

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF ABSENTEEISM POLICIES ON SERVICE
DELIVERY IN THE UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY IN
KWAZULU-NATAL**

By

**EMMANUEL XOLANI MUTHWA
211559490**

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**Supervisor:
Dr. BRIAN KWAZI MAJOLA**

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Name: Emmanuel Xolani Muthwa	No: 211559490	
Title: THE IMPACT OF ABSENTEEISM POLICIES ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL		
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all participants, UMDM staff members and uMgungundlovu District Municipality. Lastly to myself, I have sacrificed a lot for this work.

ABSTRACT

According to Occupational Care South Africa (OCSA), absenteeism costs the South African economy between R12 and R16 billion annually. Therefore, absenteeism is a significant concern for the economy locally and globally. However, the policies developed around absenteeism in municipalities and their impact on service delivery are not well understood. Thus, the study investigated the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery at uMgungundlovu District Municipality (UMDM).

Two conceptual models were used to structure the problem under investigation in this study, namely, the Steers and Rhodes' "Process Model" Theory, and the Grönroos service quality model. The former was used for the analysis of data related to absenteeism, while the later was used for analyses of information on service delivery.

This study has opted for a qualitative approach, structured interviews were distributed to forty-four respondents. Content analysis as an analysis strategy was employed in this study. Interestingly, the study finding reveals that working conditions and environment; work overload or pressure, and; leadership style are the main causes of absenteeism at UMDM. It also reveals that the policies developed around the problems of absenteeism at UMDM are good and they are enough to minimise absenteeism. However, the internal mechanisms to implement, monitor and evaluate the policies are very fragile. The study, therefore recommends that the consistency in policies implementation, monitoring and, evaluation should be geared-up; the policies be work-shopped more regularly; also, the employer should ensure that the working conditions and environment are improved, and; the motivational incentive is provided for employees who are punctual and regular at work.

Keywords: Absenteeism, Policy, Service delivery, Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal

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ABBREVIATIONS

ROWT	International Resolutions on Working Time
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LGTA	Local Government Transition Act, No 29 of 1993
LGMSA	Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, No 117 of 1998
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act, No 56 of 2003
MSA	Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, No 32 of 2000
UMDM	uMgungundlovu District Municipality
UMSLM	uMsunduzi Local Municipality
UMNLM	uMngeni Local Municipality
MPLM	Mpofana Local Municipality
IMLM	Impendle Local Municipality
RLM	Richmond Local Municipality
UMKLM	uMkhambathini Local Municipality
UMSHLM	uMshwathi Local Municipality
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
OCSA	Occupational Care South Africa
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HRD	Human Resource Development
ANC	African National Congress
IDP	Integrated Development Planning
EC	Executive Committee

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism in the workplace has been a challenge and has, for decades, affected service delivery of in the public sector. Today, the business world has developed so much that every component of an organisation is significant to its success. Critical to best human resource efficiency and management is the workers regular attendance, productivity and corporate commitment (Anderson & Geldenhuys, 2011). Thus, the importance of managing absenteeism in the workplace cannot be overemphasized. Managing absenteeism is considered as one of the most important strategic risks for organisations, therefore, organisations should have a specific programme that talks to the causes and provides solutions to absenteeism (Mogobe, 2013). Accordingly, this study assessed the impact of absenteeism on service delivery at uMgungundlovu District Municipality (UMDM).

This chapter presents the background and a brief overview of the study problem. The chapter further outlines the research questions, objectives, and the ultimate aim of the study. The importance and the rationale of the study, a brief research methodology, and the limitation to the study are presented in this chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Recent estimates put unplanned or unscheduled absence costs at 8.7 percent of payroll (Wolters Kluwer, 2015). Unsurprisingly, employers are constantly seeking knowledge to better comprehend how the increased absenteeism costs can affect the company's bottom line and what can be done to battle this issue (Wolters Kluwer, 2015). According to Callen, Gulzar, Khan, and Hasanain (2016), one possible reason for government employees' absenteeism in developing countries is the patronage appointment of employees as a reward for political loyalty. Muotka, Huhtala, Makikangas, and Feldt (2015) found out that ethical organisational culture plays a significant role in enhancing workers well-being, thus resulting in minimal absenteeism. In a study conducted in the Italian public sector by Paola, Scoppa, and Pupo (2014), the change in policies had a positive effect on absenteeism. The policy suggests vigorous monitoring and the decrease in sick leave compensation. Although the European

Union allows employees to benefit for parental leave until the child is 8 years old (Europa, 2019), absenteeism remains a challenge in numerous countries. Countries are trying to find innovative ways to decrease the rate of absenteeism in public administration. To this end, Pavithra, Barani, and Lingaraja (2017:558) proposed a biometric clocking system to enhance the monitoring of attendance and absenteeism at the workplace.

