Employee's Understanding of Workplace Absenteeism and the Investigation of Stress as a Contributing Factor

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ABSTRACT

Absenteeism is a problem that has plagued organisations for many years, unfortunately organisations are still struggling to deal with this costly problem. Much of previous research carried out on absenteeism has focussed on the variables that cause an employee to attend or not attend work such as motivation and job satisfaction. Other research on absenteeism has focused on the issue from an organisation and employer viewpoint. Stress as a contributing factor to workplace absenteeism has risen in the past number of years with the recession having a big impact on this. With recent redundancies in many organisations and recruitment bans in others, those left in their roles are finding their workload increasing which is contributing to the anxiety and stress employees are experiencing. In this study four key variables were identified to help measure and explore employees understanding of absenteeism and to investigate if stress is a contributing factor. Surveys were distributed at random in which respondents were asked a series of questions relating to the key variables.

The study has given an insight into the understanding employees have on the issue of absenteeism and has provided an understanding of the relationship between stress and absenteeism. Results identified show that the majority of respondents have a certain understanding of the effect absenteeism has on an organisation. However, some of the most interesting findings relate to an employee's knowledge in relation to policies and procedures that may be present in their organisation, with the majority of employees unaware of any policies or procedures that are in place thus, contributing to the seriousness of the problem. Findings have also shown that employees rate their daily workload as stressful and feel stressed on a regular basis. Further findings showed that employees believe that stress is a factor to absenteeism in their organisation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.0. Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore what an employee's understanding of workplace absenteeism is and to investigate if stress is a contributing factor to workplace absenteeism. To gain a better understanding, surveys were distributed to 101 volunteers working in both the public and private sector in which results were analysed and reoccurring themes were identified. The volunteers who took part in this research were all employees working across a number of different sectors. This chapter looks at the rationale as to why this topic justifies further investigation. It will also give a brief summary of the layout of this research.

1.1. Rationale

This study sets out to explore the research question 'what is an employee's understanding of workplace absenteeism and how is stress a contributing factor?'. Absenteeism is an issue that effects all organisations around the world. According to Sadri and Lewis (1995) human capital is an organisations greatest competitive advantage therefore, workplace absenteeism removes an organisations primary competitive weapon. In the current economic climate organisations are under extreme pressure to deliver high quality services in a timely and cost efficient manner. With the estimated cost of workplace absenteeism in Ireland at €1.5 billion this adds unnecessary pressures to the daily operations of an organisation (IBEC, 2011). According to Ejere (2010, p.115) an employee not showing up for work is a human capital risk as the absent employee cannot contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives. Ejere (2010) argues that absenteeism translates to lost productivity in any organisation.

Nicholson (1993) argues that workplace absenteeism is both linked to work life factors and personal factors and both need to be taken into account when assessing the complexity of the issue in an organisation.

Workplace stress is an issue that is growing in many organisations and for the first time in 2011 stress was cited as the number one reason for long term absenteeism in Ireland

and the UK (CIPD, 2011). With the recent recession employees have become extremely conscious of their job security and the financial stressors that the recession has brought adds to the levels of employee anxiety (Healey, 2009). Workplace stress can be viewed by management as a threat to both staff morale and productivity (Healey, 2009). Although the issue of workplace stress is growing many organisations are unsure of how to combat the issue and what policies to implement to fulfil their duty of care to their employees (Shuttleworth, 2004). According to Clarke (2001) the majority of workers in all sectors claim that their jobs are stressful, the highest percentage was reported in the voluntary sector where 90% of workers claimed that their jobs were highly stressful. Stress effects individuals differently and is often perceived as a negative however, stress can also affect an employee positively through short term exposure (Labour Relations Commission, 2007)

The topic of absenteeism has been researched through various contributing factors such as the cost of absenteeism, causes of absenteeism, types of absenteeism and many more. One may believe that there is a gap in the current absenteeism literature as previous models and theories devised on workplace absenteeism such as Steers and Rhodes (1978) 'Process Model' and Nicholson's (1977) 'Attachment' theory have focussed on why an employee attends or doesn't attend work and not an employee's overall understanding of absenteeism. It is important to research the topic of stress as a contributing factor to absenteeism and to gather current data to measure the severity of the issue. For these reasons the research question for this study was devised to explore an employee's understanding of absenteeism and to gather data from employees to measure the relationship between stress and absenteeism. This research was conducted through surveys in which respondents were employees of various industrial sectors.

1.2. Overview of Chapters

Chapter Two: Literature Review – This chapter will look at previous research undertaken on this topic. Theories associated with the research will be analysed and reoccurring themes from this research will be discussed.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology – This chapter looks at the research objectives for this study. It also outlines and justifies the data collection method chosen.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussions - This chapter identifies and discusses the research findings from the analysis of the data collected.

Chapter Five: Conclusion - The conclusion arrived at based on the analysis of previous literature and the findings from this research will be presented and discussed.

In addition to the chapters listed above, a bibliography referencing all articles read and an appendices including a sample questionnaire and overall findings. are also included. In the next chapter, the literature review, the topic of absenteeism will be explored and arguments and opinions will be discussed. It will look at interesting areas such as the meaning of absenteeism, theories and models associated with the topic and the causes of absenteeism.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0.   Introduction

This chapter will outline and discuss the literature associated with the research topic that served the basis for this study. Firstly the meaning and definition of workplace absenteeism will be explained. Next the types of workplace absenteeism, theories and models will be examined which will lead into the discussion of the causes of workplace absenteeism followed by how workplace absenteeism is measured. Finally the relationship between stress and workplace absenteeism will be examined along with exploring the types and consequences of stress. This chapter will be completed with a conclusion.

2.1. What is absenteeism?

Locke et al (2007, p.17) defines Absenteeism as "the lack of physical presence at a given location and time when there is a social expectation for the employee to be there". Absenteeism is a universal problem that affects all organisations in some way although many organisations do not suffer from the problem of absenteeism as much as others. Absenteeism is managed in a variety of ways in many different organisations, although it can be argued that the effects that absenteeism has on any given organisation are similar. Defining absenteeism should be easy, an employee is either present or not present at work. However according to Rhodes & Steers (1990, p.11-12) defining absenteeism is not as simple as some believe as there is no universal agreement on the definition of absenteeism.

Absenteeism as the nonattendance of an employee for scheduled work can be differentiated between absenteeism that is scheduled in advance e.g. annual leave. Many organisations view absenteeism in two categories, voluntary absenteeism and involuntary absenteeism. March and Simon (1958) were the first theorists to conceptualise this view on absenteeism. Voluntary absenteeism can include reasons such as deviance and holidays, while involuntary absenteeism is summed up by reasons

out of an employee's control such as sickness and funeral attendance (James et al, 2006).

Similarly, Sadri and Lewis (1995) classified workplace absenteeism into two types, Type A and Type B. Type A absenteeism can be defined as an absence from the workplace that is completely unavoidable on the employees part. Type A absenteeism is viewed by the employer as a genuine and legitimate absence. Common Type A absences include bereavement, jury duty and illness (Sadri and Lewis, 1995, p.24). Type B absenteeism is at the opposite end of the spectrum to Type A. Sadri and Lewis (1995) believed that Type B absences are avoidable and they comprise of an individual choice of the employee. It is believed that the key component of Type B absence is the lack of motivation in an employee. Over the years the rates of absenteeism have varied in organisations according to an absence management report published by CIPD in association with Simply Health (2012), it was reported that following on from the recession the average level of absenteeism has fallen to a record low since 2002 across the majority of sectors in Ireland and the UK. It can be argued that the recession has led to a fall in absenteeism due to the employees being concerned about job security.

2.2. Theories & Models of Absenteeism

According to Nicholson (1977, p.231) in the past absenteeism was "appositely named 'a social fact in need of theory'". Although there has been a huge amount of varied research carried out on the topic there have been few theories associated with it. Over the years theories have developed and models of absenteeism have been established. It is widely known that from those theories and models which have emerged that the most well known and most referred to models are Steers & Rhodes (1978) 'Process Model' and Nicholson's 'Attachment' Theory. The researcher has outlined the core concepts of each of these theories/models below.

2.2.1. Steers and Rhodes (1978) 'Process Model'

According to Brooke (1986, p.345) Steers and Rhodes (1978) process model of attendance has made a big contribution to research on workplace absenteeism (Appendix A). The model is influenced by two factors: "attendance motivation (voluntary absenteeism) and ability to attend (involuntary absenteeism)" (Kuzmits, 2009, p.281). According to Smulders (1980, p.368) attendance motivation is influenced

by how satisfied an employee is by their job situation. This includes both internal and external pressures such as job scope, leadership style of manager, job level, stress of the role and opportunities for advancement. Ability to attend is influenced by personal characteristics such as age, sex, education and tenure. This can affect ability to attend through problems such as illness, family problems and difficulty making the journey to the workplace. Brooke (1986 p.346) states that attendance motivation is the key determinant of attendance provided that the employee has the ability to attend. Both attendance motivation and ability to attend interact with each other and produce the outcome of actual attendance. Steers and Rhodes 'Process Model' has been called one of the most influential and often-cited models in the absenteeism literature (Harrison and Martocchio, 1998). Since Steers and Rhodes (1978) model was established there has been limited further research on motivation and ability to attend, rare research that was carried out found mixed results.

Having reviewed the literature on Steers and Rhodes (1978) 'Process Model' it is clear that the model has come under criticism in the past. According to Brooke (1986) there are a number of aspects of the model that are sources of "difficulty in its operationalization". They are summarised as follows:

1.) Possible problems associated with the construct validity of the key components of the model. Steers and Rhodes do not define the variables of "ability to attend", "pressures to attend" and "motivation to attend" as single constructs

2.) Steers and Rhodes model implies an assumption that attendance and absence are complements of one another. They do not define their dependent variable and they use "imprecise variable labels" e.g Job Scope.

3.) A third difficulty comes from Steers and Rhodes mixing the variables and theoretical concepts that are associated with absenteeism. This can be seen when Steers and Rhodes include 'personal characteristics' as determinants of both ability to attend and values/expectations. By mixing the variables Steers and Rhodes add confusion of understanding why they are related to each variable.

4.) Another concern is associated with the lack of "substantive discussion"of variables that are potentially important. It could be argued that Steers and Rhodes model is criticised for not including more theory.

Researchers have argued that the model is "a framework rather than a theory per se, because it specifies broad collections of variables rather than relations between well-defined constructs" (Brooke, 1986 as cited by Harrison and Martocchio, 1998, p. 312).

2.2.2. Nicholson's "Attachment" Theory

Nicholson believed that despite the accumulation of much varied research on absenteeism there was a serious lack of theory associated with the topic. He believed that this had caused the "fragmented" nature of the research carried out on absenteeism (Nicholson, 1977, p.231). Nicholson developed his theory of 'attachment' following on from his analysis on research, studies and theories of absenteeism. The purpose of this theory was to help predict employee absenteeism (Appendix B). Nicholson (1977) developed his theory by exploring the nature of absence while also taking into consideration methodological and measurement problems. He chose to focus his theory on absence as the measured variable rather than focussing it on attendance which a number of other studies on absenteeism have done. Nicholson devised the 'A-B' continuum as part of his theory characterising absence events by their avoidability. Nicholson (1977) notes how these events impact on a person varies from person to person depending on the influence of attendance motivation. Nicholson introduced 'attachment' as a way of measuring attendance motivation (Nicholson, 1977, p.231).

According to Nicholson (1977, p.240) organisations typically classify absences based on studies associated with the topic. The typical classes include voluntary, involuntary, sickness, sanctioned and unsanctioned. Nicholson argues that there is no wholly way of measuring 'voluntary absence' "though it may be contended that it would be inadvisably defeatist to thereby condemn all attempts at meaningful absence classification" (Nicholson 1977, p.240). Nicholson's 'A-B' continuum is defined in terms of the constraints/barriers on attendance. By devising the 'A-B' continuum Nicholson allowed absences to be viewed on a scale according to the extent to which individual choice influences the occurrence, non-occurrence of absence. Absences which fall at the 'A' end of the continuum are those which individual choice would not count and those that fall at the 'B' end are those that are entirely controlled by individual choice, thus those at the 'A' end are unavoidable and those at 'B' are avoidable.

Nicholson (1977, p.246) defines 'attachment' in the context in which an employee is dependent upon the structure and regulations of organisational life. He argues that there are four sets of influences that constitute attachment.

1.) Personality Traits: Nicholson suggests that with age comes more stability and perseveration he believes the impact that they have on attendance motivation is a

major determinant of the age-absence relationship. Similar studies have shown that the work attachment of males is higher than that of females. Nicholson states that although there is little research on it, other attachment outside work such as hobbies have the ability to undermine work attachment.

2.) Work Orientation: According to Nicholson, sociologists have given a lot of attention to the extent that employee expectations and needs determine the quality of their work experience. Research has also shown that a disconnection between work orientation and experience is directly related to stress, attendance and dissatisfaction.

3.) Job Involvement: This refers to how an employee fits in with the characteristics and demands of their job. In many cases the relationship is viewed as the employee simply being a dispensable component, in other cases it views the employee as a person. Having the right person for the job is a huge determinant of attendance.

4.) Employment Relationship: Nicholson believes that reward and consequences form a part of high attachment among employees. He believes that high attachment can be achieved by the use of control mechanisms where high attachment may be 'bought' through reward systems or 'enforced' through punishment systems. The second has been proved to be limited and not as effective as reward systems. Nicholson believes that when there is a system of rewards in place and there is an element of trust in the employee/employer relationship that attachment and attendance will be highest.

Nicholson's model of 'Attachment' was developed as a theory to gain a better understanding of the complex topic of absenteeism. It was formed to aid the investigation of the causes of absenteeism. The 'Attachment' model allowed the researcher to investigate what motivates employees to attend work. From the literature discussed above factors such as motivation, job satisfaction and the need to feel valued in their role are all variables which form the attachment bond an employee has with their organisation thus leading to the high/low levels of absenteeism an employee has.

2.3. Cost of Absenteeism

In 2011 it was estimated that the cost of unauthorised absence for organisations in Ireland was €1.5 billion or €818 per employee, these figures only include recorded absences within organisations (IBEC, 2011). These costs incurred by an organisation

include both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include payment of salary, replacement costs and overtime. While indirect costs include decrease in productivity, administration, quality of service and any social security contributions an employer makes for an absent employee (Edwards, 2010). Nicholson (1977) argues that the indirect costs that an organisation incurs are the "quid pro quos spent bargaining' for non-absent employees cooperation and flexibility to cover the time and work lost for the absent employee.

2.3.1. Organisation's Absence Management Policies and Procedures

According to IDS HR (2011) policies that are related to attendance management usually outline the principles behind the approach, attendance targets, absence notification processes, absence triggers and sources of support available to all employees. A report issued by The Industrial Society (2001) found that a written policy circulated to all employees illustrates the importance of the policy for the organisation. According to IDS HR (2003) the most common absence management policies and procedures are return to work interviews and trigger mechanisms. A survey carried out by IDS HR (2003) showed that almost two thirds of organisations have a procedure in place that return to work interviews are carried out with all employees returning from absences of any length. The aim of these interviews is to get an understanding as to why the employee was absent and to update them on any measures that will be taken going forward. Trigger mechanisms are used to flag an absence pattern of an employee. This trigger can be a set number of absences in a period of time e.g. if an employee is absent for three Mondays in a 6 month period they set off a trigger. This procedure is quite similar to the 'Bradford Index'. As per Nicholson's theory of 'Attachment' many organisations incorporate their absence management policies and procedures with reward and consequence systems. IDS HR (1998) found that a number of organisations surveyed rewarded good attendance through cash and non-cash incentives such as one day additional annual leave or prize draws. They also found that many organisations take the opposite approach and have no sick pay policy or reward systems in place.

2.3.2. Sick Pay Policies

Organisations sick pay policies vary depending on the company with many organisations not paying for employee unauthorised absence. At present in Ireland an employee has no right under employment law to be paid for sick leave, it is solely at the

discretion of the employer (Citizensinformation, 2013). According to Murray (2010) bigger organisations tend to have more generous comprehensive policies in place whereby they pay an employee full pay for a bigger period of time than smaller organisations. This differs from the UK where they are legally entitled to statutory sick pay from their employer from up to 28 weeks. Employees are also entitled to more if their organisation has an additional pay policy in place (gov.uk).

2.4. Measuring Absenteeism

An absence management report published by the CIPD in 2012 stated that the average level of absenteeism per employee among UK and Irish organisations is 6.8 days per year. The length of absence an employee has in an organisation can be measured in two categories, short term absence and long term absence. The short term absence category comprises of an employee absence of 7 days or less while a long term absence is typically 4 weeks or more (CIPD, 2012).

In order for an organisation to implement policies and procedures to control absenteeism they must first measure the severity of the problem in the organisation. Analysing and measuring absenteeism plays an important role in identifying any patterns and trends of absenteeism in an organisation and it allows management to investigate and explore underlying problems. A key element in monitoring workplace absenteeism is using an effective measurement tool. There are many ways to measure absenteeism and the most common ways are through the means of 1.) 'Time lost rate' and 2.)'Frequency rate'. Both methods are explained below:

1.) Time Lost Rate: According to CIPD (2013) this method shows the percentage of time available that has been lost due to absence. This method can be used for different departments within an organisation to identify areas of concern. The formula to calculate the time lost rate is:

$$\frac{\text{Total absence (hours or days) in the period}}{\text{Possible total (hours or days) in the period}} \times 100$$

2.) Frequency Rate: This method shows the number of absences an employee has as a percentage. According to CIPD (2013) it calculates the spread of absenteeism in an organisation. This method does not indicate how long an absence period is or if an employee has taken more than one absence in a specified period of time.

