

**Absenteeism and the Effectiveness of
Absence Management Strategies –
A study within Bausch and Lomb**

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AUTHORSHIP DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of B.A. (Hons) in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive environment companies are increasingly focusing on issues that affect cost and productivity. One of those issues is workplace absence. It is estimated that over 12 million working days are lost every year because of absence, this equates to 350 million euro per annum. Absence management is therefore becoming a priority for organisations. The objectives of this thesis were to examine how absenteeism is defined, the costs and causes of absenteeism, absence measurement and more specifically examining the effectiveness of various management strategies employed to control or reduce absence. Presently absence levels in Bausch and Lomb, Waterford are in excess of seven percent, with a resulting annual cost for the company sick pay scheme in excess of 1.1 million euro. Due to the high level of absence and the significant cost of the sick pay scheme, research was conducted using two business units within the Bausch and Lomb manufacturing facility as a case study. The case study involved gathering and analysing statistical data pertaining to absence, conducting six semi-structured interviews with management in the business units and surveying 160 employees. The research has shown that most organisations do not measure the indirect costs of absenteeism and consequently do not have a true picture of the costs of absenteeism. It is recommended therefore that companies should include both direct and indirect costs in respect of absenteeism. The literary research is supported by the findings of the secondary research in relation to causes. The main cause of absenteeism is shown to be genuine illness, however, family responsibilities, shift patterns and job motivation also adversely affect absence. This was most apparent when comparing absence levels between the two shift patterns, where specifically in one business unit

the absence levels for the twelve hour weekend shift was consistently higher than the eight hour three shift pattern.

The various strategies employed to address absenteeism included the use of return to work interviews, disciplinary procedures and family friendly initiatives. The findings of the literature research highlighted the effectiveness of each of the aforementioned, this was supported by the research findings, where in one business unit, all of the aforementioned strategies were used, but not consistently. In contrast, the other business unit examined as part of the case study had lower absence levels, and these strategies were applied on a consistent basis. The primary research also highlighted the need to measure absence, as again, absence was lower in the business unit that measured absence on a monthly basis. Absence measurement and consistent use of strategies such as return to work interviews is recommended. The availability of a sick pay scheme was initially presented as a strategy for controlling absence, however, the research findings have shown that the availability of a sick pay scheme can increase absenteeism rather than reduce it. A review of sick pay scheme criteria is therefore recommended. The research findings support the case that variations in absence levels are indicative of strategies that are employed to manage absence.

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PREFACE

Working in the Human Resource Department of Bausch and Lomb, I have both a professional and personal interest in absence management, in fact, absence management is increasingly becoming an essential function within Human Resources. My own situation, where 40% of my time is spent working with front line management on absence, is indicative of the present situation industry wide. More and more research is being conducted in this area, and according to statistics from the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) (2004) absenteeism costs Irish industry over 350 million euro per year – this is staggering. The IBEC findings are supported by the present situation in Bausch and Lomb where absence costs in excess of 1 million euros per annum. Of even greater concern is the fact that according to recent research the levels of absence are on the increase - according to a Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) UK survey conducted in 2004, sickness absence averages over nine working days per year and costs £588 sterling per employee – an increase of 3.7% on 2003 figures.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Given the pressures being placed upon organisations to achieve enhanced levels of performance and reduced costs, it is essential that aspects of organisational life that adversely affect these are minimised. One such aspect, is absenteeism. In a cost conscious and increasingly competitive market place, absenteeism can have a significant impact on the company performance. Companies can no longer afford to carry unnecessary absence, and hence there is an increased focus on the issue of eliminating, or at the very least reducing, unnecessary levels of absenteeism.

According to a Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) UK survey conducted in 2004, sickness absence averages 9.1 working days per year and costs £588 sterling per employee. The situation in the UK is comparable to Ireland, where absenteeism, which typically runs at 4% in Ireland, results in 12 million working days lost per year. According to statistics from the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) (2004) absenteeism costs Irish industry over 350 million euro per year. Subsequently absence or more specifically, absence management is increasingly becoming an essential function within Human Resources. A review of available literature has presented arguments supporting the case for reducing absence by adopting various management interventions such as absence management policies, use of disciplinary action and availability of family friendly initiatives. Working in the field of Human Resources, the researcher was keen to challenge this thinking in a practical situation.

This thesis contains a review of the various theoretical approaches to absence management and subsequently examines the effects of the practical application of these approaches on workplace absence. The objectives of this thesis were to examine the various definitions of absenteeism, to examine the costs and causes of absenteeism and strategies used to manage absence and subsequently, to ascertain if any relationship exists between management

strategies and levels of absenteeism i.e. what is the effectiveness of various strategies in managing absence.

Research was conducted using two business units of a multinational healthcare company, based in Ireland, specifically Bausch and Lomb Waterford. Bausch and Lomb is a technology-based healthcare corporation employing 12000 worldwide. Bausch and Lomb Waterford, who are part of this global network, began manufacture of contact lenses in 1981, and currently employees in excess of 1700 people. The facility is a 24 hour, 7 day a week operation. However, even in a progressive organisation such as Bausch and Lomb who continually strive to incorporate best practice initiatives, absence levels were significantly higher than the national average. In 2004 the company wide absence was 7.8%, compared to the national average of 4.65% for their industry sector. Furthermore, there was a significant difference in absence levels within two business units of this organisation, namely High Water Cast Moulding (HWCM) and Reverse Process 3 (RP3). This research uses these business units as a case study to examine if a relationship exists between the absence control policies employed and the levels of absence.

The context of this research is presented in chapter two. A review of available literature in relation to defining absence, costs and causes of absence and absence management strategies is presented in chapter three. Chapter four contains an outline of how the research was undertaken and a justification for the methodology used. The research findings are presented in chapter five. In chapter six the research findings are analysed and discussed in the context of the findings of the literature review. Conclusions and recommendations arising from the research of this dissertation are presented in the final chapter.

Chapter 2

CONTEXT

Industrial Development Authority (IDA) Ireland has named Ireland the “healthcare capital of Europe” and states that over the last 10 years, every United States (US) medical device company looking for a European base as selected Ireland as its preferred site. This IDA statement is backed up by the fact that 17 of the world’s top 20 healthcare companies are represented in Ireland. The healthcare/medical sector is one of the fastest growing employment sectors in Ireland, presently employing over 19,000. The direct corporate tax contribution from this industry sector amounted to over \$250 million in the last two years. The importance of attracting and keeping healthcare based companies in Ireland cannot be underestimated. Multinational healthcare companies are attracted to Ireland because of favourable tax incentives and a readily available well educated workforce. In the context of this dissertation, absence can have a significant impact on the competitive advantage for these multinationals, as absenteeism costs employers financially and through loss of productivity. According to the 2004 Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) workplace absence survey, the average absence rate for the healthcare industry sector is 4.65%. The subject of this dissertation is a healthcare company, namely Bausch and Lomb, who are based in Waterford, Ireland. Directly employing in excess of 1700 people in the south east of Ireland, Bausch and Lomb are one of the largest employers in the region, and their presence is significant in the overall economy of the region. The overall absence rate in Bausch and Lomb is 7.8%, which is almost 70% higher than the general industry rate. This dissertation reviews the absence management strategies employed within two business units of Bausch and Lomb and examines the relationship between absence management strategies and the levels of absence.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0. Introduction

The following chapter contains a review of available literature on the main areas of research this includes a review of literature pertaining to defining absenteeism, categorising the causes and costs of absenteeism, measuring absenteeism and subsequently a review of strategies available to manage absenteeism.

3.1. Absenteeism defined

According to Hourihan (1993) the Irish Management Institute (IMI) define absenteeism as time lost because of sickness or any other reason not excused through statutory entitlement or conditions of employment. However, he also highlights that consideration must be given to the inclusion of variants such as voluntary or involuntary absence - involuntary being when the employee is genuinely sick or unable to attend work and voluntary being when the opportunity and motivation to attend work no longer exists for whatever reason.

In the definition presented by Pilbeam and Corbridge (2002) absenteeism includes any occasion when an employee fails to report for work when contractually obliged to do so or when they fail to contact their employer as outlined in their sick absence procedure or sanctioned leave arrangements.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2001) define absenteeism as

“the manifestation of a decision by an employee not to present themselves at their place of work at a time when it is planned by management that they should be in attendance”.

The definition of absenteeism used by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) (2004) includes an unscheduled disruption of the work process due to days lost as a result of sickness or any other non-statutory leave. This definition includes: Sick leave, excused time off (bereavement leave/exam and study leave/marriage leave/paternity leave) and unexcused time off. This definition would not include: Annual leave; public holidays; absence on protective leave; days lost due to strikes and lay-offs/redundancies.

The importance of defining absenteeism is highlighted by IBEC in their Workplace Absence Survey (2004) where it is outlined that whatever definition is decided upon within an organisation, it should be used consistently so that attendance can be compared over time and for different parts of the organisation.

3.2. Costs of absenteeism

In discussing absenteeism and the costs on an organisation, Taylor (1998) is of the opinion that consideration must be given to both the direct costs such as payment of sick pay, and the indirect costs such as lower quality products, re-organisation of the workplace and training.

Research conducted by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) (2001) in the United Kingdom concludes that absence imposes significant costs on employers, and while some costs were directly financial (for example, salaries paid to absent employees who are not productive, or the cost of employing temporary workers) others were less easily quantifiable (for example, the impact on the morale of other employees, or additional management time involved in managing absence). However, their findings also indicate that companies, although they are aware of the financial implications of absence, do not measure the financial costs other than the sick pay scheme payments. Despite the fact that the cost of absence can be significant, the finding of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) Employee Absence Survey (2004), was that only 46% of the respondents to the survey monitored the cost of sickness absence. The findings of the survey also shows that of those who did monitor the cost, occupational sick pay was most likely to be included in the cost of absence, followed by statutory sick pay. Less than 50% of employers included the cost of replacement labour, additional overtime or the impact of reduced performance.

Dunn and Wilkinson (2002) refer to the costs of absenteeism as being generated in a number of ways, one of the most immediate and substantial being the direct payment of sick-pay to employees, and the cost of paying replacement labour - in effect the double payment in the event of absence.

In order to measure the overall impact of absence on an organisation, Evans and Walters (2003) suggest that using a frequency index to measure absence may give a better indication of the overall impact, particularly in respect of cost.

In relation to measuring absence, the CIPD Employee Absence Survey (2004) found that companies measurement systems included lost time measures and frequency measures. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) (2000) suggests the use of frequency rate for measuring absence – this is based on measuring the average number of spells of absence per employee and is useful in determining if absence is due to a number of short absences or a few long absences. However, the DTI (2001) research highlights that even in companies where measurement systems exist, there was lack of consistency with recording and hence measuring absence.

According to Evans and Walters (2003) the most common method of measuring sickness absence is to calculate the number of lost days per shift as a proportion of the potential total number of days per shift worked. This method was used in a survey conducted by the Small Firms Association (SFA) in 2002, in which they found that the national average for absenteeism was 3.4% or 7.8 working days per employee, this equated to a financial loss to Irish business of €112 million per year.

3.3. Absenteeism Causes

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), (2001) simplify the causes of absenteeism into planned and unplanned, short term and long term - short term unplanned absence, was primarily related to sick leave due to genuine illness, however, other reasons included illness of family members, bereavement, childcare arrangements breaking down at short notice and high living at the weekend. The main type of long term unplanned absence includes genuine

illness, negative feelings about the job or other problems at work resulting in stress related or similar illness. In terms of planned absence, DTI includes statutory leave, and other leave under which an employer has some obligation, including maternity, paternity, religious holidays, career breaks, study leave and trade union duties. Planned absence according to the DTI can be categorised as long term or short term.

According to McHugh (2001) there may be many reasons why an employee may be absent from work - they may be experiencing ill health, they may have family commitments, or there may be an underlying issue or aspect of the work environment that causes an employee to absent themselves from the workplace. This is supported by Bennett (2002) who believes that although the most common type of absence involves the employee being prevented from attending work due to illness or injury, the root cause of the illness or injury may be partly attributable to the way the organisation is managed.

The findings of the University of Saskatchewan (2001) were similar as they state that causes of absence can be categorised as: Personal which would include the caring for sick children, eldercare and life balance; Illness or injury and work related which would include job stress, nature of work e.g. lack of challenge, and working conditions e.g. uncomfortable environment.

3.3.1. Illness or injury

A survey conducted by the CIPD in 2004 shows that the most common reason given for time off work due to sickness are minor illnesses such as colds and flu, stress is the main cause of long term absence in non manual staff, and back pain the main cause in manual staff. Similarly, O'Reilly (2000) states that the main cause of absence is genuine illness. This is supported by the findings of a 2004 absenteeism survey conducted by IBEC, that identified minor illness as the main reason for short term absence. Pilbeam and Corbridge (2002) state that

“The root cause of sickness absence is the fact that an employee is unwell, and where the employee is incapacitated there exists a state of being unfit for work”

They continue in their discussion to argue that being unwell and unfit for work are not necessarily synonymous. Steers and Porter (1991) identify the scope for the exercise of employee judgement in deciding the point at which being unwell corresponds with being unfit, thus indicating that employee decision making and perceptions impact on sick absence.

3.3.2. Personal/Home Circumstances

According to the results of the CIPD Survey conducted in 2004, absence associated with home/family responsibilities was ranked 6th of 12 for manual workers and 6th of 12 for non manual workers. Taylor (1998) identifies home circumstances as an important hidden factor causing absence and highlights that elderly relatives and the care for sick children may affect the ability to attend work. According to Evans (1998) women's absence rates increase with family size, but decline as the age of the dependent children increases. In the Industrial Society's survey, 1997 more than half of the managers identified sickness in the family, childcare and domestic responsibilities as significant causes of absence. This is supported by Reisenwitz (1997) who is of the opinion that the leading cause of absenteeism among employees with small children is the difficulty in finding dependable and affordable childcare.

3.3.3. Non Sickness/Work Related

In relation to non-sickness related absence, there are a number of thoughts. Steers and Rhodes (1990) suggest that an employee's attendance is a function of their motivation and their ability to attend. This view is supported by Saratoga (1998) who notes that from a management perspective, high employee absence is a very clear indicator of some form of organisational misbehaviour, often indicating dissatisfaction with the organisation that requires analysis and action. Bevan and Hayday (1998) also comment that career dissatisfaction is one of the most powerful predictors of absence. Arnold, Cooper and Robertson (1995) state that factors intrinsic to the job such as work patterns affected absenteeism. Warr and Yearta (1995) found that shift workers were more likely than others to be absent from work for sickness or injury.

