health service per employee has substantially doubled since the estimates in 1919 were made public” (Gaudet. 1963: 57). Plummer (1960: 21) notes the following: “The costs of sickness absence to American industry is a staggering amount – perhaps a good deal more than 10 billion dollars per year”. In a research conducted by Alexander Forbes Disability Management Services in the manufacturing sector in South Africa, the direct cost of absenteeism was R2991 per worker per year (Engelbrecht, 1998). Van Tonder (1987) in a research on absenteeism due to illness and injury in the South African manufacturing sector concluded that absence due to illness and injury alone cost industry R3 billion to cover this absence; a 10% absence rate per month; a Monday absence of up to 40%; over employment of 10%, and contributes negatively towards South Africa's low productivity rate.

Costly as absenteeism is, literature does not specify a standard formula for calculating its costs. Literature however does indicate certain direct and indirect costs that need to be taken into consideration when calculating the phenomenon's cost. The direct and indirect costs are cited below, (Moore, 1992: 3–6):

### **Direct costs**

- ❑ sick pay to absent employees
- ❑ fringe benefits of absent employees
- ❑ overtime pay to staff where work could not be completed
- ❑ Overstaffing – staffing for absenteeism (absentee relief pool)
- ❑ Payment of salary of absent employee
- ❑ Payment of salary of temporary employee
- ❑ Payments to company medical aid
- ❑ Recruitment costs of temporary employees

These are the overtly noticeable costs caused as a direct result of absenteeism, but unfortunately the costs can be much further reaching and difficult to monitor. The majority of organisations only take direct costs and productivity loss into account when doing calculations, thus overlooking many other factors that could be very costly.

### **Indirect costs**

- ❑ Disruption or shutdown of a section
- ❑ Reduced productivity (insufficient replacement, fatigue, and weaker supervision on extra shifts).
- ❑ Lower product quality
- ❑ Loss of customers caused by customer service
- ❑ Diverted management time (discipline, grievance handling, etc)
- ❑ Diverted supervisory time (complete forms, counseling, substitutes)
- ❑ Product waste due to inexperience of temporary staff
- ❑ Time delays whilst waiting for temporary staff

## □ Dissatisfaction

Adding an accurate monetary value to the indirect cost of absenteeism appears difficult. The numerous hidden costs listed above can be crippling to organisations, especially if the latter are unaware of the indirect costs that are incurred if employees are absent from work. Chadwick-Jones (1982) noted that one day's absence costs the organisation 1.5 to 3 three times the daily rate of pay of the particular individual.

The question that lingers then is what is the 'right' amount of absenteeism? From the perspective of the organisation that has to absorb the substantial costs associated with absenteeism, the obvious answer is none. This goal for zero absences, however, is wishful thinking – an unobtainable ideal. According to Dilts, Deitsch and Paul (1985: 25) “a certain amount of time off from work is unavoidable because of illness, injury and personal or social obligations ... attempting to identify the lowest possible level of absences” is the ultimate goal “ a figure often mentioned in this regard is 3%”. The relevant company under research has 1.5% as its target.

## **2.7 Theories on causation of absenteeism**

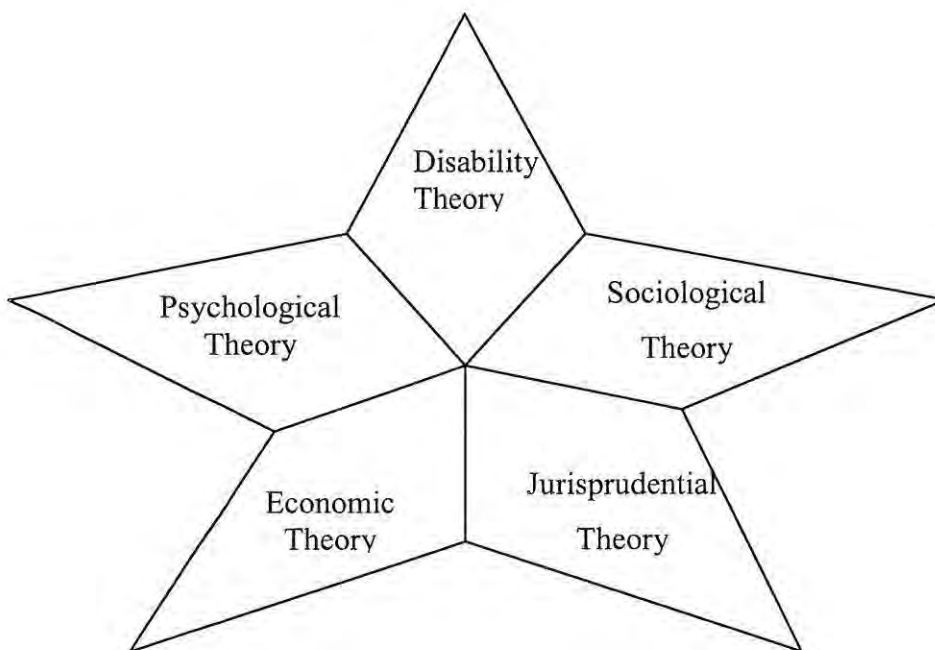
Theorising on the phenomenon of absenteeism is problematic (As, 1962; Goodman and Atkin, 1984) as “absenteeism is a social fact in need of a theory” (As, 1962: 2). Theory building on absenteeism is a difficult process for the following reasons:

- Absenteeism is a summary, composite phenomenon; any absence event may differ from any other because of the “MIX” of causes;
- No assumptions of homogeneity of causes across individuals can be made. Various causes can result in the same types of absence events; and
- The stability of causal models over time cannot be assumed.

Because of its complexity, absenteeism has generated a large number of explanatory theories that attempt to apply “knowledge” in a practical manner to some of its problems. The theories are intended to account for absences from work and permit users to predict

and control future attendance behaviour. It is unfortunate though that interdisciplinary perspectives (from economics, statistics to sociology) on absenteeism have failed to agree on a single unified and integrated theory of absenteeism (Dilts, Deitsch & Paul, 1985). Attempts have been made to construct a unified model, but to date they have only been partially successful. Dilts, et. al. (1985) suggest grouping various theories of absenteeism into five broad categories. Figure 2.0 depicts these five categories which are then each explained.

**Figure 2.0: Theories of absenteeism: Five basic categories**



**Source:** Dilts, et al. (1985)

### **2.7.1 Economic theory**

According to Dilts, et al. (1985), the economic theory is probably the most commonly used explanation of absenteeism. Proponents of this theory assume that "... people do not really like to work; they only work because they have to. At the same time, however, people want to maintain a certain standard of living that requires a specific income level" (Dilts et. al. 1985: 30 -31). An employee will simply not go to work everyday if the

income generated by working full time is greater than necessary to achieve and maintain the desired standard of living. The argument is that individuals do not really like to work in the first place.

### **2.7.2 Psychological theory**

Sometimes referred to as the Withdrawal theory, this category includes motivational theories that focus on withdrawal as a behavioural response to job dissatisfaction and need deficiencies. Dilts, et. al. (1985) further subdivide the theory into “passive withdrawal theories” (simple avoidance of the unpleasant situations) and “strategic withdrawal theories” (a means of punishing the organisation for the dissatisfaction it causes). These theories view the problem of absenteeism as a problem of individual motivation to attend work on a regular basis. Hill and Trist (1953) state that the conflict experienced by the individual is strongly influenced by the employee-organisation relationship and the phase of development in that relationship. According to Beer’s (1964: 33, 34) literature review “high absenteeism ... appears to be an earlier sign, and turnover the dying stage of a long and lively process of leaving”.

The theory on the Psychological concept has several sub-theories. Below is a summary of the sub-theories.

#### **2.7.2.1 Passive withdrawal theories**

The *Inequity Theory* (Dilts, et al., 1985) views absenteeism as an individual’s way of resolving or reacting to a perceived inequity between what they feel they put into the organisation and what they get back. It argues that employees might feel that they do not get the appropriate recognition for their efforts and hence may absent themselves from work to engage in activities where recognition is forthcoming.

The *Valence Theory* (Dilts, et al., 1985) suggests that absenteeism is due to an individual’s positive and negative attractions towards differing objects and events in the work environment. A weighting of the positive versus the negative; if the positives are weaker than the negatives then the employee is more likely to be absent. For example,

good pay versus very strong lack of job satisfaction will result in the employee more likely being absent.

The *Expectations Theory* (Dilts, et al., 1985) argues that people who expect an attractive work environment but, instead find an unattractive one may look for more pleasant ways to spend their time and may become an absentee problem.

The *Need for Control Theory* (Dilts, et al., 1985) assumes that employees who are unable to control their environment while on the job through regular attendance might absent themselves from work to attend to other activities (recreational activities, etc.)

The *"I am not Needed" Theory* (Dilts, et al., 1985) suggests that absenteeism is a function of the feelings on the part of the employees that they are not needed, or important or not essential to the organisation. When employees feel this way, the decision to be absent is an easy one to make; they believe they will not be missed and, even if they are, management will easily find a temporary replacement.

#### **2.7.2.2 Strategic withdrawal theories:**

According to the *Workload Tolerance Theory* (Dilts, et al., 1985), every employee has a specific amount of work that can be tolerated. Whenever the maximum tolerance work level is reached, absenteeism occurs; the worker cannot tolerate any additional work, whatever its form.

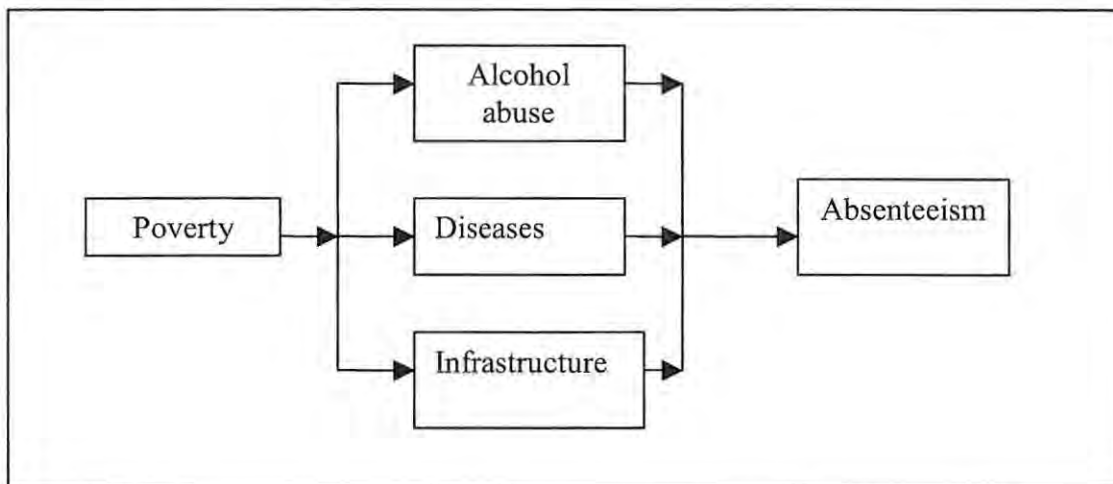
The *Coping Behaviour Theory* suggests that if a job is viewed as stressing or boring, one way of coping with the situation would be to either work harder and get promoted to another job or simply not to go to work (Dilts et. al., 1985)

#### **2.7.3 Sociological theory**

"Sociological theories of absenteeism focus on the impact that the interdependent variables within society, the organisation, and the group have on an individual's attendance behaviour", explaining "... attendance behaviour in terms of forces within the

society and the group that facilitate or limit an individual's opportunity, capacity and willingness to attend work" (Dilts et. al., 1985: 34). Poverty is one sociological factor that has been linked with absence behaviour (Twomey, 1986). Twomey (1986) in the study of the correlates of a culture-of-poverty measure, concludes that absence is more rampant in a poverty stricken culture than in an affluent one, an indication that poverty influences absence behaviour. Bartle (1998) explains the reasons by listing the links between poverty and absenteeism as shown in figure 2.1 below. In his study of absenteeism in primary schools, he also comes to the same conclusion that school absenteeism is a reflection of socioeconomic and ethnic variables. Chadwick-Jones (1982: 141) supports the above by arguing that absence "tends to be regulated by internal cultural characteristics of the social systems of individual firms ... What is involved is learning to remain a member of an organisation while being away from it".

**Figure 2.1: Poverty and absenteeism**



### 2.7.3.1 Poverty and alcoholism

Several studies have been conducted to find association between poverty and alcohol abuse. MacQueen (1999), in his research concludes that "... the economical disparity and the resulting creation of powerlessness, hopelessness and poverty create a spiritual void that is easily filled by alcohol", (MacQueen 1999: 436). Marzuk and his colleagues from Cornell University Medical College and New York University School of Medicine reached the conclusion that there was a strong association between poverty and alcohol

abuse (Marzuk, 1998). The alcohol abuse cases for the Eastern Cape region rose by 44.9% between 1994 to 2003 (Stats SA, 2003), and such can be attributed to the high poverty levels within the province. Eksteen (2001) makes a comment that the drug abuse in the Eastern Cape, which was mainly a city issue, has now become a problem in the rural areas.

#### **2.7.3..2 Alcoholism and absenteeism**

Linked to alcoholism is absenteeism (Berry and Boland, 1977). According to findings in the March 2002 issue of *Psychology of Addictive Behaviours*, employees are nearly two times more likely to call in sick the day after alcohol is consumed. Berry and Boland (1977) in their research on the impact of production losses due to alcohol abuse, concludes that alcohol abusers are four times absence prone (due to sickness) than non-abusers. Suffice to note that 14% of the dismissals during the period of this research are alcohol-related, an indication of the toll alcoholism (exacerbated by poverty) has on absenteeism.

#### **2.7.3..3 Poverty and sickness**

Poverty and illiteracy are also arguably related to the proliferation of sickness within an environment (Bartle, 1998). As mentioned earlier on, the Eastern Cape has a 28% HIV AIDS prevalence rate that is still rising. Deaths associated with HIV AIDS have also been on the increase and consequently absences related to deaths in the families are on the increase.

#### **2.7.3..4 Poverty and infrastructure**

The Eastern Cape being one of the poorest provinces is characterized by a very antiquated transportation system (HSRC Report, 1998). According to the 1998 report, "Service need and Provision in the Eastern Cape", there is a distinct deterioration of all service provisions within the province. A very small percentage of the working population owns private vehicles, as a result the majority of the population rely on "taxis". This taxi industry has become a profitable and dangerous business, claiming several lives daily due to accidents of the non-road worthy taxis and of taxi violence. In

research conducted on the increase of taxi violence in the Eastern Cape, the findings concluded that on average four people die daily as a result of taxi violence in the province (Eastern Cape Communication Services, 1998). This dangerous and unreliable transport mode has often forced workers to abandon trips to work.

#### **2.7.4 Jurisprudential theory**

Many organisations unwittingly create or compound their own attendance problems through ill-conceived, structured or administered personnel policies. Employees then judge the firm's attitude from these rules and mirror their attitudes as implied through the rules. According to Dilts et. al. (1985), employees tend to misinterpret management action that is intended to minimise the impact of absenteeism, e.g. having an absentee relief pool may create the erroneous impression that absenteeism is normal and therefore acceptable. The requirement for advance notice of absences may also give rise to similar misconceptions.

#### **2.7.5 Disability theory**

This explains absenteeism in terms of sickness or injuries that physically or mentally incapacitate the worker. Of importance to note is the proliferation of so-called medical excuse letters in response to human resources management policies that require doctors statements to "excuse" absences attributed to sickness or disability.

The five-category classification scheme above, while shedding light upon the causes as well as remedies for absenteeism, does not bring the mass of theory into perspective primarily because there is overlap between the five groups. For example, some theories classified as economic are partly psychological. For these reasons, the five-category classification scheme cannot be viewed as an integrated model of absenteeism. Nicholson (1977) and Steers and Rhodes (1978) though provide integrated models.

### **2.7.6 The Integrated models**

A number of multi-variate models are documented in the literature such as Nicholson, (1977) and Steers and Rhodes, (1978). These models attempt to incorporate a variety of socio-economic, personal and organisational factors that have influences on absenteeism. The Nicholson's model of attendance motivation (1977) will now be outlined.

### **2.7.7 Nicholson's Model (1977)**

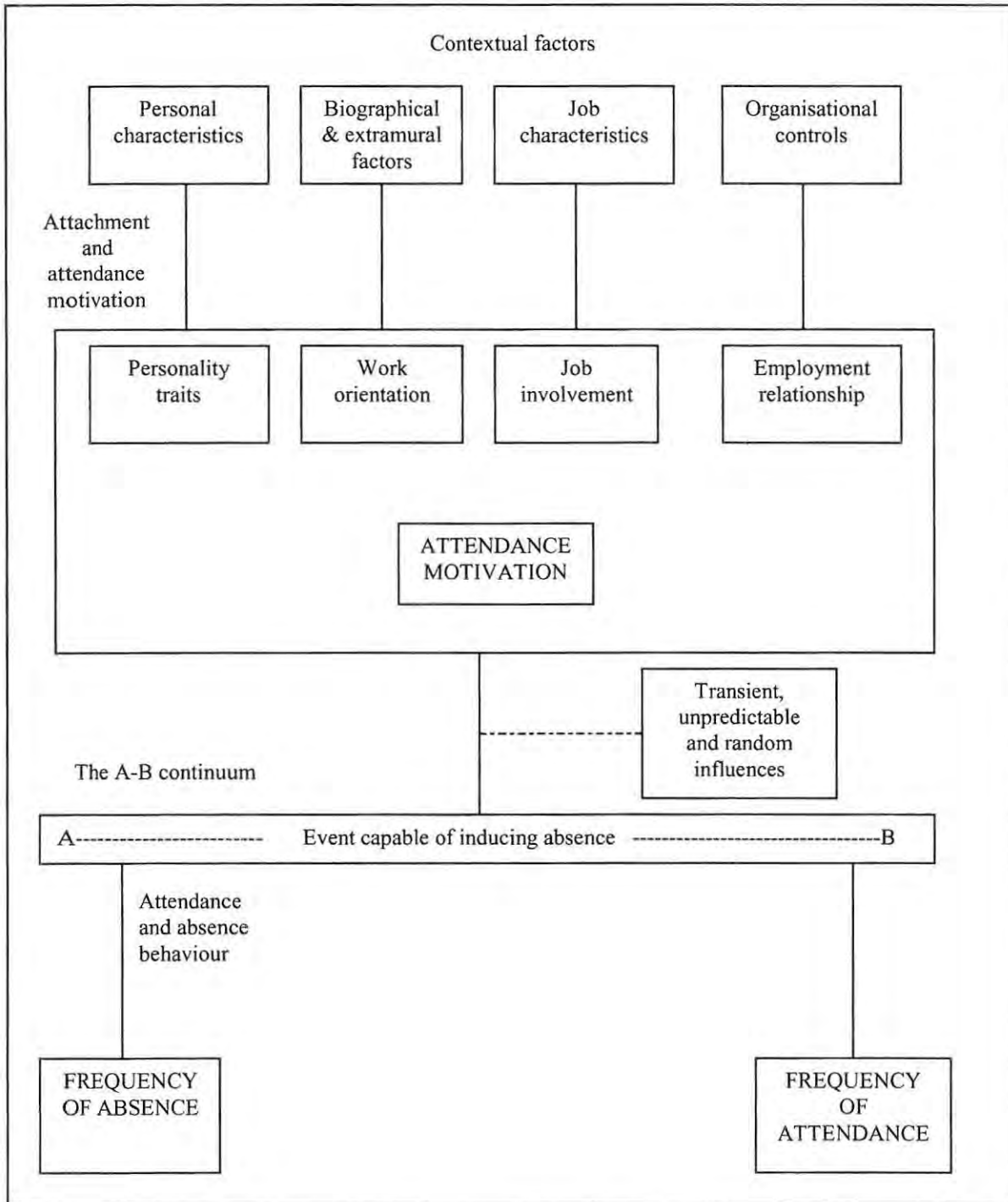
The main assumption underlying Nicholson's (1977) attendance motivation model is that attendance behaviour is normal and habitual. Habit suggests that a few workers are responsible for most absence and these workers can be thought of as being "absence prone". Reference is made to figure 2.2 below for the discussion on Nicholson's model. Nicholson suggests that in searching for absence it is necessary to look for factors upsetting the regularity of attendance.