Nicholson's model of 'Attachment' is based around the frequency rate method. Nicholson states that an absence dependent variable is "frequency, not time-lost" (Nicholson, 1977). The formula to calculate the frequency rate is:

$$\underline{\text{No of spells of absence in the period}} \text{ x } 100$$
$$\text{No of employees}$$

The Bradford Factor Index is a popular tool among many organisations to help manage the problem of short term absences. The tool was developed by the Bradford University School of Management and is used by organisations to help highlight any unacceptable patterns of short term absences among employees (Brett, 2012). The formula for the Bradford Index is:

Number of Absences (S) x Number of Absences (S) x Total Number of Days Absent (D)

Or

$$B = S^2 \text{ x } D$$

To get accurate results the method is usually applied to a period of 52 weeks. An employee's Bradford score will vary depending on the frequency of the short term absences. Below are some examples of absence lengths and frequency's that show the varying Bradford Factor scores CIPD (2013):

10 one-day absences	10 x 10 x 10 = 1,000
1 ten-day absence	1 x 1 x 10 = 10
5 two-day absences	5 x 5 x 10 = 250
2 five-day absences	2 x 2 x 10 = 40

CIPD (2007) argue that it is important that Bradford Factor scores are not solely relied upon as they only focus on short term absences. The Bradford Factor Index could cause organisations to be side tracked and neglect the issue of long term absences which are more costly to an organisation.

Although there are several methods available to measure the absence level rates in organisations many organisations do not effectively measure the problem appropriately.

This means that an organisation cannot manage the problem of absenteeism correctly as they are not using or analysing data available to them. According to CIPD (2007) in order for absence data to be used in the most effective way organisations must adhere to the following four step process.

1.) Collect accurate absence information

2.) A record that data in a usable format

3.) Analyse the data frequently

4.) Present the data/report findings to relevant parties

2.5. Causes of Absenteeism

There is a broad range of reasons that can cause an employee to be absent from the workplace. These causes can often be complex in nature and many are difficult for some organisations to understand. Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) found that most organisations do not understand nor have they investigated the main causes of absenteeism within their organisations. According to Sadri and Lewis (1995) a lot of the literature on the causes of workplace absenteeism has focussed on the aspect of voluntary absence and the idea that when an individual is physically well enough to attend work that their motivation will determine whether they will be absent or not. According to Nicholson's theory of 'Attachment' (1977) age and maturity have an effect on absenteeism. He found that younger employees generally have a higher rate of short term absenteeism. However, older employees when absent are usually out for longer spells.

A study carried out by Bolton and Hughes (2001, p. 27) found the following reasons as the most common causes of workplace absenteeism. These are ranked from the most common cited causes from an employee:

1.) Minor illness

2.) Serious illness

3.) Home/family responsibility

4.) Personal problems

5.)   Absence seen as entitlement

6.)   Lack of commitment

7.)   Work-Related accidents

8.)   Poor Workplace morale

9.)   Workplace stress

10.)   Unauthorised holiday

11.)   Impact of long hours

12.)   Drink or Drugs

13.)   Leisure accidents

According to MacLean (2007), Bolton and Hughes (2001) also researched a further number of individual characteristics and influences that can cause the non-attendance of an employee at work. From their findings five categories were identified:

1.) Sickness
2.) Personality and background
3.) Relationships at work
4.) Relationships and responsibilities outside of work
5.) The individual and the job which included perceptions.

2.5.1. Minor Illness

According to CIPD (2012) minor illnesses are by far the most common causes of absenteeism. In many cases employees who are absent due to minor illnesses may in fact have been well enough to attend work, this ties in with Steers and Rhodes 'attendance motivation' variable. This is also supported by the A-B continuum in Nicholson's model of 'Attachment'. Nicholson (1977) found that the position given to an absence such as a minor illness on the continuum differs depending on the person. He argued that minor illnesses would fall at the 'A' end of the continuum if the employee worked in a demanding environment. However, it would be positioned at the 'B' end of the continuum if the employee had good general health and a job in a less

demanding environment such as a desk job. In the case of the later it often becomes a case that the employee 'could have' attended work.

The health status of an employee comprises of both their physical and mental wellbeing. According to Brooke (1986, p.354) an employee with poor health is more likely to have a higher absence rate. Muchinksy (1977) believed that much of the research carried out on absenteeism tends to ignore the impact that health had on absenteeism. Harvey et al (1999) believed that researchers ignored the impact of health on absenteeism as an illness tends to fall into the 'involuntary' absence category which few studies are interested in.   However Nicholson and Payne (1987) discovered that much of the absence which is the main problem for organisations is 'short term' absences which are attributed by minor illnesses. Harvey et al (1999) proposed that minor illness should be considered as a 'multiple variable' which interacts with socio-economic and gender factors.

2.6. Stress as a factor to absenteeism

According to CIPD (2012) one of the most common reasons cited for long term absences is stress and it is seen more often in non-manual workers. Stress is the psychological, physiological and behavioural response by an individual when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet those demands, which, over a period of time, leads to ill-health (Palmer, 1989). Stress can be best described as a negative feeling associated with a range of physical symptoms including but not restricted to an increased heart rate and a dry mouth. However, stress can affect each individual differently and some will experience more symptoms than others. Carr et al (2011) defines occupational stress as 'the perceived difference between professional demands and a person's ability to carry out those demands'.

Stress is an issue that many organisations are faced with on a daily basis however, despite more and more people suffering from stress and the increased awareness of the issue, organisations are still unsure of how to deal with it (Shuttleworth, 2004). According to the HSE (2004) it is difficult to state what trends emerge from workplace stress. This is due to the contradictory findings from studies that have been carried out on the issue e.g. some studies show that men are more prone to stress while other studies show women are more prone to stress (Stevenson and Harper, 2006).

Although stress is mainly associated with negativity Stevenson and Harper (2006) found that stress can have both positive and negative effects on individuals in the workplace. How stress effects an employee depends on the extent of the stressor.

1.) Positive effects: A person suffering from limited or an 'acceptable' level of stress can have improved performance.

2.) Negative effects: This can decrease an employee's performance. According to Fairbrother and Warn (2003, p.9) the negative effects of stress can also effect an employee's efficiency, initiative and cause a lack of concern for others in the organisation.

Previous studies on workplace stress have often associated the coping mechanism of 'Fight or Flight' to measure if stress has positive or negative effects on an individual. The 'Fight or Flight' response, also known as the 'acute stress response' was first developed by Walter Cannon in 1920. According to Stuart (1991, p.10)

"The reaction involves a series of bodily changes including the production of adrenalin and other stress-related hormones, heightening of the senses, flow of blood away from inessential organs; release into the blood of energy supplying substances such as fats and sugars; increased pulse rate, and the tensing of muscles in preparation for strenuous action".

These bodily changes prepare an employee for any demand or challenge that they meet. An employee will take the option to fight these challenges/demands or run away from them – fight or flee.

Petrus and Kleiner (2003) suggested that stress can be essential for many day to day activities in the workplace but it can become dangerous when it reaches an intense level that affects an individual's daily activities. A study carried out by Petrus and Kleiner (2003) found that harmful workplace stress can often be associated with a number of other factors:

1.) Allowing employees little control over how the job is performed while carrying out duties in a demanding role.

2.) Practices within the organisation that allow an employee little say

3.) Unsafe working environments

In 2012 RoSPA (Royal Society Prevention of Accidents) issued a report stating that although workplace stress is rising, many organisations are still failing to tackle the issue. Although the health problems that arise from stress are well known many organisations are still finding it difficult to implement policies and procedures to prevent them. RoSPA found that organisations often have to encounter a key trigger before they act on tackling the issue of workplace stress. These key triggers can include regulation, high absenteeism rates, high costs due to absenteeism and a fall in productivity. Petrus and Kleiner (2003) developed a three step coping mechanism for organisations to manage workplace stress. The process is as follows:

1.) Employers should assess their organisation for any factors that could contribute to stress. They should review roles, environmental factors and organisational practices -policies and procedures.

2.) Organisations should implement stress management measures for all employees including management to help reduce the level of workplace stress. According to Matheson (1987) employers should always seek to know how an employee is feeling on a frequent basis, it is recommended that employers ask employees about their jobs before an assumption about if they are stressed or not it made.

3.) Organisations should monitor the progress of any measures that have been implemented and make adjustments as necessary. Petrus and Kleiner (2003) have found that all stress management systems are trial and error and reporting the progress and changes made to any measure will improve any future implementations of stress management measures within the organisation. It is important for organisations not to set unrealistic goals and recognise that not all employee's suffering from workplace stress can be helped.

2.7. Causes of Stress

In 2012 the CIPD Absence Management Survey Report stated that 52% of employers in the UK and Ireland reported that there had been a huge increase in stress related absences in comparison to previous years. It was reported that the most common cause of workplace stress was additional workload.

According to a report published by the HSE(2008) there are 6 factors that contribute to workplace stress if not carefully managed, they are:

1.) Demands: Employees ability / inability to cope with the demands of the role
2.) Control: Employees need to have a say in what they do

3.) Support: Employees need to receive support from both management and other employees within the organisation

4.) Relationships: Employees need to have good relationships with all and positive behaviours displayed e.g. no bullying should take place within the organisation

5.) Role: Employees need to have a clear understanding of what is expected from them in their role

6.) Change: Employees need to be informed about all organisational changes that take place

There are two different types of stress that a person can experience, they are acute stress and chronic stress the latter being the more serious and damaging one. Carr et al (2011) identified three main factors that contribute to chronic stress within the workplace.

1.) Job demands: The demands a particular role can have can be a huge source of stress among employees. The most common factors that contribute to high demands within a role are associated with task requirements and can include the level of uncertainty, time pressures and the amount/difficulty of the work.

2.) Individual differences: Carr et al (2011) suggest that how individuals differ can play a huge role in how an employee behaves or reacts to certain stressors and believe that these differences are part of two broad classes of variables. These variables are hereditary and environment. Inherited differences are inborn and characteristics such as mental health play a role in stress. Environmental differences are acquired and can change over time depending on individual experiences etc. Individuals differences play a big role in stress as they determine how one copes in stressful situations. They suggest that two employees with the same role may not see their environment at the same level of stress.

3.) Social demands: This looks at the social network support that an employee has. "Too much or too little social stimulation can be stressful", feeling isolated or overwhelmed within the organisation can trigger a stressor for an employee.

In 1999 it was reported that one in four workers in the US were suffering from workplace stress (Maxon, 1999). According to Maxon (1999) the United Nations International Labor Organisation has defined workplace stress as a 'global epidemic'. The effects that workplace stress can have on an organisation can be a threat to how the organisation operates. The World Health Organisation (2003) states that workplace

stress can adversely affect other employees in the organisation, have a huge impact on absenteeism, decrease productivity, affect staff morale, increase liability claims, increase customer complaints and damage the brand of the organisation.

2.8. Conclusion

What actually defines workplace absenteeism? There are many definitions for workplace absenteeism as mentioned above however, Steers and Rhodes (1990) believe that a standard universal definition for workplace absenteeism would enable companies to manage and measure the issue more effectively. There have been many studies carried out on absenteeism over the past number of years and each study highlights the complexity of the topic, because of this a lot of the most recent studies on absenteeism have focused on one or two variables that are connected with absenteeism rather than the overall issue.

Steers and Rhodes (1978) developed a model of absenteeism which found that employee attendance is dictated by two variables, how motivated the employee is and their ability to attend and carry out their duties. They also argued that personal characteristics, job satisfaction and organisational commitment also contribute to an employee's attendance. After much varied research Nicholson (1977) devised his theory of attachment which focussed on the prediction of employee absenteeism. In order to do this he developed the 'A-B' continuum to characterise absence events by their avoidability and to aid the investigation of the causes of absenteeism. Similarly to Rhodes and Steers (1978), Nicholson too looked at motivation and job satisfaction as variables.

A key finding from the literature is the financial effect that absenteeism has on an organisation. This emphasises the need for strict policies and procedures to be in place in an organisation to curb the issue of employee absenteeism. It has been proven that the most common cause cited for short term absenteeism is minor illness (CIPD, 2012). In 2011 stress topped the poll for the first time as the top reason cited for long term absenteeism this remained at the top of the poll in 2012 (CIPD, 2012). Stress is a growing concern for many organisations as it continues to effect the everyday operations of many organisations Due to the recent recession many employees have been made redundant across a number of sectors resulting in an increased workload for remaining employees thus contributing to the stress level an employee faces. Despite

the growing number of employees absent from the workplace due to stress many organisations are unsure of how to address the problem.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0.   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methodology that was used to explore the relationship between absenteeism and workplace stress. The chapter will begin by outlining the research objectives of this study. Next, it will look at the philosophical perspectives and paradigms. It will also comprise of a justification for the method that was chosen for this study. The chapter will also outline the data collection method that was chosen along with discussing any research limitations that were encountered during the study. Finally it will discuss data analysis before finishing with a conclusion.

3.1. Research Objectives

Absenteeism as highlighted by Morris et al (1989) is a "phenomenon that is not yet well understood by researchers". The aim of the research question is to measure the relationship between workplace absenteeism and stress. In order to fully investigate the overall research question, a number of research objectives have been identified from existing literature and studies.

Objective 1: Compare and contrast primary and secondary data absence rates – CIPD annual "Absence Management" reports have shown that there has been a decrease in absence rates over the last number of years. According to Paton (2006) the rate of absenteeism in the UK had hit the lowest level seen since 1987 in 2006 at 6.6 days per employee. With the change in the economy and presenteeism on the rise this emphasises the importance of comparing the primary and secondary data collected on absence rates.

Objective 2: Investigate the causes of workplace absenteeism –   Although previous studies have shown that the causes of absenteeism vary, Popp et al (1982) believe that there has not been enough in depth research carried out into the causes of workplace absenteeism. This study will attempt to investigate the most common causes of

workplace absenteeism among the sample population surveyed in the past twelve months. It is interesting to discover the reasons employees cite as causes and relate them back to Nicholson (1977) A-B continuum.

Objective 3: Research employee's perceptions of absenteeism including their understanding of policies and procedures associated with absenteeism – Although absenteeism is present in every organisation employees may not be aware of the consequences absenteeism has on an organisation such as the cost. According to IDS HR study (2009) most organisations have detailed policies and procedures in place to help control absenteeism. In order for a policy or procedure to have an impact on absenteeism and to be effective it must be effectively communicated to all employees and management (IDS HR, 2011 p.7). It is of interest to measure the number of employees who have an understanding of any policies or procedures that are in place in their organisation and to measure the understanding employees have of the financial implications on an organisation.

Objective 4: Explore the relationship between absenteeism and workplace stress – According to CIPD (2012) over one third of employees cited work related stress as the cause of absenteeism in 2011. HR Specialist (2010) found that workplace stress is continuing to rise among employees following the downturn in the economy. As workplace stress is on the rise over the past number of years it is important to explore the level of stress employees are faced with in their day to day role to enhance our understanding of the role of workplace stress and its impact on workplace absenteeism.

3.2. Philosophical Paradigms and Perspectives

According to Collis and Hussey (2009) a philosophical paradigm is "a framework that guides how research should be conducted, based on peoples philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge". As this research was conducted through quantitative surveys many researchers have argued that this form of research takes the positivist approach (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Positivist studies knowledge is formed through the gathering of facts (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p.16). However, as the research survey had a mix of both closed ended questions (quantitative) which sought facts and open ended questions (qualitative) which sought opinions and perceptions, the research paradigm for this research were a mix of the positivist approach and the interpretivistic approach. Interpretive studies enables perceptions to

be identified explored and interpreted (Bryman and Bell, 2007). As part of the research question sought to explore an employee's understanding of absenteeism it was important to incorporate the interpretivistic approach to seek employee's insights and perceptions. If the positivists approach was solely taken for this research these would have been lost.

3.3. Data Collection Method

When exploring what data collection method was best suited for this study the researcher looked at what information they were looking to obtain. For this research it was important to identify evidence from an employee perspective on the cause and effect of the relationship between stress and workplace absenteeism. For this reason the quantitative approach was selected for this research in order to analyse a large population of employees. Creswell (1994) defined quantitative research as 'Explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics). Blaxter et al (2010, p.65) stated, "quantitative research tends to involve relatively large - scale and representative sets of data, and is often presented or perceived as being about the gathering of 'facts'". The quantitative approach allows the researcher to study previous findings and theories and proceed to collect a specified amount of data and compare the findings to verify or falsify them. Bryman and Bell (2007, p.154) define quantitative research as 'entailing the collection of numerical data and exhibiting the view of relationship between theory and research as deductive, a predilection for natural science approach, and as having an objectivist conception of social reality'. After studying the various data collection methods for quantitative research the researcher chose an online survey as the method of data collection that would be undertaken in this study.

3.4. Online Survey

Before a data collection method was chosen and embarked upon it was considered if the data sought was already available from an alternative source, what the most appropriate method was, the practicalities of carrying out a particular method of data collection and how the data would be gathered and prepared for analysis (Creaser, nd). According to Sparrow (2007) online surveys using volunteer panels are growing in popularity and have taken up a big proportion of the research and data collection market. It is believed that this is due to the practicalities of this method of data collection as it offers fast and

cost effective research solutions. McDonald et al (2003, p86) argue that online surveys as a method of data collection has grown in popularity as the turnaround times are often reported to be much faster for online surveys. Cost is another factor for online surveys popularity as the need for data entry, two way postage, printing and tracking & handling are removed (McDonald et al, 2003). According to Wiley et al (2009, p.455) online surveys have unique features such as world wide reach, around the clock access and availability and the ability to collect real time feedback. It is believed that online surveys may become a mainstream means of data collection taking the place of more traditional methods (Wiley et al 2009, p.455).