The early research of Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) suggests that high levels of task repetitiveness with low job satisfaction because of general boredom with the job, lack of responsibility and challenge, poor working conditions and forms of work related stress, can be

positively correlated with absence. These findings concur with the research of Taylor (1998) who examines the link between job satisfaction and employees propensity to be absent. Bevan and Hayday (1998) also noted that there is a relationship between the prolonged working of excessive hours and absence among non-manual workers. They argued that career dissatisfaction is one of the most powerful predictors of absence. In order to help managers understand absence, Rhodes and Steers (1990) developed a “diagnostic model of employee attendance”.

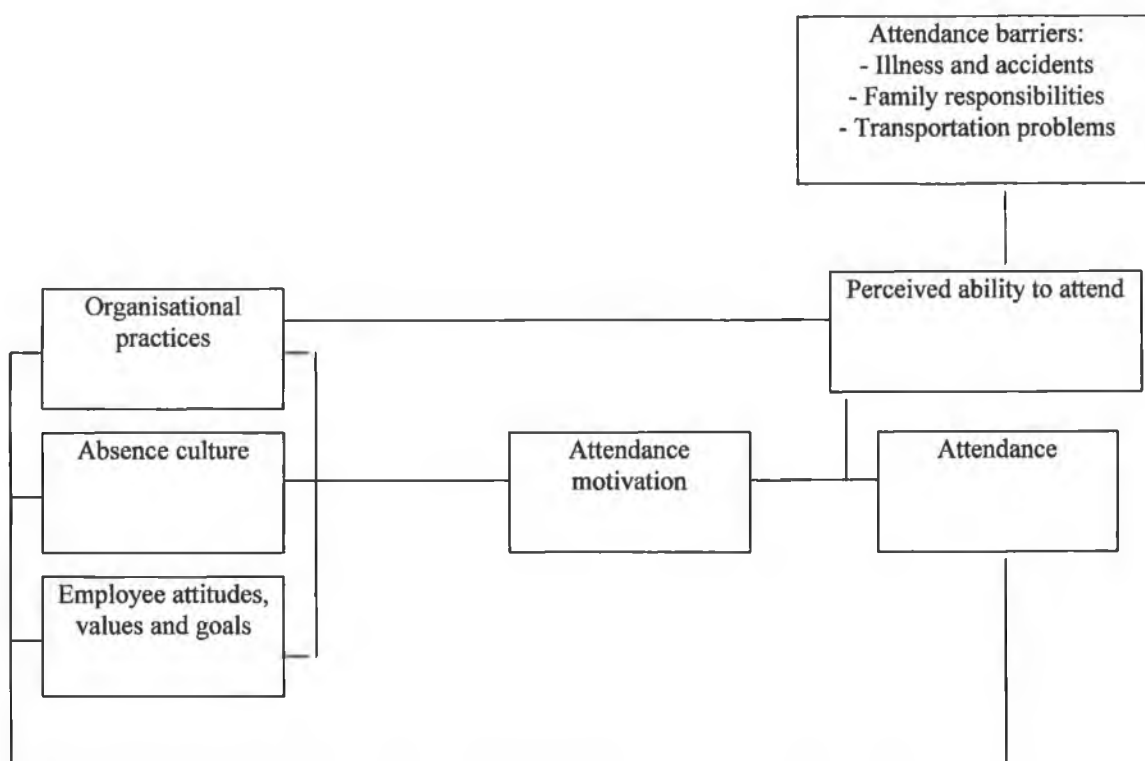


Figure 1 - A Diagnostic Model of Employee Attendance, 1990

Source: Evans and Walters, 2003.

According to Evans and Walters (2003) the diagnostic model incorporates factors which act as barriers to attendance such as illness and family responsibilities, which may be influenced by organisational policies. Reisenwitz (1997) reports that personal illness accounts for only 28%

of unscheduled time off, he further concludes that this figure indicates that 72% of the time, workers are out of work for a variety of other causes.

3.4. Absence management strategies and their effectiveness

Dunn (2001) asserts that failing to understand the cause of high absenteeism may result in the development of insufficient courses of action for dealing with the problem. Evans and Palmer (1999) argue that the existence of genuine illness as a cause of absence seems obvious, yet writings on the subject tend to imply that the problem of absenteeism can be solved totally through the application of appropriate policies. They are of the opinion that encouraging people to come to work when they would rather be at home is the main objective of absence policies.

According to Bennett (2002) employee absence can be shown to be rooted in various sources and believed that high levels of absence can be mitigated by the use of stringent absence management policies. Dunn and Wilkinson (2002) argue that an attendance control policy, established by a legitimate source authority and implemented with clear-cut progressively enforced legal sanctions, should lead to significant improvements in employee attendance.

Dalton and Todor (1993) argue that organisations can drastically reduce the extent of employee absenteeism by adopting policies which deter, not encourage absenteeism.

Similarly, Evans and Palmer (1999) conclude that the available literature on absence management presented organisational policies and procedures as being part of the cure for absenteeism, not the cause of it. However, they also believed that there is evidence to suggest that policies aimed purely at controlling absenteeism can actually lead to higher levels of absence, and therefore managers should increasingly look to manage attendance. According to Jones (1998) employers who introduce strict procedures for recording, monitoring and reviewing sickness absence obtain better attendance levels. O'Reilly (2000) supports this, with her findings in relation to the Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI) who have seen a 30% - 40% improvement in absenteeism rates following the introduction of a strict absence monitoring and tracking system.

3.4.1. Strategies for managing absence – discouraging absence

According to the CIPD (2004) and Bevan and Hayday (1998) absence surveys have consistently shown that return to work interviews are amongst the most widely applied tools of absence management. The finding of the CIPD 2004 survey was that there had been a 2.5% increase in the number of employers rating return to work interview as effective. IBEC (2004) concur with this view and go on to say that having such an established procedure in place to investigate and discuss absence with an employee may act as a deterrent to non-attendance. Similarly, Fowler (1998) believes that return to work interviews are probably the most influential element in ensuring that absences are not treated casually.

Respondents to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) 1997 and CIPD (2004) absence surveys viewed the effectiveness of return to work interviews to be generally positive and believed them to be the most effective tool in absence management. 81% of the respondents to the survey by CIPD (2004) use return to work interviews following sickness absence. According to Armstrong (1998) return to work interviews can be used to discuss the situation in relation to the employees' absence levels.

Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) deduced that employees in organisations not covered by sick pay schemes tend to have lower levels of absence than those covered by such schemes. This thinking was further supported by Dalton and Todor (1993) whose findings led to the conclusion that organisational absence rates may be highly related to control policies, such as sick pay and furthermore absence rates are much higher for the more lenient policies. Griffith (2004) highlights that organisations are becoming less tolerant of the small number of employees who are abusing their sick pay policies. According to Jones (1998) some companies are restricting or removing sick pay as part of their efforts to reduce absenteeism. According to IBEC (2002) sick pay schemes must be balanced between the provision of financial assistance allotted to those who are genuinely ill, while maintaining the motivation of others that remain at work.

According to Dunn and Wilkinson (2002) disciplinary action remains the usual sanction against persistent absentees and this is recognised by most as an organisational control

technique. 83% of organisations participating in the 2004 CIPD survey implemented disciplinary procedures for unacceptable absence, and they rated disciplinary action as being one of the most effective strategies in the control of short term absence, almost a 4% increase on 2003 figures. This is supported by the findings of IBEC (2004) where 56% of respondents to their survey implemented disciplinary procedures for unacceptable attendance, and 35% of companies indicated that they had dismissed an employee for absence. According to Griffiths (2004) three quarters of employers have introduced changes to their policies on absence management in the past two years, moving towards a more punitive approach to managing absence, particularly in manufacturing and production. These findings were supported by the more recent CIPD (2004) survey, where the 1,110 responding companies identified the three most effective methods in dealing with short term absence as return to work interviews, use of discipline and line management involvement. This is supported by Fowler (1998) who concludes that no effective absence management programme can avoid the issue of disciplinary action.

3.4.2. Strategies to absence management – encouraging attendance

IBEC (1997) states that the attention of management should be focussed on activities that positively influence attendance. As discussed in their absence management report IBEC (2002), companies can adopt a number of measures in order to create a positive attitude towards attendance in the workplace, this can include flexible working arrangements, job redesign and team working, through to rewarding good attendance and promoting employee health. This is supported by Evans and Palmer (1999) who noted that management strategy may have to change to consider re-organising the workplace to allow jobs to be undertaken by flexible self managing teams, as these tend to reduce absence levels. Sinclair, (2001) CIPD advisor in employee relations is of the opinion that effective strategies for tackling the problem include redesigning jobs, introducing more flexible working hours, return to work interviews and the involvement of line managers in dealing with absence. According to Bevan (1998) IES associate director the best employers try to motivate attendance among employees by adopting family-friendly policies.

IBEC (2002) state that an advantage of the incentives such as good attendance awards is that the company is provided with an opportunity to highlight attendance and to introduce an element of award without incorporating it into regular pay. However, respondents to a CBI Survey (1997) who operated bonus schemes did not believe they were particularly effective. Fowler (1998) notes that many firms that give attendance bonuses believe they reduce absence rates, however, he highlights the danger of good attendance being rewarded financially as possibly creating an understanding that attendance is more than a normal work requirement.

3.5. Conclusions

Absence is a significant cost for employers, and although companies generally collect data regarding direct costs, primarily by means of sick pay scheme contributions, there is limited data collection in relation to other costs. In order to measure costs and to manage absenteeism it is essential to ensure that the definition of absence used in an organisation is applied consistently, and that the method of measuring absence is applied consistently. Subsequently, in order to manage absenteeism it is essential that a company gathers data on the specific causes of absenteeism, as they can be for reasons of genuine illness or for other reasons that can be indicative of a deep rooted problem within the organisation. The strategies used to manage absenteeism can also contribute to levels of absenteeism, the literature reviewed has indicated that the strategy used has a correlation to the level of absence. Theorists such as Dalton and Todor (1993) argue that absenteeism can be reduced by adopting policies that encourage attendance rather than encourage absenteeism. This was supported by the earlier findings of Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) who have found that absenteeism levels were higher in companies with liberal sick pay schemes. Griffiths (2004) highlighted that three quarters of employers have introduced changes to their policies on absence management in the past two years, moving towards a more punitive approach to managing absence. These findings were supported by the more recent CIPD (2004) survey, where respondents identified that three most effective methods in dealing with short term absence as return to work interviews, use of discipline and line management involvement. Research by individuals such as Bevan and Hayday (1998) has shown that absence levels can be positively affected by job redesign, introduction of flexible working hours, training line managers on dealing with

absence and use of return to work interviews. This was supported by findings of research conducted by both IBEC (2002) and CIPD (2001).

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0. Introduction

According to Sekaran (1992) research is a systematic and organised effort to investigate a specific problem that needs a solution. This research was carried out between March and May 2005 using two business units of Bausch and Lomb, Waterford. Quantitative data was collated from questionnaires completed during a survey of 160 employees, and available data on absence levels in each business unit was reviewed. Semi structured interviews with the management in each unit provided supporting qualitative data. Within each business unit, management account for only 13 of the 400 employees and presently have an absence rate of less than one percent. A number of policies that would be considered in the context of absence management strategies, such as return to work interviews and job sharing are not applied or available to management in these business units. Therefore, management were excluded and this research was limited to examining the absence related to operators only.

4.1. Objectives

The objective of the research was to: Identify how absence is defined in each business unit; Analyse employee absence in each business unit, and subsequently each shift pattern during 2004; Highlight similarities and differences in absence levels across each business unit; Ascertain the causes of the absence in each processing unit as perceived by business unit managers and identified by employees; Identify current absence management strategies adopted within each processing unit; Establish if any relationship exists between the method of management and the levels of absenteeism i.e. is there a correlation between the absence levels and the management strategy to control or reduce absence.

4.2. Research Methodology

The study was conducted over a three-month period, commencing March 2005. The approach included: Using a case study of two business units of Bausch and Lomb Waterford; analysis of secondary data pertaining to each business unit, semi-structured interviews with relevant personnel in each business unit, and a survey of a representative sample of operators from each business unit, using a questionnaire.

Both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted. Gummesson (1991) argues that qualitative research provides the best way to analyse opinions that are based on everyday reality and not on numerical figures associated with quantitative research. However, Weiers (1998) lists the advantages of quantitative research as being the freedom from bias and low cost. Walters (1996) sums up the research approach as quantitative research providing a method that produces clear, unequivocal views and qualitative research providing the background detail. Consequently, the combination of both research methods can provide sufficient reliable information to draw accurate conclusions from the data analysis.

4.2.1. Case Study Selection

According to Feagin *et al* (1991) a case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic and in-depth investigation is needed. Two business units within Bausch and Lomb (B&L) Waterford were selected as a case study. The facility has four business units two of which are High Water Cast Moulding (HWCM) and Reverse Process 3 (RP3). HWCM and RP3 each have 400 employees, they are in existence for a similar period of time, operate the same shift patterns, have a 24 hour, seven day week operation and have similar organisational structures. However, the management style and culture within each business unit differs significantly, and more importantly, the levels of absence in each unit also differ. It was therefore decided to limit the case study to these two business units. The remaining two business units within B&L Waterford are of very limited size, one being relatively new, and the other being in existence since the start up of the company, with no similarities in structure consequently they were not considered for inclusion in the case study.

This case study approach concurs with the research of Stake (1995) who states that case studies tend to be selective, focusing on one or two issues that are fundamental to understanding the system being examined.

4.2.2. Analysis of secondary data

According to Cuff et al (1990) quantitative data generates knowledge that is reliable, can be generalised and unbiased and objectivity is ensured by developing research methods which minimise any influence that the researcher might have on the collection of data. It was decided to review the data regarding levels of absenteeism over a 12 month period, from January 2004 to December 2004, in order to establish if the individual approach of management, the enforcement of policies and the application of procedures had any affect on absence levels during this period. The following sources were used for secondary data collation: Absenteeism expressed as a percentage of scheduled time worked was sourced from the Human Resource department of each business unit. The Finance Department provided the financial information regarding how the cost of absence is measured, specifically the cost of the Bausch and Lomb sick pay scheme.