In South Africa, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 75 of 1997 (BCEA) stipulates that employees are entitled to annual leave after completing a year of continuous service and paid sick leave is only granted for bona fide incapacity. However, the implementation and monitoring of these policies are ineffective and inefficient (Boshoff, 2008).

The economic impact of absenteeism

The cost of employee absenteeism in South African companies is enormous. According to the world's foremost experts on time and attendance systems, Bytes Systems Integration and US-based Kronos (2011), it stands between 12 billion and 20 billion rand annually. Furthermore, the Occupational Care South Africa (OCSA, 2014) reveals that absenteeism robs the South African economy of a whopping 12 to 16 billion rand annually. This equates to around 15% of employees being absent on any given day. When one quantifies the costs of absenteeism this way, it could be deduced that, absenteeism is the costliest challenge confronting both domestic and international businesses.

In South African alone, some researchers opine that about 17 % of the payroll of businesses are lost due to absenteeism every year (OCSA: 2014). It was estimated that 1.5% of such loss is traceable to sick absenteeism. By implication, this suggests that in a year, under normal circumstances, an employee takes approximately 4 days sick leave in 250 working hours. Therefore, in South African, most businesses suffer absenteeism rate of between 3.5% and 6%. This equates to roughly between 8 and 15 days per worker per year and this is way over the standard limit. In an office of just 50 colleagues, this would equate to approximately 400 to 750 productive days lost annually to sickness. When viewed from this angle, it becomes clear where figures like R16 billion that is lost annually originate from (Leblond, 2017). The cost of absenteeism can be subdivided into three, namely: payroll costs, overtime costs and replacement costs (OCSA, 2014).

Absenteeism is not only detrimental to organisations but can also be detrimental to employees' careers (Bennedsen, Tsoutsoura, and Wolfenzon, 2018). It is generally argued that the rates of absence for women are greater than for men (Eurofound, 2010). It is further argued that employees who frequently absent themselves might find it difficult to be promoted Bennedsen *et al.*, 2018). Personal needs, personal illness, family issues, stress, and entitlement mentality were identified as the main reasons for unscheduled absences (Pillay, 2009). Personal illness such as flu, HIV/AIDS and back pain accounted for most of the reasons advanced by employees in the public sector in South Africa (Pierce, 2009).

Absenteeism poses a serious problem in the increasingly challenging context in which the South African municipalities function. Thus, most municipalities are confronted with ineffective service delivery, as a consequence of the menace of absenteeism in South Africa. Poor service delivery affects both the municipality and the population. Therefore, absenteeism constitutes a major problem in human resource management as a discipline.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

There are serious concerns about the significant prevalence of absenteeism in municipalities and its impact on service delivery. 17% of the payroll of businesses are lost due to absenteeism every year in South Africa. Furthermore, public sector institutions are experiencing a fundamental problem in effectively implementing and monitoring the absenteeism policies that are in place (Leblond, 2017). This study hypothesised that poor government service delivery in South Africa is closely connected to the challenge of prevalent absenteeism amongst its public servants. This is an unethical practice which is sustained by weak human resource management. This then, necessitates a scholarly examination that poses a fundamental question: how does the problem of absenteeism, in uMgungundlovu District Municipality, impact on service delivery? This investigation is conducted with a view to offer valuable contributions to the pool of knowledge and to stimulate further debates on the subject. This could go a long way towards empowering both corporate and public management in general and strengthening the Human Resource discipline in particular.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. Specifically, the study aimed to attain the following objectives:

- 1) To ascertain the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery
- 2) To identify the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.
- 3) To determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.
- 4) Steps taken by the uMgungundlovu District Municipality Management to deal with the employees who absented themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study responded to the following questions:

- 1) What are the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery?
- 2) What are the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
- 3) Who are the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
- 4) What steps are taken by the uMgungundlovu District Municipality Management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work?