3.5. Survey Method

The online survey tool chosen to host the survey was Survey Monkey. This website offers a free basic version of their tool however, as the free version is limited to a 10 question survey the upgraded version was chosen for a fee of €25 per month to facilitate more questions. The upgraded version of the tool also enables results to be graphed thus assisting with the data analysis process. The version also allows data collection through weblink, social media and email.

According to Wiley et al (2009, p.459) it has been proven that longer questionnaire's usually have lower response rates. The online survey for this study comprised of 24 questions. Rosenblum (2001) suggests that the appropriate number of questions for an online survey is between 20 and 25 question. The questions for the survey for this study were a mix of two different styles:

1.) Open ended questions which allows the respondent to answer the question in any way
2.) Closed ended questions whereby the respondent chooses from a list of predetermined answers provided by the researcher

As the survey was compiled of both open ended and closed ended questions the study could be viewed as using the mixed method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In the past researchers have argued that surveys comprising both open ended questions and closed ended questions are also taking the qualitative approach to their research (Trochim, 2006). Cresswell (2003) refers to this as *"concurrent and transformational strategies"* which involve data collection using

both quantitative and qualitative approaches simultaneously in the form of a survey or questionnaire containing both styles of questions. This has been taken into consideration and incorporated into the findings. A copy of the survey can be seen in Appendix C.

3.6. Pilot Survey

A pilot survey was carried out prior to the survey going live online. The pilot survey was administered to four individuals with the same demographics of those that the survey was aimed at so that the survey could be tested for any errors that may occur. This process was carried out to test the reliability and validity of the research tool. According to Pennsylvania State University (2006) by conducting a pilot survey it allows the selected individuals participating in the pilot survey to have an input and provide any feedback about the survey, in particular about the length of time it took to undertake the survey, the relevance of the questions, the flow of the questions, the language used and the ability to access the survey online. Following the feedback from the pilot survey some of the questions in the survey were rephrased and others were removed. The average length of time the survey took was less than five minutes.

3.7. Sample

The survey was distributed at random and aimed at people who were employed in any sector of any industry and was distributed through the use of social media. At first it was hoped that there would be a response rate of circa 50 people. However due to the effectiveness of distribution method the total number of respondents reached 101. The survey was published on 22 June and closed on 20 July to ensure sufficient time for a high response rate. The method of sharing the survey through the use of a social media website was chosen due to the potential number of respondents. The survey was administered to a random sample to ensure that the survey was distributed to number of varying markets. A reminder was posted on the social media website once a week to ensure that the target number of respondents was reached. According to Dillman (2007) respondent rates can increase following an initial follow up on receiving the majority of responses and suggests that multiple follow ups should be used. Respondents were informed prior to taking the survey that the survey was anonymous and all information would be confidential and would not be shared outside of this study.

3.8. Research Limitations

Originally it was hoped that the research could be carried out focussing on one organisation and the study would form around the issue of absenteeism in that organisation. However, due to the sensitivity of the research topic it was difficult to gain access to an organisation. Access could not be gained in the researcher's organisation due to the management role the researcher holds in the HR department, the organisation believed that it would be inappropriate to ask employees to take part in the study. Another limitation that was encountered was the ratio of male to female respondents that completed the survey which could have an effect on the measurement of some of the findings.

3.9. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to identify, discuss and justify the research objectives of this study. Methods utilised and philosophical paradigms were also identified and discussed. The data collection method was presented and the reasons as to why this method was chosen were outlined. The sample for this study was described along with research limitations that were encountered. The next chapter will outline the findings from this study, finding's will be discussed and will also be compared to current literature.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0.   Introduction

Chapter two, the literature review, identified what authors and theorists have researched and identified about the topic of absenteeism. This chapter will now look at and present the findings from this study, which have been drawn from research and data collected from the 101 surveys that were undertaken. Due to the exploratory nature of this topic it has been decided to combine the findings and discussions in the same chapter to ensure no repetition between chapters. The chapter will classify and discuss the findings from the surveys under the below headings which have been identified through the analysis of the survey results. These are:

1.) The measurement of employee absenteeism
2.) The causes of absenteeism
3.) Employee perceptions of absenteeism
4.) The role workplace stress plays as a contributing factor to absenteeism

A full detailed summary of the findings from the survey can be seen in Appendix D.

4.1. The measurement of employee absenteeism

To get a reliable measurement of the absence rate for the study, respondents were asked to indicate if they had been absent from the workplace in the past twelve months. The findings showed that overall 67.33% of respondents had been absent in the past twelve months (Figure 4.1). Researchers have argued that employees who do not take sick days could be victims of 'Presenteeism' for fear that being absent could jeopardise their job (IDS HR, 2009). A study carried out in 2009 found that one in four employees go to work despite being too ill to do so (IDS HR, 2009).

Figure 4.1
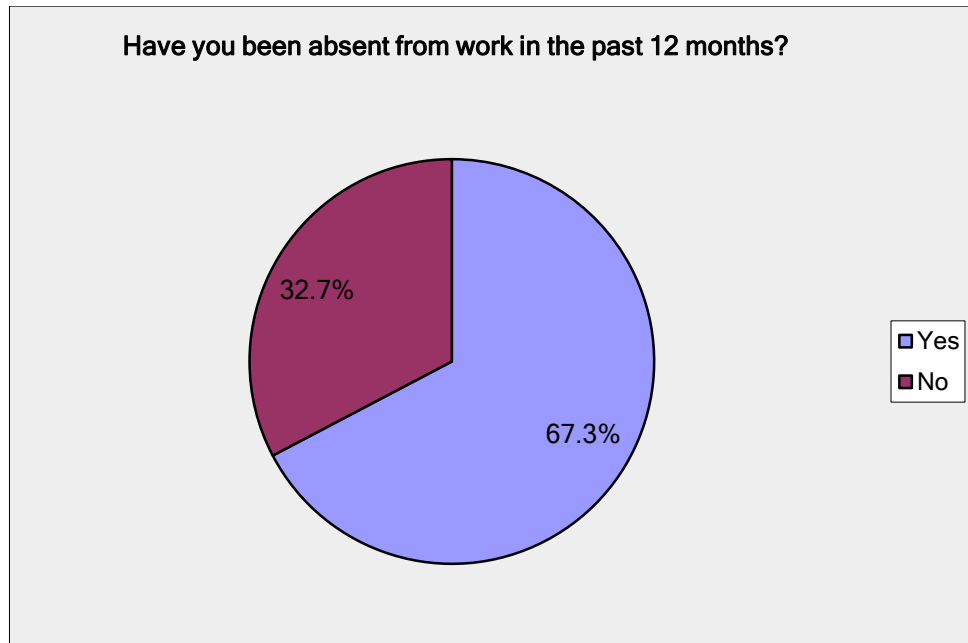
According to CIPD (2012) the average number of days lost due to unauthorised employee absence is 6.8 days per annum per employee. However, the sample population surveyed for this study show conflicting results to the literature and show that the average number of days lost due to employee absence is 1-3 days per employee (Figure 4.2). However, as the CIPD report was published in 2012 and based on findings from 2011 and the survey results for this research were based on 2012/2013 data, the finding's from this survey support more recent research that shows that absenteeism is falling every year due to the recession as people are turning up for work when they are ill as they are concerned over their job security, this is also referred to as 'Presenteeism'. According to Dickinson (2012) "The link between presenteeism and job insecurity is unsurprising".

Figure 4.2

If yes, how many days were you absent?

Legend:
- 1-3
- 4-7
- 8+
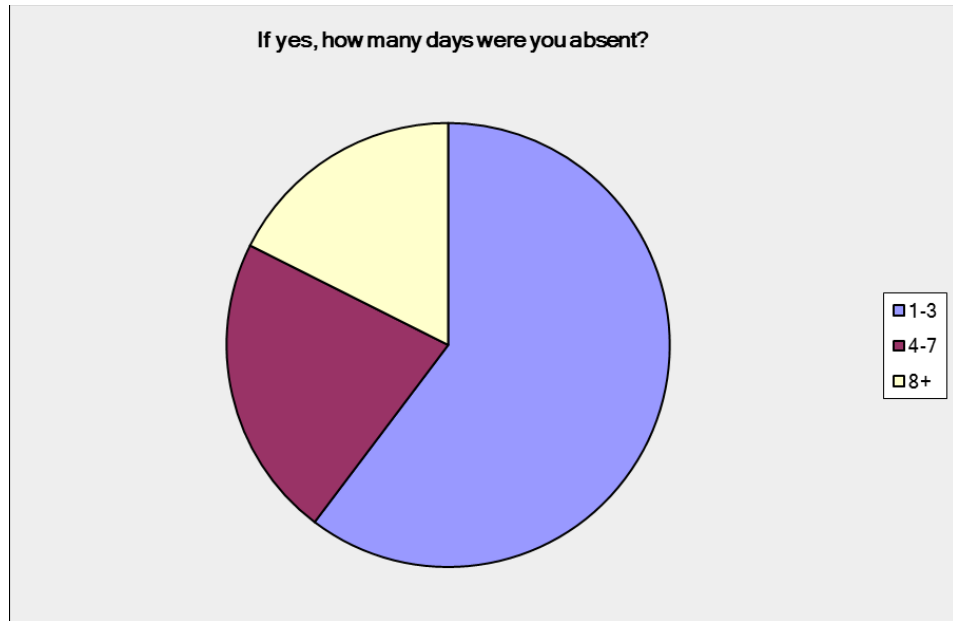
Previous studies carried out on the measurement of employee absenteeism have proven that the absence rate for women is higher than that of men (Edwards et al, 2010). Out of the 101 respondents for this study 67 were female and 34 were male. When individual surveys were analysed it was found that out of the 67 female respondents 52 of them were absent in the past twelve months this equates to 77.5%. This is in comparison to a 52% absence rate among the 34 males that were surveyed. According to Harvey and Nicholson (1999) it is believed that women may have a higher absence rate to men as "women divulge personal information about symptoms with greater ease and have higher symptom sensitivity".

4.2. The causes of absenteeism

IBEC (2011) reported that the most prominent cause of short term absenteeism among organisations is minor illness. When exploring the causes of absenteeism for this research participants of the survey were given a list of the most common causes of absenteeism. Findings from this research support previous literature with 73.9% of respondents stating they had been absent in the past 12 months due to a minor illness (Figure 4.3). Minor illnesses can constitute a variety of symptoms from colds, flus, headaches and stomach upsets to name but a few (CIPD, 2012).According to Harvey and Nicholson (1999) "there have been few studies that have considered separate minor illnesses in terms of their influence on absence". As minor illness is the top cited reason

for absenteeism this means that absence patterns are short term and usually sporadic, this is often more problematic for organisations as it is easier to make arrangements for cover for staff who are on long term absence. An employee taking a small number of days off here and there has an immediate impact on the workload for other staff (IDS HR, 2009)

Figure 4.3
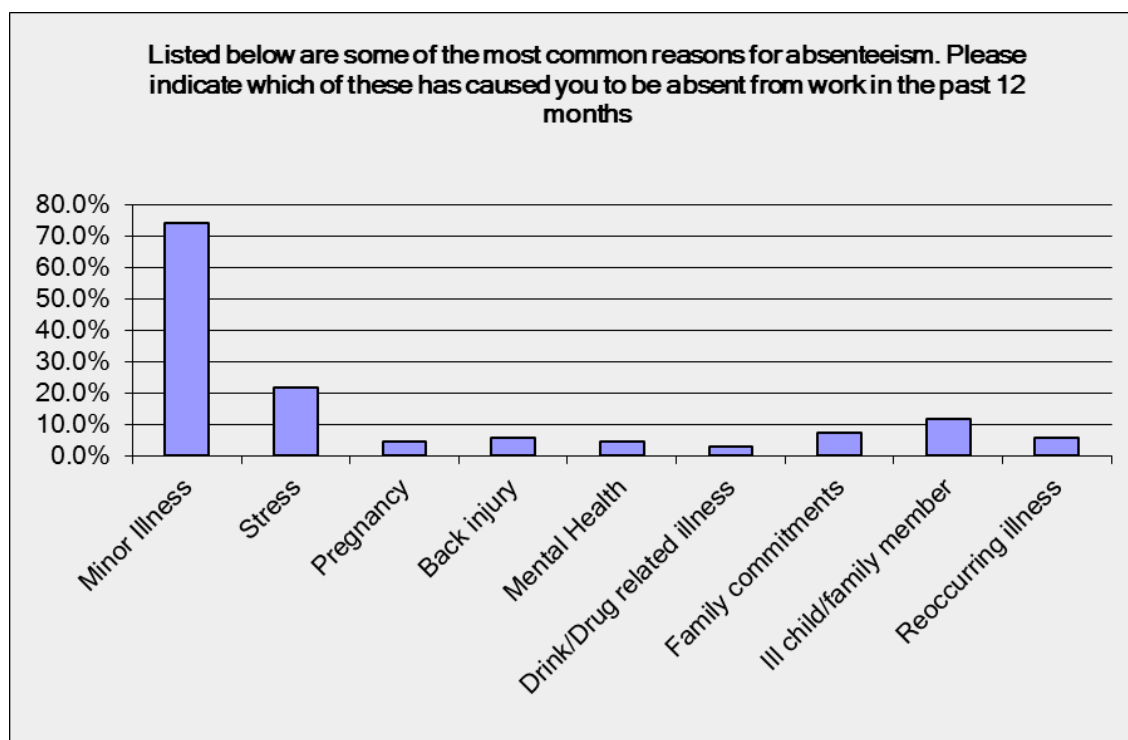
4.3. Employees perceptions of absenteeism

A mix of open ended questions and closed ended questions were incorporated into the survey to explore employee's perceptions of workplace absenteeism.

4.3.1. Cost

In order to measure what respondents believe the financial impact absenteeism has on an organisation respondents were asked how much they believe it costs their organisation if they are absent for one day. The findings from the research support previous literature and studies on the costs of absenteeism with 42.6% of respondents understanding that it costs their organisation one day's salary payment plus additional costs to cover their absence (Figure 4.4). Surprising findings showed that over one fifth

of respondents had no concept of the financial impact absenteeism has on their organisation. When responses were analysed individually the findings show that employees who are absent from work and who do not receive sick pay believe that it costs their organisation nothing for them to be absent. However, this is not the case as the employer still incurs the indirect costs overtime, lost productivity and inferior quality (Grundemann, 1998).

Figure 4.4
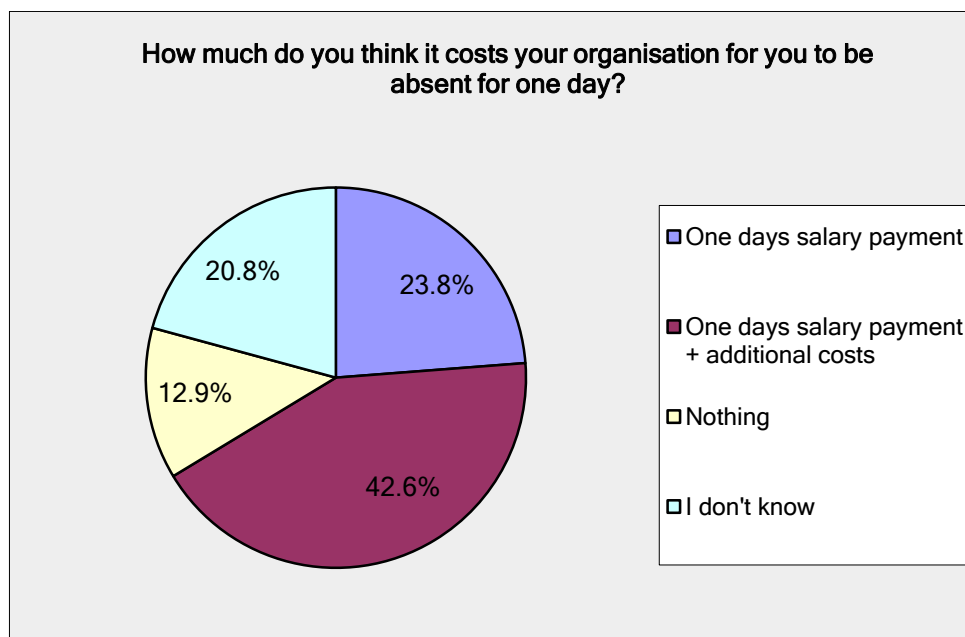
4.3.2 Policies and Procedures

Question 6: The survey found that 35% of respondents said that they were not aware of the sick pay policy in place in their organisation (Figure 4.5). As there is no legal entitlement to sick pay in Ireland (citizensinformation, 2013) respondents who were aware of the sick pay policy in their organisation were asked to elaborate to give the researcher an insight into the types of polices in place in Ireland. Having analysed the results individually it was evident that sick pay polices in the private sector can vary from 0 days per annum to full pay for an indefinite period of time. Respondents from the public sector have a set sick pay policy across the board.