4.2.3. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to provide a comprehensive review of core issues associated with absence, which allowed a personal validation of the data, whereby, the secondary data could be further explained by qualitative data gathered during the semi-structured interviews. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) advocate that qualitative research provides the best opportunity to study responses and opinions of the respondents. This thinking is supported by Crimp and Wright (1995) who outline the benefits of using semi-structured interviews in that they enable the researcher to “stage manage” the research by making sure that all questions are covered with room for the respondent to add comments to specific questions. The aim of the interviews was to ascertain the views of two personnel managers and four production managers on a variety of issues associated with employee absence, this included: Current levels of absenteeism within each of their business units; perceived causes of absence and effectiveness of management strategies in the control of absenteeism. The schedule of interview questions was subsequently designed to first validate the secondary data

obtained, and then to further extrapolate information regarding opinions on causes and costs of current absence management policies. Some questions used were open-ended which allowed the respondents to provide their own answers, others were multiple choice. Kinnear and Taylor (1996) suggest that open questions can allow respondents to freely express views divergent from the researchers expectations and multiple choice questions reduce researcher bias and the time and cost associated with data processing. An outline of questions used in the semi-structured interview is detailed in Appendix 2. Participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge of the business unit and their specific involvement in absence management.

During a face-to-face interview clarification was requested by the researcher on answers given and more in-depth probing was conducted in order to extrapolate as much information as possible from each interview. This is in keeping with the findings of Torrington (1991) who states that when open questions fail to get a relevant response, a supplementary question can be asked to get the required information.

4.3.4. Operator survey

According to Bell (1999) the aim of a survey is to obtain information which can be analysed and patterns extracted and comparisons made. In most cases a survey will aim to obtain information from a sample of a population, whose answers can then be taken as representative of the population as a whole. The population being surveyed for this research, consisted of 400 operators from RP3 and 400 operators from HWCM. In order for the sample to be representative of the population, a review of the breakdown in respect of shift pattern and business unit was conducted. In each of the business units, there was a 50:50 split between shifts, i.e. half the operators worked three-shift cycle and half worked weekend shift, subsequently the questionnaires were distributed to evenly between each shift pattern. In relation to gender, both populations were 70% female and 30% male, however, due to the number of variables being compared from data gathered from a limited population, the data was too limited to ascertain any degree of correlation between gender and absence levels, and subsequently there was no reference to gender in the questionnaire.

The population was assumed to have a normal distribution, and therefore sample size was calculated on the basis of a 95% confidence level, with a confidence interval of 10%. The sample size used was 80 from the population of 400 in each processing unit.

Sample size:

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{c^2}$$

Where
Z = Z value (e.g. 1.96 for a 95% confidence level)
p = percentage choosing, expressed as a decimal (0.5 used for sample size needed
c = confidence interval expressed as a decimal (e.g. 0.1 used for +/- 10%)

Figure 2 – Formula for calculating sample size

Prior to questionnaires being distributed, a pre-test was conducted with 10 volunteers to assess usability, and the questionnaires were amended on the basis of feedback. The design and wording of the questionnaire was of paramount importance. According to Oppenheim (1966)

“The world is full of well meaning people who believe that anyone who can write plain English and has a modicum of common sense can produce a good questionnaire”

He subsequently clarified that although this will help, it will not be sufficient.

To ensure maximum completion and the highest possible return rate, the one page questionnaire was designed to keep questions short and concise, with wording that would be easily understood and not misinterpreted by those being surveyed. The questions were worded to minimise bias and provide data that could be statistically analysed. Questionnaires were given to 80 employees in each processing unit, 40 to employees on the three-shift cycle and 40 to employees on the weekend shift. The employees to complete the questionnaires were selected at random from the computerised time and attendance system which has a computer generated random selection tool. A copy of the questionnaire used is in Appendix 3. The

questionnaires (160 in total) were distributed, via internal mail, with a covering letter to all participants. A copy of the covering letter is in Appendix 4.

In order to extrapolate honest accurate responses in respect of absenteeism, anonymity was considered to be a key aspect of the survey. There was subsequently no way of linking responses with individuals.

4.4. Conclusion

The use of quantitative data supplied by the support departments within Bausch and Lomb, coupled with the qualitative data sourced by the use of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, provided sufficient information for the researcher to achieve research objectives.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS

5.0. Introduction

The findings from the research are presented in this chapter. Graphs showing the analysis of the secondary data findings are presented with a relevant commentary. The key findings from the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires are also detailed and presented in sections relating to the literature review and the corresponding research objectives.

5.1. Secondary Data

The information provided by the Finance Department of Bausch and Lomb regarding costs of absenteeism showed that only the direct cost of the sick pay scheme is included in the cost of absence. For 2004 this figure was 1.1 million euro.

The HWCM and RP3 business units operate two shift patterns. The first shift pattern, known as “three shift” is Monday to Friday, for 8 hours, rotating weekly from nights to evenings to days. The second shift pattern, known as weekends, work Saturday and Sunday, working 12 hours, alternating weekly from days to nights.

Absence is recorded as a percentage of scheduled time worked via a computerised time and attendance system, for example, an employee scheduled to work 400 hours, and has unapproved absence of 40 hours, therefore has a recorded absence level of 10%. The data available was a % absence level for each shift pattern for each business unit calculated monthly. This data was subsequently tabulated to enable comparisons to be made between shift patterns and business units and also to enable trend analysis to be conducted. The tabulated data is contained in Appendix 1. No detail regarding cause of absence is recorded on the time and attendance system.

5.1.1. Comparison of overall absence levels

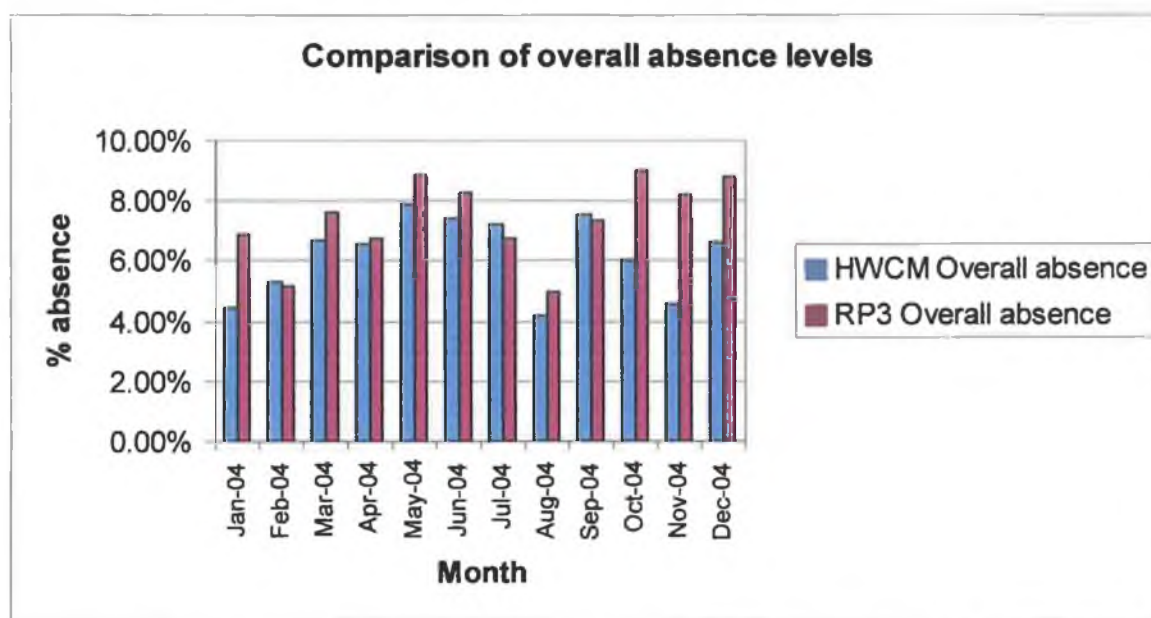


Figure 3 - Monthly comparison of absence levels in HWCM and RP3

In relation to overall absence levels in 2004, RP3 had an average absence level of 7.61% in comparison to 5.72% in HWCM, a difference of almost 2%. The above graph shows that the absence level in HWCM was lower than RP3 for all but three months, namely February, July and September. It is evident from the graph that absence levels in RP3 showed a significant level of absence during May, October and December in comparison to other months reaching a maximum level of 8.84% in October. In HWCM the maximum level was 7.85%. The lowest absence level for both areas occurred in August, however, HWCM had a level of 4.15% compared with 4.98% in RP3 for the equivalent period. However, it can be seen that the absence levels in HWCM had a downward trend towards the end of the year, reducing from 7.56% in September to 4.58% in November – a drop of almost 3%, during the equivalent period RP3 showed an increase in absence from 7.33% in September to 8.24% in November, an increase of almost 1%. Of note also, is that in December both areas experienced an increase in absence on the previous month.

5.1.2. Comparison of absence levels on three shift

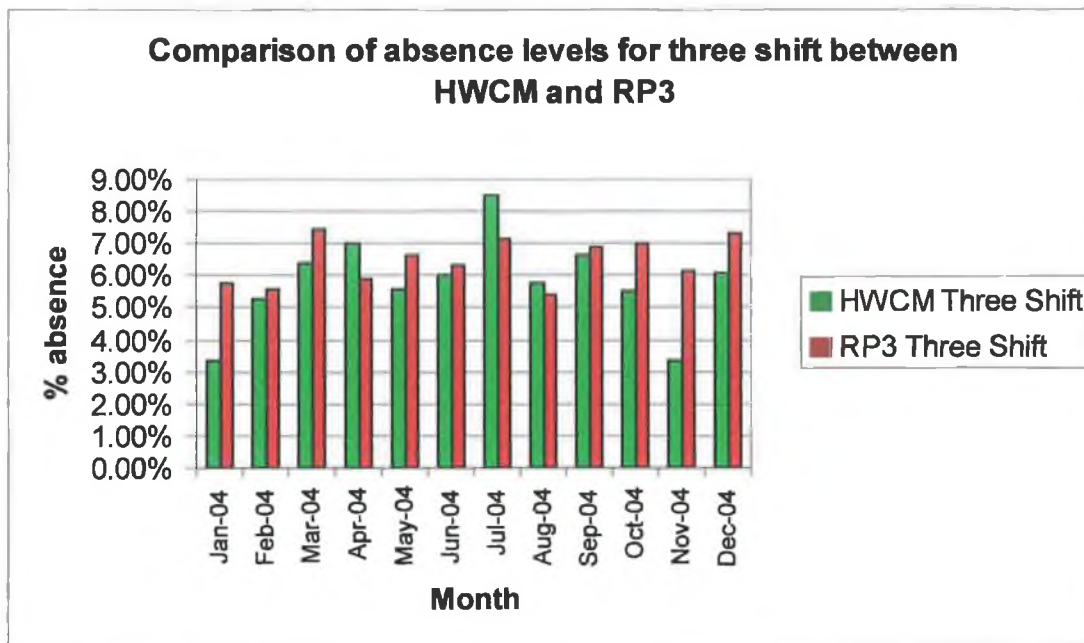


Figure 4 - Comparison of absence levels on three shift between HWCM and RP3

As can be seen from Figure 4, when comparing the recorded absence levels of operators on three shift cycle between HWCM and RP3, although the absence levels in HWCM are lower than those in RP3 for nine months of the year, there is not a significant difference overall (0.68%). RP3 has an average absence level of 6.47% for three shift, compared to 5.79% in HWCM. However, it is noteworthy that the trend of absence differs significantly between the two business units – HWCM have the lowest levels of absenteeism in January and November, and have highest in April, July and September. On the other hand, RP3 have the highest levels of absence in March, July and December, and the lowest in August.

5.1.3. Comparison of absence levels on weekends

When comparing business units in relation to operators who work the weekend shift pattern, it is obvious from Figure 5, that the absence levels in HWCM are much lower than in RP3, a difference of 3.1% in 2004. The absence levels in RP3 are higher than those of HWCM for all but the three months, specifically February, April and July. The absence levels in RP3 increased dramatically in May and June, and again towards the end of the year, (October to December inclusive) which had the same trend for the three shift pattern in RP3. The highest

absence level recorded for RP3, occurred in May 2004, when there was 12.06% absence on the weekend shifts, however there was a subsequent downward trend for the following three months, with a fall in absence levels from 12.06% to 4.33% in August. In HWCM, the absence trend on the weekend shift was very similar to that on the three shift cycle, specifically the absence levels decreased from September (7.55%) to November (3.39%), with an increase in December to 6.15%.

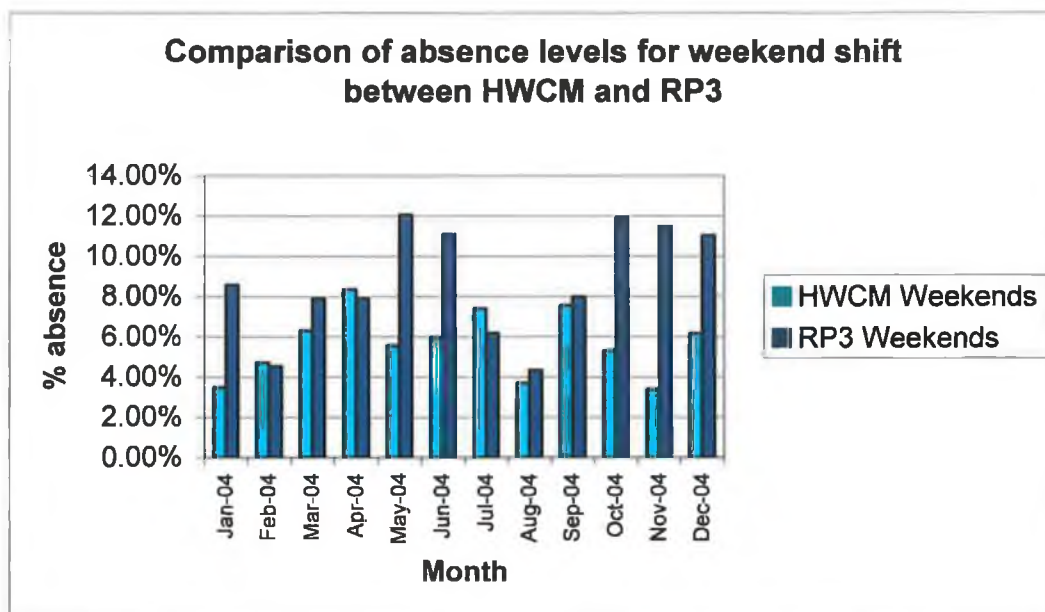


Figure 5 - Comparison of absence levels on weekends between HWCM and RP3

5.1.4. Comparison of absence levels between three shift patterns

Figures 6 and 7 show a comparison between absence levels on three shift workers versus weekend workers in HWCM and RP3. In HWCM, the absence levels on three shift range from a low of 3.34% in January to 8.48% in July. The absence levels on weekends range from a low of 3.49% also in January to 8.36% in April. The absence levels on both shift patterns followed a similar trend.