Absence behaviour falls on a continuum from unavoidable (A) to avoidable (B). The A-B continuum defines the constraining forces imposed on behavioural choice. These factors are seen as varying between individuals and settings. Absenteeism is triggered by a stimulus or event that affects the individual's needs. The motivational state, or level of attendance motivation, determines whether an event will actually result in absenteeism.

Attendance motivation, according to Nicholson (1977: 246), is "... largely a matter of the way the need system of the person maps out the properties of work and nonwork environments". From figure 2.2, it can be seen that the four major sets of influences making up attachment are personality traits, orientation toward work, work involvement and the employment relationship.

In forecasting absence, Nicholson (1977: 248) argues that "...a person with a high attachment will not be as influenced by absence-inducing events and consequently will be absent only when events are close to the A side of the continuum". On the other hand, the employee with low attachment will be influenced not to come to work by events not just near the A side but rather all along the A-B continuum.

**Figure 2.2: Nicholson's model of attendance motivation**



**Source:** Nicholson, 1977

From the above it is clear that Nicholson's model makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of absence behaviour by providing an integrative framework for examining individual motivation to attend. It has however been suggested by Rhodes and Steers (1990) that the model has a shortcoming in that it focuses mainly on the work domain and that the model is difficult to test. The Steers and Rhodes model (1978) will now be discussed.

### **2.7.8 Steers and Rhodes Model (1978)**

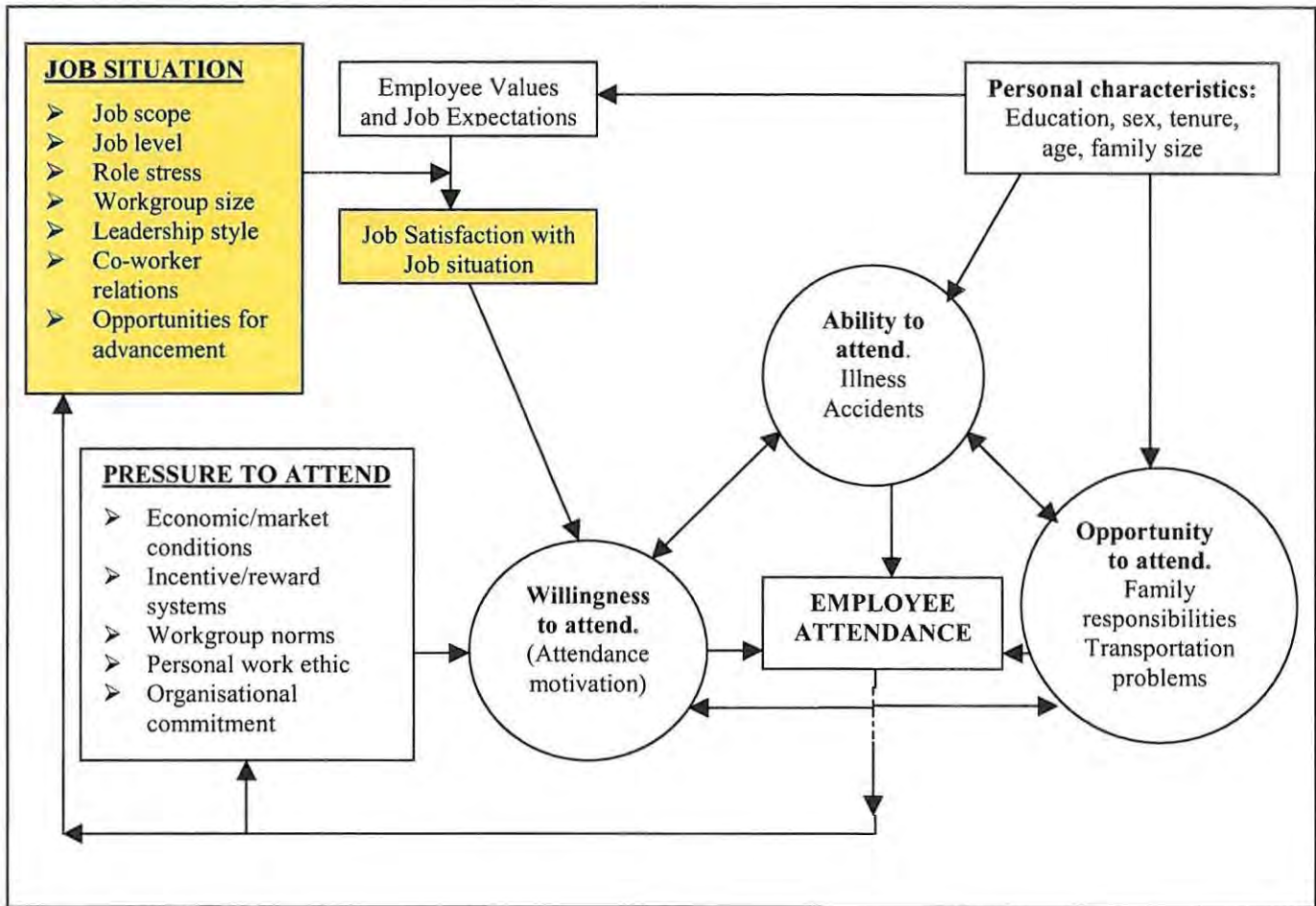
The Steers and Rhodes model originates out of the earlier attitude/behaviour models (Goodman & Atkin, 1984) and sees absenteeism as a process. The model uses the individual as the unit of analysis and covers both voluntary and involuntary absenteeism. The basic surmise of the model is that employee attendance is dependent upon three conditions; ABILITY (able to attend), MOTIVATION (willing to report to work) and OPPORTUNITY (given the chance to report to work). If any one of these conditions is not satisfied, then employees will not report to work.

#### **2.7.8.1 Job situation, satisfaction and attendance motivation**

With reference to figure 2.3 below, the model's point of departure is that employees' motivation to come to work (attendance motivation) is the primary influence on actual attendance, assuming that the employee has the ability to attend (Steers & Rhodes, 1978).

The question remains, "what influences the attendance motivation?" Steers and Rhodes (1978) state that an employee's motivation to attend work is determined by two factors; (1) the various internal and external pressures to attend and (2) the employee's affective response to the job situation – job satisfaction. The latter is a function of how the employee's values and expectations (determined by age, sex, education, tenure and family size) interact with the nature of the job (job content) and the surrounding work environment (job context).

**Figure 2.3: Steers and Rhodes model of employee absenteeism**



Adapted from: Steers and Rhodes, 1978

Riordan (1987) defines job satisfaction as the degree to which individuals like their jobs. This satisfaction influences the motivation to attend or not to attend. Steers and Rhodes (1978) discuss job scope, job level, role stress, leadership style, workgroup size, co-worker relations and opportunity for advancement as factors impinging on job satisfaction and therefore influencing the employee's motivation to attend or not to attend. This model thus implies a distinct relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism. It is the objective of this research to explore this relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism of shopfloor workers (job level) in a motor manufacturing plant in the Eastern Cape.

### **2.7.9 Role of employee and job expectations**

Steers and Rhodes (1978) describe the values and expectations of employees as major influences on attendance motivation. Values and expectations interact with job situation variables (determined by scope, level, role stress, workgroup size) determining satisfaction. These expectations need to be met for the individual to be satisfied.

### **2.7.10 Pressure to attend**

A second major influence on the desire to come to work (Steers & Rhodes, 1978) is pressure to attend. These pressures may be economic and market conditions (e.g. constraining on an employee's ability to change jobs), incentive/reward systems, workgroup norms (pressure from co-workers in work group) and organisational commitment.

### **2.7.11 Ability to attend**

The ability to attend refers to an individual who wants to come to work or is motivated to come to work but is unable because of illness, accidents, family responsibilities or transportation problems

### **2.7.12 Opportunity to attend**

An employee may be willing to work and be able to work but not have the opportunity to attend work. Variables that deny the opportunity to attend are considered under ability to attend, but they are different enough to merit separate analysis. This category includes two important groups of variables: family responsibilities and transportation problems (Dilts, et. al., 1985).

## **2.8 Summary**

Absenteeism costs tens of billion of rand each year, but a large percentage of absences are avoidable. The above literature review provides an understanding of absenteeism and an indication of the size and complexity of the subject. Absenteeism is one of those untractable problems for which there is no clear culprit and no easy cure. It is an

international problem although the extent varies from country to country. There is widespread debate concerning the meaning of absenteeism. Absence means different things to different people and there are various ways to measure the behaviour but for the purpose of this study it is defined as the failure of workers to appear on the job or report for work when they are scheduled to work or expected to be present.

The five-category scheme and the integrated models on absenteeism were reviewed to understand the causes of absenteeism. Most researchers seem to favour the integrated model by Steers and Rhodes (1978). This research aims to investigate the relationship established by Steers and Rhodes, between job satisfaction (job satisfaction with job situation) of shopfloor workers (job level) and absenteeism (attendance motivation) in a motor manufacturing plant. The next chapter reviews the literature on job satisfaction.

### 3 CHAPTER 3: JOB SATISFACTION

#### 3.1 Introduction

The importance of job satisfaction to human beings is a phenomenon that has been widely studied. A study by Locke (1976) suggested that over 3000 articles or dissertations had been produced to date. The reason for the popularity of the subject is not hard to explain. "Most individuals spend a large part of their working lives at work, so that an understanding of factors involved in job satisfaction is relevant to improving their well being and hence is an important aspect of their lives" (Gruneberg, 1979:1). The popularity of this field of study can also be attributed to the relevance of job satisfaction to the physical and mental well being of employees and to the fact that in one form or another it has been related to such variables as turnover, job performance, absenteeism and productivity, all which do impact on the profitability of organisations (Vroom, 1960). Because of the "common sense" theory, that job satisfaction influences absenteeism, many South African organisations including the company relevant to this research spend millions of rands annually in employee satisfaction surveys, efforts aimed to improve job performance and absenteeism. The fact that these variables have monetary implications for organisations has resulted in job satisfaction research being a focus in industrial psychology including this research.

In spite of the attention given to the research of job satisfaction, Lawler (1971) questions the value of it. He questions whether wishing to increase the stock of human happiness in the world through improved job satisfaction is a sensible goal, arguing that dissatisfaction can be creative and can lead to change of a constructive kind. Davis and Cherns (1975: 14) write, "... the altogether extraordinary emphasis on job satisfaction in the current and professional press appears to be adding to the confusion and apprehension, whilst not clarifying the fundamental issue ... whether to change the means by which society gets its work done".

Although these objections to job satisfaction studies have some validity, it can nevertheless be argued that in such a complex area confusion will often arise, and that the later will only be reduced through further studies.

Since job satisfaction can be regarded as an important contributor to various aspects of work performance, an investigation of the level of job satisfaction on the shop floor workers in the motor manufacturing plant, and its subsequent impact on absenteeism make valuable scientific contribution.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to job satisfaction. It starts by analysing the meaning of job satisfaction and the relevant theories on the phenomenon. It further explores the types of measures used in the assessment of job satisfaction and ends with an analysis of the potential effects of job satisfaction.

### **3.2 The meaning of job satisfaction**

It is generally accepted that there is no simple commonly agreed theoretical generalisation that explains job satisfaction. Wanous and Lawler (1972: 102) state that “there is a serious lack of good theory about the very meaning of job satisfaction...”.

The history of the construct job satisfaction indicates an evolutionary developing process, where the construct was initially perceived to be a simple variable (Locke, 1970; Beer, 1964). Beer (1964: 34) illustrates this approach when he defines job satisfaction as “...the attitude of workers toward the company, their jobs, their fellow workers and other psychological objects in the work environment. A favourable attitude toward these indicates job satisfaction and vice-versa”. Most writers distinguish between job satisfaction and job morale, the latter referring to group wellbeing and the former to the individual’s emotional reactions to a particular job (Gruneberg, 1979).

Vroom (1964) and Hulin and Smith (1965), suggest that job satisfaction is not a uni-dimensional variable, but that it should be considered as consisting of a number of factors

or areas of satisfaction – facets. To go along with this argument, James (1994) defines job satisfaction as a *collection* of attitudes that employees have toward their job. Spector (1996) defines it as an attitudinal variable that reflects how people feel about their jobs overall as well as various aspects of them. Locke (1976) defines it as the pleasurable or positive state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. There is no agreed definition, however, and Wanous and Lawler (1972) list nine different operational definitions, each based on a different theoretical orientation and each resulting in different measures. The major difference between definitions is in terms of the different ways in which aspects of job satisfaction are combined.

When one refers to global job satisfaction, it is apparent that certain common elements need to be recognised in defining these terms:

- Job satisfaction is an attitude, or simply a “feeling” based on an evaluation of conditions of employment (Steers and Porter, 1975)
- The above reactions and perceptions are of an individualistic nature (Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson & Capwell, 1957).

These attitudes are necessarily grounded within the particular content and context of employment and can be considered time bound as attitudes and situations can change (Vroom, 1964).

For the purpose of this research, the following definition of job satisfaction is offered: Job satisfaction is “...the attitude of workers toward the company, their jobs, their fellow workers and other psychological objects in the work environment ...” (Beer, 1964: 34).

### **3.3 Dimensions of job satisfaction**

Perhaps one of the most important issues in job satisfaction has been put forth by Herzberg et. al., (1957). These researchers present job satisfaction as a dichotomous rather than a continuous variable. They view satisfaction as resulting from motivation, stemming from the challenge of the job, through such factors as achievement,

responsibility, growth, advancement, work itself and earned recognition and dissatisfaction as emanating from factors peripheral to the task. As an alternative to the theoretical formulation of Herzberg et al. (1957) that certain job factors are either satisfiers or dissatisfiers, Smith (1953) proposes that job satisfaction is a function of the perceived characteristics of a job in relation to an individual's frame of reference. A particular job condition, on the basis of this theoretical position, can be a satisfier, dissatisfier, or irrelevant, depending on conditions in comparable jobs, conditions of other people of the same qualifications and past experience of the individual, as well as on numerous situational variables of the present job (Smith, 1953). Thus, job satisfaction is not an absolute phenomenon, but is relative to alternatives available to the individual.

Vroom's (1962) theoretical approach places more emphasis on the importance of psychological needs. He asserts that jobs which afford exercise of individual judgement and initiative and also provide the use and development of aptitudes, while permitting some knowledge of results of a person's performance are more ego-satisfying than those which do not have these characteristics.

The result has been that there have been two major approaches to the study of job satisfaction – the global approach and the facet approach. The global approach treats job satisfaction as a single, overall feeling towards the job (Spector, 1988). In other words, it is like a summary indicator of a person's attitude toward the job across the various facets. On the other hand, the job facet approach permits a more complete picture of job satisfaction, focusing on different aspects of the job, such as rewards, other people on the job, job conditions and the nature of the work itself (Spector, 1988). It refers to the tendency for an employee to be more or less satisfied with various aspects of the job.

Whether job satisfaction consists of a single dimension or a number of separate dimensions, it seems that there is no one, general comprehensive theory that explains it (Mullins, 1996). The theories on job satisfaction will now be discussed.

### 3.4 Theories of job satisfaction

Many theorists have tried to come up with explanations for why people feel the way they do with regard to their jobs. As a result several research theories have been proposed. Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler and Weik (1970) have divided these theories into two categories, content theories and process theories. Content theories relate to factors that influence job satisfaction, namely the Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory and its development by Herzberg into the two-factor theory of job satisfaction.

The process theories try to give an account of the process by which variables such as expectations, needs and values interact with the job characteristics to produce job satisfaction. Examples are the Equity theory (Lawler and Porter, 1969), Reference groups theory (Bandura, 1969) and the Need/value fulfillment theories, also referred to as the Discrepancy theory (Locke, 1976).

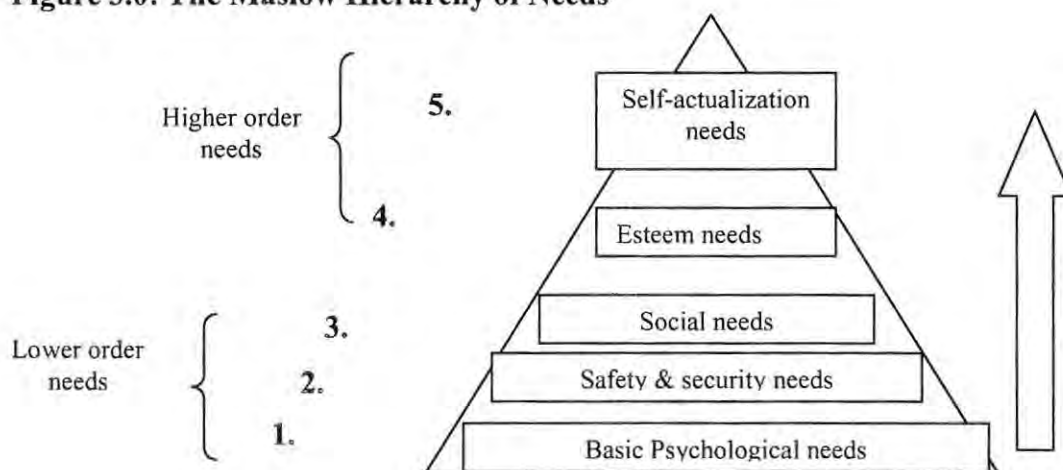
The following is a review of the theories on job satisfaction.

#### CONTENT THEORIES

##### 3.4.1 Maslow's Needs Hierarchy Theory

The following discussion on Maslow's theory is based on figure 3.0 below. Maslow did not devise his theory in order to explain job satisfaction but perhaps his model is the most popular theory on job satisfaction (Gruneberg, 1979).

**Figure 3.0: The Maslow Hierarchy of Needs**



It suggests that job satisfaction involves fulfilling the individual's need (Maslow, 1943), arguing that only after the lower order needs are satisfied is one capable of being concerned with fulfilling higher order needs. In the job situation, the theory would predict that only after the lower needs for security and pay have been satisfied, would the employee seek satisfaction and achievement from the work itself.

Those in lower level occupations are likely to be motivated by lower order needs such as pay and security, whereas those in higher level occupations tend to be more interested in fulfilling higher order needs. Appealing though as it might be, this theory has some major drawbacks. Firstly, there is no evidence for this hierarchy of needs. Secondly, human's needs, even at the lowest levels, are not satisfied by one consummatory act – there are always physical needs to be satisfied (Gruneberg, 1979).

### 3.4.2 Herzberg's two-factor theory

Very much related to Maslow's needs theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory distinguishes two classes of factors involved in job satisfaction, namely motivators and hygiene factors, as shown in figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1: Relationship between Maslow's and Herzberg's theories**

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS	HERZBERG'S TWO FACTOR THEORY
Physiological	HYGIENE FACTORS
Safety	
Love	
Esteem	MOTIVATORS
Self-actualisation	

#### 3.4.2.1 Motivators

Motivators are factors, which if present in the working environment lead to satisfaction, but whose absence do not lead to dissatisfaction. Examples of such are recognition, responsibility, and nature of work, sense of achievement, personal growth and advancement. Mullins (1996) calls these growth factors, as they are related to *the job content* of the work itself, that is, the intrinsic interest of the work itself and correspond to

the higher levels of “self-autonomy” and “self-actualisation” in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as shown in figure 3.1 above.