Figure 4.5
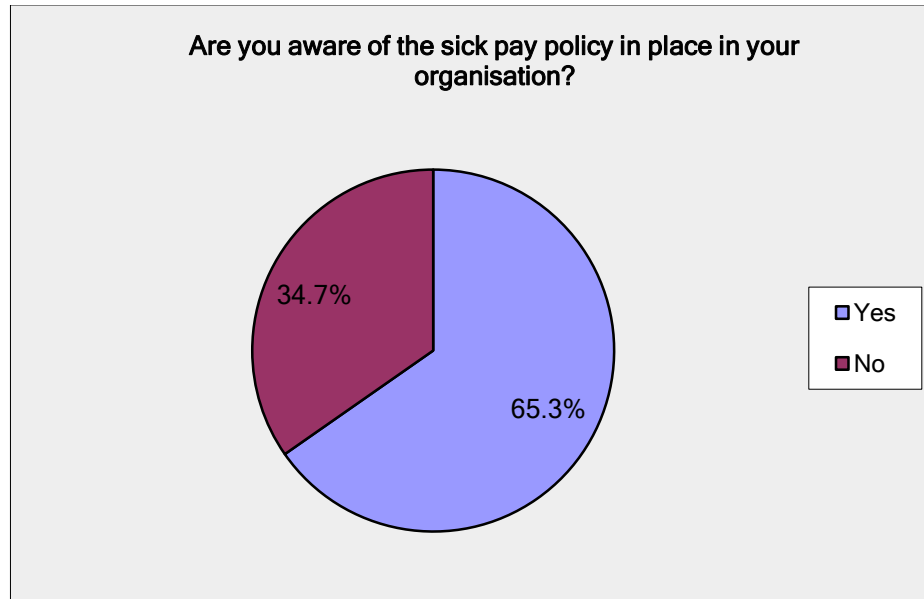
Question 8: To gain an understanding of how employees felt about the sick pay policy in their organisations respondents were asked to rate how fair they believe their policy is. However, findings for this question were not reliable nor accurate as 94 respondents answered this question however question 6 showed that only 66 respondents knew what their sick pay policy was, for this reason findings for this question were dismissed.

Question 13: To measure how serious respondents believed absenteeism to be they were asked if they believed sick leave was an additional entitlement to annual leave. Surprisingly almost one fifth of respondents answered yes to this question (Figure 4.6). A study carried out by the Industrial Society on a number of organisations in 2001 found that 31% of employees believe that sick leave is an additional entitlement to annual leave. This is an extremely negative belief on the employee's part proving that there are employees in organisations taking advantage of sick pay policies in place.

Figure 4.6

Do you feel that your paid sick leave is an additional entitlement to annual leave?

19.8%

80.2%

Yes
No
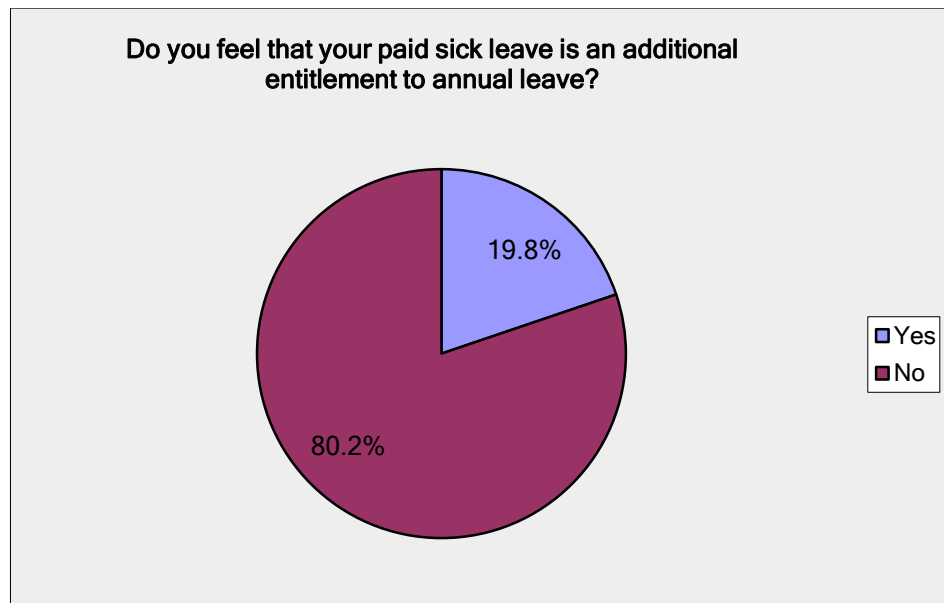
Question 22 asked respondents if they were aware of policies or procedures in place in their organisation to control absenteeism. A surprising finding was 62% of respondents were unaware of any policies or procedures in place. This shows poor communication on their employer's part as the informing employees of the policies in relation to absence management can often be key to reducing casual absenteeism (IDS HR, 2003).

Respondents who answered yes to question 22 were asked to explain what the policies and procedures were. Following the analysis of the individual responses it was clear that the policies and procedures in place in many organisations are varied. The most common policies and procedures identified in the findings are as follows:

- Back to work interviews
- No uncertified days allowed on a Saturday
- No sick pay to prevent people taking unnecessary days off
- Strict sick leave policies outlining the number of certified/uncertified days allowed in a set period of time
- The requirement of a sick certificate after a certain amount of days absent
- Health and Wellness week to promote a healthy lifestyle
- Employee Assistance Programmes
- Financial incentives
- Stress management courses

- Verbal warnings for patterned absence
- Annual reviews with HR
- A point trigger system

The findings from the survey correlate with the literature and previous studies on organisational attendance management policies.

4.3.3 Employees general perceptions of absenteeism

Question 12: To get an understanding of how serious respondents understood absenteeism to be respondents were asked if they have ever called in sick to work when they were actually well enough to attend, they were also asked to indicate why they had done this. A surprising finding was 30% of respondents had admitted to doing this. When analysed further reasons cited could be related back to Nicholson's (1977) 'A-B' continuum. Nicholson devised the continuum to characterise absence events in terms of their avoidability and an employees choice. Nicholson believed that not all cited illnesses for absence prevent an employee from attending (Nicholson, 1977). Grundemann and Vuuren (1998) also believe that ill health does not necessarily mean an employee is incapable of attending work. Results indicated that the reasons cited by respondents who knew they were well enough to attend would be positioned at the 'B' end of the continuum, some of the results are listed below:

"I had a head cold but I could have gone in"

"I had a headache but I probably could have gone in if I wanted to"

"Yes I had no holidays left"

"Yes sometimes you feel worse than you really are and you realise you could have gone in"

Findings from the analysis of individual surveys could also be related back to Steers and Rhodes (1978) 'Process Model' of attendance. Steers and Rhodes (1978) focussed on an employee's motivation to attend which can be influenced by how satisfied an employee is with their role. Employee satisfaction is derived from both internal and external factors such as job satisfaction and leadership style. The below findings from the survey reflect the variables in Steers and Rhode 'Process Model'.

"Yes for a duvet day"

"Retail in Christmas week, I just wasn't bothered"

"I couldn't face it"

"Yes, sometimes I get overwhelmed"

"Yes in a job where the manager was a bully"

"Yes, laziness"

"Yes, tired, overworked and needed a rest"

Although absenteeism is still an on-going issue in organisations CIPD (2012) has reported a fall in absenteeism in the last number of years. In order to measure employee's beliefs on the problem they were asked if they believe absenteeism is an issue in their organisation. The findings from this question showed that 58% of respondents do not believe absenteeism is an issue in their organisation (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7
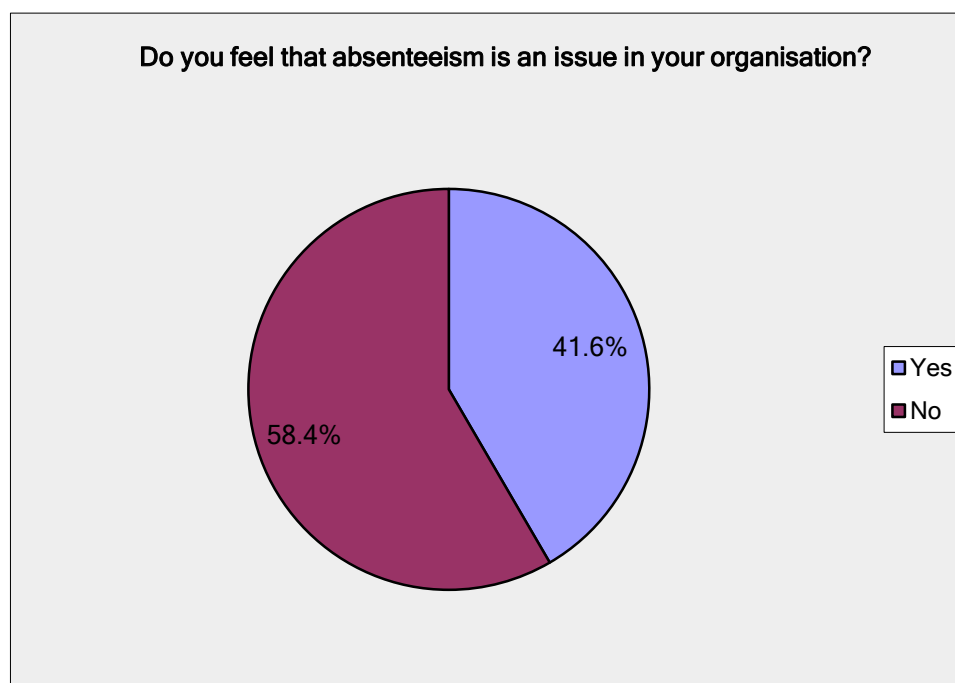
Respondents also believed that absenteeism in their organisation has the biggest effect on those carrying the additional workload while others are absent. (Figure 4.7). A study carried out by IDS in 2009 also found that absenteeism has an immediate impact on the workload of other staff which in turn has a direct impact on their organisations productivity. The findings from this research also showed that respondents believed the second most common effect is productivity. According to Circadian (2005) loss of productivity can have a bigger impact on an organisation when the absent employee is not replaced and their work is not completed by another employee.

Figure 4.8

What do you believe absenteeism has an effect on for your organisation?
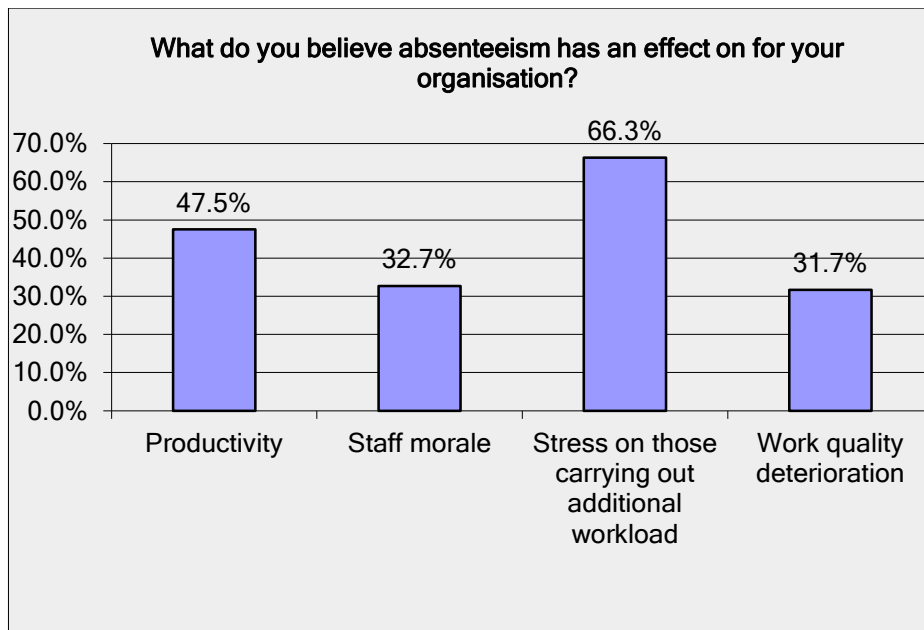
4.**4. The role stress plays on absenteeism**

As reported by CIPD (2012) stress is a growing issue for many organisations. To measure the level of stress among respondents they were asked a number of scaled questions to gain an insight into the level of stress from their current workload and within their organisation. The findings showed that 27% of respondents had been absent from work due to contributing factors from the workplace in the past twelve months (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9

Has work contributed to your absenteeism in the past 12 months?

26.7%

73.3%

☐ Yes
☐ No
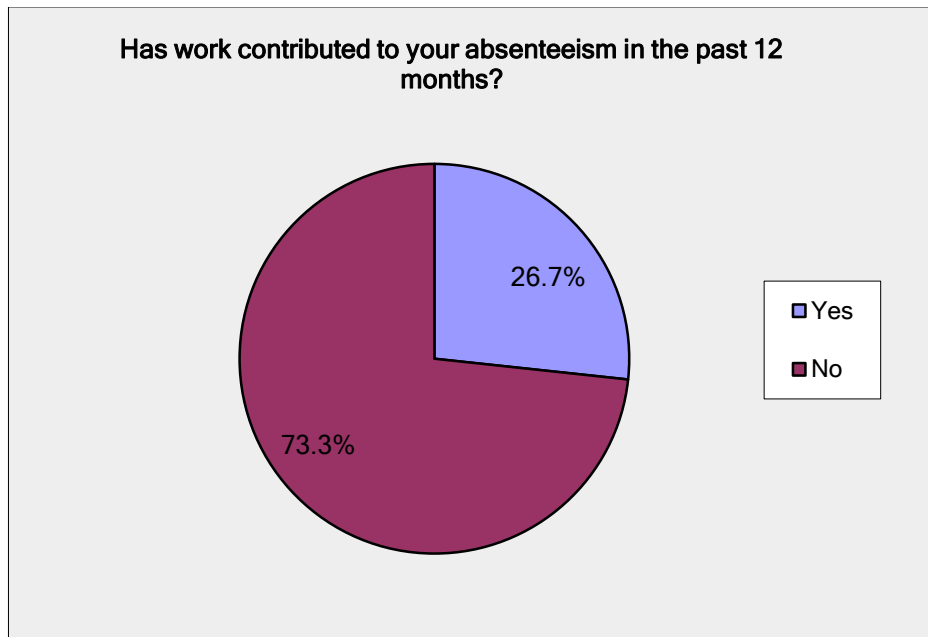
Out of the 27% of respondents stress proved to be the biggest cited contributing factor, with 15 respondents citing workplace stress as the reason for absence (Figure 4.10). Although 15 respondents out of 101 may seem like a minimal amount of respondents suffering from workplace stress when analysed further it translates into 1 in every 6 people is suffering from workplace stress which is a significant number among the sample surveyed. Previous studies carried out have found that between 50% and 60% of employees in Ireland suffer from workplace stress translating into one of Irelands top cited reasons for employee absence (Donaghy, 20002). Previous literature has shown that in 2002 it was estimated that workplace stress costs the Irish economy an estimated €200 million per year, when analysed further when loss of productivity and medical bills are accounted for the figure rises to €20 billion across the EU (Donaghy, 2002).

Figure 4.10
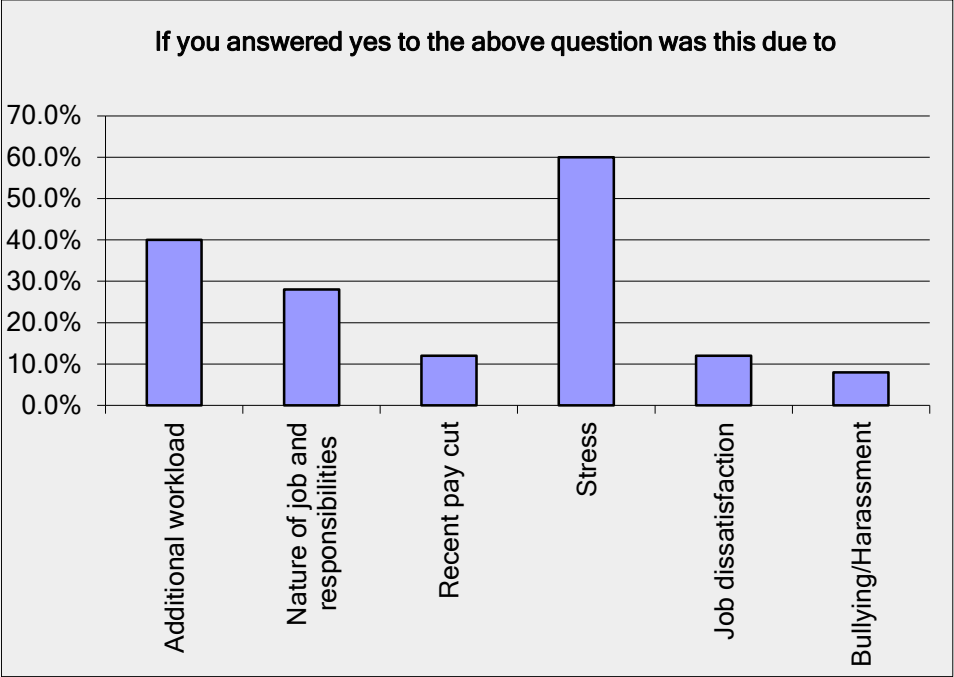
As the findings from the survey showed 1 in 6 employees are absent due to workplace stress to gain an insight into respondents beliefs about workplace stress they were asked if they believe if stress is a contributing factor to absenteeism in their organisation. A significant number of respondents believe that stress is a contributing factor to absenteeism in their workplace with 86% of respondents acknowledging that stress is a contributing factor (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11
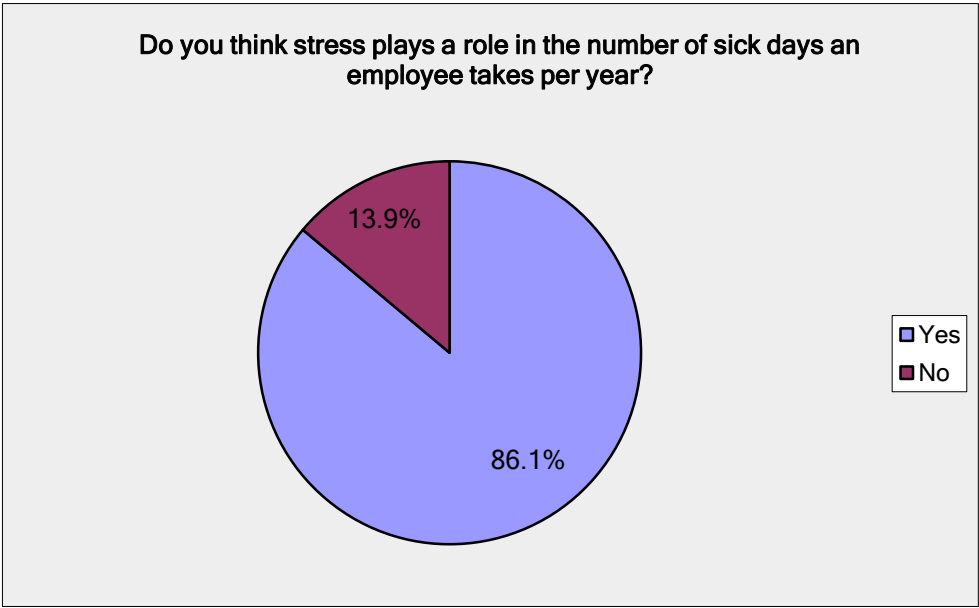
Respondents were asked to indicate how they would rate their current workload 36% of respondents rated their current workload the second highest ranking on the scale figure 4.12). According to Fredman (2013) a heavy workload for short periods of time can cause employees short term stress. He argues that employees who are exposed to prolonged heavy workloads is a serious threat to the employee along with the rest of the workforce and can damage a company's productivity and sustainability.