1.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is validated by the fact that it carries a high propensity to reveal the causes of absenteeism that are currently not scientifically documented, in the context of municipalities. Furthermore, the study holds the potential to empirically determine how the management failure to curtail absenteeism in the municipality has sustained the problem, or even worsen it. Singh, Chetty, and Karodia, (2016) rightly observe that “excessive costs, low productivity, and inefficient service delivery have challenged the sustainability of the

business”. The outcome of this study will be beneficial to the municipal management team as they will have empirical evidence of the causes of absenteeism and proposed recommendations to tackle the problem of absenteeism.

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Currently, the uMgungundlovu Municipality is yet to maximise the utilisation of plans to curtail or at least minimise absenteeism in its domain. This implies the necessity for decision makers to evaluate their present initiatives of human resource and seek to restructure it not only for the sake of curbing absenteeism but also to inspire a commitment, especially among rank and file staff members. Therefore, this study is done in that regard by providing empirical evidence and recommendations. In addition, the study will provide a better understanding of the causes of absenteeism in municipalities, thus, allowing decision makers to make informed decisions.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, the focus is on the presentation of the methods that were employed in the study. The Study is exploratory in nature as it seeks to understand the impact of absenteeism policies service delivery at UMDM. For exploratory research, the design is mostly used for the purpose of new discoveries, more particularly in such a study, which has never been done before (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:29). Qualitative research design was employed in this study since the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental rationale, views, and motivations of a research problem, and seeks to provide insights to the issue under investigation.

This inquiry is targeting 202 employees from the Department of Community Services and technical services of uMgungundlovu District Municipality as the population of the study. The targeted population (employees) at UMDM is categorised as plumbers (48), technicians (14), general workers (48) and firefighters (56), and environmental health practitioners (7), Managers are (7) Junior Managers (Level 13 -15), (7) Divisional Managers (Level 16-19) and (15) Supervisors (Level 10-12). A non-probability sampling that employs convenience and purposive techniques was used to select respondents for the study. In a convenience sampling, the sample consists merely of elements which are known or are quickly and easily accessible whereas purposive is when the researcher purposefully chooses the elements that he/she wishes to include in the sample, based on a set list of characteristics (Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Creswell

(2014) defines a sample size as the entire number of people or items chosen from the larger population to be part of the study. The total number of employees that were selected for this study is 44. This study used semi-structured interviews for purposes of obtaining relevant qualitative data for the study. This study used a structured interview guide for data collection which comprises 15 questions. The choice of structured interview guide was motivated by the fact that the structured interview provides less interviewer bias, faster execution, comparable responses or consistency. Content analysis was used and themes were induced from the interview data.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The uMgungundlovu District Municipality is the sole public organisation that is within the purview of this research and there is no other municipality that was approached. Most workers at the municipality were not part of the study. However, the few that partook were selected on the basis of representativeness to discover reasonable findings. There are instances where face to face interviews was not possible owing to the geographic dispersion of the respondents.

1.10 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The dissertation comprises of five chapters.

Chapter one

The first chapter provides a synopsis of the study. The chapter highlights the research problem, the background of the study, the research questions and research objectives. Furthermore, the significance, limitations, and rationale of the study were discussed. A summary of the chapter is also provided.

Chapter two

At the heart of the second chapter is the review of the existing literature and the theoretical framework. In this respect, a number of global schools of thought on absenteeism and the causal factors, manifestations, and kinds of absenteeism constitute the focus of the chapter. Clearly, the chapter focuses more on the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery as well as identifying the knowledge gap. It goes further to discuss the impact of absenteeism on productivity, service delivery in municipalities, local government in South Africa after 1994, status of municipalities, characteristics of municipalities, categories of municipalities, municipalities and provision of services, Integrated Development Plan, municipal services, municipal service levels and mechanisms of providing services, and free basic services.

Chapter three

The third chapter describes in detail the methodology employed in this study. Other procedures followed in this study are discussed in detail. The target population, sample size, research approach, data collection methods, data analysis techniques are provided in this chapter.

Chapter four

The fourth chapter presents the analysed data. The themes emerged from the content analysis were presented in this chapter. The interview guide and objectives of the study guided the presentation of the analysed data.