#### **3.4.2..2 Hygiene factors**

These factors are related to *the job context* as they are concerned with the job environment extrinsic to the job itself. They serve to prevent dissatisfaction, but when adequate do not lead to job satisfaction. Examples of such factors are pay, working conditions and interpersonal relations. These correspond to the lower order needs in Maslow’s hierarchy, as can be seen from figure 3.1 above.

Herzberg (1968) argues that the causes of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are separate and distinct. Factors such as pay and working conditions although necessary, are context factors, which have little to do with deriving satisfaction from the job. On the other hand, “job satisfaction is produced by the job itself allowing the individual to grow psychologically, i.e. to achieve a worthwhile aim to achieve recognition for his efforts and so on, so that he can regard himself as a worthwhile individual” (Gruneberg, 1979: 12).

Herzberg’s theory has been a source of debate as well, with attacks coming from several writers. House and Wigdor (1967) argue that a given factor may be the cause of job satisfaction for one person but job dissatisfaction for another person, or vice-versa. Within a sample of people, a given factor can be the source of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. House and Wigdor (1967) then conclude that the two-factor theory is an over-simplification of the sources of satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Mullins (1996) on the other hand gives credit to Herzberg’s two-factor theory, arguing that despite the widespread criticism, at least it has attempted an empirical approach to study job satisfaction by drawing attention to the important variables that bring about job satisfaction.

## PROCESS THEORIES

The content theories discussed above focus in identifying the factors responsible for job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. On the other hand, process theories aim to describe the interaction between variables in their relationship to job satisfaction. Process theories see job satisfaction as being determined not only by the nature of the job and its context, but by the needs, values and expectations that individuals have in relation to their jobs. The three classes of job satisfaction processes that will be discussed in this research are as follows, those:

- determined by the extent of the *discrepancy* between what the job offers and what the individual expects – Expectations and Equity theory
- determined by what the *groups need* – the Reference group theory
- *valued* by the individual – Needs and value fulfillment theories

### 3.4.3 The Expectations and Equity theory

The expectations about our environment affect how people behave and give them frames of references by which they judge the world around them. The same is done in work situations when one decides what is for example reasonable pay. There is a tendency to relate to what others are getting, and if one finds him/herself getting too little, the person gets dissatisfied. This is the central notion of the equity theory, which argues that people have a concept of what is just reward for their efforts. Only when the rewards and efforts are seen as reasonable in terms of the rewards and efforts of other co-workers is there satisfaction.

When there is a discrepancy between the individual's efforts and reward, and those of others, the employee will put less into his/her work, or withdraw from the situation. In studies of situations of overpayment, Pritchard and Peters (1974) suggest that this led to dissatisfaction, because the overpaid employees felt that others were underpaid because of the fault in the system.

The above then leaves one with a theory that is clearly not straightforward. Locke (1976) argues that the problem with equity theory is not so much that it has been shown to be wrong but that it is so loose that it is able to account for anything.

#### **3.4.4 The Reference group theory**

An understanding of the groups to whom an individual relates (reference group) is of critical importance in understanding job satisfaction. This is so because according to the equity theory, individuals compare their inputs and outputs from jobs with those of others within the reference group, before deciding whether or not they are equitably treated.

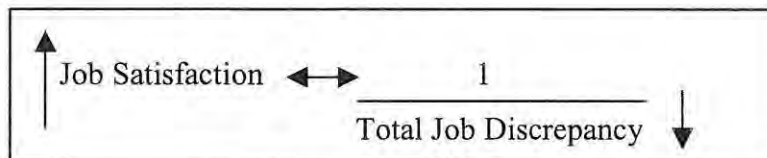
This theory unfortunately leaves many questions unanswered, e.g. the basis of a reference group and its expectations. Gruneberg (1979) concludes that the expectations based on reference groups must be supplemented by knowledge of personality factors and of the individual needs and values in any assessment of what the individual considers equitable in relation to his job satisfaction. Locke (1976) questions whether expectations and their relationship to what the job actually gives have any relevance to understanding job satisfaction. He argues that when expectations and reality are different the reaction is not dissatisfaction, but surprise. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction will depend upon the intrinsic value (which affects self-esteem) we place on our reward. This makes the problem of expectations in relation to job satisfaction complex. What is clear however is that a knowledge of the expectations of individuals in relation to their job is of considerable significance in an understanding of how people behave in their jobs.

#### **3.4.5 Needs/Value fulfillment theories**

Needs theorists argue that the *degree* to which the job fulfills needs determines job satisfaction. Their argument is based on the fact that individuals differ in what they value in a job, and that this too is likely to affect the degree to which they are satisfied. Vroom (1964) examines two of the most explained forms of the need fulfillment theory – the subtractive and multiplicative models and comes up with the following:

### 3.4.5.1 Subtractive model

This model argues that job satisfaction is inversely related to the degree of discrepancy (D) between what the individual needs and the extent to which the job supplies these needs (Gruneberg, 1979).

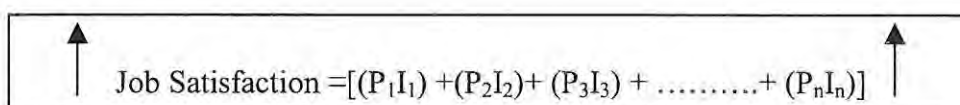


Total job discrepancy =  $(D_1 + D_2 + D_3 + \dots + D_n)$ ; where  $D_1$  to  $D_n$  refer to the degree of different discrepancies.

The greater the total discrepancy, counting all needs, the less satisfaction and the greater the congruence, the greater the satisfaction. The problem with this theory is that it ignores the importance of a particular need, ignoring the fact that some needs are more important to individuals than others, so that a fulfillment of such needs can well be set off against minor failures to fulfill lesser needs. On the other hand, a failure to fulfill important needs may well not be set off by satisfaction with a whole host of minor needs. The result is that a view of job satisfaction that does not take into account the relative importance of needs is misleading. Since individual differences affect the importance of needs and need fulfillment on the job, Vroom (1964) concludes that this model is at best only a partial answer and argues for a second model, the multiplicative model.

### 3.4.5.2 The Multiplicative model

This model argues that the need importance is taken into account by multiplying the perceived amount of need offered by the job (P), by the importance to the individual of that need (I). The products of each need are added together to give a total measure of job satisfaction, (Vroom, 1964).



Vroom (1964) argues that the higher the total measures of the job facets the higher the job satisfaction.

Locke (1976) points out the main problem of the multiplicative model as being its failure to distinguish between how much one wants something (its importance) and how much of that something one wants. He points out that in measuring discrepancy, people may be influenced by value; and in measuring value, they might be influenced by the discrepancy between what they want and what the job offers. It would thus be important if the amount of value wanted and how much that value is wanted could be differentiated (Locke, 1976).

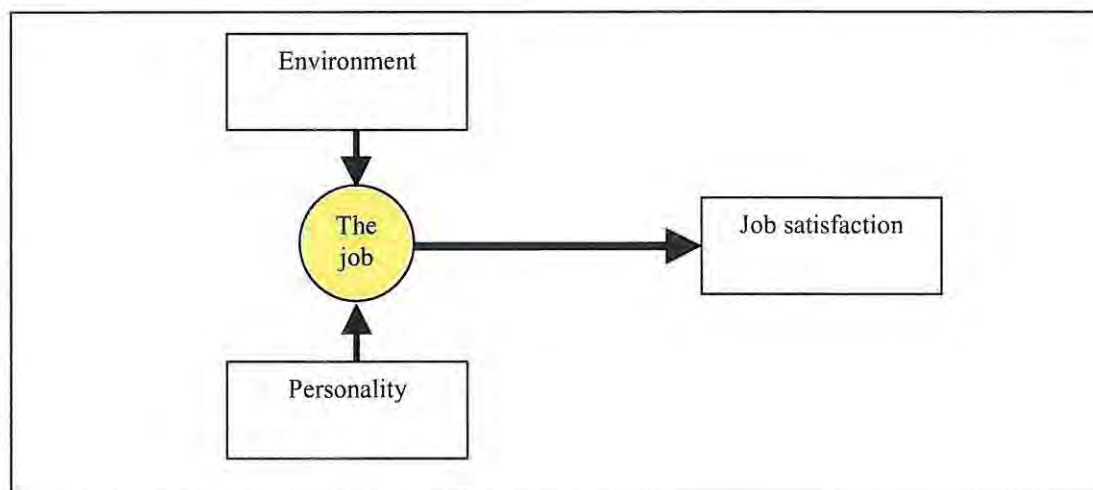
### 3.5 Antecedents of job satisfaction

What makes people like or dislike their jobs? Van Maanen and Katz (1976) present one of the first attempts to look at this problem. They regard job satisfaction in terms of three distinct areas:

- The environment – the organisational policies aspect (pay, conditions, etc)
- Personality - the interpersonal context of the job
- The job itself

Put in another way, job satisfaction is the product of appropriately matching the individual to the job, as can be seen in figure 3.2 below.

**Figure 3.2: Environment and personality influence on job satisfaction**



### 3.5.1 Environment

Environmental antecedents include features such as the characteristics of the job and job tasks, as well as various aspects of the organisation. **Job characteristics** refer to the content and nature of tasks themselves. Table 3.0 below shows some of the most widely studied contributors to job satisfaction and their mean correlation with the latter.

**Table 3.0: Dimensions of job characteristics**

CHARACTERISTIC	MEAN CORRELATION	DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERISTIC
Skill variety	0.29	The number of different skills necessary to do a job
Task identity	0.20	Whether or not an employee does an entire job or a piece of a job
Task significance	0.26	The impact job has on other people
Autonomy	0.34	The freedom employees have to do their jobs as they see fit
Job feedback	0.29	The extent to which it is obvious to employees that they are doing their jobs correctly
Job scope	0.45	The overall complexity of a job

**Source:** Fried and Ferris, 1987

Of importance to note is that the above results obtained from studies by Fried and Ferris (1987) in the United States show a relation between job characteristics and job satisfaction, but in another study by Pearson and Chong (1997) in Malaysia, there was no relationship. It therefore calls for a need to be careful about generalising results from one country to another, and not assume that what works here will work everywhere.

Another important environmental antecedent identified by Fried and Ferris (1987) is pay. Robbins (2001: 208) argues that pay relates more strongly with the facet of pay satisfaction than with global satisfaction, “ ... it is the fairness with which pay is distributed or equity that determines pay satisfaction rather than the actual level of pay itself”. In other words, pay satisfaction is affected by how an individual’s salary

compares to others in the same job rather than people in general. People who make more money are not necessarily more satisfied when they have different jobs.

### **3.5.2 Personality**

The majority of studies on the causes of job satisfaction have tended to concentrate on the environmental perspective (Robbins, 2001). Recently the focus has changed to the personal antecedents such as mood, with some researches going as far as to suggest that job satisfaction might be caused in part by genetic predispositions (Robbins, 2001).

The idea that job satisfaction may be caused in part by personality surfaced during the Hawthorne studies (Roethlisberger, 1941). The Hawthorne researchers noticed that certain individuals, whom they called chronic kickers, were continually complaining about the job irrespective of what the researchers did to them (Roethlisberger, 1941). More recently, Schneider and Dachler (1978) note in a longitudinal study that job satisfaction seems very stable over time, and they speculate that it might be the product of personality traits.

**AGE:** A question that has been of interest to industrial psychologists concerns possible changes in job satisfaction over a person's life span. The general finding reported by Herzberg et al. (1957) shows that job satisfaction starts high, declines and then starts to improve again with increasing age. Brush et al. (1987) calculated a mean correlation between age and job satisfaction of -0.22 in their meta-analysis of 21 studies. Herzberg, et al. (1957) suggest that the reasons for such a relationship is that the individual comes to adjust to his work and life situation. Job satisfaction is initially high but declines as expectations are not met, only to rise again as the individual again adjusts to the work.

### **3.5.3 Person-job fit**

Research on job satisfaction has tended to treat the environmental and personal factors as independent influences. The approach has now focused on the interaction of both factors. Kristof (1996) states that job satisfaction will occur when there is good match between

the person and the environment, a good match between what the individuals say they want on a job and what they say they have.

An ideal job fit is when “have” EQUALS “want”, refer to the formula below.

$$\boxed{\begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ \text{Job satisfaction} = \frac{1}{\text{(Have - Want)}} \\ \downarrow \end{array}}$$

The smaller the discrepancy (“have” minus “want”) the greater the job satisfaction.

### 3.6 The assessment of job satisfaction

Having defined job satisfaction and explored its different causes, it is imperative that the measurement or assessment thereof be considered. Job satisfaction is usually assessed by asking people how they feel about their jobs, by either a questionnaire or interview. According to an extensive overview of the research on the measurement of job satisfaction, Robbins (1993), identifies the two most widely used measurement approaches as:

- A single global rating method. According to (Robbins, 1993: 184) this is nothing more than asking individuals to respond to one question such as; “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job?”
- A summerisation of employee/job dimensions. This more sophisticated approach measures the employee’s level of satisfaction with regard to certain facets in the job. The overall employee satisfaction is then calculated (Locke, 1970; Vroom, 1964).

According to Robbins (1993), the single question approach correlates with dimensional measurement and concludes that the concept of job satisfaction is inherently so broad that the single rating actually becomes a more inclusive measure. Both the global and dimensional measurements are needed to obtain an overall comprehensive index. Since the definition of job satisfaction adopted by this research inclines toward the job

satisfaction facet dimension, the second assessment approach that summarises the employee/job dimensions will be considered. For that fact, the Job Descriptive Index tool will be outlined below.

### **3.6.1 The Job Descriptive Index (JDI)**

The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969) was first developed more than thirty years ago and has since become the most widely used measure of job satisfaction (O'Connor, Peters and Gordon, 1978). The tool is based on Hulin and Smith's (1965) suggestion that employee-satisfaction is not a uni-dimensional variable but should be considered as consisting of a number of factors or areas of satisfaction. Of all the job satisfaction scales available [the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), Job in General (JIG) and the Job satisfaction Index (JSI)], the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) has been the most popular with researchers (O'Connor et. al. 1978). According to Smith (1987), reasons for its popularity include the measure's comprehensibility by workers of low educational levels, its simplified response format and the availability of norms. The scale assesses five facets: work, pay, supervision, co-workers and promotion opportunities and consists of 72 items, 18 in each of the work, supervision and co-workers subscales and 9 each in pay and promotion. All items are short words or phrases and respondents are asked to place a "Y" (yes) beside an item if it describes the particular aspect of the job, an "N" (no) if it does not, and a "?" (not sure) if they cannot decide. Refer to a sample of the JDI in Appendix A.

Its biggest limitation is that it only has five facets, and hence some researchers (Balzer, Smith, Kravit, Lowell, Paul, Reilly and Reilly, 1990) argue that particular items might not apply to all employee groups. In response to such criticism, efforts have been made to improve the instrument. Balzer, et. al.. (1990) have added a sixth scale of overall satisfaction called the Job in General Scale to the original JDI. Table 3.1 shows the JIG scale.

**Table 3.1: Three items from the Job in General scale (JIG)**

---

Think of your job in general. All in all, what is it like most of the time?

In the blank beside each word or phrase below, write

   Y    for "Yes" if it describes your job

   N    for "No" if does NOT describe your job

   ?    if you cannot decide.

JOB IN GENERAL

       Undesirable

       Better than most

       Rotten

---

### 3.6.2 Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist, 1967) comes in two forms, a 100-item long version and a 20-item short version. Both versions ask about 20 facets of job satisfaction as can be seen in table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2: Dimensions from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire**

---

Activity	Ability utilization
Independence	Company policies and practices
Variety	Compensation
Social Status	Advancement
Supervision (human relations)	Responsibility
Supervision (technical)	Creativity
Moral values	Working conditions
Security	Coworkers
Social service	Recognition
Authority	Achievement

---

Source: Weiss, Dawis, Lofquist and England, 1966



The short form is used to assess either global satisfaction or intrinsic (nature of the job tasks) and extrinsic (external) aspects, e.g. pay etc. The employee is asked to indicate how satisfied he/she is with each facet. Several researchers have however questioned how the items have been classified into the intrinsic and extrinsic groups (Gardiner and Lankau, 1993).

### **3.6.3 Shortcomings with the measurement tools**

Two issues were brought up regarding the measurement of job satisfaction. Firstly, most researchers have debated whether global satisfaction is the sum of facets or something different (Gruneberg, 1979; Robbins, 2001). Smith (1987) the developer of the JDI, has argued that they are separate. Many researchers, however have treated the sum of facet scores as an indicator of overall job satisfaction (Robbins, 2001). The shortfall is that summing of the subscale scores presumes that all facets have been assessed and that each makes an equal contribution to global satisfaction. It seems unlikely that each facet has the same importance to every individual. Thus, the sum of facets approximates overall job satisfaction. Secondly, both single question rating and dimensional measurement of job satisfaction reflect the individual's attitude towards his/her job, but research has not focused on the subjective meaning and significance thereof for the individual. Differences in employees' perceptions, feelings and attitudes with regard to the importance of the facets of the job have not been accounted for. Although quantitative measurement may reflect the same level of job satisfaction, the individuals' personal evaluations of their experience is often disregarded by most measuring instruments (Visser, Breed & Van Breda, 1997).

### **3.7 Potential effects of job satisfaction**

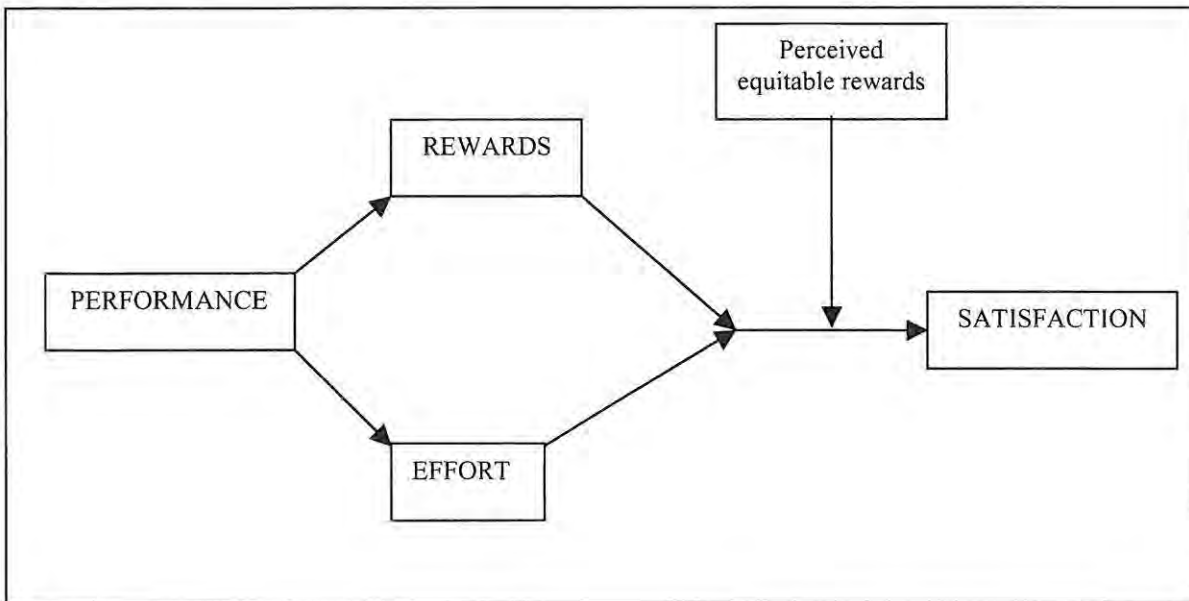
A number of organisationally relevant behaviours are thought to be the result of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Three of these behaviours, job performance, turnover and employee absence, have been prominent.