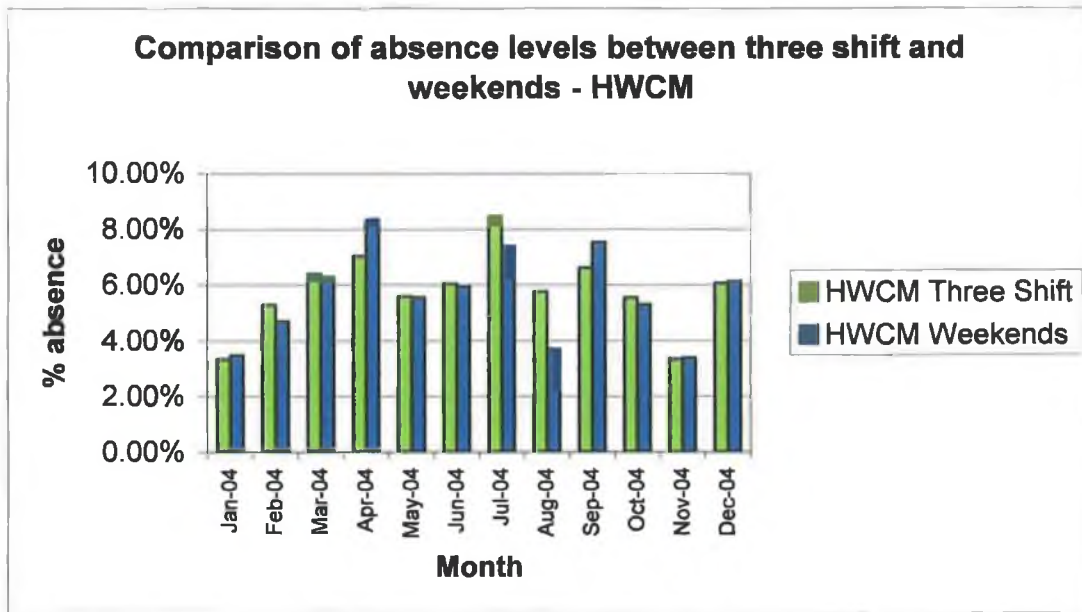


Figure 6 - Comparison of absence levels between three shift and weekends in HWCM

As can be seen in Figure 7 in RP3 the difference between shift patterns is most apparent – on average the difference between the shift patterns is over 2%. However, in May, the difference between the shift patterns was as high as 5%. On the three shift cycle, the lowest absence level was 5.8%, and the highest was 7.42%, compared to the weekend shift cycle where then lowest level of absence was 4.33%, however the highest was 12.06%.

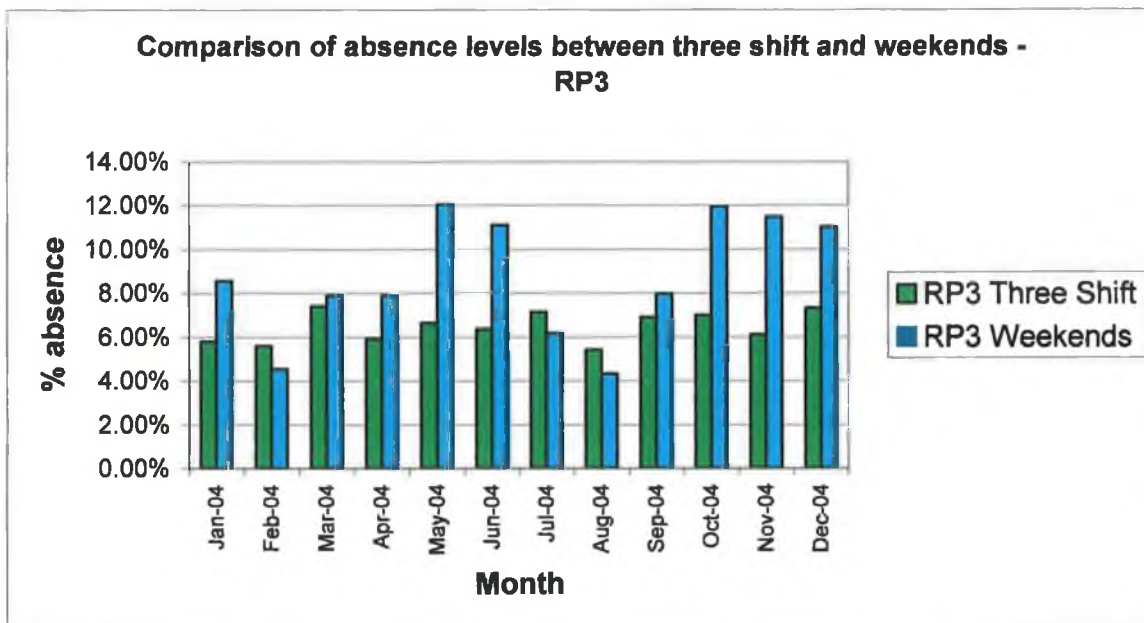


Figure 7 - Comparison of absence levels between three shift and weekends in RP3

The data collected indicated that the levels of absence within both business units varied between both shift patterns and area.

5.2. Semi-structured interviews

5.2.1. Background

In each business unit a shift is managed by a Production Manager and a Supervisor, and each shift has 100 employees. HWCM commenced production in 1994, RP3 commenced production in 1992.

In relation to defining absence, both business units define absenteeism as absence from the workplace as a result of inability to attend, however this is further categorised as approved and unapproved. All legislative leave is considered as approved absence and is not included in figures pertaining to levels of absence. Only unapproved absence such as sick leave (both certified and uncertified) is recorded in the absence levels for each business unit. HWCM and RP3 close for an annual shut down period for the first two weeks in August.

Both business units measure absence levels and track individual employee absence. Absence is measured by shift and is recorded as percentage of scheduled time worked. However, the management of absence differs significantly in each area, this is explored in more detail under the topic of semi-structured interviews. In relation to costs of absenteeism, only the direct costs associated with sick pay schemes are considered in the context of costs of absenteeism.

Family friendly initiatives are available in both areas, and include: Job Sharing; Part-time working; Flexitime; Parental Leave (an additional week in excess of legal requirements is available); Force Majeure and Leave of Absence. However, during the semi-structured interviews it became apparent that the application of these policies in relation to each business unit differs significantly – this is discussed in more detail under the topic of semi-structured interviews. Both business units offer an annual attendance bonus that is paid to all employees with 100% attendance.

Six semi-structured interviews were conducted. Questions were asked in relation to each of the specific research objectives, and where necessary supplementary probing questions were introduced to clarify answers given, or to extrapolate information behind data contained in the secondary data. For the purpose of this report the participants in the semi-structured interview are identified by means of a letter: A to F. Respondent A is Personnel Manager of RP3, B and C are both Production Managers of RP3, D is Personnel Manager of HWCM and E and F are both Production Managers of HWCM.

5.2.2. Absenteeism defined

All six respondents defined absenteeism as an employee's unapproved absence from the workplace, and all included certified and uncertified sickness in this definition. In relation to approved absence, all considered legislative leave to be approved, and maternity leave, jury duty and parental leave were cited as examples by respondents A,B and D. Respondent D also highlighted that leave of absence, although not a statutory entitlement, was considered approved absence under the relevant company policy.

5.2.3. Costs and measurement of absenteeism

When asked about the cost of absenteeism in each of their areas, none of the respondents were aware of the actual cost of absenteeism for their business area, either direct or indirect. However, all were aware that the direct cost of the sick pay scheme was the only measured cost associated with absence in the company and all six were aware of the overall company cost of this scheme, being in excess of 1.1 million euro. Respondent D was of the opinion that using the sick pay scheme as the only measurement of cost was inaccurate and did not represent the true cost of absenteeism in Bausch and Lomb. This sentiment was supported by respondent A who suggested that indirect costs should also be measured.

In relation to measurement, the three participants from RP3 (A, B and C) had ceased to measure absence levels in July 2003. When asked to explain the reason for this respondents B and C had not taken notice of the data on absence provided prior to July 2003, and therefore stated they had no reason to request the information when it had not been made available to them. The third respondent (A) from RP3 stated that

“recording absence levels was a non value adding activity”.

In contrast, the three respondents from HWCM (D, E and F) could present exact absence levels for their respective areas for the preceeding month. Two respondents (E and F) associated this with both the availability of monthly data from the Human Resource Department and the requirement to provide this information to their manager. All three participants (D, E and F) from HWCM were of the opinion that having absence level figures available was a key factor in absence management, and according to respondent F

“the monthly data provided by HR acts as a trigger for action to be taken with poor attendees”

5.2.4. Absenteeism causes

Presently B&L do not record causes of unapproved absence, therefore a question was posed to ascertain the perceived reasons for absence from the respondents. The initial question posed in relation to the causes of absenteeism required the respondent to select from a prepared list of potential causes, and the opportunity was also provided to present opinions on other reasons for absence that may have been omitted from the initial selection.

All six respondents rated the following as their top three perceived causes within their areas: home circumstances (including childcare, care of elderly), genuine illness, particularly minor illnesses such as colds and flu and finally the existing sick pay scheme. Respondents A and B both believed that whilst the vast majority of the absences were genuine, there is a percentage of employees that are only *“skiving from work”*, in the belief that nothing will happen to them when they do return to work. Respondent F commented that another cause of absenteeism is the long hours and the lack of job motivation during the weekend shift. Respondent E concurred with this thinking and went on to say

“ Working for 12 hours during the weekend is hard enough, but it is made more difficult by the fact that the job is very routine and boring and wouldn't encourage job satisfaction”.

5.2.5. Absence management strategies and their effectiveness

All respondents used return to work interviews as a strategy for controlling absence, however of the three respondents (A, B and C) in RP3, no one carried out these consistently. *“It is difficult to get the time to follow up all absences”* commented respondent C. Respondents D, E and F from HWCM confirmed that they used return to work interviews regularly.

In relation to the use of the disciplinary procedure, respondent F stated that

“to be seen using disciplinary action for repeat offenders for absence is the only real deterrent there is”

Five of the six respondents agreed that use of disciplinary action was an effective tool for reducing absence, respondent E disagreed. Respondent A stated that use of disciplinary action should only be *“used as a last resort and in exceptional circumstances”*.

In relation to the availability of a sick pay scheme, all respondents believed that the availability of a sick pay scheme had a negative effect on levels of absence, and in the case of respondents B and C, both commented that the availability of sick pay actually provided an incentive to employees to *“ring in sick for a day or two”*. The participants were asked to provide detail of the family friendly initiatives that are available in their respective areas. In relation to job sharing, respondent D was of the opinion that HWCM are more likely than RP3 to refuse applications for job sharing on the basis of business needs, this was clarified by requesting details of numbers involved in job sharing in each business unit. HWCM presently have 30 employees job sharing, and RP3 have 50. In the case of Force Majeure, all respondents agreed that this was available in their respective areas, however, all six respondents suggested that HWCM apply the policy more rigidly than RP3. Respondents A and F were of the opinion that HWCM query the employees' application and check if the employees' absence does in fact fall into the category of Force Majeure leave, while in RP3 Force Majeure applications are not queried. Also, the management of Leave of Absence in both areas differ, to the point that more employees would be granted this unpaid leave in RP3 whereas HWCM refuse more applications based on business needs, this was confirmed by

both respondents A and D. Finally, according to participants A, B, C, and D, more flexitime would take place in RP3 than in HWCM. It was the opinion of respondent D that

“generally the contracted hours should be adhered to unless an employee has extreme personal circumstances and even then this arrangement would be for a fixed period of time only”.

None of the participants used or were aware of using teamwork of job redesign as a management strategy for absence control. When asked about the benefits of having an annual attendance bonus and the perceived benefit of this, all respondents were of the opinion that this bonus did not contribute to increased attendance. In fact, respondents A and B were of the opinion that payment of an attendance bonus should not be necessary as

“people are paid a good salary to attend work in the first place”

5.3. Employee Survey

The total number of questionnaires returned was 83, giving an overall response rate of 52%. From the 80 questionnaires distributed in each of the business units, 38 were returned from RP3 (a response rate of 48%) and 45 were returned from HWCM (a response rate of 56%). Due to the level of response the data obtained cannot be presented with an acceptable degree of statistical significance however, the data gathered is accepted as being indicative of the population.

5.3.1. Survey results respondent details

Figure 8 shows the overall return rate from each shift pattern - 58% from three shift and 42% from weekends.

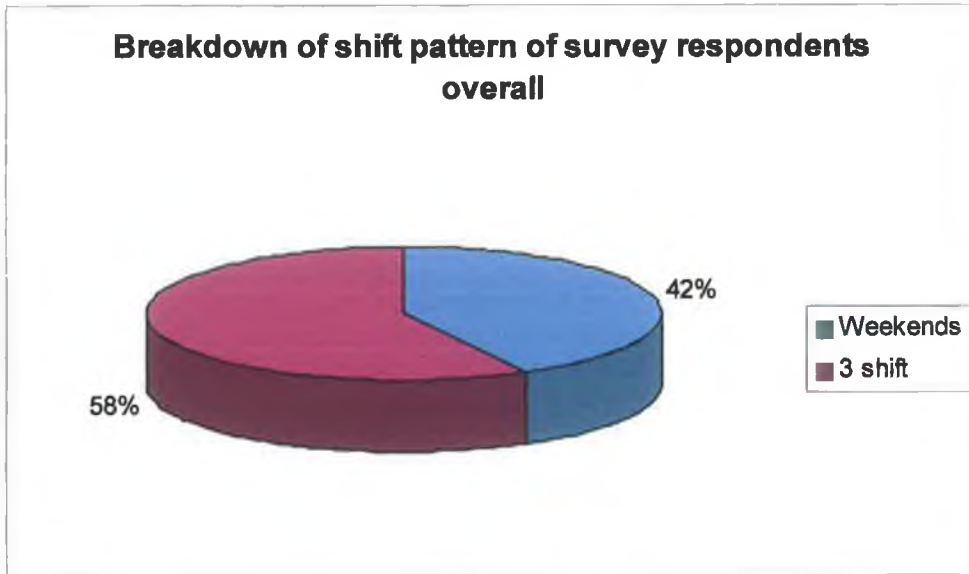


Figure 8 – Breakdown of respondents shift pattern

Co-incidentally, the return rate from HWCM and RP3 was the same, as shown in Figures 9 and 10.