Figure 4.12
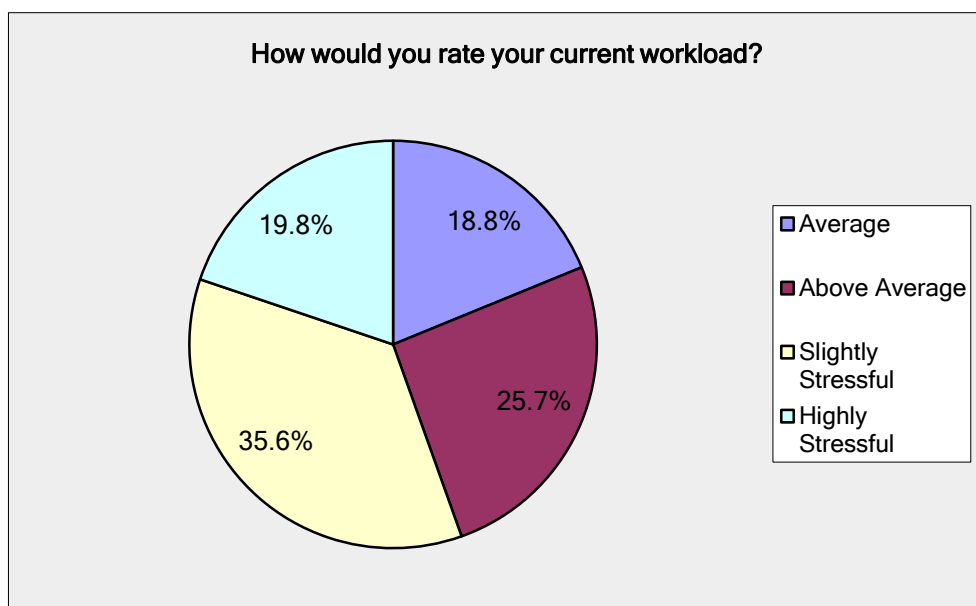
According to Parter et al (2011) stress and anxiety have become part of the daily work environment and are often characterised as being part of a normal environment in the workplace. To gauge how often respondents encountered workplace stress they were ask to indicate how often they feel stressed in a typical working week. Findings for this question were extremely close with 27% indicating that they felt stressed moderately often and 25% indicating that they felt stressed very often (Figure 4.13). According to (EAP Consultants, 2009) a study carried out in 2009 found that 41% of employees in Ireland felt stressed or very stressed by their jobs this exceeded the stress employees felt outside of work in relation to personal issues such as money worries.

Figure 4.13

In a typical week, how often do you feel stressed at work?

- 10.9% Extremely often
- 24.8% Very often
- 26.7% Moderately often
- 26.7% Slightly often
- 10.9% Not at all often
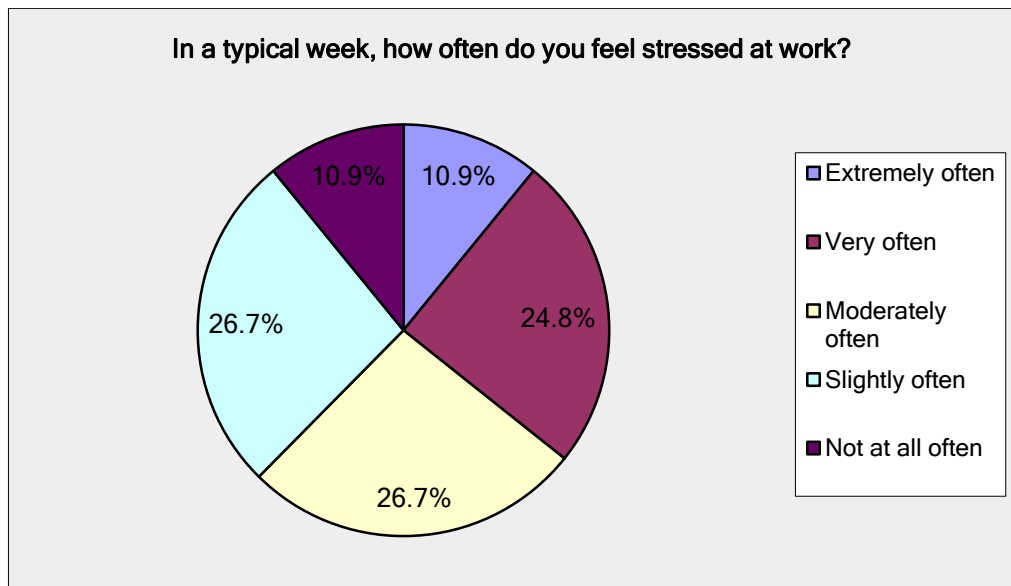
4.5. Conclusion

To summarise the chapter it is clear to see that the findings from the survey were extremely varied and interesting. Many findings agreed with previous literature and studies on workplace absenteeism. The findings demonstrate the level of understanding employees have of absenteeism and the various policies and procedures that are in place in their organisation. From these findings it highlights the importance of having open communication channels in place to help curb the issue in an organisation.

Previous literature has highlighted stress as a growing contributing factor to absenteeism, the findings from the survey showed that stress is present among respondents and they feel it is an issue in their organisation which leads to absenteeism. Additional increase in workloads due to employee absence increases the frequency of stress among employees. Employees who feel stress from their workload can lead to an employee not being able to keep up with their workload which in turn creates more stress (Fredman, 2013).

In addition the findings demonstrate that minor illness is the top cited reason for absenteeism. Findings also showed that Steers and Rhodes (1978) 'Process Model' was proven by respondents showing that lack of motivation and job dissatisfaction are also variables that effect employee attendance. Nicholson's (1977) 'A-B' continuum was

verified with respondents admitting that their illness did not necessarily prevent them from going to work and that personal choice impacted on their decision.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore an employee's understanding of workplace absenteeism and to investigate if stress is a contributing factor to workplace absenteeism. Absenteeism as mentioned earlier is an issue that effects all organisations. It was discovered that the definition for absenteeism varies as there is no universal definition (Locke et at 2007; Steers and Rhodes 1990). Many studies such as CIPD's Absence Management Report have identified stress as a growing cause for long term absenteeism.

Findings from this study in relation to the causes of absenteeism were supported by previous literature. Minor illness was the top cited cause of absenteeism among the respondents over the last 12 months. The most interesting finding was in relation to respondent's knowledge of absenteeism where it was discovered that knowledge on absenteeism proved to be poor. A significant number of respondents did not know the sick pay policy that was in place in their organisation. In addition 62% of respondents were not aware of any policies or procedures in place in their organisation to prevent absenteeism. Another surprising finding was one fifth of respondents believe that paid sick leave is an additional entitlement to annual leave, as there is no legal entitlement to paid sick leave in Ireland the findings from this question clearly show that employees are taking advantage of the sick pay policies in many organisations. Due to the limited knowledge of employees understanding of workplace absenteeism organisations would be best placed to improve employees understanding by making them aware of the company's absence policies and procedures and to set clear expectations (IDS, 1998).

As discussed previously absenteeism is a topic that is in much need of further theory (Nicholson, 1977). For the purpose of this study previous theories and models devised by Nicholson (1977) and Steers and Rhodes (1978) were tested in this research and the results were reflected in the findings. From analysing the survey responses individually, findings showed that Steers and Rhodes 'Process Model' was verified by respondents indicating that they did not attend work due to lack of motivation and respondents job

dissatisfaction. Furthermore Nicholson's 'A-B' continuum was also present in respondents indicating that their illness lay at the 'B' end of the continuum and the cause of their absence was more weighted by choice.

The measurement of stress as a contributing factor to workplace absenteeism supported previous studies by the CIPD. As the problem of stress is growing in many organisations CIPD Absence Management Survey (2011) found that stress was cited as one of the most common reasons for absenteeism in Ireland and the UK. The findings from this research found that stress was cited as the second most common cause for absenteeism with 22% of respondents citing stress as the reason that they were absent in the past twelve months. Respondents indicated that their current workload did cause stress as the majority of respondents cited on a scale of 1-4 that their workload was a 3 (slightly stressful) this clearly has a knock on affect to how often respondents feel stressed in a week. Findings were very close for how often respondents felt stress in a week with the second and third highest frequency linked very closely together. As discovered in the literature how often an individual encounters a stressor and the weight of their workload can affect the individual both positively and negatively (Stevenson and Harper, 2006).

The conclusion that this study has reached is that an employee's understanding of absenteeism is limited and not as advanced as it could be. It has also been discovered that stress is a contributing factor to workplace absenteeism and is a factor that is growing every year.

5.2. Further Research

Having concluded the research there are some changes which could be made to the study for more accurate findings. Firstly to gain a more in depth analysis on the causes of absenteeism the survey would differentiate between causes of long term absenteeism and short term absenteeism. This would allow the researcher to prove if stress is the number one cause of long term absenteeism as secondary literature suggests. Another modification to the study would be to carry out employee interviews to explore further employee's feelings and understanding of absenteeism, as surveys are limited to the amount information which can be obtained from the respondent. The final alteration to the research study would be to interview employers to gain an insight into their communication methods for policies and procedures. This would allow the researcher to

compare the findings from employer interviews and employee surveys to analyse if a breakdown in communication has occurred.

5.3. Recommendations

The findings from this study have advanced the understanding of absenteeism from an employee's viewpoint in particular in relation to their lack of knowledge of policies and procedures that may be in place in their organisation and the implications absenteeism has for an organisation. A gap in the literature can be identified as much of absenteeism literature looks at it from an employer or organisation perspective and does not focus as much on the overall understanding of absenteeism which could be a factor contributing to the problem. The findings help employers understand how educated employees are on the topic and can give them an insight into how stress is affecting them in the workplace and thus leading to employee absenteeism. It is important to understand employee's feelings as human capital is an organisations greatest competitive advantage (Sadri and Lewis, 1995). Based on the analysis of primary and secondary research the following recommendations have been devised:

1.) The findings demonstrate that employees have limited knowledge of absenteeism and the implications it has on the employer. One of the suggested recommendations is that companies educate their employees on the policies and procedures that are in place in their organisation. As previous literature has discovered communication can be key to an organisation reducing workplace absenteeism (Grundemann and Vuuren, 1998). This could be done through circulating relevant policies and procedures documentation throughout the organisation and ensuring that employees are notified of all relevant amendments to such documents.

2.) Both primary and secondary data for this research has shown that motivation is a variable that contributes to employee attendance. Many employees chose not to go to work when they are well enough to attend due to lack of motivation, job dissatisfaction and illnesses that lie on the 'B' end of the continuum (Steers and Rhodes 1978; Nicholson 1977). One of the suggested recommendations to promote good attendance would be for organisations to reward employees for having good attendance. The reward systems implemented by the organisation do not necessarily have to be cash incentives they can also be non-cash incentives such as an additional annual leave day for perfect attendance in a

twelve month period**.** According to Scott (2013) ''Attendance-based reward systems offer employees incentive to adhere to their schedule and maintain perfect attendance, which, in turn, supports an organization's bottom line''.

3.) Findings from primary research showed that stress is an issue among employees and it is a factor that is contributing to absenteeism. Studies carried out by RoSPA (2012) and Shuttleworth (2004) discovered that although stress is a growing concern in organisations many do not know how to address or deal with the situation. One of the recommendations would be for organisations to avail of training on stress management in the workplace. Stress management training is essential for managers to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and enables them to make an assessment of the employee and direct the employee to the appropriate support services. Employees should also receive training on how to deal with stressors and to build up their resilience towards stress. Training could improve staff morale and empower them to identify less stressful work patterns. An additional recommendation would be that employers also offer employees a service such as an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to assist those who are suffering from stress.

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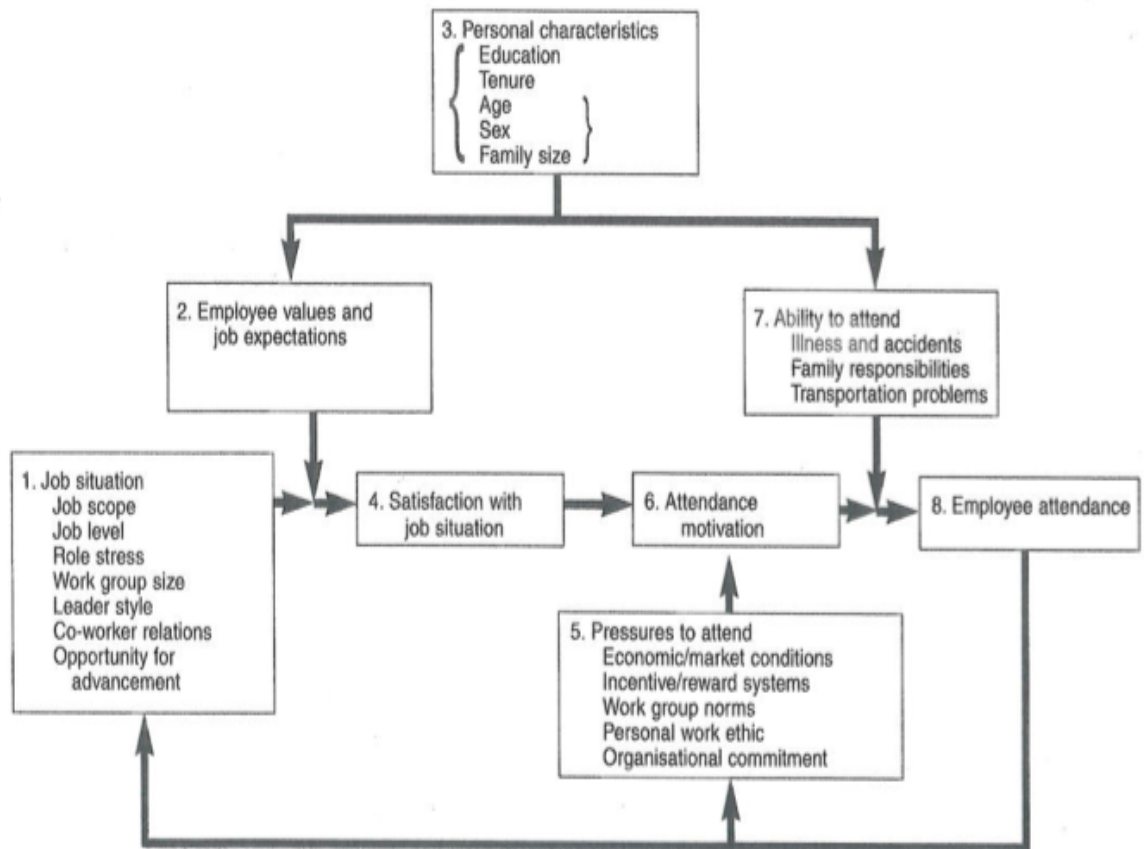
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APPENDIX A

RHODES AND STEERS' MODEL OF EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE

Source: Rhodes and Steers, 1990, p.46.

APPENDIX B

Nicholson's (1977) Model of Attendance Motivation

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS: Personal characteristics | Biographical and extra-mural factors | Job characteristics | Organizational controls

ATTACHMENT AND ATTENDANCE MOTIVATION: Personality traits | Work orientation | Job involvement | Employment relationship → Attendance motivation

Transient, unpredicted and random influences

THE A-B CONTINUUM: A ← Events capable of inducing absence → B

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE BEHAVIOUR: Frequency of absence | Frequency of attendance

APPENDIX C

Workplace Stress and Absenteeism

✱1. What is your gender?

O   Female

O   Male

✱2. Please indicate your age bracket

O   18-25

O   26-35

O   36-45

O   46-55

O   56+

✱3. How long have you worked in your organisation?

O   2 years or less

O   3-5 years

O   6-9

O   10+

✱4. What sector do you work in?

O   Private

O   Public

✱5. Are you responsible for managing other employees?

O   Yes

O   No

✱6. Are you aware of the sick pay policy in place in your organisation?

O   Yes

O   No

7. If you answered yes to the above question please outline the policy

8. How fair is your employer's sick pay policy?

○ Extremely fair

○ Very fair

○ Moderately fair

○ Slightly fair

○ Not at all fair

*9. Have you been absent from work in the past 12 months?

○ Yes

○ No

10. If yes, how many days were you absent?

○ 1-3

○ 4-7

○ 8+

Other (please specify)

```
[                              ]
```

11. Listed below are some of the most common reasons for absenteeism. Please indicate which of these has caused you to be absent from work in the past 12 months

☐ Minor Illness

☐ Stress

☐ Pregnancy

☐ Back injury

☐ Mental Health

☐ Drink/Drug related illness

☐ Family commitments

☐ Ill child/family member

☐ Reoccurring illness

Other (please specify)

```
[                              ]
```

*12. Have you ever called in sick to work when you were well enough to attend? If yes, why?

```
[                              ]
```

✳13. Do you feel that your paid sick leave is an additional entitlement to annual leave?