### 3.7.1 Job satisfaction and job performance

One of the main reasons for studying job satisfaction is undoubtedly the widely held view that whether a person is satisfied or not with his job has consequences for his performance (Gruneberg, 1979). A number of reviews (Gruneberg, 1979) of the relationship between job satisfaction and performance have cast serious doubts on the assumption that any relationship exists between the two factors. Brayfield and Crockett (1955), in their review of over fifty studies, find little overall relationship between job satisfaction and performance, a conclusion confirmed in a latter review by Vroom (1964).

There are two arguments that have been used to explain the apparent failure to find a relationship. Firstly, Herzberg (1968) considers that satisfaction may lead to increased performance but that the wrong measures of satisfaction are often used. Secondly, Lawler and Porter (1969), suggest that rather than higher satisfaction leading to higher performance, it is higher performance which leads to rewards which in turn may or may not lead to increased satisfaction as demonstrated in figure 3.4 below.

**Figure 3.3: The effect of performance on job satisfaction**



Source: Adapted from Lawler and Porter, 1969

Jacobs and Solomon (1997) hypothesised that satisfaction and performance would be related more strongly when performance leads to rewards. The rationale is that employees who perform well will be satisfied because they have received rewards. They found support for their hypothesis that a performance-reward linkage leads to a stronger satisfaction-performance relationship. The other explanation stems from the fact that people who like their jobs work harder and therefore perform better.

Whilst there appears that there might not be a clear simple relationship between job satisfaction and performance, this view is also probably unwarranted. Gruneberg (1979) suggests that the precise nature of the relationship remains unclear although it is obviously complex, and it may well be that performance causes satisfaction rather than the other way around.

### **3.7.2 Job satisfaction and employee turnover**

The evidence concerning the relationship between job satisfaction and employee turnover appears far more conclusive than does that of satisfaction and performance (Gruneberg, 1979). In fifteen studies conducted by Porter and Steers between 1955 and 1972, all but one found a positive relationship. In another study conducted by Hulin and Smith (1965) on employees leaving a company, the results indicated that the leavers had substantially lower levels of job satisfaction before leaving the organisations than did those who stayed. When the company subsequently improved the working conditions, turnover reduced from 30% to 12% (Gruneberg, 1979)

Although the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover has been proved to exist, the magnitude of the relationship is not necessarily very large. This is because a larger number of factors, not necessarily connected with the job, e.g. economic circumstances and the availability or unavailability of alternative employment, will result in dissatisfied individuals continuing employment. Conversely, some satisfied employees may change their employment because of promotion, ambition and other external reasons.

### **3.7.3 Job satisfaction and absence**

One apparently self-evident result of job dissatisfaction is to increase the likelihood that the individuals will withdraw from the job situation, either temporarily, by absenting themselves for a short period, or permanently, by escaping from the organisation. Conventional wisdom suggests that “... people who dislike their jobs will be more likely to miss work than people who like their jobs” (Robbins, 2001:215).

A number of reviews of the relationship, including several meta-analyses have all concluded that there is a relationship although the magnitude of the relationship is small (Vroom, 1964; Porter and Steers, 1973). Farrell and Stamm (1988) found correlations of  $-0.13$  and  $-0.10$ , respectively between absence and global job satisfaction using two different measures of absence. On the other hand Tharenou (1993) found correlations as high as  $-0.34$  between job satisfaction and absence in a sample of Australian blue-collar workers. Negative correlation in this instance indicate that the higher the satisfaction, the lower the absence. Mertzner and Mann (1953) also found a relationship for blue-collar and none for white-collar, a suggestion that the relationship could be more strongly related under some conditions. Hackett and Guion (1985) found that absence correlated more strongly with some satisfaction facets such as pay and supervision than others did.

In conclusion, it appears quite clear that, as with the relationship between satisfaction and performance, the relationship between satisfaction and absence is complex and unclear. As was found by Mertzner and Mann (1952) that the relationship related more strongly under some conditions, it is thus the aim of this research to investigate the existence of this relationship among the shop floor workers in the motor manufacturing industry in South Africa. A more detailed in-depth report on the studies conducted on this relationship is covered in the next chapter.

## **3.8 Summary**

Job satisfaction, generally defined as the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs (global satisfaction) or aspects of their jobs (facet satisfaction), is the most frequently

studied and researched variable in industrial psychology. This unfortunately has resulted in many contradictory findings and the lack of a generally accepted theory of job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is usually measured with questionnaires administered to employees, and two of the most widely accepted measurement instruments are the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ).

Research has linked job satisfaction to two main variables, namely the environmental factors and the personal characteristics. Environmental factors such as job characteristics, role variable and pay have been found to correlate with job satisfaction and so has the personal characteristics such as age.

The three “common sense” approaches that increased employee performance is a result of high levels of job satisfaction and that lack of satisfaction contributes to employee turnover and that a modest to slight relationship exists with absenteeism, all have been supported by the research investigating the link between job satisfaction and employee behaviours.

Having explored the relevant literature on both absenteeism and job satisfaction, the next chapter discusses the literature on the two variables’ relationship backed by results of empirical research studies conducted.

## **4 CHAPTER 4: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB SATISFACTION AND ABSENTEEISM**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The belief that absence from work is in some way a natural consequence of job dissatisfaction is widespread (Cheloha and Farr, 1980). Confidence in this belief has been such that absence from work and turnover have been employed as criterion measures for the validation of work-attitude measures and the success of organisational change programs (Nicholson, Brown and Chadwick-Jones, 1976) – a perception that the higher the absence rate the higher levels of dissatisfaction. On the other hand, one of the main reasons for studying job satisfaction is undoubtedly the widely held view that whether a person is satisfied or not with his job has consequences for his productivity, for his likely stay within the organisation and for his willingness to attend work regularly (absence behaviour).

Besides a number of studies purporting to show reliable relationships between employee attitudes and absenteeism (Steers and Rhodes, 1978), below are some of the reasons that have been offered to explain the popularity of the belief that absenteeism and job satisfaction are related.

1. The notion has intuitive appeal, i.e. it “makes sense” to assert that workers who are happy with their jobs will attend work more regularly and permanently and that dissatisfied workers will seek opportunities to avoid going to work (Argyle, 1972).
2. The proposition offers a vindication for job satisfaction studies in the face of the repeated failure of research to demonstrate a reliable relationship between job attitudes and productivity (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955).
3. It also provides an economic rationale for employers to actively seek to improve the quality of their employees’ work experience (Argyle, 1972).

Based on the above reasoning, it is therefore not surprising that absenteeism and job satisfaction have attracted the abundance of research attention that they have. To the uninitiated, they both seem to be clear discrete employee responses with significant practical implications and a relationship that is unquestionable, yet some research (Hackett and Guion, 1985) has proved otherwise. This chapter reviews the two main theoretical models that have been put forward to explain the relationship and focuses on the empirical studies which provide both support and no support for the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction.

## **4.2 Theoretical perspective**

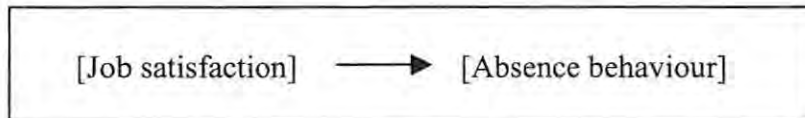
Gruneberg (1979) states that the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction is complex and unclear, and it is only recently that several academics have tried to explain it in the different models used to explore the causes of absenteeism. Nicholson (1977: 232) points out that much of the early research focussed on “tentative speculations and propositions ex post facto to case studies, and a number of more general theories of organisational behaviour in which absence is only a minor element”.

Brayfield and Crockett (1955) categorised the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction into two categories, namely direct and indirect relationship models. The direct relationship models, for example, the Pain avoidance model by Hackett and Guion (1985), argues that absenteeism is a direct outcome of job dissatisfaction. On the other hand, the indirect models (Steers and Rhodes model, 1978 and Nicholson’s Model, 1977) argue that job satisfaction is one of the several forces that shape the employees’ attendance motivation, defining the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism as being indirect. The following section discusses the two categories in detail.

## DIRECT RELATIONSHIP MODELS

As explained above, the direct relationship models argue that there is a direct link between job satisfaction and absenteeism as can be seen in figure 4.0 below.

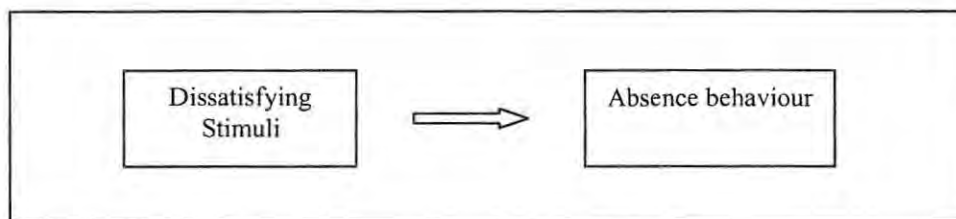
**Figure 4.0: Direct relationship model**



### 4.3 Pain-avoidance model

The pain-avoidance model is one of the earliest research models that guided much of the absence research and has its origin in job satisfaction research (Hackett & Guion, 1985). Researchers using this model were of the opinion that job dissatisfaction represented the primary cause of absenteeism (Rhodes and Steers, 1990). The basis of the model is that workers will withdraw from their job situations if dissatisfied. Brayfield and Crockett (1955) concluded that dissatisfied workers would be absent more often if their work dissatisfaction was symptomatic of being in a punishing situation, arguing for a direct relationship between satisfaction and the absence behaviour, refer to figure 4.1 below.

**Figure 4.1: Pain avoidance model**



The model has been supported by several meta-analyses. McShane's (1984) review of twenty-four published studies supports the idea that employees who are dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs are more likely to be absent. Farrel and Stamm's (1988) study found negative weighted correlations between overall job satisfaction and both total time absent and absence frequency, an indication that the higher the satisfaction levels,

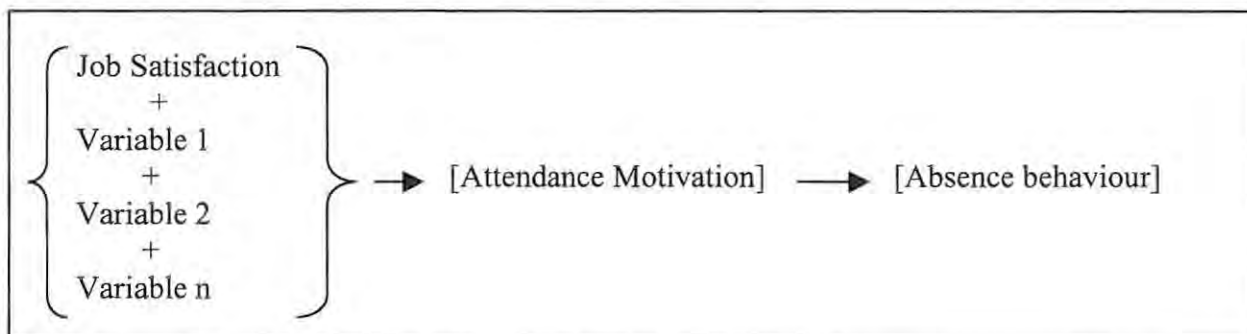
the lower the absence levels. Hackett and Guion's (1985) meta-analysis results show that four percent of the variance in absence measures is explained by overall job satisfaction, lower though but once again a direct link between job satisfaction and absenteeism.

Although the above studies present support for the direct absence-job satisfaction relationship, Rhodes and Steers (1990) criticise it. They argue that when taken together the meta-analysis and the multivariate studies on the pain-avoidance model provide little support for the theory. They conclude that it is not fruitful to further test any models that are based on the assumption that dissatisfaction is the primary cause of absence, hence they argue for their integrated model that shows an indirect relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism.

### INDIRECT RELATIONSHIP MODELS

The indirect relationship models suggest that job satisfaction is one of the several variables that affect the employee's attendance motivation (Steers & Rhodes, 1978). The models argue that the presence or absence of the satisfaction dimension impacts (additively) on the magnitude of the employee's attendance motivation which in turn has a direct influence on the absence behaviour as depicted in figure 4.2 below. These models put attendance motivation as the variable that has a direct relationship with absenteeism, and not job satisfaction.

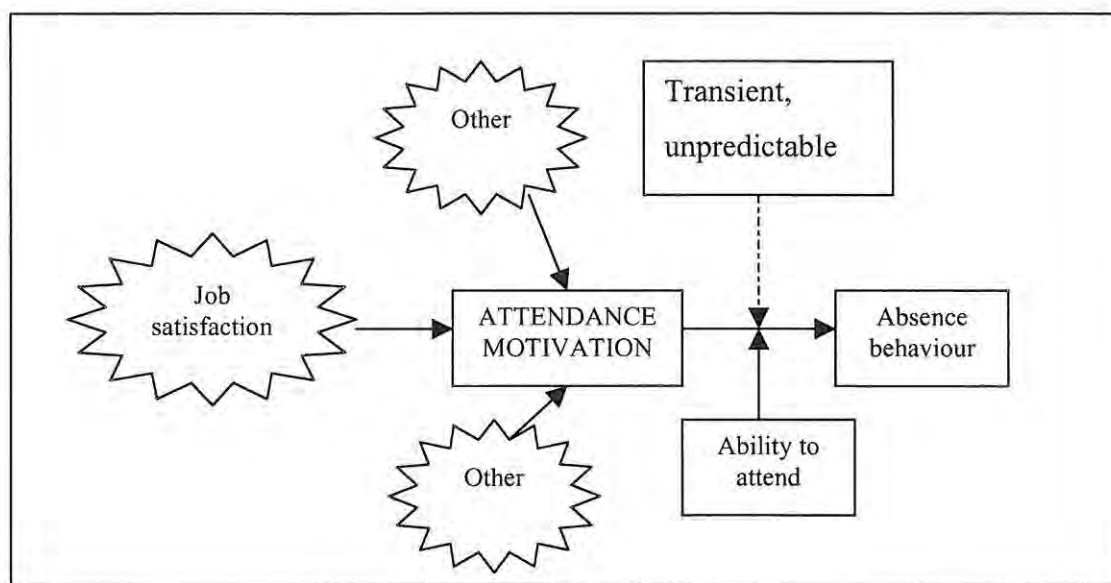
**Figure 4.2: Indirect relationship model**



#### 4.4 Nicholson's (1977) and Steers and Rhodes' (1978) models

Figure 4.3 below has been developed by the researcher by extracting common features from both Nicholson's (1977) and Steers and Rhodes (1978) models of absence behaviour. The two models have been developed to explain absence behaviour in a manner that shows its indirect relationship to job satisfaction.

**Figure 4.3: Combined indirect relationship models**



Adapted from Nicholson (1977) and Steers and Rhodes (1978)

The main assumption underlying Nicholson's (1977) model is that attendance behaviour is normal and habitual, while Steers and Rhodes (1978) suggest that an employee's attendance is largely a function of two important variables: attendance motivation and the ability to attend. Like Nicholson, Steers and Rhodes (1978) include job satisfaction and various internal and external pressures to attend as the two main determinants of attendance motivation. Nicholson (1977: 246) defines attendance motivation as "... largely a matter of the way the need system of the person maps out the properties of work and nonwork environment". Of importance to note is that both models pay credence to attendance motivation as the consequence of the variables that influence absenteeism (of

which job satisfaction is one of them). Several studies however have attempted to test this relationship between attendance motivation and attendance (Lee, 1989; Brooke and Price, 1989, Watson, 1981). In Lee's (1989) research, the results show that employee attendance is weakly predicted, while Brooke and Price (1989) provide the strongest support for the relationship. Steers and Rhodes (1978) in proposing their integrated model interpreted the modest correlations reported between job satisfaction and absence as being moderated by other "third factor" variables. In other words their model suggests that job satisfaction plays a major explanatory role, an interpretation which is challenged by several meta-analyses (Hackett & Guion, 1985).

Just how much correlation or link there is between job satisfaction and absenteeism is open for debate, and has been a subject of many research studies. Four decades ago, Brayfield and Crockett (1955: 421) remarked that "it is time to question the strategic and ethical merits of selling to industrial concerns an assumed relationship between employee attitudes and employee performance". This advice seems to be as applicable to attendance as to performance. Recent findings (Farrel & Stamm, 1988) indicate that among a constellation of job attitudes, job involvement is often a better predictor of absence than job satisfaction. It therefore might be useful for purposes of model development to talk in terms of attitudes in general, as an influence on attendance motivation instead of focussing on one particular attitude such as job satisfaction.

#### **4.5 Research studies on the relationship**

One of the more widely researched topics in industrial psychology has been the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism (Chelora and Farr, 1980). No less than five reviews spanning the past decades have concluded that absenteeism is negatively related to overall job satisfaction (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955; Herzberg et. al., 1957; Muchinsky, 1977; Vroom, 1964). However, this relationship has been questioned. Working with a sample of over 1200 blue-collar workers in a variety of organisations, Nicholson, et. al. (1976) found relatively few significant satisfaction-

absence relationships and concluded that an uncertain relationship existed between the two constructs. Ilgen (1977) reported similar results with a sample of clerical workers.

One of the problems in this research area has been the lack of a guiding theoretical model. There is little systematic knowledge of why satisfaction influences absenteeism at any level other than common-sense. Kornhauser and Sharp (1932) conducted the earliest known systematic study with a sample of female factory workers. While no statistical analyses were reported, the investigators commented that the "...unfavourableness of job attitudes is slightly correlated with lost time" (Kornhauser & Sharp, 1932: 402). Several other researchers have also concluded that there is a correlation between absenteeism and overall job satisfaction as can be seen in table 4.0 below - results of several studies conducted on the relationship.

Patchen's (1960) study was one of the first to employ a measure of job facet satisfaction (rather than overall job satisfaction) as a predictor of absenteeism. He reports that satisfaction with pay and promotions is negatively correlated with absenteeism.

One of the studies that found no relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism was reported by Vroom (1962). In his conclusion, Vroom (1964) views it necessary to "...hedge generalizations about the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism with caveats about the strength, reliability and cause of the relationship" (Nicholson, Brown and Chadwick-Jones, 1976: 729).

Mertzner and Mann (1953) on the other hand found a relationship between job satisfaction and absence for blue-collar, but not for white-collar workers. Their findings received further support from Ilgen (1977) who found no relationship between satisfaction and absence in a group of university workers. This triggered interest and has resulted in growing interest questioning the posited link between absence and job satisfaction. Locke (1976), for example, said that the magnitude of the correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism seldom surpasses 0.40, and is typically much lower.