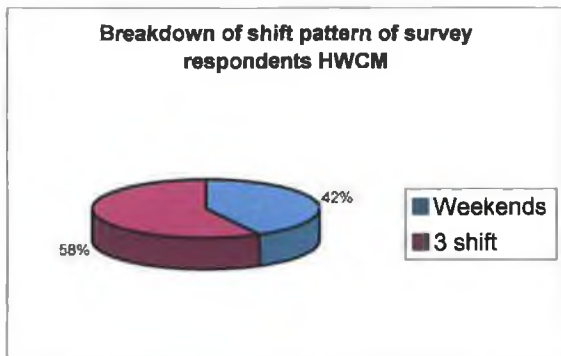


Figure 9

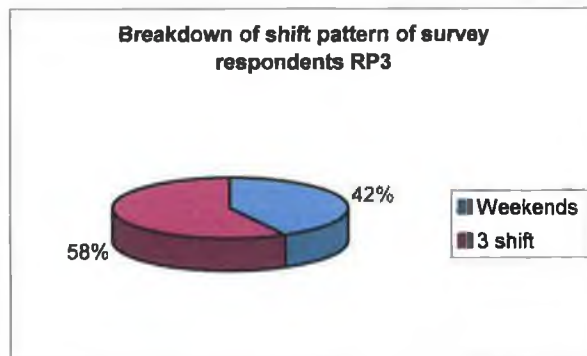


Figure 10

Respondents shift pattern – HWCM and RP3

The length of service of all respondents was well distributed across all brackets, as can be seen in Figure 11.

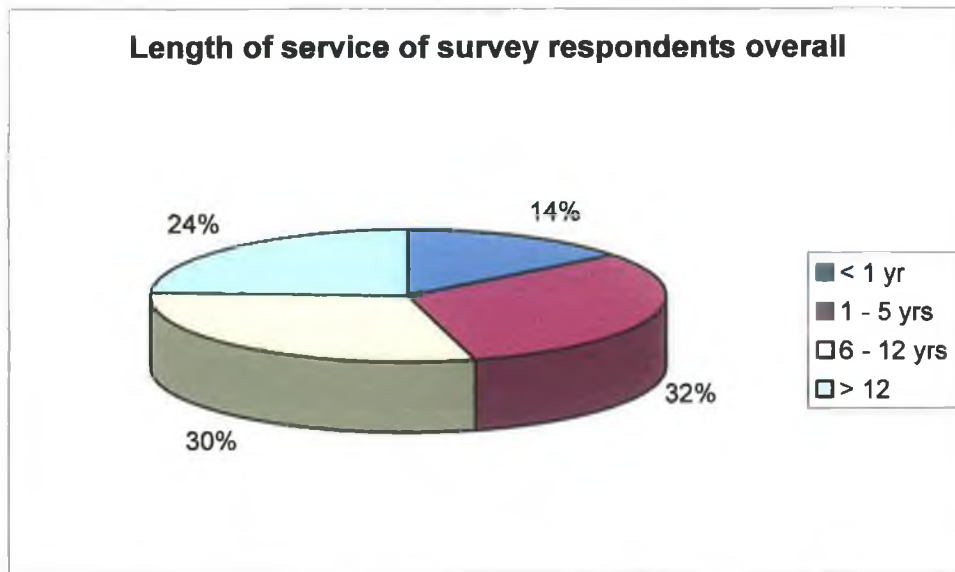


Figure 11 – Length of service of all respondents

In relation to length of service in each business unit, it is apparent that in RP3, 69% of respondents have been with the company for 6 or more years. This is in contrast to HWCM where only 44% have been with the company for more than 6 years.

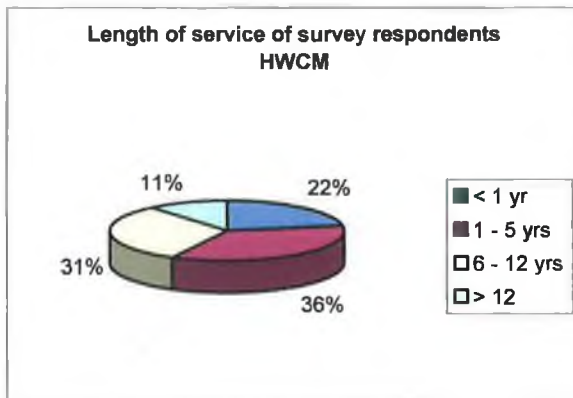


Figure 12

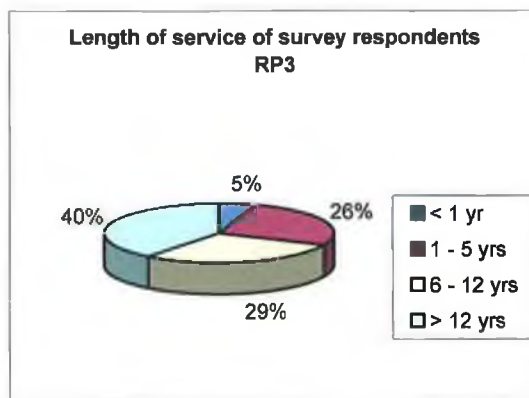


Figure 13

Length of service of respondents in HWCM and RP3

The age brackets for all respondents can be seen in Figure 14. 40% of all respondents being in the 26 to 35 years age bracket.

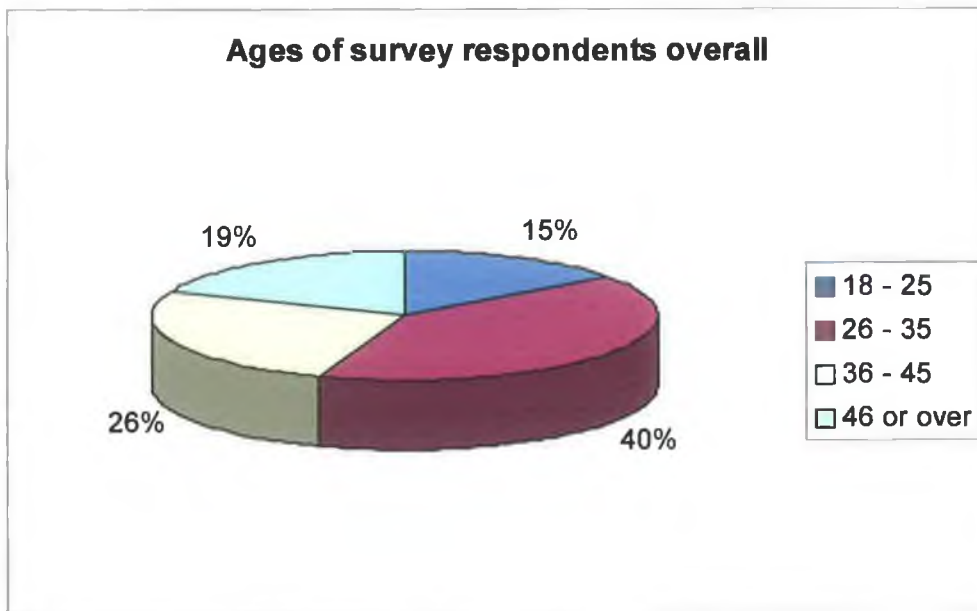


Figure 14 – Ages of all respondents

In HWCM the majority (65%) of respondents are under 35, compared to RP3, where the majority of respondents are over 36, with 33% being 46 or over. Only 5% of respondents in HWCM were over 46.

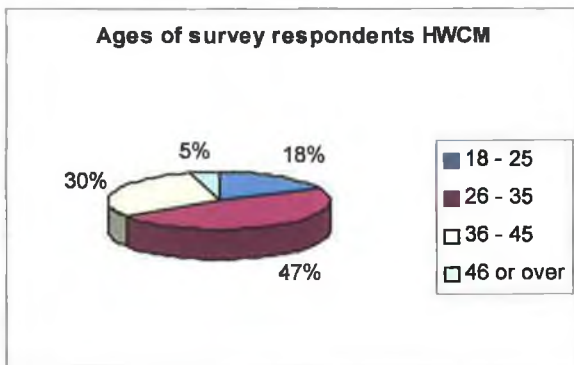


Figure 15

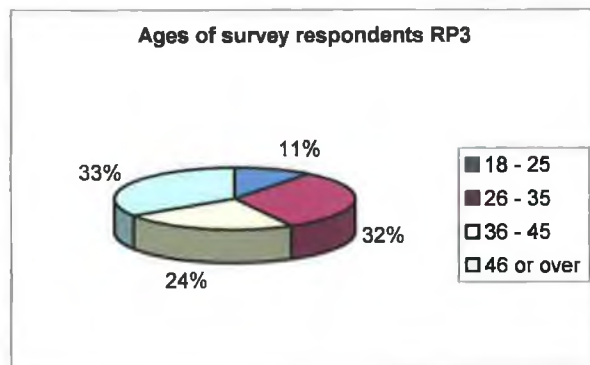


Figure 16

Ages of survey respondents in each business unit

5.3.2. HWCM Absence data

From the total of the 45 questionnaires returned from HWCM, 29 questionnaires from the weekend shift and 26 from the three shift cycle. 3 of the 19 respondents on the weekend shift and 3 of the 26 respondents on the three shift cycle were absent during 2004. In total there

were 13 occasions of absence, 7 on weekends (attributable to 3 employees) and 6 on three shift (attributable to 3 employees). Of the 13 absences in total, the reasons for the absences as identified by the respondents can be seen in Figure 17.

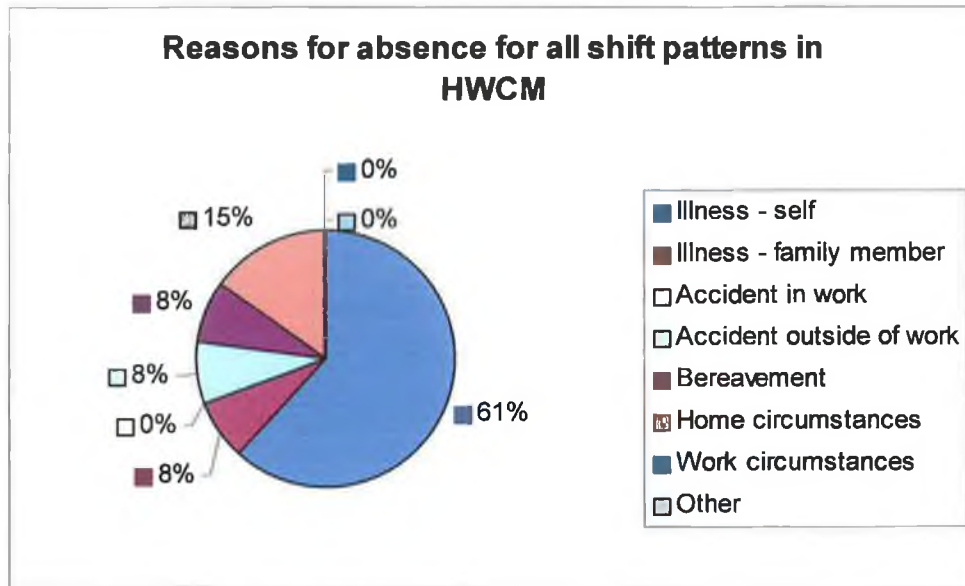


Figure 17 – Respondents reasons for absence for all shift patterns HWCM

The highest percentage of absence is attributed to illness of the employee, with 15% associated with home circumstances, and 8% associated with each of bereavement, accidents outside of work, and the illness of a family member. When analysing the data from each shift pattern, it is apparent that the reasons for absence differ between each shift pattern. Although self illness is the most significant reason for absence in both shift patterns, 66% for those on three shift and 57% on weekend shift, as can be seen from Figure 18, the remainder of absence is attributed to accidents outside of work (17%) and bereavement (17%). In respect of weekend shift, the reasons other than self illness causing absence are recorded as 29% associated with home circumstances, and 14% with illness of a family member – refer to Figure 19.

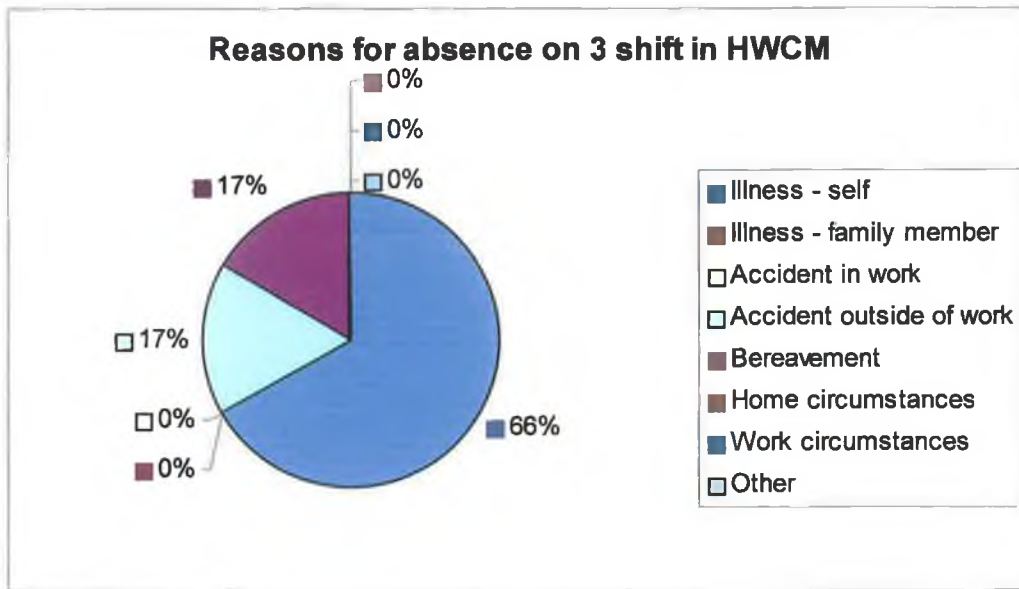


Figure 18 – Reasons for absence HWCM three shift

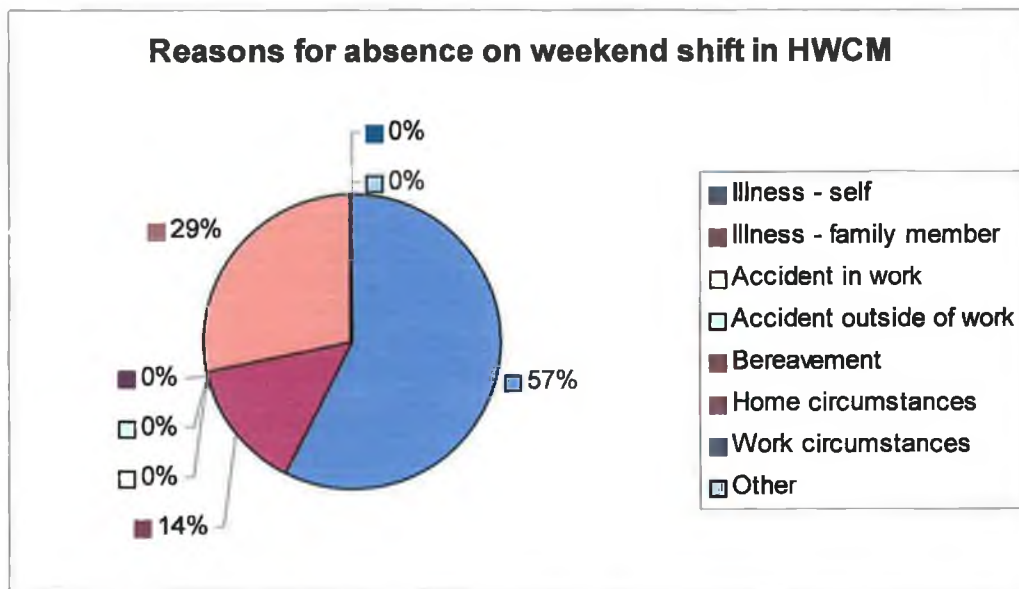


Figure 19 – Reasons for absence HWCM Weekend shift

In relation to the effectiveness of absence control policies, the HWCM respondents rated disciplinary action and attendance bonus as the most effective policies in relation to reducing levels of absence. As can be seen from Figure 20, the policies deemed as not effective by

54% of respondents was job redesign and teamwork, followed by 20% who did not believe return to work interviews were effective.