○ Yes

○ No

✳14. Do you feel that absenteeism is an issue in your organisation?

○ Yes

○ No

✳15. Has work contributed to your absenteeism in the past 12 months?

○ Yes

○ No

16. If you answered yes to the above question was this due to

☐ Additional workload

☐ Nature of job and responsibilities

☐ Recent pay cut

☐ Stress

☐ Job dissatisfaction

☐ Bullying/Harassment

Other (please specify)

[   ]

✳17. Do you think stress plays a role in the number of sick days an employee takes per year?

○ Yes

○ No

✳18. How would you rate your current workload?

○ Average

○ Above Average

○ Slightly Stressful

○ Highly Stressful

✳19. In a typical week, how often do you feel stressed at work?

○ Extremely often

○ Very often

○ Moderately often

○ Slightly often

○ Not at all often

*20. How much do you think it costs your organisation for you to be absent for one day?

○ One days salary payment

○ One days salary payment + additional costs

○ Nothing

○ I don't know

*21. What do you believe absenteeism has an effect on for your organisation?

☐ Productivity

☐ Staff morale

☐ Stress on those carrying out additional workload

☐ Work quality deterioration

Other (please specify)

[   ]

*22. Are you aware of any procedures that are in place to control absenteeism in your organisation? If yes, please expand

[   ]

*23. Is there an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in your organisation?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I don't know

*24. Are you happy in your role?

○ Yes

○   No

[Done]

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○   No

APPENDIX D

Workplace Stress and Absenteeism

Q1 What is your gender?

Male
33.66% (34)
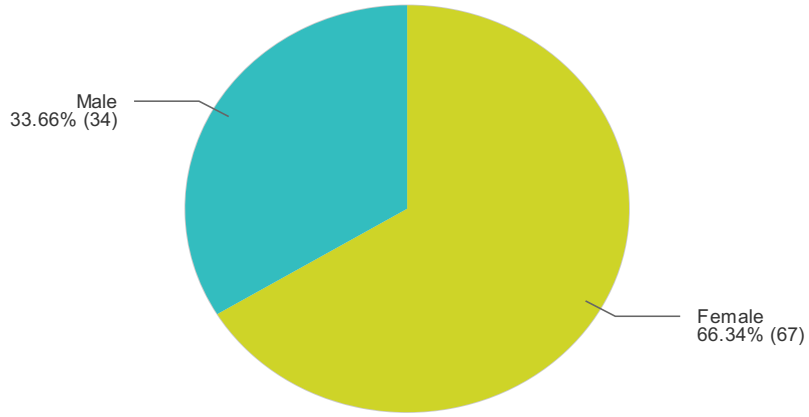
Female
66.34% (67)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	**66.34%**	67
Male	**33.66%**	34
Total		101

Q2 Please indicate your age bracket

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
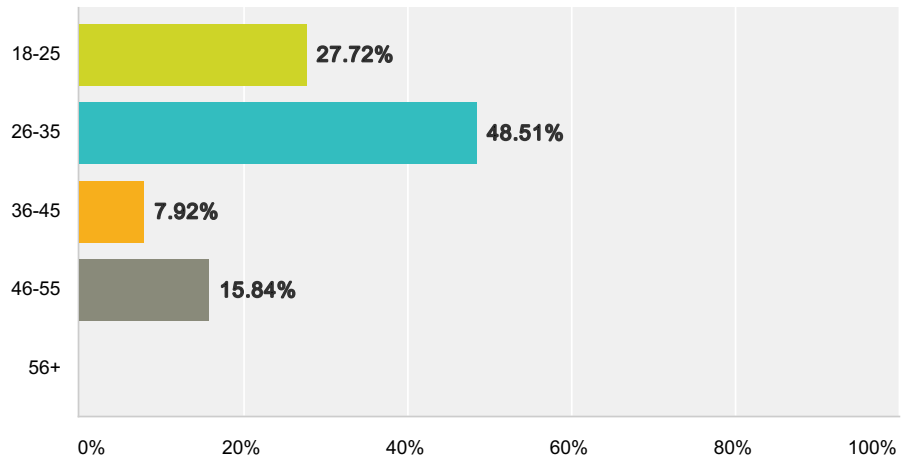
Answer Choices	Responses	
18-25	**27.72%**	28
26-35	**48.51%**	49
36-45	**7.92%**	8
46-55	**15.84%**	16
56+	**0%**	0
Total		101

Q3 How long have you worked in your organisation?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
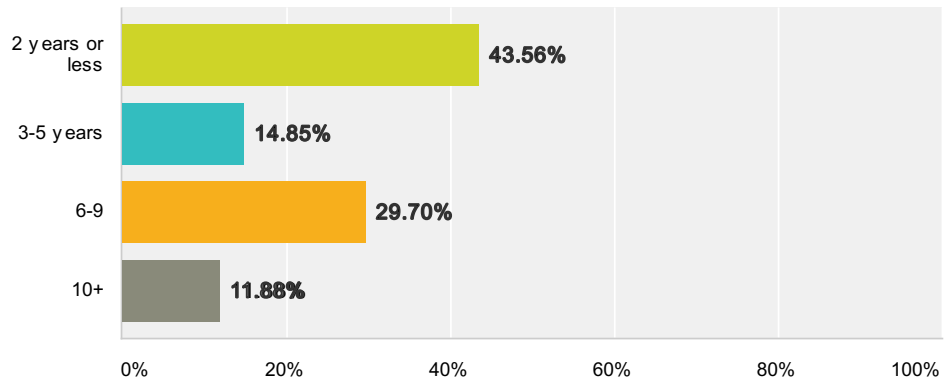
Answer Choices	Responses	
2 years or less	**43.56%**	44
3-5 years	**14.85%**	15
6-9	**29.70%**	30
10+	**11.88%**	12
Total		101

Q4 What sector do you work in?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
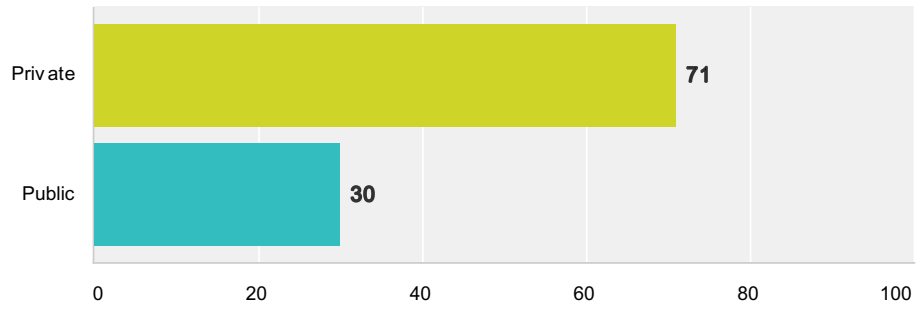
Answer Choices	Responses	
Private	70.30%	71
Public	29.70%	30
Total		101

Q5 Are you responsible for managing other employees?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
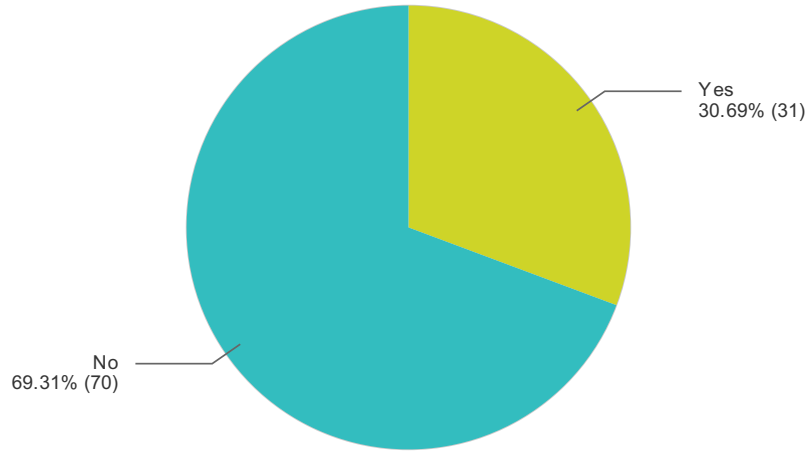
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**30.69%**	31
No	**69.31%**	70
Total		101

Q6 Are you aware of the sick pay policy in place in your organisation?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
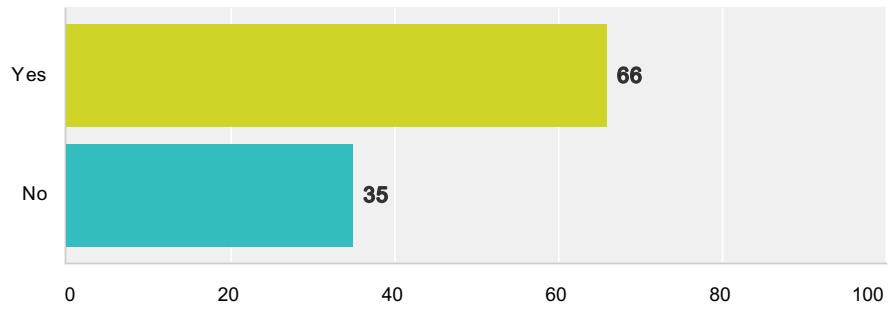
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**65.35%**	66
No	**34.65%**	35
Total		101

Q7 If you answered yes to the above question please outline the policy

Answered: 65   Skipped: 36

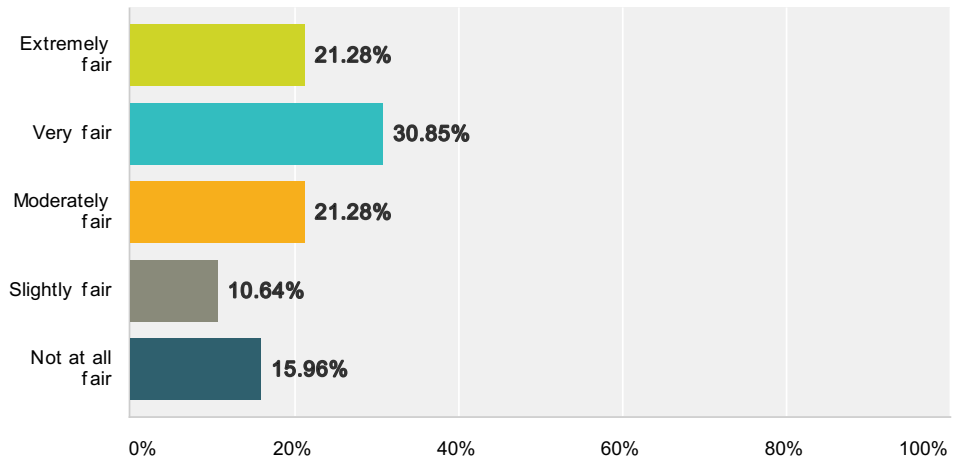| #	Responses	Date
1	-	7/18/2013 6:43 AM
2	7 DAYS UNCERTIFIED OVER 2 YEARS	7/18/2013 4:34 AM
3	13 weeks full pay 13 weeks half pay for certified leave and 8 days uncertified leave in 365 days	7/18/2013 4:02 AM
4	Full time staff get full sick pay. Part time staff do not get paid	7/18/2013 3:02 AM
5	Sick pay is paid at full rate for 3 months. After 3 months the payment drops down.	7/18/2013 2:56 AM
6	4 weeks paid leave, can go uncertified for 7 days which include saturday and sunday	7/18/2013 2:53 AM
7	7 uncertified days per year and 70% pay for certified days	7/17/2013 10:05 AM
8	No pay	7/17/2013 4:28 AM
9	A doctor's note is required if the employee is sick for more than 2 days.	7/17/2013 4:26 AM
10	A medical cert is required following two consecutive days of absence. It must be renewed weekly. Staff are currently entitled to 7 days uncertified sick leave over a 24 month period. Sick leave cannt be taken immiediately after annual leave.	7/17/2013 2:51 AM
11	7 days uncertified leave in 2 years starting from 1st Jan 2012	7/17/2013 2:15 AM
12	Sick Cert required if absent for more than two days. Employee required to fill out Sick Leave Form with Line Manager on return to work. Seven days uncertified sick leave in a 24 month period. Long term sick leave: Full pay for three months/half pay for three months within a 24 month period.	7/17/2013 1:52 AM
13	No pay	7/12/2013 6:23 AM
14	at discretion of the Director	7/9/2013 1:19 AM
15	Employees are paid for sick leave at a managers discretion.	7/8/2013 9:12 AM
16	We do not pay for sick leave however in certain circumstances it is overlooked. But we have no forma sick pay policy in place	7/8/2013 9:07 AM
17	No sickpay	7/8/2013 9:06 AM
18	We do not get paid for sick leave, only in instances where an exception has been made	7/8/2013 9:05 AM
19	We are not entitled to be paid for sick leave	7/8/2013 9:05 AM
20	At your discreation but as a rule (generally for a newbee) no	7/8/2013 9:03 AM
21	Dont cover sick pay	7/8/2013 9:00 AM
22	7 un cert sick days every 2 years wit pay, cert days cert must be in by 3rd day of sickness long term sickness is available	7/7/2013 6:54 AM
23	It's at the managers discretion, if they think you'd taking the piss they can deny the pay, but under normal circumstances I believe its 12 paid sick days per year.	7/7/2013 5:52 AM
24	Up to 3 months full sick pay from your employer and social welfare providing you have a medical cert. After 3 months you only get social welfare. Also get 7 uncertified sick pay days per every two years.	7/7/2013 4:49 AM
25	13 weeks full pay and 13 weeks half pay thereafter. medical certificates have to be produced	7/5/2013 2:44 PM
26	Full pay, if over three days doctors note required, if a week or longer an mc1 form and subsequent mc2 form are required from your GP to allow my employer to claim part of my pay from social dept. But I remain. On full pay. Injury on duty - full pay no mc1's required.	6/29/2013 5:04 AM
27	5days a year	6/27/2013 9:40 AM
28	Paid for 2 days after that need doctors note	6/27/2013 9:21 AM
29	Take as much sick time as needed	6/27/2013 8:46 AM
30	I am unable to disclose any details	6/27/2013 8:27 AM
31	2 Uncertified days and 10 certified days	6/26/2013 8:49 AM
32	it's 10 paid working days	6/26/2013 6:26 AM

33	10 days p/a	6/26/2013 6:22 AM
34	If absent two or more days employees must produce a sick not. Five days sick leave are paid. Must ring in before your starting hour.	6/26/2013 5:52 AM
35	No pay	6/26/2013 5:35 AM
36	No paid sick leave for the first 6 months, after that it's 3 days paid leave if you have been in the company <2 years, 5 days after that.	6/25/2013 2:49 PM
37	no pay	6/25/2013 2:25 PM
38	You get paid for occasions of sickness. ie. you get paid the first three days of a week (5 days) you're out sick. The company deducts monies which you must claim from Social Protection.. If you have cancer or something life-threatening, you get paid full stop.	6/25/2013 2:17 PM
39	5 weeks full paid leave	6/25/2013 2:09 PM
40	If we are with the company more than one year we receive 4 hours pay per week that we are sick	6/24/2013 3:47 PM
41	Unlimited sick days	6/23/2013 10:34 PM
42	No pay for a sick day.	6/23/2013 10:30 AM
43	over three days requires a doctor's note.	6/23/2013 10:23 AM
44	Not at liberty to disclose	6/23/2013 9:41 AM
45	Unlimited. Just clear it with your manager if its less than a week. Over a week… Report to HR for extended leave.	6/23/2013 9:20 AM
46	2 individual paid sick days or 2 periods not exceeding 2 days each without a doctors note	6/23/2013 8:38 AM
47	4 weeks paid leave	6/22/2013 1:32 PM
48	Those paying full PRSI get sick pay from DSP. Pre-199? employees pay a very low rate of PRSI and are paid from their salary. full pay for 6 months, then 1/2 for the next 6 months, off pay after 1 year although there is an appeals policy	6/22/2013 12:40 PM
49	6 mths full pay then 6mths half pay	6/22/2013 12:32 PM
50	We don't get sick pay anymore as too many people were taking the Piss	6/22/2013 11:40 AM
51	No sick pay.	6/22/2013 11:36 AM
52	Sick cert required when out no more than 7 uncertified allowed over two years	6/22/2013 11:36 AM
53	I have a 4 hour permanent part time contract but usually work approx 20 hrs/wk, if I am out for a wk sick I get paid my contract hrs only, if I miss only 1 hr shift but carry out the other 3 4hr shifts I get no sick pay but i would still have to do a back to work form or be called into the office over it	6/22/2013 11:28 AM
54	No pay	6/22/2013 11:18 AM
55	3 paid sick days	6/22/2013 11:15 AM
56	6 months paid sickness if long term, statutory sick pay otherwise	6/22/2013 10:58 AM
57	Doesn't pay	6/22/2013 10:18 AM
58	We are paid for the first 2 days without a social welfare cert, after that the social welfare payment is deducted from our pay and they make up the difference for up to 3 months	6/22/2013 10:15 AM
59	Sick pay is generally up to three days paid for the year. After that it is at the managers discretion.	6/22/2013 9:21 AM
60	12 days sick pay per annum	6/22/2013 7:45 AM
61	I get 7 days uncertified over 2 years fully paid	6/22/2013 7:18 AM
62	No pay	6/22/2013 7:12 AM
63	Full pay for indefinite amount of time	6/22/2013 7:04 AM
64	7 uncertified days in a 2 year period & 12 weeks certified in a rolling 12 month period	6/22/2013 6:49 AM
65	10 Certified / 2 Uncertified	6/22/2013 6:45 AM

Workplace Stress and Absenteeism

Q8 How fair is your employer's sick pay policy?