**Table 4.0: Studies of relationship between attitudinal factors and absenteeism**

Investigator	Factor	Population	Relationship
Kornhauser & Sharp (1932)	Overall job satisfaction	Female factory workers	Negative
Noland (1945a)	Overall job satisfaction	Industrial workers	Negative
Covner (1950)	Satisfaction with management	Manufacturing workers	Negative
Kerr et. al. (1951)	Overall job satisfaction	Manufacturing depts.	Positive
Metzner & Mann (1953)	Overall job satisfaction	Blue & white collar workers	Negative for blue Zero for white
Van Zelst & Kerr (1953)	Overall job satisfaction	Manufacturing workers	Negative
Fleishman et al. (1955)	Overall job satisfaction	Production workers	Negative
Talacchi (1960)	Overall job satisfaction	Office workers	Negative
Patchen (1960)	Satisfaction with pay	Oil refinery workers	Negative
Harding & Bottenberg (1961)	Overall job satisfaction	Airmen	Negative
Vroom (1962)	Overall job satisfaction	Oil refinery workers	Zero
Waters & Roach (1971)	Overall job satisfaction	Female clerical workers	Negative
	Satisfaction with work		Negative
	Satisfaction with supervision		Zero
	Satisfaction with pay		Zero
	Satisfaction with promotions		Zero
Waters & Roach (1973)	Satisfaction with co-workers	Female clerical workers	Negative
	Overall job satisfaction		Negative
	Satisfaction with work		Negative
	Satisfaction with supervision		Zero
	Satisfaction with pay		Zero

The most comprehensive review of the relationship between job satisfaction (by job facets) and absence has been published by Nicholson et al. (1976) as shown in table 4.1 below. After reviewing twenty-nine studies, they conclude “that the popular belief that job satisfaction is a major cause of absence from work has doubtful empirical validity” and “at best it seems that job satisfaction and absence from work are tenuously related” (Nicholson et al, 1976: 734). A suggestion that there is no simple relationship between satisfaction and absence.

Of the studies that related overall job satisfaction (not by job facets) to absenteeism, highly consistent results have occurred. In all but a few studies, total job satisfaction has been found to be negatively related to absenteeism, and the best estimate of the strength of the relationship is that it is very weak (Nicholson et al., 1976) as seen in table 4.1 below. Of the studies that examined job facet satisfaction, satisfaction with work has

been found to have a consistent negative relationship to absenteeism, while with other facets this relationship has not been found.

**Table 4.1: Correlations between job satisfaction and absence**

Investigator	Population	Satisfaction	r
Nicholson et.al. (1977)	Male blue collar steelworkers	JDI-coworkers	-0.23**
		Supervision	-0.13
		Promotion	-0.14
		Pay	-0.21
		Work	-0.37**
		Total	-0.30**
Adler and Golan (1981)	Female telephone operators	JDI-coworkers	0.05
		Supervision	-0.01
		Promotion	-0.14
		Pay	-0.12
		Work	-0.20*
		Total	-0.06
**p<0.01			

Adapted from Hackett and Guion, 1985

Why then do other findings on this relationship fly in the face of the common-sense assumption that people happy in their jobs will attend work more regularly? A number of reasons have been suggested, ranging from personal factors to company policies; the obvious ones being geographical, weather and illness conditions. Hammer & Landau (1981) suggest that perhaps the relationship between job satisfaction and absence is nonlinear, and hence the low coefficient correlations have resulted from trying to fit a straight line to curved data.

It appears quite clear from the results summarised in table 4.0 and 4.1 that the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism is complex and unclear. What

research has presented is that many other factors, unrelated to job satisfaction, may also be operating.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Although several research studies have been conducted worldwide on the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism, no known (to the author) research has been conducted in the motor manufacturing industry in South Africa. Most researches conducted in South Africa tend to study absenteeism separate from job satisfaction, e.g. Job Satisfaction among South African Aircraft pilots (2003), by C. Hoole and L.P Vermeulen; A comparison of the job satisfied and job dissatisfied environmental health officer in South Africa (2000) by A.D. Louw and J.C. Meyer; Major predictors of Absenteeism at Regional services council (1993) by M. J. Louw, etc.

It is therefore the quest of this research to be the pioneer of such research in the motor manufacturing industry in South Africa bearing in mind the conflicting results and recommendations that have been put forward by earlier researchers.

The following chapter discusses the research design process (methodology), from the determination of the sample, questionnaire administration to the method of analysis used on the collected data.

## 5 CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Introduction

Selltiz, Johoda, Deutsch and Cook, (1966) suggest that for any research to be purposeful, it should discover answers to the research questions.

The literature review on absenteeism and job satisfaction dealt with in chapters 2 and 3 presented a theoretical framework of the variables associated with absenteeism and job satisfaction. This chapter explains the research methodology/process that has been used in the empirical investigation of the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism.

Different types of social research can be identified from literature, some being exploratory research, descriptive research and explanatory research. Peil (1982) observes that much of social research, especially in developing countries, sets out to explore a new era, or at least one about which little is known in the local context (Peil, 1982). This aptly describes the present study, a “first” of its kind in the motor manufacturing industry in South Africa. The nature of this study strongly leans towards exploratory research, exploring the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism within the South African motor manufacturing context.

Mouton (1990) concludes that the aims for social research vary a great deal, ranging from, gaining new insights into the phenomenon; undertaking preliminary investigation before a more structured study of the phenomenon is done; describing central concepts and constructs of a phenomenon; determining priorities for future research and developing new hypotheses about an existing phenomenon.

Selltiz et. al. (1966) on the other hand emphasised three research strategies by means of which exploratory research can be conducted:

- A review of related social science and other pertinent literature;
- A survey of people who have had practical experience with the problem to be studied;

- An analysis of “insight-stimulating” examples.

The above three exploratory research strategies aptly describe the present study as it is characterised by the review of pertinent literature, the survey of people subjected to the job satisfaction facets and their resultant absenteeism behaviours, and the analysis of one manufacturing company as an insight-stimulating example.

## **5.2 Goals of the research and hypotheses**

The overall goal of the research is to enable (if proven) the motor manufacturing company under research, to influence different facets of job satisfaction with the aim of reducing absenteeism in general and be able to deal with specific types of absenteeism.

The objectives of the research are:

- To investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism (if any and then);
  - To identify the job satisfaction facets that have the most impact on absenteeism
  - To investigate the impact of job satisfaction facets upon different types of absenteeism.

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the above research objectives.

H0<sup>1</sup>: There is no statistical significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism.

H1: There is a statistical positive significant correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism.

H0<sup>2</sup>: Absenteeism and work are not correlated

H2: Absenteeism and work are correlated

H0<sup>3</sup>: Absenteeism and supervision are not correlated

H3: Absenteeism and supervision are correlated

H0<sup>4</sup>: Absenteeism and coworkers are not correlated

H4: Absenteeism and coworkers are correlated

H0<sup>5</sup>: Absenteeism and pay are not correlated

H5: Absenteeism and pay are correlated

H0<sup>6</sup>: Absenteeism and promotion are not correlated

H6: Absenteeism and promotion are correlated

### **5.3 Research process**

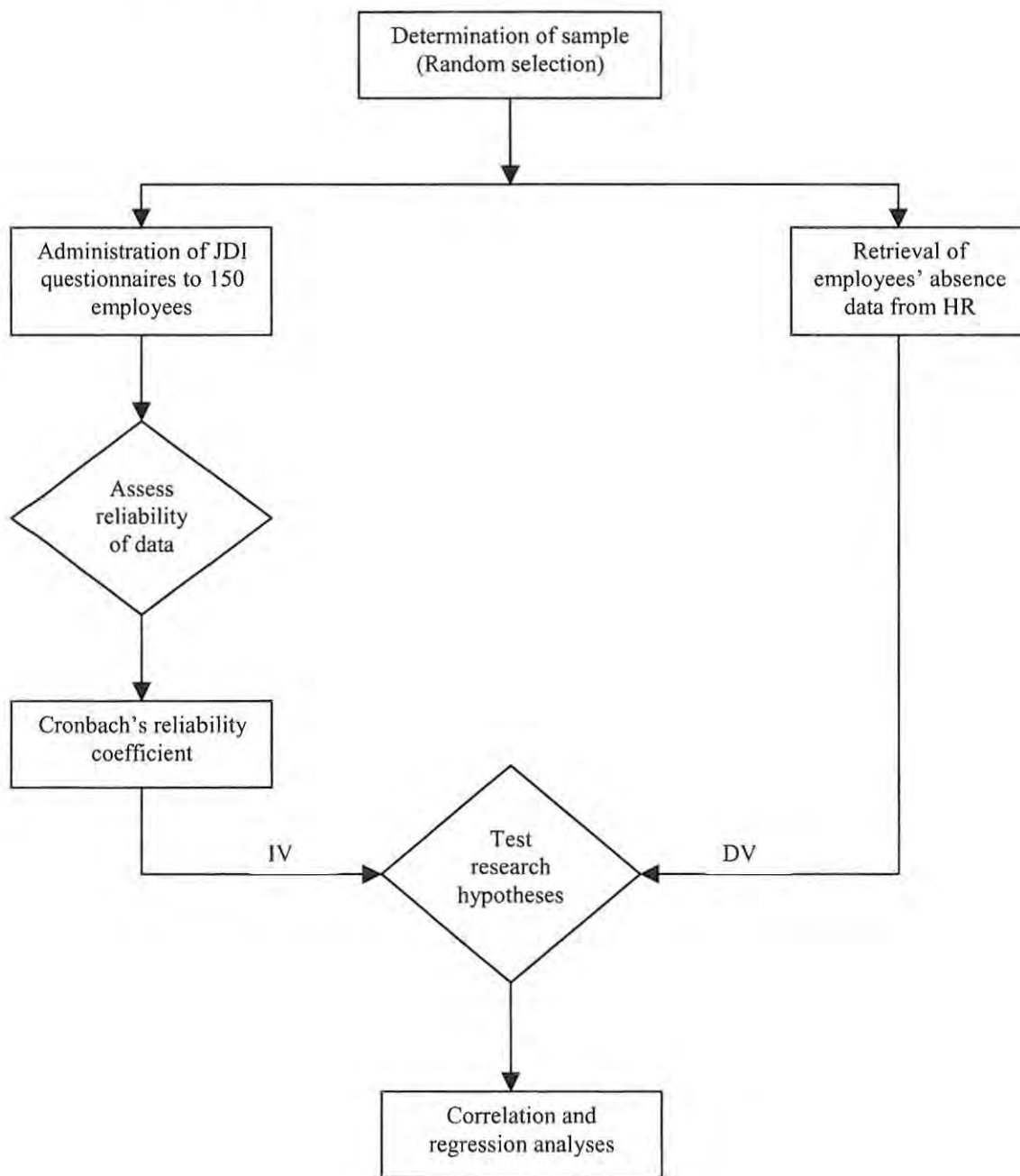
The research was conducted within the post-positivist paradigm. This philosophical stance sees a researcher as an objective analyst and an interpreter of tangible social reality (critical realism), giving the former independence from the researched, determinism, criticality of evidence and the ability to generalize (Remenyi, 1996).

The writer tried to be as objective and ethically neutral as possible, and to respect anonymity (Delamont, 1992). A guarantee was given to the company and respondents involved that their names would not be revealed in the research report (refer to Appendix B). The company was also promised a copy of the final report.

Reference is made to the figure 5.0 below, a flow chart of the research process. This process consists of the following steps: selection of research method/instrument; delimitation and sampling; questionnaire design; questionnaire administration; construct validity test of the tool and statistical tests on data. The first part of the research process involved calculating the sample size. This was done using a sample size calculator and resulted in a round figure of 150. The next step involved the random selection of the 150 workers from the shop floor workers database. This was done using an EXCEL random

generator (using the employees' company numbers). This was followed by getting the randomly selected shop floor workers to answer the JDI questionnaires. Each questionnaire was numbered and that number linked it to the individual worker. The reason for numbering and linking the questionnaires to the respondents was to enable the correlation of the job satisfaction index level with the respective absence statistics.

**Figure 5.0: Research process flow chart**



The second part involved collecting absenteeism statistics for the respondents for a period of twelve months from January 2002 to December 2002 from the company's Human Resources department employee database. The last part of the research was to validate the questionnaire and analyse the data received, that is the JDI questionnaire data (independent variable - IV) and the employees' absenteeism statistics (dependent variable - DV). Regression and correlation analyses (to determine the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism and to identify the job satisfaction facets that have the most impact on absenteeism) were done using statistical software. Absenteeism data from HR was also analysed to identify absenteeism types, and then analysed to investigate the impact of job satisfaction facets upon the different types of absenteeism, namely sick leave, unpaid leave and Monday sickness, explained in the chapter 2.

#### **5.4 Selection of research method/instrument**

Job satisfaction is almost always assessed by asking people how they feel about their jobs, either by a questionnaire or interview. This research being quantitative used questionnaires, which were individually handed out to the selected employees by hand. Below are the advantages and disadvantages of using the hand distributed questionnaire method (Dixon et. al, 1989).

##### Advantages

1. Homogeneous stimulus: since the questionnaire is the only means of communication between the researcher and the respondent, and since the questionnaires are identical, the stimulus provided is identical in all cases.
2. Freedom of respondent: the respondent is free to complete the questionnaire or not, with freedom to decide the time, place and tempo of the completion.
3. Ease of processing: being structured it is relatively easy to process the data

##### Disadvantages

1. Impersonal: a questionnaire is an impersonal instrument of data collection, a respondent for example does not have the opportunity to qualify answers.

2. Limited to literate respondents: with reference to the demographics of the Eastern Cape in which illiteracy levels are very high, respondents must be able to read and write to complete the questionnaire.
3. Negative attitudes to questionnaires: sometimes questionnaires are seen as a nuisance, a waste of time and treated that way.
4. Lack of control: there is no control over the correctness of the responses.

### **5.5 Population and sampling procedure**

Trochin (2000) defines a research population as a group that the research wants to generalise to, and the sample as the group of people that are selected to be in the study. The definition of the sample is of vital importance as the results of an investigation are not trustworthier than the quality of the population or the representativeness of the sample (Trochin, 2000). For the purpose of this research, the sample was drawn from the shop floor workers of a motor manufacturing plant in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. This objective in itself delimited the study. The reason for this delimitation stems from the fact that the manufacturing organisation under research was easily accessible to the researcher.

The company's 2500 shop floor workers were the subjects of research, as they are the people whose absenteeism is of major concern. For the purpose of this research, shop floor workers refer to hourly paid workers who are involved in the motorcar assembling processes.

The sample was randomly drawn (using EXCEL random generator on the employees company's numbers) from the hourly paid workers mentioned above. A sample size of 150 was determined using the Sample Size Calculator at 95% confidence level.

### **5.6 The research questionnaire design (validity and reliability)**

According to Green, Tull and Albaum (1988: 249-256), the following criteria have to be satisfied before any measuring instrument can be considered as being satisfactory:

- ❑ The measuring instrument must comprise data that is both quantitative and verifiable, in other words, the measuring instrument must be objective.
- ❑ The validity and reliability of the measuring instrument should be determined. The validity of a measuring instrument means that the data must be unbiased and relevant to the characteristic being measured. In other words, it allows the researcher to state that the instrument measures what he/she proposes to measure. Reliability, on the other hand, is the extent to which scaling results are free from experimental error – referring to the consistency of the test results of groups of individuals, or of the same individual at different times.
- ❑ The measuring instrument must be sensitive in order to indicate any differences in attitudes and values.
- ❑ The information in the measuring instrument should be relevant to the contemporary theoretical and practical problem being investigated, while its administration should facilitate the prompt collection and analysis of data.

Job satisfaction is a highly important variable in organisational studies, and the most commonly investigated in industrial-organisational psychology and occupational health, with more than 12 400 studies published on the topic by 1991 (Spector, 1996). Job satisfaction is almost always assessed by asking people how they feel about their jobs, either by a questionnaire or interview. Among the many facet satisfaction measures that exist, the **Job Descriptive Index (JDI)** (Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969) is used more frequently than any other is. The JDI was designed to measure the construct of job satisfaction, defined by Smith et. al. (1969: 100) “as the feelings a worker has about his job”. The final version of the JDI was designed around five subdimensions: satisfaction with work, supervision, coworkers, pay and promotion. The instrument consists of 72 items, 18 in each of work, supervision and co-workers subscales and 9 each in pay and promotions. All items are short words or phrases and respondents are asked to put a “Y” (yes) beside an item if it describes the particular aspect of the job, an “N” (no) if it does not, and a “?” (not sure) if they cannot decide.

As mentioned above by Green, et. al. (1988), the validity and reliability of the instrument have to be determined. Table 5.0 below summarises the results of research on the JDI's construct validity conducted by Kinicki, McKee-Ryan, Schriesheim, and Carson (2002). The table 5.0 presents the estimates of internal consistency reliability for the JDI subscales based on the meta-analysis undertaken for that review by Kinicki et. al. (2002). All the estimates are based on coefficient alpha. The mean coefficients are reasonably high, and the average reliability estimates for the JDI are 0.87, 0.88, 0.86, 0.88, and 0.89 for satisfaction with Pay, Promotion, Coworkers, Work and Supervision, respectively. In summary, the JDI possesses adequate internal consistency reliability.

Smith, et. al. (1969) conceptualises satisfaction as a dynamic construct that varies over time. Thus to be construct valid, the JDI should be sensitive to change over time. From the table below, the test-retest coefficients are smaller than their internal consistency counterparts (0.21 less on average). The ranges are larger, supporting the idea that job satisfaction is a dynamic state that is susceptible to change over time, a proof of the JDI's construct validity (Smith, et. al., 1969).

**Table 5.0: Reliability of the JDI subscales**

Reliability of the Job Descriptive Index Subscales								
Subscale	Internal consistency reliability				Test-retest reliability			
	K	M	SD	Range	K	M	SD	Range
Pay	31	0.80	0.05	0.69 - 0.88	8	0.65	0.01	0.60 - 0.71
Promotion	27	0.84	0.50	0.70 - 0.92	10	0.63	0.14	0.29 - 0.82
Coworkers	40	0.85	0.50	0.68 - 0.93	9	0.59	0.1	0.46 - 0.78
Work	59	0.81	0.11	0.23 - 0.95	13	0.63	0.01	0.49 - 0.88
Supervision	54	0.84	0.06	0.66 - 0.95	10	0.56	0.13	0.35 - 0.71

Note. K = number of samples

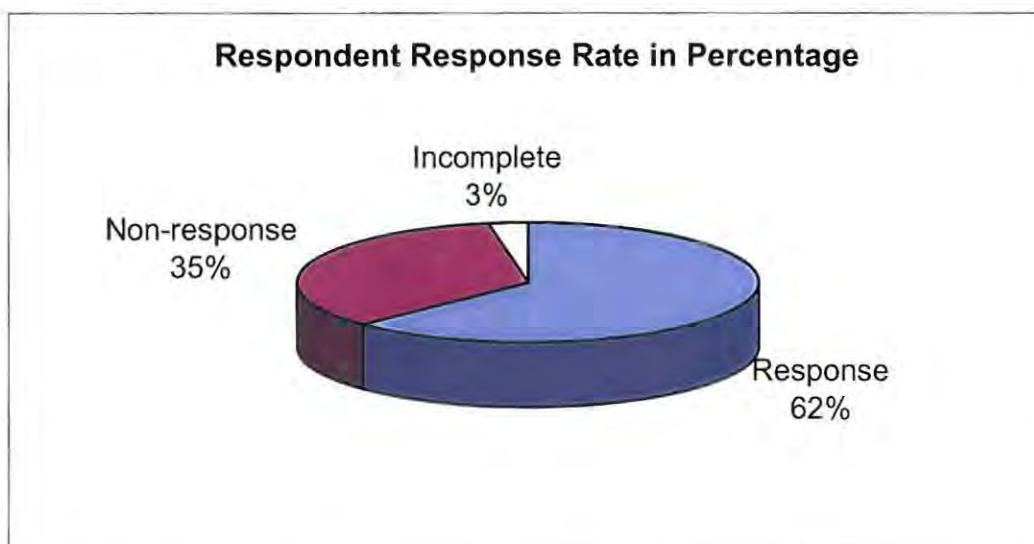
Source: Kinicki et al (2002).