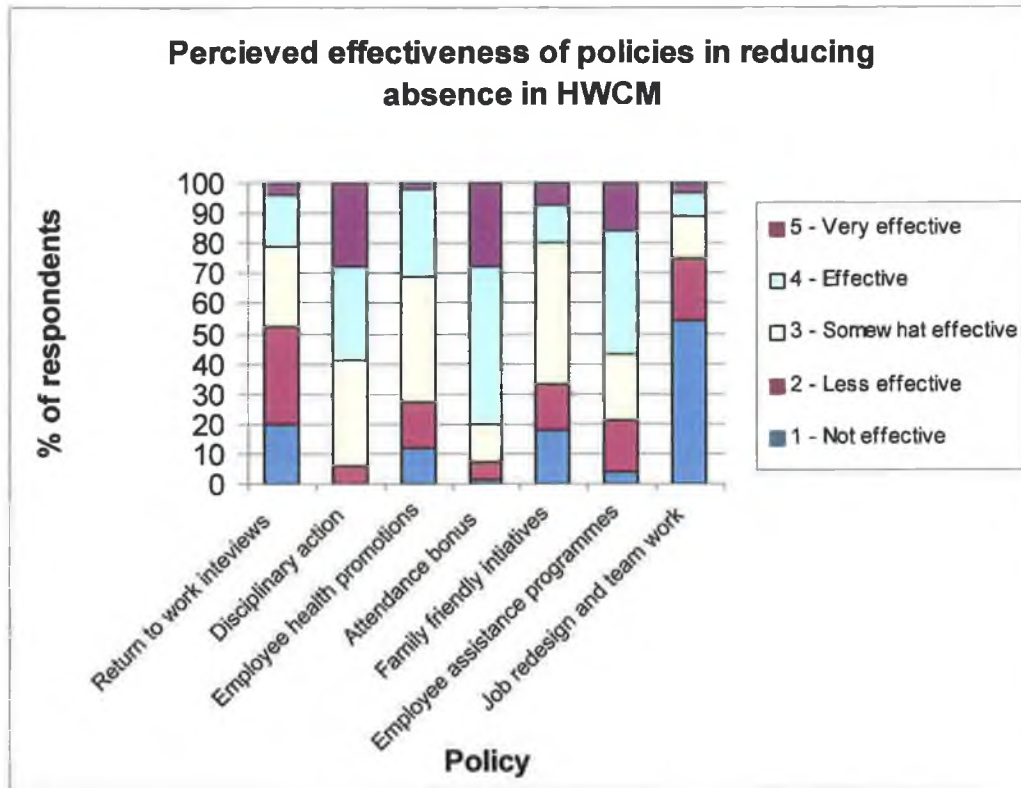


Figure 20 – Effectiveness of policies HWCM

The policies that were perceived in HWCM to be somewhat effective or better are summarised in Table 1.

<i>Policy</i>	<i>%</i>
Disciplinary action	94%
Attendance bonus	93%
Employee assistance programmes	79%
Employee health promotions	73%
Family friendly initiatives	67%
Return to work interviews	48%
Job redesign and teamwork	25%

Table 1 – HWCM effectiveness of absence control policies

A full summary of the questionnaire results for HWCM is contained in Appendix 5.

5.3.3. RP3 Absence data

From the total of 38 questionnaires returned from HWCM, 16 were from the weekend shift and 22 from the three shift cycle. 5 of the 16 respondents on the weekend shift and 6 of the 22 respondents on the three shift cycle were absent during 2004. In total there were 20 occasions of absence, 9 on weekends (attributable to 5 employees) and 11 on three shift (attributable to 6 employees). Of the 20 absences in total, the reasons for the absences as identified by the respondents can be seen in Figure 21. 65% of absences are attributable to illness of the employee, however, 10% is attributable to home circumstances and 10% to bereavement. Accidents at work, illness of a family member and missing a flight (other) each represent 5% of absence causes.

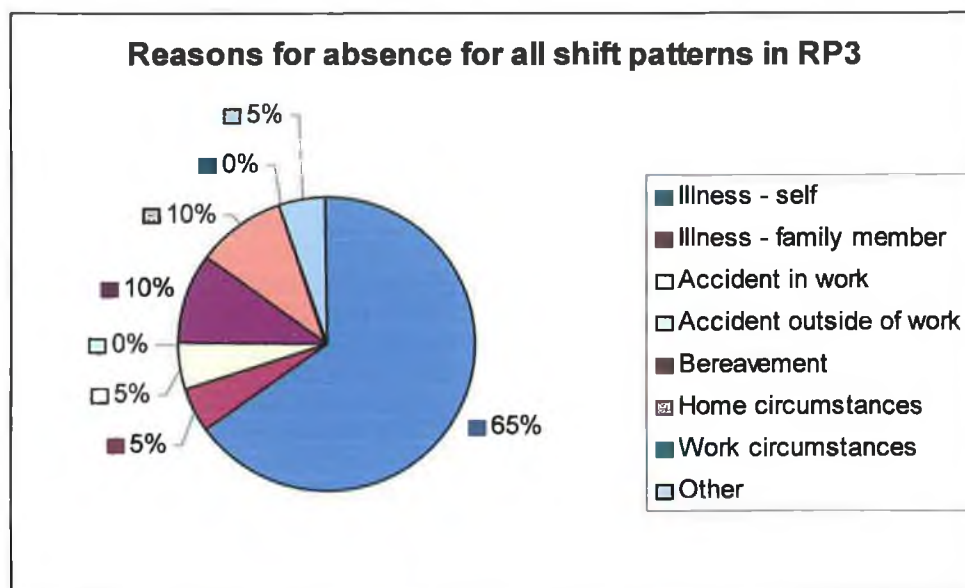


Figure 21 – Respondents reasons for absence for all shift patterns RP3

When comparing reasons for absence across shift patterns, as can be seen in Figure 22 and Figure 23, 82% of absence is attributed to employee illness for those on three shift, with the remaining 18% attributable to accidents at work and bereavements. In contrast, only 45% of weekend shift absence is attributed to employee illness, with home circumstances contributing to 22% of absence.

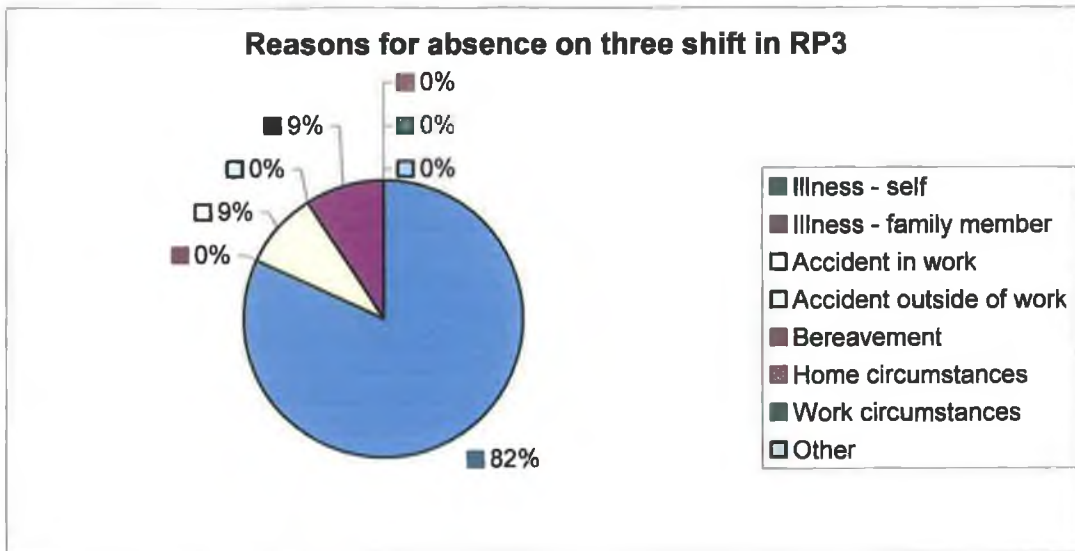


Figure 22 – Reasons for absence three shift cycle in RP3

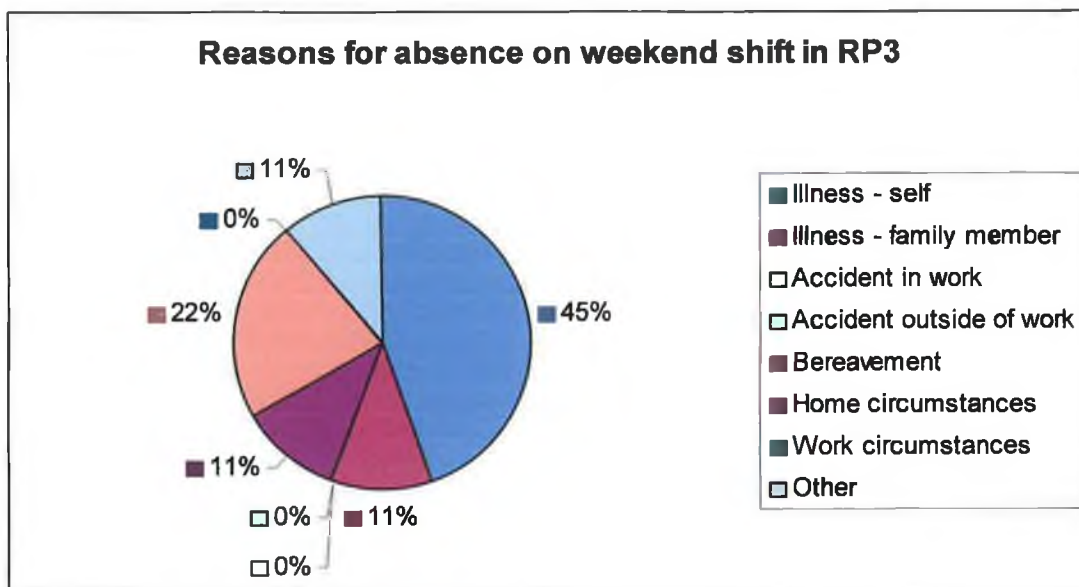


Figure 23 – Reasons for absence weekend shift cycle in RP3

In relation to effectiveness of absence control policies in RP3, Figure 24 shows that disciplinary action and employee assistance programmes were considered very effective in reducing the levels of absence, 19 % and 18% respectively rating these policies as very effective. 45% rated job redesign and 31% rated return to work interviews as not having an effect in respect of absence reduction.

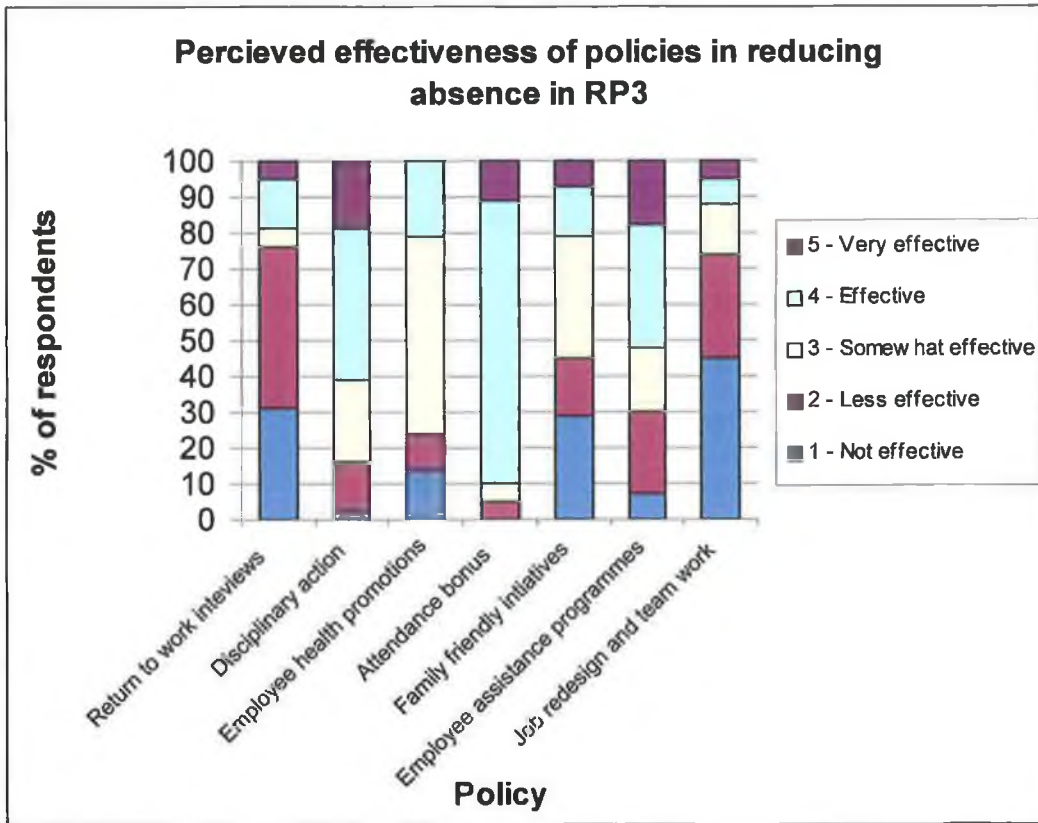


Figure 24 – Effectiveness of policies RP3

The policies that were perceived in RP3 to be somewhat effective or better are summarised in Table 2.