Answered: 94   Skipped: 7

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely fair	**21.28%**	20
Very fair	**30.85%**	29
Moderately fair	**21.28%**	20
Slightly fair	**10.64%**	10
Not at all fair	**15.96%**	15
Total		94

Workplace Stress and Absenteeism

Q9 Have you been absent from work in the past 12 months?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
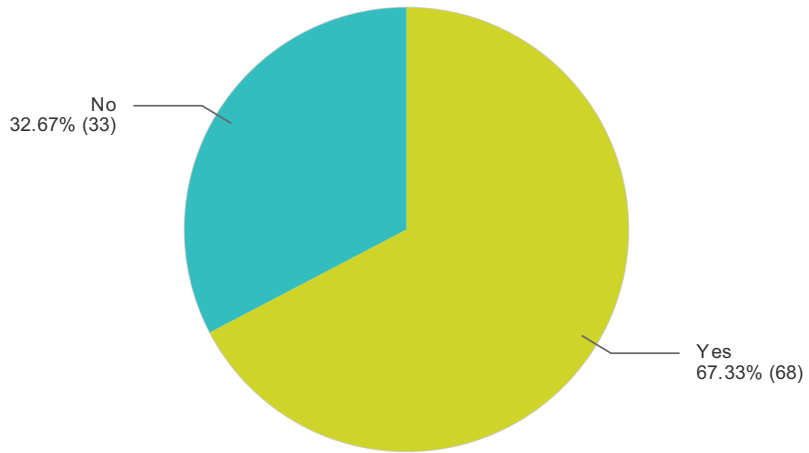
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**67.33%**	68
No	**32.67%**	33
Total		101

Workplace Stress and Absenteeism

Q10 If yes, how many days were you absent?

Answered: 68   Skipped: 33

8+
17.65% (12)

4-7
22.06% (15)

1-3
60.29% (41)
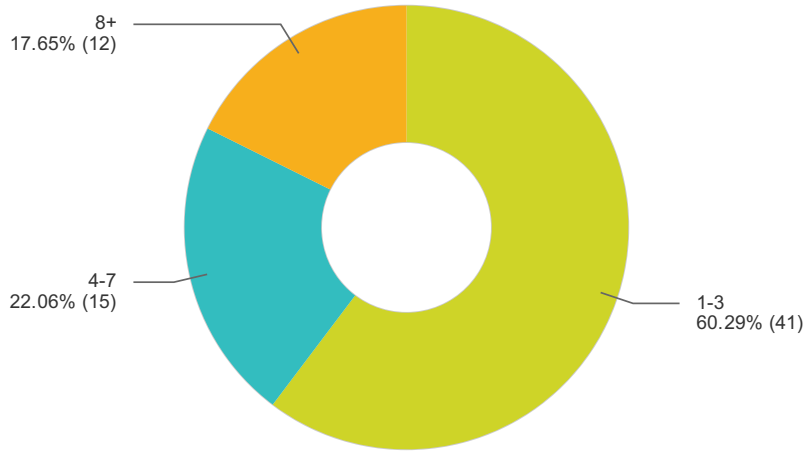
Answer Choices	Responses	
1-3	**60.29%**	41
4-7	**22.06%**	15
8+	**17.65%**	12
Total		68

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	7 weeks	7/18/2013 2:56 AM
2	0	6/22/2013 12:35 PM

Q11 Listed below are some of the most common reasons for absenteeism. Please indicate which of these has caused you to be absent from work in the past 12 months

Answered: 69   Skipped: 32
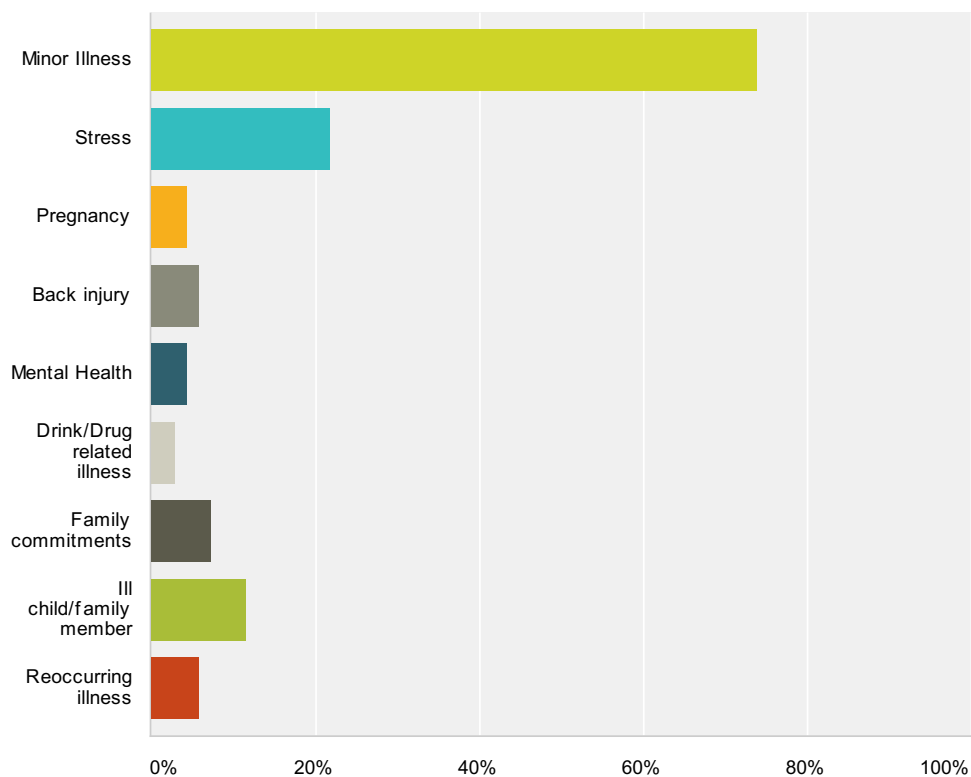
Answer Choices	Responses	
Minor Illness	**73.91%**	51
Stress	**21.74%**	15
Pregnancy	**4.35%**	3
Back injury	**5.80%**	4
Mental Health	**4.35%**	3
Drink/Drug related illness	**2.90%**	2
Family commitments	**7.25%**	5
Ill child/family member	**11.59%**	8
Reoccurring illness	**5.80%**	4
Total Respondents: 69		

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Broken bone	7/18/2013 2:56 AM
2	Surgery	7/18/2013 2:53 AM
3	Had to have operation	7/8/2013 9:07 AM
4	Major Illness	6/27/2013 8:30 AM
5	Surgery for a benign tumour behind my ear	6/22/2013 1:32 PM

Q12 Have you ever called in sick to work when you were well enough to attend? If yes, why?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	Yes. Tired. Overworked & needed to rest	7/18/2013 6:43 AM
2	NO	7/18/2013 4:34 AM
3	No	7/18/2013 4:02 AM
4	No	7/18/2013 3:02 AM
5	No	7/18/2013 2:56 AM
6	no	7/18/2013 2:55 AM
7	No	7/18/2013 2:53 AM
8	yes because annual leave is not given at short notice	7/17/2013 10:05 AM
9	Yes I had a headache but I probably could have gone in if I wanted to.	7/17/2013 4:28 AM
10	Yes - mental health day!	7/17/2013 4:26 AM
11	Yes, the current sickness arrangements would not prevent doing so.	7/17/2013 2:51 AM
12	No	7/17/2013 2:15 AM
13	NO	7/17/2013 2:07 AM
14	no	7/17/2013 2:07 AM
15	No	7/17/2013 1:52 AM
16	Yes, I had a slight headcold but I could have gone in	7/12/2013 6:23 AM
17	No,	7/9/2013 5:29 AM
18	no	7/9/2013 1:19 AM
19	No	7/8/2013 9:12 AM
20	Yes when I needed a duvet day	7/8/2013 9:07 AM
21	No	7/8/2013 9:06 AM
22	Yes - I was very stressed and anxiuos at the time and quite drained. I knew I wouldn't get anything done and realised it was better in the long term to take the day off and refresh before going back in.	7/8/2013 9:05 AM
23	No	7/8/2013 9:05 AM
24	Yes, laziness!	7/8/2013 9:04 AM
25	No	7/8/2013 9:03 AM
26	No	7/8/2013 9:00 AM
27	No	7/7/2013 6:54 AM
28	When have woken up too late, so that going in to work would mean you would have to work back a few extra hours.	7/7/2013 5:52 AM
29	No.	7/7/2013 4:49 AM
30	No	7/5/2013 2:44 PM
31	No	6/30/2013 11:41 AM
32	No.	6/29/2013 5:04 AM
33	No	6/27/2013 9:56 AM
34	No	6/27/2013 9:40 AM
35	No	6/27/2013 9:21 AM
36	No.	6/27/2013 8:55 AM

37	Yes, sometimes I get overwhelmed and need "mental health" days	6/27/2013 8:46 AM
38	I drank too much the night before and was too tired. I also rang in once so I could go to a party.	6/27/2013 8:37 AM
39	yes hungover or just could face work that day	6/27/2013 8:30 AM
40	Never	6/27/2013 8:27 AM
41	No	6/26/2013 8:49 AM
42	no	6/26/2013 6:26 AM
43	No	6/26/2013 6:22 AM
44	Yes, to mind a sick child.	6/26/2013 6:10 AM
45	No	6/26/2013 6:09 AM
46	no	6/26/2013 5:58 AM
47	Yes, Sometimes you feel worse that what you really are and realise you could of made it into work however you decided you needed the day of.	6/26/2013 5:52 AM
48	No	6/26/2013 5:35 AM
49	No.	6/25/2013 2:49 PM
50	no	6/25/2013 2:25 PM
51	Yes hungover	6/25/2013 2:21 PM
52	No	6/25/2013 2:17 PM
53	Retail on Christmas week- just wasn't bothered	6/25/2013 2:09 PM
54	No	6/25/2013 2:08 PM
55	Yes, to study for exams or to go out the night before	6/24/2013 3:47 PM
56	Probably, once, a number of years ago—to just take the day off.	6/23/2013 10:34 PM
57	no	6/23/2013 2:14 PM
58	No	6/23/2013 12:40 PM
59	No	6/23/2013 11:37 AM
60	Yes duvet day !	6/23/2013 11:33 AM
61	No	6/23/2013 10:30 AM
62	No	6/23/2013 10:23 AM
63	Never	6/23/2013 9:41 AM
64	Nope	6/23/2013 9:20 AM
65	No	6/23/2013 8:46 AM
66	No. Maybe once. I was young and stupid.	6/23/2013 8:39 AM
67	Yes. Stress	6/23/2013 8:38 AM
68	No	6/22/2013 3:36 PM
69	No	6/22/2013 2:51 PM
70	Hangover	6/22/2013 2:11 PM
71	No	6/22/2013 1:46 PM
72	Yes for stress, I was physically well but mentally not, only once in 9 years	6/22/2013 1:32 PM
73	No	6/22/2013 1:02 PM
74	No	6/22/2013 12:40 PM
75	No	6/22/2013 12:35 PM
76	Couldn't face it	6/22/2013 12:32 PM
77	no	6/22/2013 11:58 AM
78	No	6/22/2013 11:57 AM
79	No	6/22/2013 11:40 AM

80	No	6/22/2013 11:36 AM
81	Sick child	6/22/2013 11:36 AM
82	no	6/22/2013 11:28 AM
83	No	6/22/2013 11:19 AM
84	Yes in an old job where the manager was a bully	6/22/2013 11:18 AM
85	no	6/22/2013 11:15 AM
86	Yes couldn't have leave for important appt	6/22/2013 10:58 AM
87	No	6/22/2013 10:50 AM
88	no	6/22/2013 10:32 AM
89	No	6/22/2013 10:18 AM
90	No	6/22/2013 10:15 AM
91	No	6/22/2013 9:43 AM
92	Yes - I had no holidays left and had been very stressed in work for a number of weeks and genuinely felt that I needed the day off.	6/22/2013 9:21 AM
93	No	6/22/2013 8:15 AM
94	No	6/22/2013 8:03 AM
95	No	6/22/2013 7:45 AM
96	No	6/22/2013 7:18 AM
97	No	6/22/2013 7:12 AM
98	No	6/22/2013 7:04 AM
99	No	6/22/2013 7:01 AM
100	no	6/22/2013 6:49 AM
101	No	6/22/2013 6:45 AM

Q13 Do you feel that your paid sick leave is an additional entitlement to annual leave?
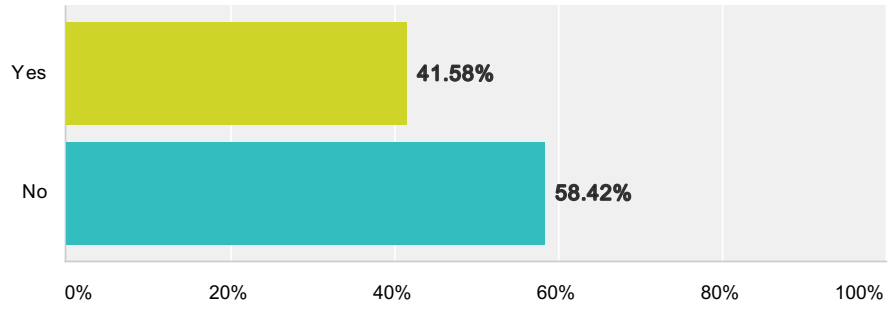
Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

Yes
19.80% (20)

No
80.20% (81)
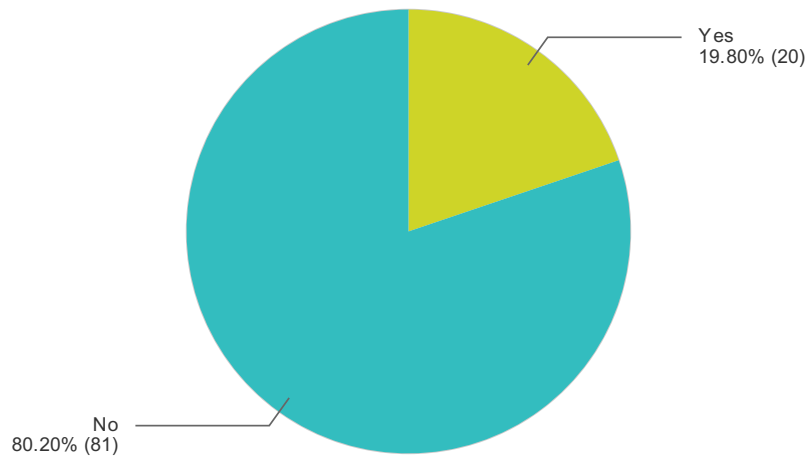
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**19.80%**	20
No	**80.20%**	81
Total		101

Q14 Do you feel that absenteeism is an issue in your organisation?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**41.58%**	42
No	**58.42%**	59
Total		101

Q15 Has work contributed to your absenteeism in the past 12 months?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

Yes
26.73% (27)

No
73.27% (74)
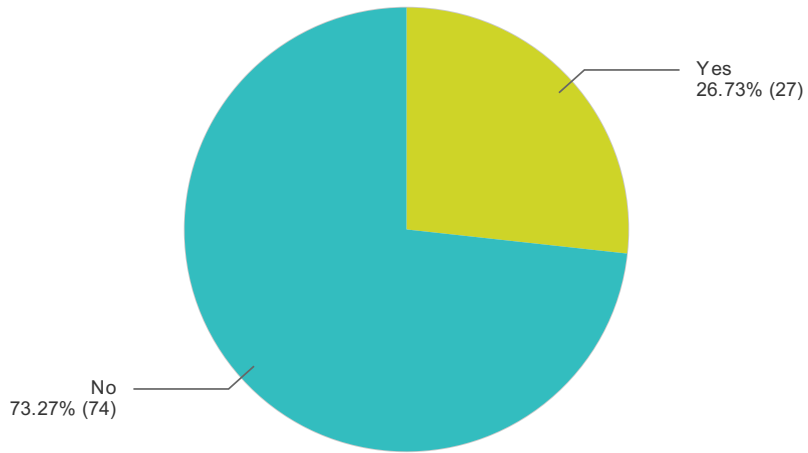
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**26.73%**	27
No	**73.27%**	74
Total		101

Q16 If you answered yes to the above question was this due to

Answered: 25   Skipped: 76
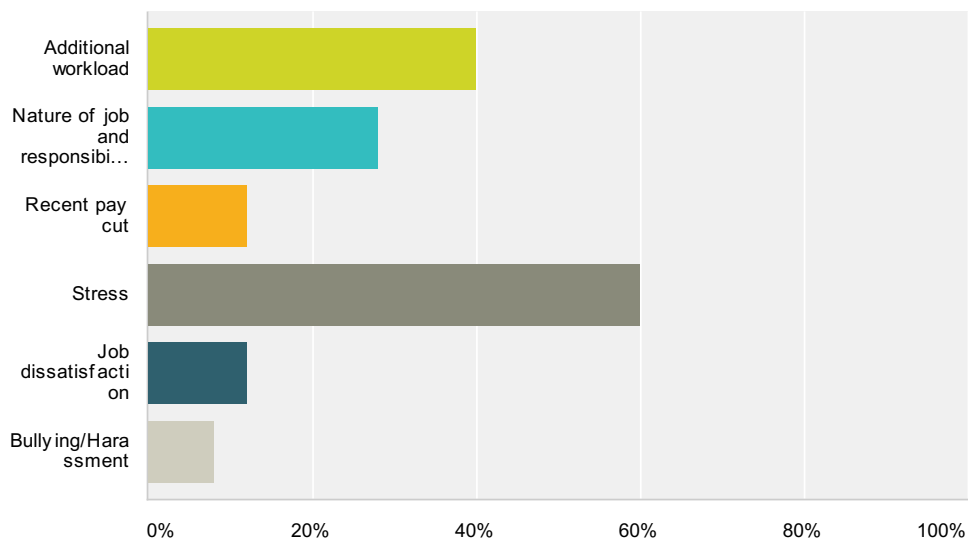
Answer Choices	Responses	
Additional workload	**40%**	10
Nature of job and responsibilities	**28.00%**	7
Recent pay cut	**12%**	3
Stress	**60%**	15
Job dissatisfaction	**12%**	3
Bullying/Harassment	**8%**	2
Total Respondents: 25		