The above validation also confirms the tests carried out by Gillet and Schwab (1975), in which they conclude that when compared to alternative measures of job satisfaction, the JDI has good convergent and discriminant validity and reliability. Because of the reliability and comprehensibility by workers of low educational levels (refer to the results in the next chapter on the validity and reliability of the JDI used), the JDI was therefore confirmed as the instrument to measure the workers' job satisfaction in this research, without the need to convert it from English to Xhosa (the first language of the population under research).

### 5.7 Administration of the questionnaire

The questionnaires numbered 1 to 150, with the employees' names written at the top right corner were distributed to the respective workers. Refer to Appendix A for an example of a JDI questionnaire. Each worker had the option to tear-off his/her name from the questionnaire for anonymity during the responding stage. The workers were encouraged to complete the questionnaires during their spare time and hand them back to their respective team managers or use the internal mailing system to mail them to the researcher. Figure 5.1 below shows the response rate of the respondents in completing the questionnaires in this research.

**Figure 5.1: Respondent response rate**



The overall return rate of 62% (94 complete questionnaires out of 150) was considered acceptable so no follow-up was done. The response rate secured the representivity of the results, and also indicated a high level of interest in the subject of job satisfaction

## **5.8 Data analysis**

The research set out to prove that there is a statistical positive correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism, hence the responses of 94 hourly paid workers on the JDI and the absenteeism statistics were subjected to the regression and correlation analysis to determine both the form and degree of their relationship.

Correlation is one of the most important and basic ideas in elaboration of bivariate relationships. Measures of correlation indicate both the strength and the direction (+ or -) of the relationship between a pair of variables (Bryman and Cramer, 1990). The statistic that is calculated is the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ), and varies between  $-1$  and  $+1$ . The nearer the value of  $r$  is to zero, the weaker the relationship, and the closer to unity (+ or -), the stronger is the relationship. Bryman and Cramer (1990) suggests the following as far as the interpretation of the correlation results are concerned: When  $r$  is below 0.19 the correlation is very low; between 0.20 and 0.30 it is low; 0.40 to 0.69 is modest; 0.70 to 0.89 is high; 0.90 to 1.00 is very high. These are guidelines for interpretation about which there is substantial consensus.

The results for construct validity of the measuring tool (Cronbach alpha), correlation and regression analysis are presented and explained in the following chapter.

## **5.9 Limitations of the investigation**

### **5.9.1 Representativeness**

As noted, the biggest disadvantage of using questionnaires is the poor response rate it often produces (Peil, 1982). One would have expected a response rate higher than the 62% obtained from this research. The low response phenomenon places a restriction on the generalisability of the results. However this does not influence the fact that the results are significant in their own right as the information is unique in South Africa.

### **5.9.2 Incompleteness of data returned**

Returned questionnaires sometimes lacked completeness with regard to certain aspect of the job and these constituted the 3% that was disregarded from the statistical analysis. This can be attributed to lack of comprehension on the part of the workers. Words such as “fascinating, frustrating, impolite and ambitious” would be vocabulary jargons to a majority of the semi-illiterate Xhosa speaking employees who constitute a greater percentage of the shop floor workers. Although this appeared limited, the results remain significant. A proposal to be considered is to convert the English JDI version to Xhosa.

### **5.10 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it can be stated that there are several limitations in the gathering of the job satisfaction data. The results should therefore be interpreted with caution and not be generalised in unlimited fashion. Nevertheless, this research yielded findings of significant importance in conceptualising and understanding the job satisfaction measurement phenomenon.

The following chapter provides a summary of the research findings, analyses the results and ends with the discussion thereof.

## **6 CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

“It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning”  
(Claude Bernard)

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the nature, direction and significance of the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism in a motor manufacturing plant in the motor manufacturing industry in South Africa. The aim was to enable the manufacturer to influence different facets of job satisfaction in an effort to reduce absenteeism in general. A secondary objective was to identify the job satisfaction facets that have the most impact on absenteeism and their influence upon different types of absenteeism.

The previous chapter reviewed how the research was planned and conducted, highlighting the pros and cons of the methodology (supported by relevant theory). This chapter provides a summary of the research findings (looks at the response rate and the validity of the satisfaction measure, taking into consideration the fact that a majority of the respondents are semi-illiterate and that English is not their first language and then finally discusses the actual findings), analyses the results and ends with the discussion thereof.

### **6.2 Summary of results**

This investigation, which endeavoured to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism among the shopfloor workers in a motor manufacturing plant in the Eastern Cape, was carried out in a sample of 94 respondents. The research was based on the uncritical acceptance of the Human Relations school's prescription, which argues that it makes intuitive sense that job dissatisfaction would predict absence from work (Gruneberg, 1979).

The data for the study was gathered by means of self-administered JDI questionnaires and employee absenteeism statistics from the company's Human Resources department. Suffice to note that the calculated plant's gross absence rate (GAR) for the period under the research review was 2.6%. Table 6.0 below gives a biographical overview of the sample and the area from which the respondents were randomly drawn.

**Table 6.0: Respondents overview.**

Respondents			
		Age (years)	
<b>Total</b>	94	<b>Youngest</b>	21
<b>Female</b>	14	<b>Average</b>	36.3
<b>Male</b>	80	<b>Oldest</b>	55
Work Area			
<b>Paintshop</b>	30	<b>Bodyshop</b>	20
<b>Assembly</b>	32	<b>Other</b>	12

Tests for validity and reliability (Cronbach alpha) were conducted on the JDI and thereafter tests for correlation and regression were conducted on the data.

### 6.2.1 Response rate

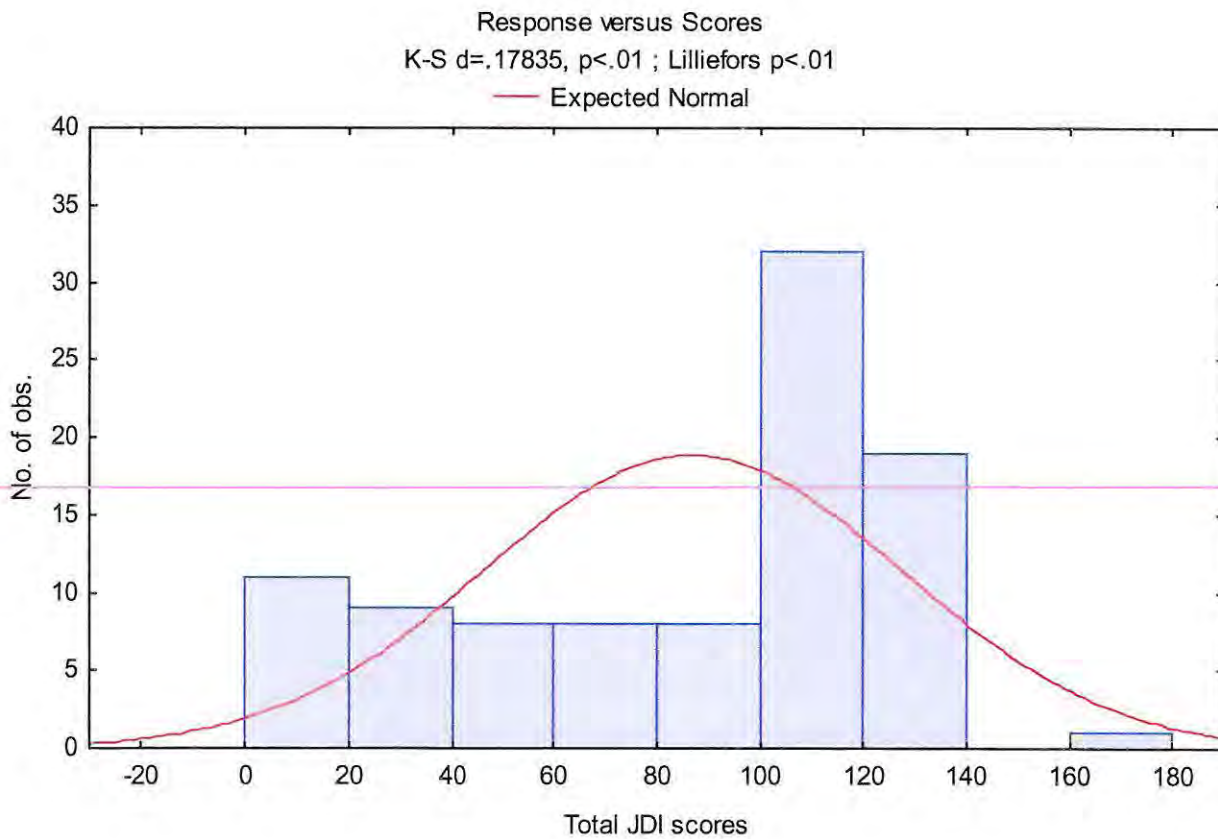
Out of the 150 questionnaires that were sent out, 94 were received back, a response rate of 62%, which was considered acceptable, hence no follow up was done.

The response rate although acceptable was low. Response analysis plays an important part in the sense that it may be hypothesised that it could exert a controlling influence over the emergence of relationships, for example if the combination of low satisfaction and high absence was confined to non-respondents. The graph 6.1 below however shows that 55% of the respondents scored above the average JDI score of 86, and 45% below, a near 50-50 spread. The results therefore reject the above hypothesised relationship on the response rate and its influence over the emergence of relationships.

Each respondent was told the purpose of the research as being purely academic and that they could tear off their names from the questionnaires if they so wished to remain anonymous. Cited below are some of the possible reasons for the low response rate:

- **Trust:** There appeared some degree of mistrust on the purpose of the research. When the questionnaires were being handed out the following questions came out repeatedly; “Why have you chosen me and not the other guys?”; “Will I be penalised if I do not respond?”; “What assurance do I have that this information will not be used against me?”.
- **Reward:** Since the research was academic, some employees wanted to know what was in it for them. What rewards were there for them since they had to “waste their time” in participating in this research. The research was therefore classified by some as a waste of time.

**Graph 6.1: The relationship between number of respondents and the JDI score**



- **Negativism:** Several researches are conducted annually in this organisations, namely, employee and customer satisfaction surveys, and the perceptions from the affected employees is that nothing much come out of these. The result has been a general negative attitude toward any research on their well-being since “nothing will come out of them anyway”. Running concurrently with this research was a company wide research on employees’ satisfaction index (ESI) which only attracted a 36% respondent rate.

### 6.2.2 Measurement tool’s validity

In Chapter 3, under the section: Research questionnaire design, four prerequisites of the measuring instrument were spelt out. As such this research tested the construct validity of the JDI.

Cronbach’s alpha measures how well a set of variables measure a single unidimensional latent construct, and is written as a function of the number of variables or test items (N) and the average inter-correlation among the items ( $\bar{r}$ ) (Cronbach, 1951). When data has a multidimensional structure, Cronbach’s alpha will usually be low. A high alpha indicates high or good reliability, which in-turn refers to how well the tool’s variables measure a single unidimensional latent construct. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 or higher is considered as “acceptable” in most social science applications (Cronbach, 1951).

The JDI questionnaire version used in the research is in English, and was administered among a population of workers who are semi-illiterate and speak Xhosa as their first language. Prior to this research, several suggestions had been put forward to translate the JDI to Xhosa. Such was turned down as the tests conducted on the Arabic version (Maghrabi and Johnson, 1995), in which the alpha value was as low as 0.48 revealed that translations mostly fail to be faithful to the semantic meaning of the original items, resulting in questionable construct validities. Table 6.1 below shows the reliability results of the JDI, for the data that was processed. The test results show a high Cronbach

**Table 6.1: Reliability results of JDI**

RELIABILITY TESTS					
Number of items in scale : 5					
Number of valid cases : n = 94					
SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR SCALE					
Mean	86.28723404		Sum	8111.000000000	
Standard Deviation	40.93940509		Variance	1676.034889000	
Skewness	-0.45484670		Kurtosis	-1.016806939	
Minimum	12.00000000		Maximum	175.000000000	
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>0.86000000</b>		Standardized Alpha	0.882993410	
Average Inter-Correlation: 0.622860084					
	Mean	Var.	StDv.	Item-Toti	Alpha
<b>Work</b>	61.01064	753.436	27.44879	0.849153	0.804257
<b>Supervision</b>	63.88298	954.316	30.89201	0.827710	0.789552
<b>Co-workers</b>	66.12766	985.494	31.39258	0.823668	0.791527
<b>Pay</b>	76.90426	1418.938	37.66879	0.523151	0.874958
<b>Promotion</b>	77.22340	1378.812	37.13235	0.649766	0.860377

alpha of 0.86 in this research indicating that the JDI's construct validity and reliability is high and therefore good. Good validity and reliability results mean that the data that is being measured is unbiased, free from experimental error and relevant to the characteristics being measured (Cronbach, 1951). Such a high alpha augments Smith et. al.'s (1987) argument for the tool's popularity as being comprehensibility by workers of low educational levels and its simplified response format.

### 6.2.3 Correlation of results

Correlation is one of the most important and basic ideas in elaboration of bivariate relationships. Measures of correlation indicate both the strength and the direction (+ or -) of the relationship between a pair of variables (Bryman and Cramer, 1990). Table 6.2 below shows the correlation results obtained for the tested variables.

The table 6.2 below shows how the five JDI facets (work, supervision, co-workers, pay and promotion) correlate with sick absence (paid and unpaid sick leave); AWOL (any unauthorised absence from work, excluding sick absence as defined above) and absenteeism total (sick absence plus AWOL). The JDI total is the satisfaction index for the employee when all the facets have been taken into consideration.

Results from the correlation table below for the total JDI and total absenteeism give the following:

$$r = 0.0277, \quad p = 0.791$$

Statistics logic guide that when p-value > 0.05 we fail to reject H<sub>0</sub>, that is JDI and absenteeism are not correlated which means that the null hypothesis is TRUE.

H<sub>0</sub><sup>1</sup>: JDI and absenteeism not correlated  
 H<sub>1</sub>: JDI and absenteeism correlated

Making reference to the above primary research hypothesis, this then means that job satisfaction and absenteeism are not correlated.

**Table 6.2: Correlations between JDI facets and absenteeism.**

Correlations between JDI facets and Absenteeism										
Correlations N = 94										
		Work	Supv.	Co-wkrs	Pay	Prom	Total	Sick	AWOL	Abs.Total
<b>Work</b>	r	1.0000	0.8256	0.7738	0.4871	0.5905	0.9346	0.0342	0.0440	0.0452
	p	----	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.7430	0.6730	0.6667
<b>Supv.</b>	r	0.8256	1.0000	0.7692	0.4301	0.5545	0.9054	<b>-0.0064</b>	<b>-0.0200</b>	<b>-0.0124</b>
	p	0.0000	----	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.9510	0.8480	0.9060
<b>Co-wkrs</b>	r	0.7738	0.7692	1.0000	0.4698	0.6154	0.8967	0.0406	0.0084	0.0386
	p	0.0000	0.0000	----	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.6980	0.9360	0.7100
<b>Pay</b>	r	0.4871	0.4301	0.4698	1.0000	0.5295	0.6193	0.0381	<b>-0.0506</b>	0.0168
	p	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	----	0.0000	0.0000	0.7150	0.6280	0.8720
<b>Prom.</b>	r	0.5905	0.5545	0.6154	0.5295	1.0000	0.7275	0.0037	0.0417	0.0173
	p	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	----	0.0000	0.9720	0.6900	0.8690
<b>JDI Total</b>	r	0.9346	0.9054	0.8967	0.6193	0.7275	1.0000	0.0269	0.0114	<b>0.0277</b>
	p	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	----	0.7970	0.9130	<b>0.7910</b>
<b>Sick</b>	r	0.0342	-0.0064	0.0406	0.0381	0.0037	0.0269	1.0000	0.1659	0.9436
	p	0.7430	0.9510	0.6980	0.7150	0.9720	0.7970	----	0.1100	0.0000
<b>AWOL</b>	r	0.0440	-0.0200	0.0084	-0.0506	0.0417	0.0114	0.1659	1.0000	0.4831
	p	0.6730	0.8480	0.9360	0.6280	0.6900	0.9130	0.1100	----	0.0000
<b>Total</b>	r	0.0452	-0.0124	0.0389	0.0168	0.0173	0.0277	0.9436	0.4831	1.0000
	p	0.6667	0.9060	0.7100	0.8720	0.8690	0.7910	0.0000	0.0000	----

Legend.      Supv: Supervision                      Abs: Absence  
                  Prom: Promotion                      Co-wkrs: Co-workers  
                  AWOL: Absence Without Leave

According to Bryman and Cramer's (1990) suggestion, a correlation of below 0.19 is very low. The correlation from the above table for total absenteeism and overall job satisfaction is 0.0277, way below 0.19, suggesting no correlation.

Of interest to note is that both supervision and pay show negative correlation results with absenteeism. This supports Patchen's (1960) findings in which he reports a negative correlation between pay and absenteeism. A negatively correlated relationship implies an inverse relationship. In the research's sense this is interpreted to mean that the *more* the workers are satisfied with their supervision and pay, the *less* they will be absent from work. The negative supervision-absenteeism correlation although very weak tends to support the general saying that "people do not resign from their jobs but from their managers (supervisors)". This research adds support to Adler and Golan (1981) and Nicholson et. al. (1977) researches of the steelworkers and telephone operators respectively, in which negative correlations of  $-0.13$  and  $-0.01$ , between supervision and absenteeism are found. (These results are tabulated in table 4.1 in chapter 4). The pay-AWOL relationship supports Dilts et. al.'s (1985) Economic Theory of attendance behaviour, which argues that a majority of people come to work to earn a living, hence will remain at work to maintain a certain standard of living that requires a specific income level. Dissatisfaction with the income levels can compel the employees to work what they perceive as near equivalent work time to generate the insufficient income, hence might absent themselves from work. (Dilts et. al.'s, 1985)

On the other hand positive correlation means that the higher the satisfaction level of those facets the higher the absenteeism. The results of the rest of the facets (coworkers, work and promotion) show very weak positive correlations. This result supports Kerr et. al.'s (1951) and Muchinsky (1977) findings (0.03 and 0.05, respectively) and Locke's (1976) conclusion that the magnitude of the correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism seldom surpasses 0.40. Making reference to Bryman and Cramer's (1990) suggestion, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between the job satisfaction facets and total absenteeism.

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 below summarise the relationship between the job satisfaction facets and overall absenteeism and the summary of the hypotheses' results respectively.

**Table 6.3: Job satisfaction facets versus overall absenteeism**

JDI Facet	Total absenteeism		Remarks
	p-value	r	
Work	0.67	0.0452	$p > 0.05$ Fail to reject $H_0^2$
Supervision	0.91	-0.0124	$p > 0.05$ Fail to reject $H_0^3$
Coworkers	0.71	0.0389	$p > 0.05$ Fail to reject $H_0^4$
Pay	0.87	0.0168	$p > 0.05$ Fail to reject $H_0^5$
Promotion	0.87	0.0173	$p > 0.05$ Fail to reject $H_0^6$

All the above values of r coefficient are way below 0.19 an indication that the relationship between the JDI facets and total absenteeism is very small.

Applying the same statistical concept that when  $p > 0.05$  we fail to reject  $H_0$ , the rest of the research hypotheses status will be as indicated in the table below.