<i>Policy</i>	<i>%</i>
Attendance bonus	95%
Disciplinary action	84%
Employee health promotions	76%
Employee assistance programmes	70%
Family friendly initiatives	55%
Job redesign and teamwork	26%
Return to work interviews	24%

Table 2 – RP3 effectiveness of absence control policies

A full summary of the questionnaire results for RP3 is contained in Appendix 6.

5.4. Conclusion

HWCM and RP3 provided a case study due to their similar size, structure and shift patterns. Management of absence in HWCM differs significantly from RP3, particularly in relation to measuring absence, use of disciplinary and how policies such as force majeure and leave of absence are applied. The absence levels in HWCM are lower for both shift patterns than those in RP3. The absence level during weekend shift exceeds three shift in both business units, however, this difference is most significant in RP3. The main reasons recorded for absence is employee illness, however, other reasons recorded include, illness of family member, accidents in and out of work, bereavement, home circumstances and other (which was recorded on the questionnaire as being a missed flight). Disciplinary action was considered to be the most effective absence control policy, followed by attendance bonus and employee assistance programme. The least effective absence management policy was considered to be job redesign and teamwork, followed by return to work interviews.

Chapter 6

ANALYSIS

6.0. Introduction

Available literature on absence was reviewed, with specific focus on the main areas of research, namely definitions of absenteeism, measurement and costs, causes and strategies used by management to control or reduce absence. Using two business units of Bausch and Lomb as a case study, quantitative data was obtained in respect of levels of absence in each unit, causes of absence and management strategies used to reduce absence. Information was also sourced in respect of the cost of absenteeism. This data was analysed across two shift patterns in each business unit. Using information from this quantitative data and the findings of the literature review, semi-structured interviews were conducted with management in each business unit on perceived causes, measurement and cost of absence and the strategies employed in each business unit to manage absence. The information gathered during the literature review, secondary data review, semi-structured interviews, and employee survey is discussed in this chapter. The findings of the research will be discussed in the context of the literature review.

6.1. Review

6.1.1. Absenteeism defined

From the findings of the primary research it was apparent that in Bausch and Lomb absenteeism was defined as failure to attend for work when obliged to do so and this was further classified as approved and unapproved absence (unapproved included certified and uncertified absence). This was consistent with the findings of the literature review and the definitions of absence presented by the Hourihan (1993) and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2001). The definition of absenteeism in Bausch and Lomb is in keeping with the recommendation of IBEC in their Workplace Absence Survey (2004) in that the definition is used consistently which enables attendance to

be compared over time and for different parts of the organisation. Having this consistency meant that comparisons used between HWCM and RP3 in the case study were true.

6.1.2. Cost and measurement of absenteeism

The importance of including direct and indirect costs when considering the cost of absence was highlighted by the findings of Taylor (1998) and DTI (2001). However, B&L only consider direct costs associated with absenteeism, specifically the cost of the sick pay scheme, which is consistent with the findings of the CIPD Employee Absence Report 2004, who found that of those employers monitoring the cost of absence, occupational sick pay was most likely to be included. Although B&L do not include indirect costs, the impact of indirect costs was recognised by two respondents in the semi-structured interviews who were of the opinion that the cost of the sick pay scheme was inaccurate and did not represent the true cost of absenteeism. The B&L approach to measuring costs is consistent with the findings of the literature review – indirect costs such as reorganisation of the workplace and training are not considered. Not having an overall cost of absenteeism can lead to a lack of appreciation of the effects of absence – this thinking is apparent when, during the semi-structured interviews, the personnel manager in RP3 considered recording absence to be a non value adding activity. Measuring the cost of absence is important because it can provide senior management with evidence of how absence impacts the bottom line and why it is worth investing in reducing absence. B&L should consider including both direct and indirect costs when counting the cost of absenteeism in order to get a true account of how much absence is costing B&L.

In relation to measurement, from the semi-structured interview it was highlighted that the three participants from RP3 had ceased to track absence levels since July 2003. In contrast, HWCM could all present their previous months absence figures and believed that having absence figures available to them was a key factor in controlling absence. RP3 no longer track absence, RP3 have on average a higher level of absence than HWCM who measure and track absence consistently. As highlighted by respondent E from HWCM, in the semi-structured interviews, measuring absence is a key factor in controlling absence as it acts as a trigger for action to be taken against poor attendees. Analysis of the secondary data shows that the absence levels in RP3 were 7.61% in 2004, in comparison to 5.72% in HWCM for the

same period. This is consistent with the findings in HWCM where measuring absence is key in controlling absence.

The contrast between the two business units in their approach to absence measurement is consistent with the view of the DTI's research (2001), where it is highlighted that even in companies where measurement systems exist, there was a lack of consistency with recording and measurement of absence.

6.1.3. Absenteeism causes

As Bausch & Lomb does not record causes of absence, the research findings highlight the perceived causes of absence as presented by management during the semi structured interviews, and operators during the employee survey. All six respondents in the semi structured interviews rated the following as their top three perceived causes within their areas: Home circumstances (including childcare, care of elderly); genuine illness (particularly minor illnesses such as colds and flu) and finally the existence of a sick pay scheme. The findings from the employee surveyed were consistent with the semi structured interview findings, however, the highest proportion of absence was attributed to employee illness, followed by home circumstances. This was consistent with the findings of Industrial Society's survey (1997) and Reisenwitz (1997) who highlighted sickness in the family, childcare and domestic responsibilities as significant causes of absence. The research findings in relation to genuine illness is supported by the literature review findings of the DTI (2001), O' Reilly (2000) and the CIPD (2004) who highlight that the main cause of unplanned absence was genuine illness due to minor ailments such as colds and flus.

Reference to the sick pay scheme in B&L was specifically not included in the design of the semi structured interview or the employee questionnaire, as during the research period the continuance of the sick pay scheme was under negotiation with employee unions, with the involvement of third parties, and the inclusion of reference to the sick pay scheme was considered to potentially introduce bias to the research findings. From the semi structured interviews, the finding in respect of the sick pay scheme was considered to be significant in that, participants were given a list of multiple choice answers, which did not include any

reference to the sick pay scheme, all six respondents answered home circumstances and genuine illness and then independently added the availability of the sick pay scheme to their list of perceived causes. The availability of the existing sick pay scheme as a perceived cause of absence also concurred with the early research of Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) and more recently Dalton and Todor (1993) who associated levels of absence with the availability of sick pay schemes, specifically, employees in organisations not covered by sick pay schemes tended to have lower levels of absence than those covered by such schemes.

In HWCM there was no significant difference between absence levels and shift patterns, with 5.79% in the HWCM three shift cycle and 5.65% in the weekend cycle. However, the results in RP3, where absence levels on weekend shift averaged 8.75% compared to 6.47% on the three shift cycle, support the findings of Arnold *et al* (1995) and Warr and Yearta (1995) who suggest that factors intrinsic to the job such as work patterns affect absenteeism and specifically shift workers are more likely to be absent from work for sickness.

In the semi structured interviews, only two respondents commented that another cause of absenteeism is the long hours and lack of job motivation particularly during the weekend shift, and survey results showed that job redesign was not perceived effective in reducing absence, although the findings of the literature review indicated that job satisfaction and motivation can be significant contributors to absence, this was not supported by the research in B&L.

6.1.4. Absence management strategies and their effectiveness

Consistent with Bevan and Hayday (1998), who believe that return to work interviews are amongst the most widely applied tools of absence management, and the 81% of respondents to the CIPD (2004) absence survey, who use return to work interviews following sickness absence, both business units in Bausch and Lomb use return to work interviews as a strategy for controlling absence. However, in RP3, return to work interviews are not conducted consistently because of time constraints.

In contrast, HWCM's return to work interviews are carried out consistently, and according to the respondents in the semi-structured interviews, are seen as an effective absence control

strategy. Of interest however is the fact that according to the employee survey, only 24% of respondents in RP3 perceived return to work interviews as effective, compared to 48% in HWCM. Analysis of the secondary data shows that on average absence levels in HWCM are lower than RP3, and this is the case for both shift patterns. This supports the findings of Fowler (1998) who believes that return to work interviews are probably the most influential element in ensuring that absences are not treated casually. Whilst the research findings are consistent with the literature review, Bausch & Lomb needs to ensure that both RP3 and HWCM are carrying out the return to work interview on a consistent and regular basis with every employee.

Five of the six respondents to the semi structured interview agreed that the use of disciplinary action was an effective tool for reducing absence. This is supported by the findings of Dunn and Wilkinson (2002) and Fowler (1998) who highlight that disciplinary action remains the usual sanction against persistent absentees and that no effective absence management programme can avoid the use of disciplinary action. This is supported by the findings of CIPD (2004) where 83% of respondents to their survey implemented disciplinary procedures for unacceptable attendance. The respondents to the employee questionnaire further concur with the suggestion that disciplinary action is effective in absence control, 84% in RP3 and 94% in HWCM rank this as effective. Disciplinary action is used in B&L, however, the absence levels in B&L still exceed the national average, therefore, use of disciplinary action alone will not control absence, moreover it is one element that must form part of the overall absence management strategy.

From the research findings, family friendly initiatives were available in both business units, however it was noted by the respondents in the semi structured interviews, that HWCM offered less job sharing, the force majeure policy was applied more rigidly, more leave of absence applications were refused and less flexitime offered within the HWCM area. Bevan (1998) believes that the best employers try to motivate attendance by adopting family friendly policies. This is supported by Sinclair (2001) who is of the opinion that introducing more flexible working hours is one of the effective strategies for dealing with the problem of absence. These findings are not supported by the case study as the business unit, namely

HWCM that provided fewer opportunities for flexible working, experienced lower levels of absence than RP3 who were more accommodating in respect of flexible working. This supported by the results of the employee survey, where the availability of family friendly initiatives was ranked 5th of 7, in respect of effective absence control policies in both business units.

In relation to the availability of a sick pay scheme, the findings of the literature research indicated that use of a sick pay scheme was considered as a strategy for managing absence, however, as discussed in the section on absenteeism causes, the primary research findings were that availability of a sick pay scheme was in fact a cause of absence. Jones (1998) stated that some companies are restricting or even removing sick pay schemes in an effort to reduce absenteeism. As recent as 2004, Griffith highlights that organisations are becoming less tolerant of employees who abuse their sick pay policies. The findings of the literature review are consistent with the findings of the primary research in this regard, where all six respondents in the semi-structured interviews placed availability of a sick pay scheme as one of the top three causes of absence.

A key issue in respect of management strategies was highlighted by Evans and Palmer (1999), IBEC (2002) and Sinclair (2001) who comment that job redesign and team working are strategies that can be effective in creating a positive attitude towards attendance in the workplace. There was no support for these findings in the research, as no respondents in the semi-structured interviews considered job redesign or teamwork as an absence management strategy, and this was supported by the findings of the employee survey.

The availability of an attendance bonus was identified as an absence management strategy in the literature review, and Fowler (1998) for example noted that many firms that give attendance bonuses believe they reduce absence rates. However, the findings of the research are not consistent with the ideas of Fowler, as the semi-structured interviews highlighted that the use of an attendance bonus was not thought to be effective in reducing absence and two respondents noted that employees are already paid a good salary to attend work in the first place without offering an attendance bonus. In stark contrast however, respondents to the

employee survey believed the availability of an attendance bonus to be an effective policy in reducing absence – in RP3, the attendance bonus was ranked as the most effective strategy, and in HWCM, it was ranked second.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0. Conclusions

The researcher found both similarities and inconsistencies between the literature review and the primary research. In terms of defining absence, the literature reviewed concurred with the findings of the primary research. The cost of absence in B&L included direct cost of the sick pay scheme only, which is consistent with the findings in the literature review, in relation to how respondents to a CIPD survey measure cost of absence, however, the importance of including indirect costs when looking at absenteeism cannot be ignored. The findings of the primary research in respect of measurement were consistent with the literature review in that the absence levels in RP3, who do not track absence were higher on average than HWCM who measure absence. The main perceived causes of absence according to the respondents in the semi-structured interview were home circumstances, genuine illness and the sick pay scheme – these findings were consistent with the findings of the employee survey and the literature.

The most effective management strategies in controlling absence were highlighted as being the use of disciplinary procedures, however in relation to the use of return to work interviews, and the availability of an attendance bonus, opinions differed between management and employees. Both the findings of the literature review and the primary research concurred in relation to these strategies – this was supported by the analysis of secondary data where it was shown in HWCM that absence levels were lower than RP3, HWCM consistently use return to work interviews – this is not the case in RP3. Family friendly initiatives, according to the literature research, were considered as effective absence management strategies, the findings in B&L however, were contradictory to this. RP3 who are more flexible than HWCM in relation to family friendly initiatives have higher absence levels than HWCM.

The consistent approach to absence management in HWCM would appear to have had a positive effect on absence levels in comparison to RP3. Both business units are similar in size, age and shift patterns, however absence levels differ. Such variations are indicative of internal systems and strategies that exist to manage absence, and the existing culture of each business unit.

7.1. Recommendations

7.1.1. – Defining absence

Although the findings of this research are restricted to the limited research conducted within two similar business units of a manufacturing facility, the findings of the primary and secondary research are generally supportive of the findings of the literature review. In the case of defining absenteeism, it is imperative that B&L ensure that the definition of absence used is applied consistently throughout the organisation.

7.1.2. Costs

In relation to costs, only the cost of the sick pay scheme was considered when counting the cost of absence – the hidden and indirect costs of absence were not considered. Although this is the case in most companies, as highlighted in the literature review, the actual costs associated with absence far exceeds the direct costs of sick pay schemes. B&L must consider including indirect costs when measuring the cost of absenteeism to ensure an accurate picture of how much absenteeism is costing the company – having this total cost available will ensure an increased awareness amongst all in B&L, and consequently will lead to an increased management focus on reducing absence levels.

7.1.3. Measurement

In relation to measurement of absenteeism, the importance of having data available and reviewing this data is paramount – when comparing two business units, the one where absence was measured consistently and absence levels reviewed regularly had a lower level of absence than the business unit where measurement was inconsistent or not happening at all. B&L must enforce a consistent approach to absence measurement, with regular reviews of absence levels in all business units and across all shifts. In conjunction, in keeping with researched

best practice, B&L would benefit from a review of their method of measurement, specifically, consideration should be given to differentiating between long and short term absence, as the management strategy adopted will be dependent on the length of absence.

7.1.4. Sick pay scheme

This research has also highlighted the negative effect of the availability of a sick pay scheme on absence levels – at a direct cost of 1.1 million euro per annum, consideration should be given by B&L to the removal of this scheme, or at a minimum review the payment criteria in respect of the scheme.

In relation to direct costs, without any amendment to the existing scheme, reducing absence levels by 2%, which has been achieved in HWCM by application of absence management policies, would result in a bottom line saving of €20,000.