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Unfit working faculties causing illness	7/18/2013 2:56 AM
2	accident at work	6/22/2013 10:58 AM

Q17 Do you think stress plays a role in the number of sick days an employee takes per year?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

No
13.86% (14)

Yes
86.14% (87)
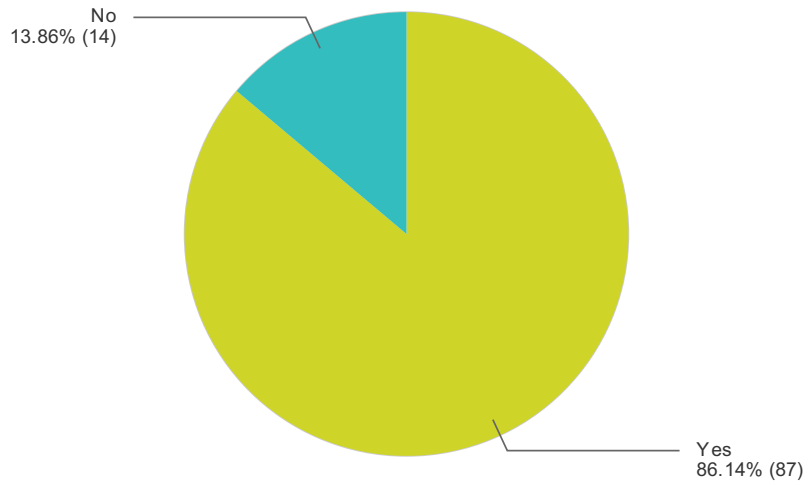
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**86.14%**	87
No	**13.86%**	14
Total		101

Q18 How would you rate your current workload?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
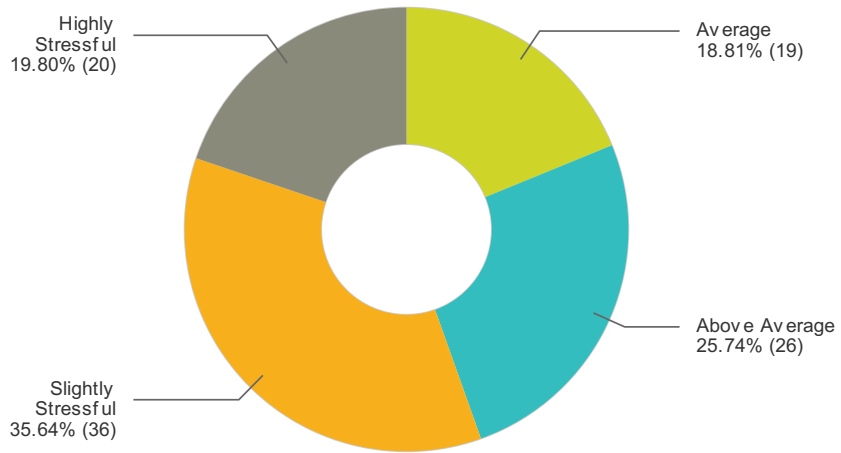
Answer Choices	Responses	
Average	**18.81%**	19
Above Average	**25.74%**	26
Slightly Stressful	**35.64%**	36
Highly Stressful	**19.80%**	20
Total		101

Q19 In a typical week, how often do you feel stressed at work?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
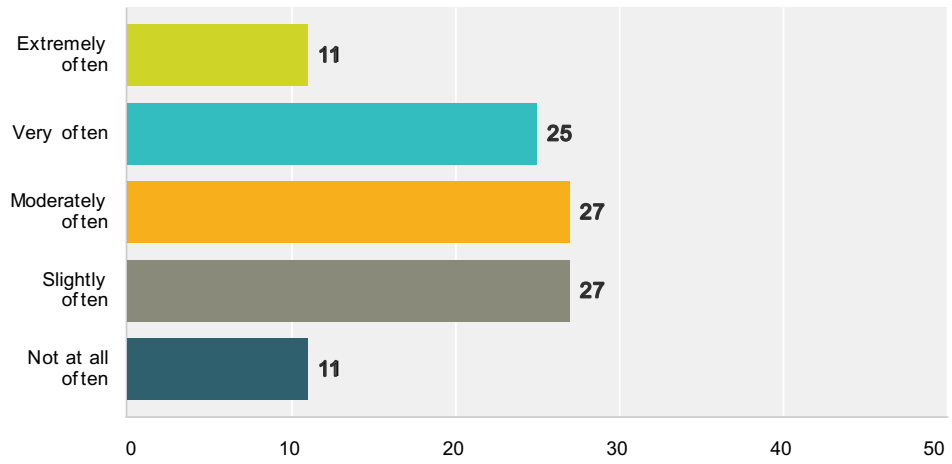
Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely often	**10.89%**	11
Very often	**24.75%**	25
Moderately often	**26.73%**	27
Slightly often	**26.73%**	27
Not at all often	**10.89%**	11
Total		101

Q20 How much do you think it costs your organisation for you to be absent for one day?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
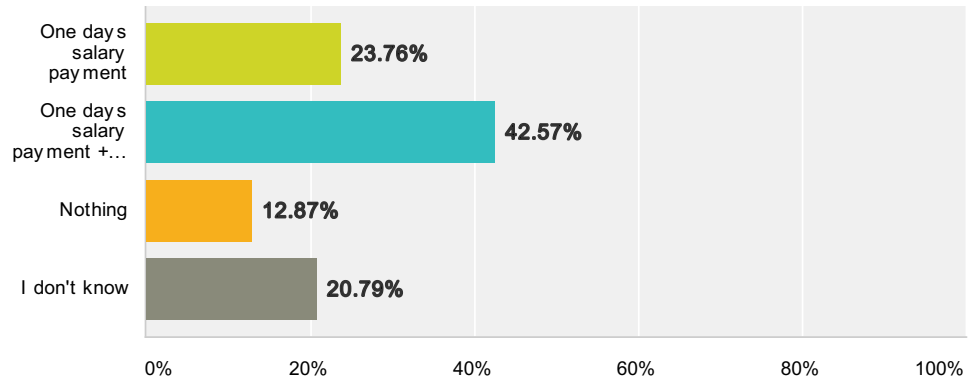
Answer Choices	Responses	
One days salary payment	**23.76%**	24
One days salary payment + additional costs	**42.57%**	43
Nothing	**12.87%**	13
I don't know	**20.79%**	21
Total		101

Q21 What do you believe absenteeism has an effect on for your organisation?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0
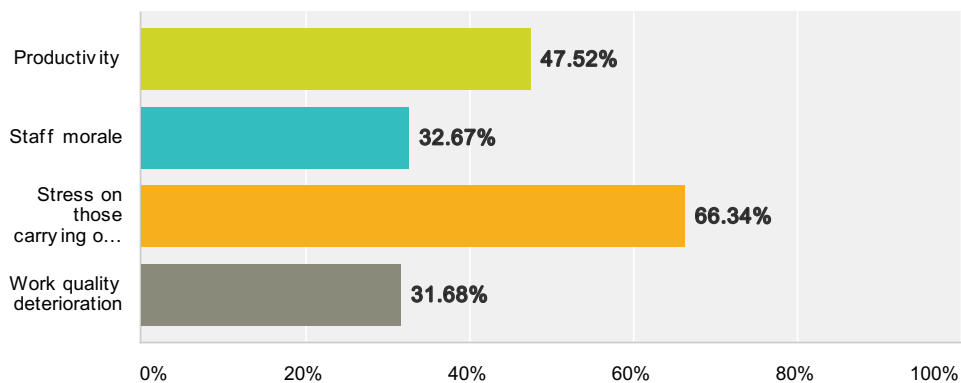
Answer Choices	Responses	
Productivity	**47.52%**	48
Staff morale	**32.67%**	33
Stress on those carrying out additional workload	**66.34%**	67
Work quality deterioration	**31.68%**	32
Total Respondents: 101		

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	work isnt covered when your not in, you catch up when you come back	7/17/2013 2:07 AM
2	Cultural effect leading to additional absenteeism	6/23/2013 10:23 AM
3	cost to company	6/22/2013 10:58 AM

Workplace Stress and Absenteeism

Q22 Are you aware of any procedures that are in place to control absenteeism in your organisation? If yes, please expand

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	No	7/18/2013 6:43 AM
2	BACK TO WORK FORM TO BE COMPLETED WITH LINE MANAGER	7/18/2013 4:34 AM
3	No	7/18/2013 4:02 AM
4	No	7/18/2013 3:02 AM
5	No	7/18/2013 2:56 AM
6	no	7/18/2013 2:55 AM
7	Not aware	7/18/2013 2:53 AM
8	uncertified sick leave not allowed on saturday	7/17/2013 10:05 AM
9	Yes we are not paid so management think people will come in regardless if they are sick or not as they cannot afford to lose the money.	7/17/2013 4:28 AM
10	Repetitive offenders are not paid for sick days.	7/17/2013 4:26 AM
11	Back to work forms which have to be filled out by staff returnign from sick leave	7/17/2013 2:51 AM
12	No	7/17/2013 2:15 AM
13	RETURN TO WORK MEETING WITH LINE MANAGER AND FORM TO BE FILLED IN.	7/17/2013 2:07 AM
14	yes	7/17/2013 2:07 AM
15	Employee required to fill out Sick Leave Form with Line Manager on return to work.	7/17/2013 1:52 AM
16	Yes they don't pay us. I see this as punishment to prevent people from being absent.	7/12/2013 6:23 AM
17	Yes, very subjective and varies from employee to employee	7/9/2013 5:29 AM
18	n/a	7/9/2013 1:19 AM
19	No	7/8/2013 9:12 AM
20	Yes all sick days are monitored by the relevant Manager/Direct Report. We have a procedure to address it	7/8/2013 9:07 AM
21	No	7/8/2013 9:06 AM
22	Very liberal with giving time off if you need it, good team environment that encourages good working relationships and mutual respect. Generally making you not dread going in every morning.	7/8/2013 9:05 AM
23	No	7/8/2013 9:05 AM
24	Non-payment for sick days	7/8/2013 9:04 AM
25	No	7/8/2013 9:03 AM
26	NO	7/8/2013 9:00 AM
27	Yes work interviews after sick and also if more than 5 un cert sick days in 3 months	7/7/2013 6:54 AM
28	Above manager discretion situation.	7/7/2013 5:52 AM
29	No.	7/7/2013 4:49 AM
30	no	7/5/2013 2:44 PM
31	No	6/30/2013 11:41 AM
32	If prolonged, you must visit a chief medical officer in Garda Headquarters to explain your illness.	6/29/2013 5:04 AM
33	No	6/27/2013 9:56 AM
34	No	6/27/2013 9:40 AM
35	Nope	6/27/2013 9:21 AM
36	No.	6/27/2013 8:55 AM

37	No, unaware	6/27/2013 8:46 AM
38	Nope	6/27/2013 8:37 AM
39	3 days or more in a row you must bring a doctors not	6/27/2013 8:30 AM
40	I am unaware of any proceedures	6/27/2013 8:27 AM
41	Yes sick policy	6/26/2013 8:49 AM
42	no	6/26/2013 6:26 AM
43	No	6/26/2013 6:22 AM
44	Necessity to produce a sick cert after 2 days sick leave.	6/26/2013 6:10 AM
45	No	6/26/2013 6:09 AM
46	no	6/26/2013 5:58 AM
47	Health and wellness Week 2013 - helping employees to lead a healthy lifestyle Open door policy Employees must report absence to HR	6/26/2013 5:52 AM
48	Back to work interviews, warnings, EAP	6/26/2013 5:35 AM
49	Yes, normal procedures like return to work interviews after every absence, requirement of a doctor cert if absent for >3 days and recorded discussions for patterns of absenteeism.	6/25/2013 2:49 PM
50	no	6/25/2013 2:25 PM
51	No	6/25/2013 2:21 PM
52	No	6/25/2013 2:17 PM
53	No,	6/25/2013 2:09 PM
54	No	6/25/2013 2:08 PM
55	No	6/24/2013 3:47 PM
56	No	6/23/2013 10:34 PM
57	no	6/23/2013 2:14 PM
58	No	6/23/2013 12:40 PM
59	If we injure ourselves at work we can see a physio to prevent us being off sick	6/23/2013 11:37 AM
60	No	6/23/2013 11:33 AM
61	No	6/23/2013 10:30 AM
62	individual managers use the HR policy to manage sick days	6/23/2013 10:23 AM
63	Financial incentives based on meeting goals, not filling a desk.	6/23/2013 9:41 AM
64	Nope	6/23/2013 9:20 AM
65	No	6/23/2013 8:46 AM
66	No	6/23/2013 8:39 AM
67	YEs, can't remember the name of the index	6/23/2013 8:38 AM
68	No	6/22/2013 3:36 PM
69	No	6/22/2013 2:51 PM
70	No	6/22/2013 2:11 PM
71	No	6/22/2013 1:46 PM
72	Stress management course and 1 2 1 with line manager's to see how you are functioning in current role	6/22/2013 1:32 PM
73	Warnings re: absenteeism both verbal and written	6/22/2013 1:02 PM
74	we have a "return to work interview process" where the absent employee has a meeting with their Line Manager	6/22/2013 12:40 PM
75	No	6/22/2013 12:35 PM
76	No	6/22/2013 12:32 PM
77	no	6/22/2013 11:58 AM
78	Nope	6/22/2013 11:57 AM
79	No	6/22/2013 11:40 AM

80	No	6/22/2013 11:36 AM
81	Constant monitoring	6/22/2013 11:36 AM
82	no	6/22/2013 11:28 AM
83	No	6/22/2013 11:19 AM
84	No	6/22/2013 11:18 AM
85	no	6/22/2013 11:15 AM
86	Policy and procedures so many absences go thro stages 1 to 4	6/22/2013 10:58 AM
87	No	6/22/2013 10:50 AM
88	no	6/22/2013 10:32 AM
89	No	6/22/2013 10:18 AM
90	No	6/22/2013 10:15 AM
91	Back to work interviews, annual reviews that includes an analysis of your attendance for the previous 12 Months	6/22/2013 9:43 AM
92	No	6/22/2013 9:21 AM
93	Reviews	6/22/2013 8:15 AM
94	No	6/22/2013 8:03 AM
95	No	6/22/2013 7:45 AM
96	Yes back to work form	6/22/2013 7:18 AM
97	A point system	6/22/2013 7:12 AM
98	Regular contact with Manager and HR	6/22/2013 7:04 AM
99	A focus on Conviviality to maintain positive morale and regular performance at work meetings every few months for mutual feedback.	6/22/2013 7:01 AM
100	back to work form to be completed with line manage also very active occ health dept	6/22/2013 6:49 AM
101	Structured sick policy	6/22/2013 6:45 AM

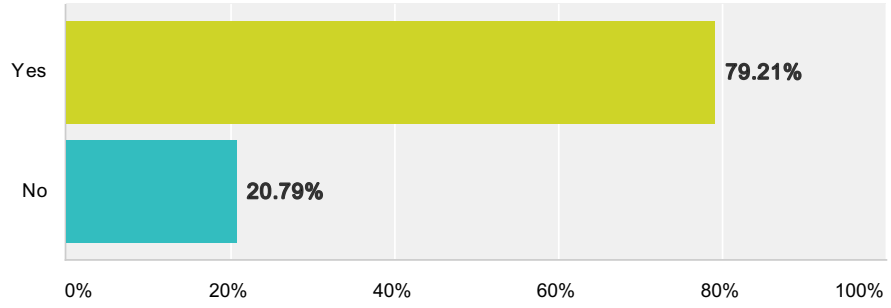## Q23 Is there an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in your organisation?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

Yes
27.72% (28)

I don't know
50.50% (51)

No
21.78% (22)
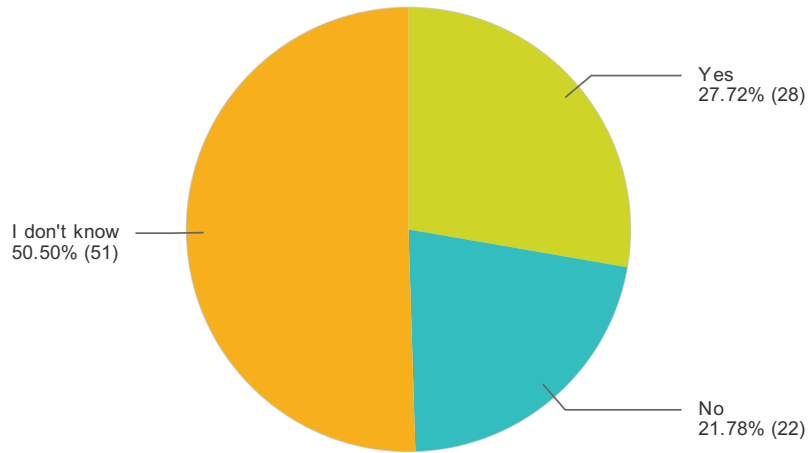
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**27.72%**	28
No	**21.78%**	22
I don't know	**50.50%**	51
Total		101

Workplace Stress and Absenteeism

Q24 Are you happy in your role?

Answered: 101   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**79.21%**	80
No	**20.79%**	21
Total		101