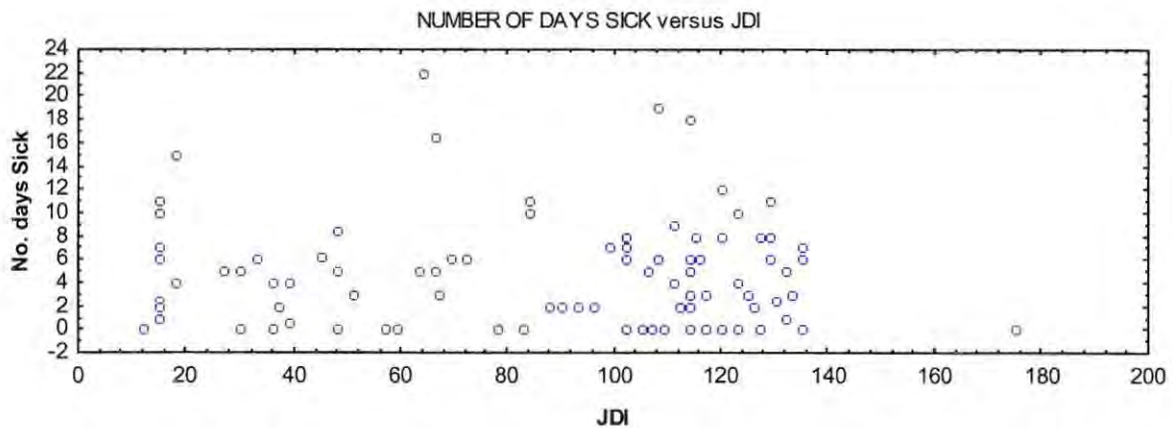
**Table 6.4: Hypotheses results summary**

HYPOTHESIS	RESULT
$H_0^1$ : There is no statistical significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism.	Not rejected
$H_0^2$ : Absenteeism and work are not correlated	Not rejected
$H_0^3$ : Absenteeism and supervision are not correlated	Not rejected
$H_0^4$ : Absenteeism and coworkers are not correlated	Not rejected
$H_0^5$ : Absenteeism and pay are not correlated	Not rejected
$H_0^6$ : Absenteeism and promotion are not correlated	Not rejected

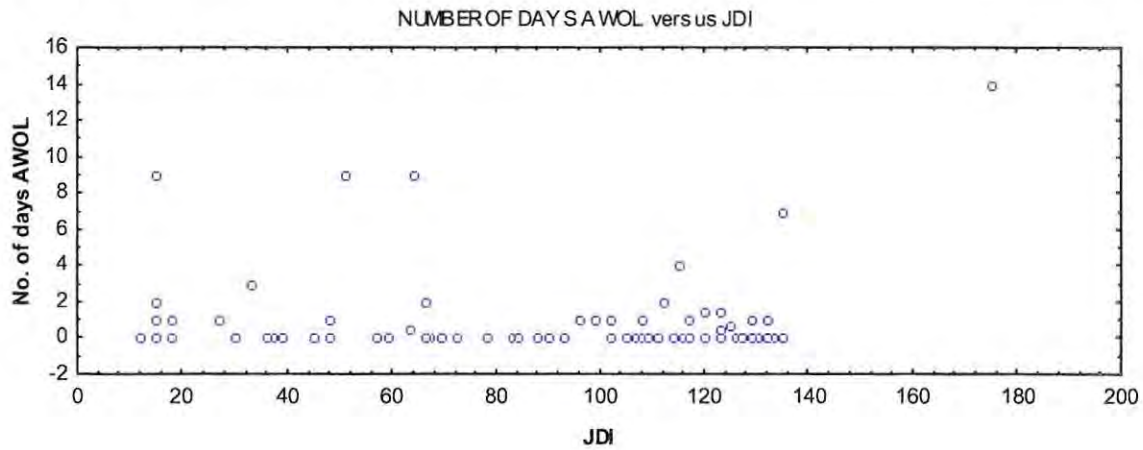
The primary hypothesis H1 was formulated in terms of the proposition of the popular belief and assumption that absenteeism is related to job satisfaction (Gruneberg, 1979), and was investigated by means of correlation analysis which assessed the relationship between the overall job satisfaction of all the sample employees and their total absenteeism statistics. The secondary hypotheses H2 to H6 were concerned with the job satisfaction facets, i.e. their relationship to absenteeism. The results consistently suggest that there is no relationship between job satisfaction (whether by facet or globally) and absenteeism. This supports Chadwick-Jones et. al.'s (1982) conclusion after investigating sixteen plants, that the predictability of absence from job satisfaction facets in most cases was unrelated.

The scatter plots below (figures 6.0, 6.1 and 6.2) give a graphical presentation of the extent of the relationship between the JDI and sick leave, AWOL and total absent days; again a clear picture that no relationship exists.

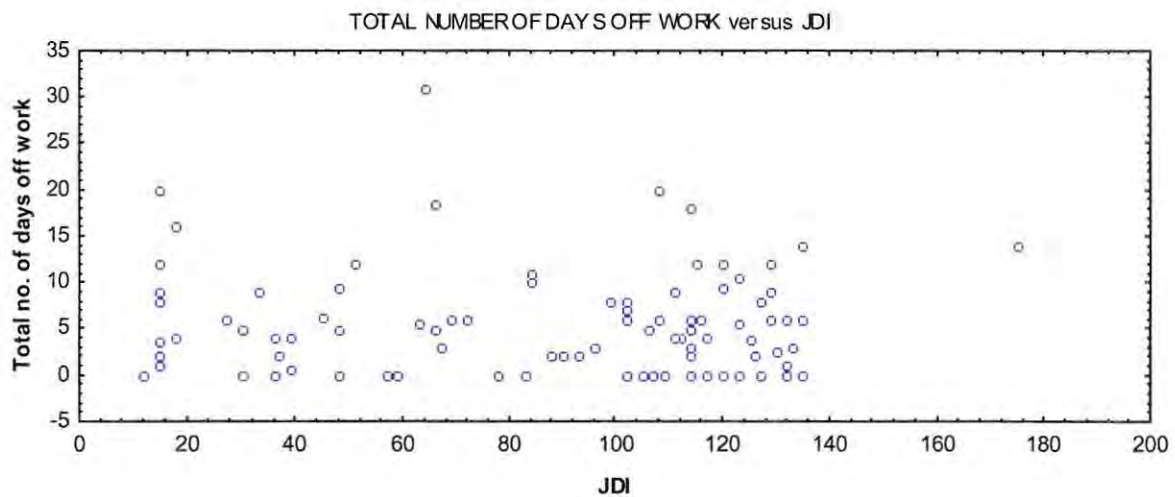
**Figure 6.0: Total sick days versus total JDI**



**Figure 6.1: Total AWOL days versus total JDI**



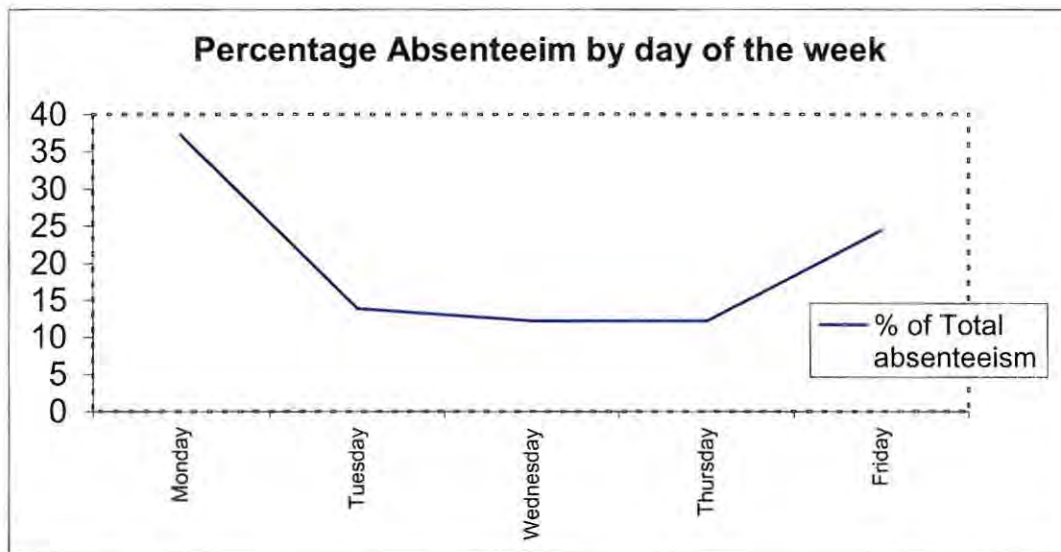
**Figure 6.2: Total number of days off work versus JDI**



#### 6.2.4 Absence pattern

As outlined in chapter 4, one of the main assumptions underlying Nicholson's (1977) model of attendance behaviour is that attendance is normal and habitual, the latter suggesting that some workers are "absence prone". It was therefore necessary to investigate the presence of a pattern on absenteeism to establish the presence/absence of such workers within this organisation. The graph 6.2 below shows the average weekly absenteeism pattern due to sickness and AWOL.

**Graph 6.2: Average weekly absenteeism spectrum**



Mondays and Fridays recorded the highest absenteeism with close to 40% of the absent behaviour occurring on Mondays, followed by Fridays at 25%. This supports Van Tonder's (1987) findings that 40% of South African absence behaviour in the manufacturing industry falls on Mondays. This trend also supports Nicholson's (1977) basis for his absence behaviour model described above.

### **6.3 Discussion of results**

Set out below is the discussion of the results relating to the investigation of the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism, guided by the arguments from literature review and other research studies conducted on the subject

The correlation results of the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism in this plant as shown in table 6.2 gave a figure of 0.0277, a relationship which can best be described as being tenuously related, as also concluded by Nicholson, et. al. (1976).

It is quite clear that the results of this research are in direct conflict with the popular belief and view that job satisfaction is a major cause of industrial absence; a view

supported by Argyle (1972) who suggests that it “makes sense” to assert that workers happy with their jobs will attend work more regularly; Brayfield and Crockett, (1955) and Steers and Rhodes (1984) who argue that dissatisfied workers would be more absent from work than satisfied workers. However, before accepting this conclusion, it is necessary to dispose of alternative explanations of these findings.

#### 6.4 Absenteeism and overall job satisfaction

Before delving into this discussion, it is important that the plant’s absenteeism and job satisfaction profiles be presented. The average gross absence rate (GAR) during the research period was 2.6%, a result far much lower than the provincial industry average absence rate of 5.5% but higher than the 1.68%, the lowest recorded for the province (Klein, 1986). From Table 6.4 the GAR of 5.5% ranks the Eastern Cape fourth highest among the first world countries for which GAR’s are available – a cause for concern for the province.

**Table 6.5: Comparative ranking of Eastern Cape with other countries**

COUNTRIES	Mean %	Highest	Lowest
Canada	11.6		
Denmark	7.7		
France	5.9		
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>17.20%</b>	<b>1.68%</b>
Holland	5.4		
Belgium	3.8		
Greece	3.1		
Germany	3.0		
Sweden	3.0		
Italy	2.9		
Japan	2.5		

The shopfloor workers’ satisfaction index with their job content and context show a balanced state of satisfaction, 45% of them registering a low to medium satisfaction index and the remainder, 55%, registering a medium to high, refer to graph 6.1 above.

How then were these two variables (job satisfaction and absenteeism) linked and why? The primary aim of the research was to investigate the existence of a relationship

between job satisfaction and absenteeism. Once proven, the secondary aim was to identify the job satisfaction facets responsible for this link so that the organisation could utilise the findings to control absenteeism. It was therefore hypothesised (H1<sup>1</sup>) that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism. This hypothesis did not receive support having found a correlation of 0.0277 that suggests an insignificant relationship. The result rather supports Locke's (1976) conclusion that the magnitude of the correlation between job satisfaction and absenteeism seldom surpasses 0.40 and is typically much lower and Nicholson, et al. (1976: 734) who concluded that "at best it seems that job satisfaction and absence from work are tenuously related".

This research's correlation result however is consistent with a growing body of literature questioning the posited link between absence and attitudes, i.e. questioning that absence is an approach-avoidance behaviour (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955). The following uses the theoretical assumptions in absence research to support the findings.

#### **6.4.1 Absence as a habit**

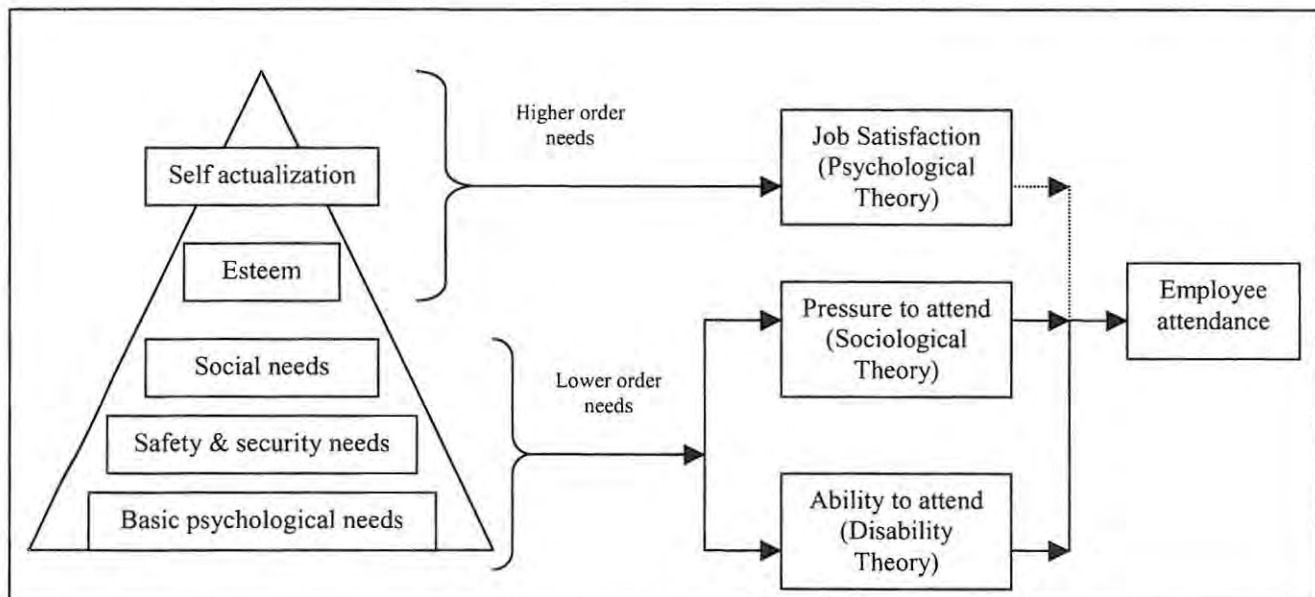
Graph 6.2 presented the average weekly absence trend as bathtub shaped, indicating that up to 40% of the absence behaviour occurs on Mondays, followed by Fridays with a 25% rating. Such trends can be attributed to habitual behaviours, supporting Nicholson's (1977) argument that absence behaviour is normal and habitual – the assumption underlying his attendance motivation model. Habit is implicit in the suggestion that a few workers (the absence prone) are responsible for most absence. For example, since these workers are paid every Friday, it can be argued that the chances of excessive indulgence in alcohol by a few "absence prone" alcohol abusers are high. Since the company's sick leave policy does not call for a doctor's sick leave advice for one-day sick leave absence, these "sick" employees could take advantage of the system and absent themselves from work on the pretext of being off sick. This is compounded by the ready availability of bogus sick certificates from medical practitioners (Van der Merwe, 1988). The fact that 47% of the dismissals in the organisation during the period of research are

due to repeated absence supports Nicholson's (1977) hypothesis that absence is a habit that may not be related to job satisfaction at all.

### 6.4.2 Needs and employee attendance

Having failed to support the proponent theories of the Psychological Theory (Dilts et. al., 1985), namely the passive and strategic withdrawal theories which support a direct relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism, the following discussion explores the possibility of the link between the regional poverty and the ability and pressure of the workers to attend work. Reference is made to the Sociological Theory (Dilts et. al., 1985) covered in chapter 2 and the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943) covered in chapter 3. Figure 6.3 below depicts the link between the Needs Theory and the absence model.

**Figure 6.3: Needs and employee attendance**



Making reference to the Integrated Model of Absence, Steers and Rhodes (1978), define the pressure to attend as being influenced mainly by economic situations and organisational commitment. They also define the ability to attend as referring to instances

where a person wants to come to work and has a high attendance motivation, but fails to do so because of unavoidable limitations, e.g. illness, accidents, family responsibilities and transport problems. It will be argued that these unavoidable limitations are more prevalent among the poor, hence are the main contributors of absenteeism in the researched plant. The demographics of the research population are discussed in Chapter 1.

A combination of Maslow and Steers and Rhodes models would therefore link higher order needs with job satisfaction and lower order needs with pressure and ability to attend as depicted in the above figure 6.3. As mentioned earlier, the shopfloor workers in the research are drawn from the Eastern Cape, an environment with people who are still concerned with fulfilling their lower order needs, hence their attendance behaviours are sociologically oriented and would most likely be influenced by the pressure and ability to attend forces. The Sociological Theory of absence supports the above fact, arguing that attendance behaviour is influenced more by the "... forces within the society that facilitate or limit an individual's opportunity, capacity and willingness to attend work" (Dilts, et. al., 1985: 34).

#### **6.4.3 Ability and pressure to attend**

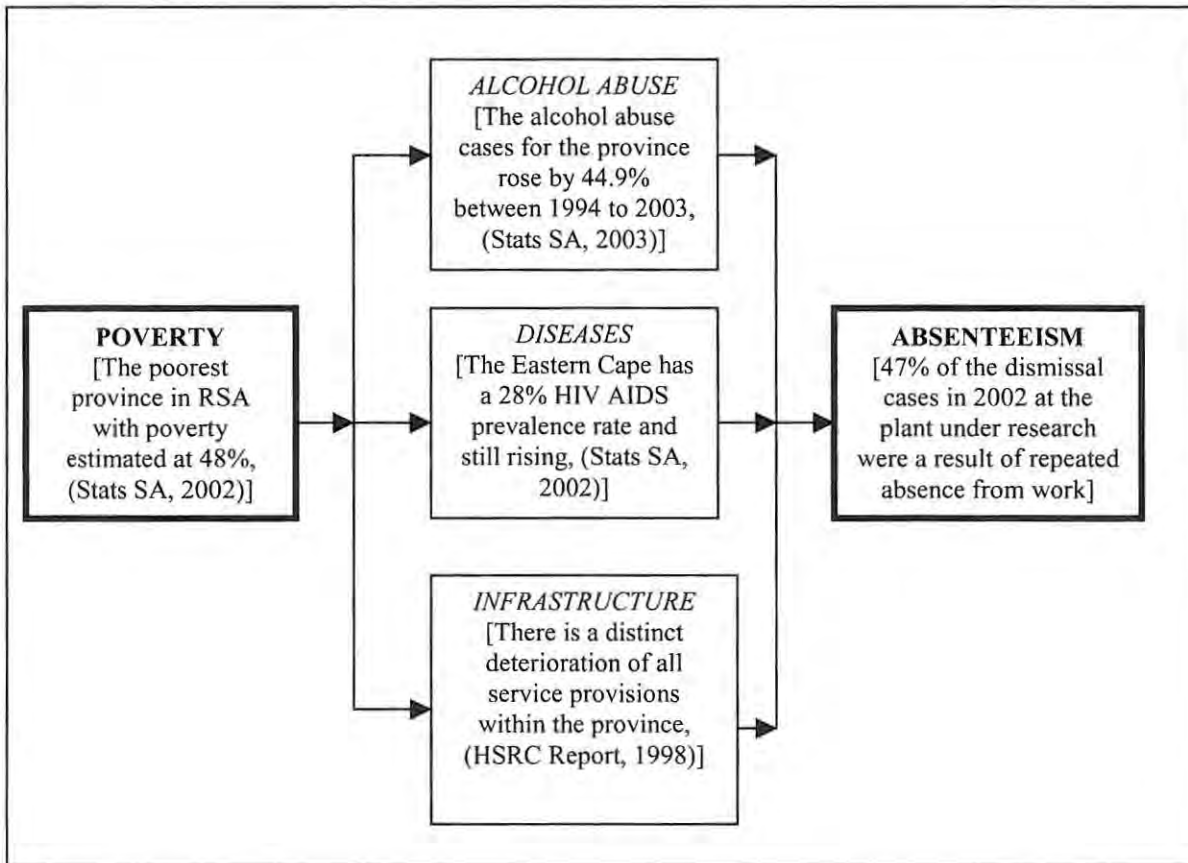
Unrelated or apparently unrelated events, such as a stressful family crisis (family death) or some behavioural disorder (alcoholism) may lead to absence. These "causes" may be unrelated to the organisational conditions, but to the external environment. As supported by the Sociological Theory (Dilts, et. al., 1985), poverty is one condition, prevalent in the Eastern Cape that create conditions that affect the employees' ability to attend work and at the same time exerts pressure on them to attend. The following is an explanation using the model in figure 6.3 above, of how the provincial socio-economic situation has contributed to reject the hypothesis that job satisfaction and absenteeism are related.