7.1.5. Attendance bonus

The availability of an attendance bonus was perceived by employees to be an effective absence management strategy, therefore consideration should be given to maximising the benefit of the existing annual attendance bonus scheme. Presently, an annual bonus, will not provide any incentive to an employee who is absent in the earlier part of the year. However, if the bonus was to be paid on a quarterly basis, even if an employee is absent in the first three months of the year, they will still have an incentive to attend work in the second three months as they will still be entitled to a attendance bonus for that quarter. This will have a minimal cost impact on the company, specifically administrative costs and could be introduced immediately.

7.1.6. Absence Management Policy

The effectiveness of return to work interviews cannot be contended, this is supported by the findings of both the literature review and the primary and secondary research. B&L should develop an absence management policy based on best practice. The policy should include detailed guidelines on absence measurement, use of return to work interviews and disciplinary procedure – the application of this policy should be a management responsibility and should be applied consistently. The policy should also address the issue of measuring the cost of

absence as outlined above. The effectiveness of family friendly initiatives was not supported by the findings of the primary research, however, the literature review highlights the importance of family friendly initiatives in managing absence. Guidelines for ensuring consistent application of family friendly initiatives should also be included in the absence management policy.

The aforementioned conclusions and recommendations are based on research conducted in B&L, however, the literature review was not restricted. The effect of the specific culture within B&L cannot be ignored, however, it is thought that due to the overall consistency between primary and secondary research findings and literature review, that recommendations made could be considered by all organisations managing absence.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Absence levels for 2004 in HWCM and RP3

Microsoft Excel - Absence figures_graph.xls													
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Data Window Help													
J39													
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	2004 HWCM ABSENCE												
2		Jan-04	Feb-04	Mar-04	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04	Nov-04	Dec-04
3	HWCM Three Shift	3.34%	5.29%	6.42%	7.04%	5.60%	6.04%	0.48%	5.77%	6.63%	5.55%	3.35%	6.07%
4													
5	HWCM Shift A	2.00%	4.14%	7.96%	5.07%	4.43%	6.50%	5.44%	4.00%	5.33%	7.05%	2.93%	6.20%
6	HWCM Shift B	4.40%	5.60%	5.10%	6.39%	6.82%	5.74%	7.63%	5.35%	6.08%	4.53%	3.68%	5.79%
7	HWCM Shift C	3.63%	4.13%	6.19%	9.67%	5.54%	5.89%	8.37%	3.97%	8.47%	5.07%	3.43%	6.23%
8													
9	HWCM Weekends	3.49%	4.71%	6.30%	8.36%	5.57%	5.97%	7.40%	3.70%	7.55%	5.31%	3.39%	6.15%
10													
11	HWCM Shift D	6.67%	4.71%	5.64%	5.50%	8.47%	7.56%	7.00%	3.99%	9.25%	4.19%	3.80%	8.77%
12	HWCM Shift E	5.98%	7.67%	8.63%	6.24%	13.97%	11.29%	7.80%	3.42%	8.65%	9.17%	9.06%	6.13%
13													
14	HWCM Overall absence	4.45%	5.25%	6.70%	6.57%	7.85%	7.40%	7.25%	4.15%	7.55%	6.00%	4.58%	6.62%
15													
16	2004 RP3 ABSENCE												
17		Jan-04	Feb-04	Mar-04	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04	Nov-04	Dec-04
18	RP3 Three Shift	5.80%	5.60%	7.42%	5.92%	6.65%	6.36%	7.15%	5.42%	6.90%	7.01%	6.12%	7.33%
19													
20	RP3 Shift A	8.71%	4.93%	7.22%	6.50%	6.30%	5.72%	6.32%	5.14%	4.64%	7.14%	6.36%	5.27%
21	RP3 Shift B	7.67%	7.91%	7.78%	5.85%	6.41%	6.65%	7.66%	5.55%	9.62%	8.34%	5.63%	8.02%
22	RP3 Shift C	1.01%	3.97%	7.26%	5.41%	7.24%	6.82%	7.48%	5.57%	6.22%	5.55%	6.17%	8.71%
23													
24	RP3 Weekends	8.57%	4.54%	7.88%	7.88%	12.06%	11.11%	6.18%	4.33%	7.99%	11.96%	11.49%	11.03%
25													
26	RP3 Shift D	9.32%	4.08%	6.06%	7.09%	10.09%	9.35%	5.36%	4.61%	7.26%	13.88%	14.80%	13.33%
27	RP3 Shift E	7.73%	5.04%	9.90%	8.78%	14.18%	12.92%	7.01%	4.04%	8.71%	18.00%	8.04%	8.57%
28													
29	RP3 Overall absence	6.69%	5.19%	7.64%	6.73%	8.84%	8.27%	6.77%	4.96%	7.33%	8.98%	8.24%	8.78%
30													
31	HWCM Overall absence		5.72%					7.61%					
32	HWCM Three shift overall		5.75%					6.47%					
33	HWCM Weekends overall		5.65%					8.75%					
34													
35													

Appendix 2 – Schedule of questions for semi-structured interview

Section 1: Absenteeism defined

How is absence defined in Bausch & Lomb?

Section 2: Cost and Measurement of absence

What is the overall cost of absenteeism in Bausch & Lomb?

What is the cost of absenteeism in your area only?

What is the level of absence in your area?

How does your area measure absenteeism and what categories of absence are included for measurement purposes?

If you do monitor it, what do you do with the information?

Section 3: Absenteeism Causes

Please rank what you consider to be the top three causes of absence – one being the highest reason and three being the lowest reason:

- **Genuine Illness –self**
- **Illness of family member**
- **Accident – work**
- **Accident – outside of work**
- **Bereavement**
- **Home circumstances (incl. Childcare, care of elderly)**
- **Work circumstances (bullying, harassment, job motivation)**
- **Other – explain**

Section 4: Absence management strategies and their effectiveness

What strategies do you employ in relation to attendance in your area?

Do you use any of the following:

- **Return to work interviews**
- **EAP referrals**
- **Disciplinary action**
- **Job redesign and team work**
- **Employee health promotions**
- **Attendance bonus**
- **Family friendly initiatives (if so, please name them)**

What strategies do you think are most effective and why?

If you were to introduce additional strategies, what would you choose and why?

What do you consider to be the main differences between HWCM and RP3 in respect of absence management?

Appendix 3 – Operator Questionnaire

EMPLOYEE ABSENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire contains 3 sections - please read the instructions for each section carefully.

Section 1 – General

Instructions: Please indicate your answer by placing a “/” in the appropriate box.

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Where do you work? | HWCM | <input type="checkbox"/> | RP3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. What is your shift pattern? | Weekends | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3-shift | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. How long are you working in B&L? | Less than 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | 1 – 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | 6 – 12 years | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| | More than 12 years | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 4. In what age group are you? | 18 – 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 26 – 35 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | 36 – 45 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 46 or over | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 2 – Reasons for absenteeism

Instructions: If you have been absent from work in 2004, please indicate the number of times you have been out and the reasons why e.g. if you have been absent 3 times, once because of a sick parent and twice because of flu, put “1” in the box opposite “Home Circumstances” and “2” in the box opposite “Illness”. If you have not been absent in 2004 please place a “/” in the box opposite the comment “I was not absent from work in 2004”.

Note: Do not include the following approved leave as absence – Maternity Leave, Annual Leave and Public Holidays, Parental Leave, Force Majeure, Carers Leave, Leave of Absence, Examine/Study Leave, Marriage and Paternity Leave.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| I was not absent from work in 2004 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Illness – self | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Illness - family member | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Accident in work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Accident outside of work | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bereavement | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Home circumstances (incl. Childcare, care of elderly) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Work circumstances (bullying, harassment, job motivation) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other – explain _____ | |

Section 3 – Reducing absence

Instructions: From the following list indicate how effective you believe each is in reducing absence in your workplace, i.e. by either motivating employees to come to work, or by deterring employees from being absent. For each, circle the number that represents how effective you believe each is – 5 being very effective, and 1 being not effective.

	<i>Not effective</i>	<i>Somewhat effective</i>			<i>Very effective</i>
	1	2	3	4	5
Return to work interviews	1	2	3	4	5
Disciplinary action	1	2	3	4	5
Employee health promotions	1	2	3	4	5
Attendance Bonus	1	2	3	4	5
Family friendly initiatives (e.g. flexible working/Job sharing)	1	2	3	4	5
Employee Assistance Programme Referrals	1	2	3	4	5
Job redesign and team work	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire - Please return to Theresa Farrell, HR Dept. before May 8th.

Appendix 4 – Covering letter to operator questionnaire

May 1, 2005

Dear employee,

I am presently conducting research in to absenteeism in Bausch and Lomb Waterford as part of my studies for a B.A. (Hons) in Human Resource Management. As part of my research I am conducting a survey of employees in RP3 and HWCM. I would be very appreciative if you could complete the following questionnaire, which should take no more than 15 minutes, and return it to me before May 15th, 2005.

The completed questionnaires are being returned to me, and will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. There is no requirement to provide personal details such as your name or employee number.

The results of the questionnaire may be used as a basis for review of the absence control policies and procedures used in Bausch and Lomb.

Thank you for your co-operation

Theresa Farrell
Process Personnel Manager HWCM

Appendix 5 – Employee Survey Results HWCM

Response level

Number of questionnaires distributed:	80
Number of questionnaires returned:	45
% return rate	56%

Shift pattern

Weekends	19
3 shift	26

Length of Service

< 1 yr	10
1 - 5 yrs	16
6 - 12 yrs	14
> 12 yrs	5

Age Group

18 - 25	8
26 - 35	21
36 - 45	13
46 or over	2

Employee absence

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Weekend</i>	<i>3 Shift</i>
Absent in 2004	6	3	3
Not absent in 2004	39	16	23

Number of occasions of absence:

Weekends

7 from 3 employees - 2 out 2 occasions, 1 out on 3 occasions

3 Shift

6 from 3 employees - 3 out on 2 occasion

Total

13 from 6 employees

Reasons for absence

	<i>Total</i>	<i>3 shift</i>	<i>Weekend</i>
Illness - self	8	4	4
Illness - family member	1	0	1
Accident in work	0	0	0
Accident outside of work	1	1	0
Bereavement	1	1	0
Home circumstances	2	0	2
Work circumstances	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0

Effectiveness of absence control policies

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Perceived effectiveness</i>				
	<i>1 - Not effective</i>	<i>2 - Less effective</i>	<i>3 - Somewhat effective</i>	<i>4 - Effective</i>	<i>5 - Very effective</i>
Return to work interviews	20	32	27	17	4
Disciplinary action	0	6	35	31	28
Employee health promotions	12	15	42	29	2
Attendance bonus	1	6	13	52	28
Family friendly initiatives	18	15	47	13	7
Employee assistance programmes	4	17	22	41	16
Job redesign and team work	54	21	14	8	3

Appendix 6 – Employee Survey Results RP3

Response level

Number of questionnaires distributed:	80
Number of questionnaires returned:	38
% return rate	48%

Shift pattern

Weekends	16
3 shift	22

Length of Service

< 1 yr	2
1 - 5 yrs	10
6 - 12 yrs	11
> 12 yrs	15

Age Group

18 - 25	4
26 - 35	12
36 - 45	9
46 or over	13

Employee absence

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Weekend</i>	<i>3 Shift</i>
Absent in 2004	11	5	6
Not absent in 2004	27	11	16

Number of occasions of absence:

Weekends	
9 from 5 employees - 3 out on 1 occasion, 1 out 4 occasions, 1 out 2 occasions	
3 Shift	
11 from 6 employees - 2 out on 1 occasion, 3 out on 3 occasions	
Total	
20 from 11 employees	

Reasons for absence

	<i>Total</i>	<i>3 shift</i>	<i>Weekend</i>
Illness - self	13	9	4
Illness - family member	1	0	1
Accident in work	1	1	0
Accident outside of work	0	0	0
Bereavement	2	1	1
Home circumstances	2	0	2
Work circumstances	0	0	0
Other	1	0	1

Effectiveness of absence control policies

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Perceived effectiveness</i>				
	<i>1 - Not effective</i>	<i>2 - Less effective</i>	<i>3 - Somewhat effective</i>	<i>4 - Effective</i>	<i>5 - Very effective</i>
Return to work interviews	31	45	5	14	5
Disciplinary action	2	14	23	42	19
Employee health promotions	14	10	55	21	0
Attendance bonus	0	5	5	79	11
Family friendly initiatives	29	16	34	14	7
Employee assistance programmes	7	23	18	34	18
Job redesign and team work	45	29	14	7	5

Appendix 7 – Employee Survey Results Overall

Response Level

Number of questionnaires distributed:	160
Number of questionnaires returned:	83
% return rate	52%

Shift pattern

Weekends	35
3 shift	48

Length of Service

< 1 yr	12
1 - 5 yrs	26
6 - 12 yrs	25
> 12	20

Age Group

18 - 25	12
26 - 35	33
36 - 45	21
46 or over	15

Employee absence

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Weekend</i>	<i>3 Shift</i>
Absent in 2004	17	8	9
Not absent in 2004	66	27	39

Number of occasions of absence:

Weekends

16 from 8 employees

3 Shift

17 from 9 employees

Total

33 from 17 employees

Reasons for absence

	<i>Total</i>	<i>3 shift</i>	<i>Weekend</i>
Illness - self	21	13	8
Illness - family member	2	0	2
Accident in work	1	1	0
Accident outside of work	1	1	0
Bereavement	3	2	1
Home circumstances	4	0	4
Work circumstances	0	0	0
Other	1	0	1

Effectiveness of absence control policies

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Perceived effectiveness</i>				
	<i>1 - Not effective</i>	<i>2 - Less effective</i>	<i>3 - Somewhat effective</i>	<i>4 - Effective</i>	<i>5 - Very effective</i>
Return to work interviews	25	39	16	15	5
Disciplinary action	1	10	29	36	24
Employee health promotions	13	12	49	25	1
Attendance bonus	0	5	9	66	20
Family friendly initiatives	24	16	40	13	7
Employee assistance programmes	5	20	20	38	17
Job redesign and team work	50	25	14	8	3

Appendix 8 – List of Abbreviations

ACAS – Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

B&L – Bausch and Lomb

DTI – Department of Trade and Industry

CIPD – Chartered Institute of Personnel Development

CBI – Confederation of British Industry

EAP – Employee Assistance Programme

HR – Human Resources

HWCM – High Water Cast Moulding

IBEC – Irish Business and Employers Confederation

IDA – Industrial Development Authority

IMI – Irish Management Institute

RP3 – Reverse Process 3

SFA – Small Firms Association

VHI – Voluntary Health Insurance