#### **6.4.4 Poverty and absenteeism**

Twomey (1986) in the study of the correlates of a culture-of-poverty measure, concludes that absence is more rampant in a poverty stricken culture than in an affluent one, an

indication that poverty influences absence behaviour. The details of this relationship are covered in chapter 2, under the Sociological theories of absenteeism. Taking the Eastern Cape statistics into consideration, adopting the poverty-absenteeism link figure 2.1 in chapter 2 would look as shown in figure 6.3 below.

**Figure 6.4: Poverty-absenteeism relationship**



#### 6.4.5 Poverty and pressure to attend

Poverty can obscure an otherwise obvious relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism. It can be argued that the workers, illiterate and poverty stricken as they are, firstly, with no other chances of getting alternative employment within the “poor province”, will almost always be present at work, whether dissatisfied or not – a phenomenon which supports Dilts, et. al.’s (1985) theory of attendance motivation in relation to the sociological pressures. Secondly, with most of these workers being the

bread winners of their families, dissatisfied as they might be, they can not afford to lose a penny due to absence, hence will attend work, as the saying goes, “Beggars are not choosers”. The relationship between the worker and his/her work is purely for life sustenance – to work at all costs to earn a living. This is in support of Dilts et. al.’s (1985) economic theory that argues that an employee will almost always attend work if the income generated is less than necessary to maintain the desired standard of living.

The researched organisation has an attendance incentive scheme, a tool used by several organisations to enhance attendance (Lawler and Hackmann, 1969). Although the attendance incentive scheme has proved successful in some organisation, this has not been the case for this organisation (refer to section of motivation of study). Steers and Rhodes (1978) found out that the primary factor capable of influencing attendance motivation when this scheme is being used is the nature of the incentive. Monthly prize draws for a mere four lucky individuals, as is the case in this organisation can be perceived as unfair. Why should all contribute when the chances of being rewarded for good attendance are four in two and half thousand? Rather reward all who qualify. Be this as it may be for the organisation, generally poverty tends to exert pressure on workers to attend whether satisfied with their jobs or not – who would not want to earn extra? This is in contravention to Robbins’ (2001) conclusion that people who dislike their jobs will more likely be absent from their jobs than people who like their jobs.

The above facts certainly support two of Dilts et. al.’s (1985) theories of attendance behaviour, the economic and sociological theories, more than they do the psychological theory, which argues for an absent-job satisfaction relationship.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it therefore seems that the common view of absence as a pain-reductive response on the part of the worker to his work experience is naïve, narrow and empirically unsupportable. The affective response of the worker to his work situation is epiphenominal to the causes of absence in the majority of cases, though it itself may

acquire causal potency under certain, as yet unspecified circumstances. To reveal such circumstances, the attention of researchers must turn to viewing the dynamics of attendance motivation; viewing absence as behaviour that is adaptive and proactive to diverse individual needs, goals, habits and to situational constraints, norms and rules.

The next chapter is the last one. It summarises this research, from literature review to the discussion of the results and makes recommendations for further research based on the experience gathered in this research. It ends by concluding the study.

## 7 CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Summary

This research set out to investigate the relationship between and job satisfaction and absenteeism of shop floor workers in a motor manufacturing plant in the Eastern Cape, and to identify the job satisfaction facets that have the most influence on absenteeism.

The literature review revealed that there was no definition that can cover all the approaches to the phenomenon of absenteeism as the latter means “... different things to different people at the different times in different situations” (Johns and Nicholson, 1982: 134). The literature review also revealed that job satisfaction is one of the most widely researched phenomenon and like absenteeism, “... there is a serious lack of good theory about the very meaning of job satisfaction” (Wanous and Lawler, 1972: 102). The abundance of research attention on these two phenomena has resulted in the failure to find a single theoretical framework that explains their relationship. It was also revealed from literature that two schools of thought have emerged from the research on the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism. The first school is driven by the common belief that workers who are satisfied with their jobs will attend work more regularly and permanently than the dissatisfied workers who will seek opportunities to avoid going to work (Argyle, 1972). The second school argues that factors such as the ability and pressure to attend (as functions of the individual’s need system) and the employee’s normal/habitual behaviours influence the attendance behaviour far more than job satisfaction.

The empirical results of this research show that there is no statistical relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism and suggests that in this research context, poverty (illustrated in the research results by the negative correlation between “pay” and “AWOL”) could be playing a more influential role on absenteeism than job satisfaction.

## 7.2 Recommendations for further research

It was pointed out in Chapter one that no known research has been conducted on the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction in the motor manufacturing industry in South Africa. The present investigation could therefore be viewed as the first systematic attempt to investigate this relationship in the motor industry. Based on the experience gathered in this study, a number of recommendations can be suggested concerning future research in this field.

As far as the samples are concerned, replication (and possible enlargement) of the study in other provinces would be highly desirable. In this regard, similar studies at motor manufacturing plants in Guateng and KwaZulu Natal would seem appropriate.

Although the English version of the JDI questionnaire that was used gave good reliability and validity results, it is still recommended considering the illiteracy amongst the shopfloor workers, that a Xhosa version of the JDI be produced and a replication of the study conducted. Obviously the construct validity of such a version would have to be determined, and if need be, refinements done to attain the same high reliability levels as the English version.

The inclusion of other antecedents that could have a bearing on absenteeism is deemed necessary. It is considered that notable omissions in the present study were the impact of poverty on the ability and pressure to attend and culture on the attendance motivation. As discussed under the Discussion of Results section, poverty has been found to have a direct influence on drug abuse (MacQueen, 1999), which in turn has been found to affect absenteeism (Berry and Boland, 1977). The impact of culture on attendance motivation, although very controversial still has to be explored. The second omission is the consideration of the extent to which the absenteeism policies of the organisation are permissive. Measures of permissiveness could include the extent to which the absence relief pool is being relied upon, the volume of paid expenses due to absenteeism, the ease of being absent and the extent to which excessive absence is punished or ignored.

Most of the research on employee absenteeism has involved simple bivariate correlational studies in which absences are correlated with some other variable to which they are intuitively thought to be related, i.e. attitudes. Only recently, have multivariate studies that attempt to take into consideration the possible simultaneous influences of several variables on absence appeared in literature (Ilgen & Hollenback, 1977; Chelora & Farr, 1983). It is therefore recommended that the influence of a package of variables, work and nonwork, on absenteeism be explored.

There is a body of theoretical literature that suggests attitudes may be less potent predictors of absence than the personal value system of workers (Rokeach, 1973). Little research has sought to investigate the role that personal values and non-work related features of an individual's life might play in absence. Rather than continuing to conceptualise absence primarily in terms of a process of withdrawal from negative work environment, which from a managerial perspective conveniently places such behaviour under the direct control of organisations, it is likely to prove more fruitful to view absence more in terms of a process in which workers are drawn out of the workplace by valued features on their nonwork environments.

Finally and perhaps most important, comprehensive research designs are needed to estimate the relative importance of the many variables identified (culture, poverty, rewards, etc) as each influences attendance. For example, is the organisation's attendance incentive scheme more influential than the prevailing economic conditions or than job satisfaction? How much variance exists across individuals concerning the relative importance of these variables? Answers to such questions would advance the organisation's understanding of the processes leading up to attendance behaviour and why the attendance incentive scheme has been a failure.

Throughout the literature on employee absenteeism, there is a prevailing assumption that all absenteeism is detrimental to organisational well-being. It is possible, however, that some absenteeism may in fact be "healthy" for organisations in that such behaviour can

allow for temporary escape from stressful situations, thereby potentially contributing to the mental health of employees. It would be useful if future studies could examine the extent to which changes in absence rates do or do not have adverse consequences for other aspects of the organisational effectiveness and thus determine the “optimum” accepted absence.

In general (this research included), absenteeism studies have focussed on shopfloor workers and have ignored managerial personnel either because of lack of data or because absenteeism statistics that are available suggest that little problems exist with managers. However, in view of the increased autonomy that managers possess (which makes short absences from work relatively easy), it may be useful to reexamine de facto absenteeism amongst such employees. This reexamination really suggests the need to examine the productivity of such employees, and whether job satisfaction has a far noticeable link to absenteeism.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

The research's lack of support for the hypothesis that job dissatisfaction causes absenteeism does not imply that absence behaviour is any less important or less researchable. It does imply that a more efficacious approach to it must be undertaken than merely to correlate it with satisfaction measures. The focus of an organisation interested in absenteeism behaviour must be on those factors within the organisation that influence the provision of valued rewards (or sanctions) for attendance behaviour.

To conclude, it appears quite clear that the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism is complex and unclear. What this research has undoubtedly shown is that many other factors, unrelated to job satisfaction may also be influencing absenteeism, suggesting that the common view of absence as a pain-reductive response on the part of the worker to his work experience is naïve, narrow and empirically unsupportable. The affective response of the worker to his work situation is epiphenominal to the causes of absence in the majority of the cases, though it itself may acquire causal potency under

certain, as yet unspecified, circumstances. To reveal such circumstances, the attention of researchers must turn to the dynamics of attendance motivation; viewing absence as behaviour that is adaptive and proactive to diverse individual needs, goals, habits, and to situational constraints, norms and rules.

**Appendix A: Job Descriptive Index (sample)**

**Answer Yes if it describes your job, No if it does not or N/A if you cannot decide**

**You can tear off your name from the corner if you wish to remain anonymous**

Work Area : \_\_\_\_\_

Male/Female: \_\_\_\_\_

Age : \_\_\_\_\_

**WORK**

- Fascinating
- Routine
- Satisfying
- Boring
- Good
- Creative
- Respected
- Hot
- Pleasant

- Useful
- Tiresome
- Healthful
- Challenging
- On your feet
- Frustrating
- Simple
- Endless
- Gives sense of pleasure

**SUPERVISION**

- Asks my advice
- Hard to please
- Impolite
- Praises good work
- Tactful
- Influential
- Up-to-date
- Doesn't supervise enough
- Quick tempered

- Tells me where I stand
- Annoying
- Stubborn
- Knows job well
- Bad
- Intelligent
- Leaves me on my own
- Around when needed
- Lazy

**CO-WORKERS**

- Stimulating
- Boring
- Slow
- Ambitious
- Stupid
- Responsible
- Fast
- Intelligent
- Easy to make enemies
- Talk too much
- Smart
- Lazy
- Unpleasant
- No privacy
- Active
- Narrow interests
- Loyal
- Hard to meet

**PAY**

- Income adequate for normal expenses
- Satisfactory profit sharing
- Barely live on income
- Bad
- Income provides luxuries
- Insecure
- Less than I deserve
- Highly paid
- Underpaid

**PROMOTION**

- Good opportunity for advancement
- Opportunity somewhat limited
- Promotion on ability
- Dead-end job
- Good chance for promotion
- Unfair promotion policy
- Infrequent promotions
- Regular promotions
- Fairly good chance for promotion

(Source: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, the University of Michigan)X

**Appendix B: JDI results and absenteeism statistics**

Independent Variable										Dependent Variable		
JDI RESULTS										ABSENTEEISM STATS		
No.	Plt	Age	Sex	Work	Supv.	Co-wkrs	Pay	Prom	Total	Sick	AWOL	Total
1	P/S	32	M	21	30	6	12	9	78	0	0	0
2	P/S	39	M	45	30	24	12	15	126	2	0	2
3	ASSY	32	M	21	9	9	6	3	48	5	0	5
7	P/S	40	M	15	36	17	0	15	83	0	0	0
9	ASSY	31	M	39	27	27	6	18	117	3	1	4
11	B/S	34	M	23	23	36	12	12	106	5	0	5
12	P/S	39	F	43	32	22	15	7	119	42	0	42
13	B/S	51	M	39	27	24	9	15	114	6	0	6
17	B/S	32	M	37	30	34	15	14	130	2.5	0	2.5
18	B/S	42	M	12	21	21	9	3	66	16.5	2	18.5
19	P/S	45	M	24	27	36	0	9	96	2	1	3
20	B/S	44	M	17	17	17	8	8	67	3	0	3
21	B/S	48	M	24	33	33	12	12	114	2	0	2
22	B/S	38	M	33	30	30	12	15	120	12	0	12
24	B/S	30	M	43	27	30	6	6	112	2	2	4
25	B/S	26	M	16	16	16	8	8	64	22	9	31
27	B/S	29	M	9	21	18	15	9	72	6	0	6
29	ASSY	31	F	9	9	15	9	6	48	0	0	0
31	ASSY	55	M	42	36	30	6	0	114	0	0	0
32	P/S	40	M	36	27	27	18	15	123	10	0.5	10.5
33	B/S	36	M	3	3	3	3	3	15	1	0	1
35	ASSY	33	M	54	40	42	18	21	175	0	14	14
36	ASSY	31	F	18	21	24	12	9	84	10	0	10
38	P/S	43	M	3	3	3	3	3	15	2	0	2
39	ASSY	30	M	24	36	30	18	15	123	4	1.5	5.5
40	ASSY	40	M	36	27	30	12	6	111	4	0	4
41	B/S	27	M	21	30	30	12	9	102	8	0	8
42	P/S	35	M	39	24	21	12	6	102	6	0	6
43	COLT	40	M	9	9	9	3	9	39	4	0	4
47	P/S	40	M	32	30	27	15	12	116	6	0	6
48	ASSY	35	M	15	24	15	9	6	69	6	0	6
49	COLT	40	M	24	30	18	12	6	90	2	0	2
51	ASSY	33	F	18	6	6	6	9	45	6.25	0	6.25
52	P/S	43	F	33	21	27	15	21	117	0	0	0
56	ASSY	41	M	3	3	3	3	3	15	11	9	20
57	B/S	40	M	24	24	21	18	12	99	7	1	8
58	ASSY	47	M	42	24	21	21	6	114	0	0	0
59	P/S	38	M	15	12	9	9	3	48	8.5	1	9.5
60	P/S	33	M	40	34	24	15	12	125	3	0.75	3.75
61	B/S	31	M	18	12	12	6	3	51	3	9	12
62	COLT	32	M	6	6	6	13	6	37	2	0	2
65	P/S	47	M	6	6	3	0	0	15	2.5	1	3.5
66	ASSY	40	M	33	30	24	9	18	114	18	0	18
70	P/S	23	M	6	9	12	3	3	33	6	3	9
72	COLT	38	F	3	3	3	6	3	18	15	1	16
73	ASSY	29	M	3	3	3	3	3	15	7	2	9
74	P/S	30	M	30	24	10	15	9	88	2	0	2
75	P/S	29	M	36	30	27	18	18	129	6	0	6
76	P/S	36	F	34	23	24	18	8	107	0	0	0
78	P/S	35	M	43	32	29	13	16	133	3	0	3

No.	Plt	Age	Sex	Work	Supv.	Co-wkrs	Pay	Prom	Total	Sick	AWOL	Total
79	P/S	29	F	42	33	24	18	12	129	11	1	12
82	ASSY	32	F	36	42	37	11	6	132			0
85	COLT	36	M	0	3	3	3	3	12	0	0	0
87	COLT	45	M	24	27	36	6	9	102	7	0	7
89	ASSY	33	M	39	30	27	12	12	120	8	1.5	9.5
90	P/S	33	F	30	24	30	12	12	108	6	0	6
92	COLT	34	F	15	15	15	9	3	57	0	0	0
95	B/S	44	M	39	30	24	3	6	102	6	1	7
97	ASSY	27	M	45	36	27	12	12	132	5	1	6
100	ASSY	31	F	9	33	11	3	3	59	0	0	0
102	ASSY	28	M	3	3	3	3	3	15	6	2	8
103	ASSY	34	M	33	21	30	6	18	108	19	1	20
104	ASSY	42	M	45	33	27	15	12	132	1	0	1
105	ASSY	44	M	24	27	30	12	21	114	5	0	5
106	B/S	49	M	39	24	27	6	15	111	9	0	9
107	B/S	40	F	6	6	6	6	6	30	0	0	0
108	COLT	41	M	6	9	6	6	9	36	0	0	0
109	COLT	31	M	6	6	6	6	6	30	5	0	5
110	P/S	35	M	40	34	21	16	16	127	0	0	0
112	ASSY	30	M	12	24	15	9	6	66	5	0	5
113	ASSY	28	M	15	9	24	9	6	63	5	0.5	5.5
115	ASSY	32	M	33	39	24	9	15	120	0	0	0
117	B/S	38	M	39	30	24	3	6	102	7	0	7
118	P/S	28	M	41	29	36	10	11	127	8	0	8
119	P/S	33	F	42	30	24	15	12	123	0	0	0
121	COLT	40	M	18	15	12	6	6	57	0	0	0
122	P/S	31	M	43	23	34	16	13	129	8	1	9
124	ASSY	30	M	36	30	33	3	7	109	0	0	0
125	COLT	35	M	3	3	3	3	3	15	10	2	12
126	P/S	28	M	20	26	22	13	3	84	11	0	11
127	P/S	35	M	48	48	12	0	7	115	8	4	12
129	ASSY	39	M	42	36	30	6	0	114	3	0	3
130	ASSY	34	M	48	36	27	9	15	135	0	0	0
132	COLT	47	M	24	27	24	15	12	102	0	0	0
134	ASSY	21	M	9	12	6	6	6	39	0.5	0	0.5
135	ASSY	38	M	27	33	33	12	9	114	0	0	0
137	B/S	48	M	27	18	18	18	12	93	2	0	2
138	P/S	35	M	3	6	3	3	3	18	4	0	4
140	B/S	33	M	39	33	39	12	12	135	6	0	6
141	COLT	36	M	9	9	6	6	6	36	4	0	4
142	P/S	37	M	3	3	3	3	3	15	2	0	2
143	ASSY	30	M	45	30	30	12	18	135	7	7	14
144	P/S	35	M	45	30	24	21	15	135	0	0	0
145	ASSY	36	M	6	9	6	3	3	27	5	1	6
147	P/S	38	M	42	27	27	0	9	105	0	0	0

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