Chapter five

The fifth chapter focuses on three aspects, namely: discussion of the findings, conclusions, summary, and recommendations. The aim of this chapter was to summarise the findings and to make recommendations that could be used to manage absenteeism effectively.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter establishes the need to conduct this study. A general understanding of absenteeism is provided. Furthermore, a discussion on the impact of absenteeism on productivity and service delivery is presented in this chapter. The chapter provides the context of the study, a brief overview of the uMgungundlovu District Municipality as well as the problem under investigation. Thus, research objectives and research questions were developed to address the problem under investigation. In addition, the chapter provided the importance and the rationale of the study. The following chapter positioned the phenomenon being investigated into the body of the knowledge and established the gap which necessitated the conduction of this study.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first chapter, the detailed course of this study was set by establishing the background and general overview of the research design. Therefore, in this chapter, the review of existing literature on the nexuses between absenteeism and service delivery is presented. The entire chapter two is devoted to this because the researcher upholds that literature review should not be a simple list of existing scholarly writings (Hart, 2018: 31). Instead, various pertinent debates on the subject, arguments and counterarguments should be systematically juxtaposed with a view of ascertaining the study gap and to fill that gap with a new study (Machi and McEvoy, 2016; Kumar, 2011: 31-32; Punch, 2000: 44-45; Vithal and Jansen, 2004: 14).

The literature review encompasses the context in which the theory is engaged within the local government on issues relating to the effect of absenteeism on service delivery. As Hart (2018:31) rightly argues that the purpose of a literature review is to appropriate a “research project into the context by relating ideas and theory to problems and questions” in order to rationalise its significance to the ongoing debates on the subject. Therefore, the review of literature represents the rational constituent on which the study is constructed (Bowers and Stevens, 2010: 94). This is so because it helps to form the theoretical framework for the study, facilitates the process of understanding its key concepts and enables the development of its methodology (Kumar, 2011: 31). Lastly, the review of related literature also helps to establish the study gap in order to reveal the specific void the research seeks to fill (Hart, 2018; Vithal and Jansen, 2004: 14). Therefore, this literature review endeavours to first provide valuable insight into the complexity of absenteeism, explains the context of local government in the Republic of South Africa and then examines the service delivery in uMgungundlovu District Municipality within this context.

2.2 GLOBAL VIEW ON ABSENTEEISM

Subsequent to the impacts of shifting ideas in the globalised world and its system, the contour of the contemporary working condition and the workers are being synchronized in consonance with the ever-progressive technological inventions. This labour revolution has given rise to unprecedented management models of some predictable sort that has greatly intensified

pressure on the global workplace (Klaus, 2017). In 2013, employees missed 131 million days from work resulting in revenue losses of £14 billion (UK Statistics Authority, 2014). By 2014, employee absenteeism in the United Kingdom (UK) cost businesses approximately £29 billion, equating to 7 days lost per individual each year (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD] the UK, 2014). The general business problem is that employee absenteeism negatively impacts the organizational bottom line. The specific business problem is that some managers lack strategies to reduce employee absenteeism (Forte, 2017).

The speedy pace, coupled with the complexity of responsibilities, lead to higher rate of unemployment, more casual work than formal, constant work modification and the factors of the health-disease process (ILO, 2016). Hence, work dissatisfaction, anxiety, tension and stress cannot be unnoticed among workers, degenerating to problems such as unexcused absences at work, even such absenteeism which is justified on medical ground (Salih, 2018). This has been connected to problematic working times in developing countries such as China, but surprisingly, also in some industrialised countries as well (Frick, Simmons and Stein, 2018; Lee, 2004). This view has its theoretical and historical roots in the background of c (Jennifer and Jennifer, 2016).

2.2.1 International Resolutions on Working Time

Essentially, the available literature on working time is extremely subjective towards the industrialised world, mostly the European countries (Coile, Milligan and Wise, 2018; Boulin, Lallement, Messenger, Michon, 2006; Messenger, 2004; Houseman and Nakamura, 2001; Wong and Picot, 2001; Golden and Figart, 2000; O'Reilly and Bothfeld, 2002; Bosch, Lehndorff, Dawkins and Michon, 1993). Therefore, international debates on working time, often lack significant consideration of most developing nations, largely owing to the enormous gaps between the developed and the developing countries (Hörning, Gerhardt, and Michailow, 2018; Messenger, 2018). However, the Hours of Work International Convention of 1919 was the first of its kind to stipulate the standard of “8 hours a day and 48 hours a week” for the manufacturing sector (Skidelsky, 2019; Lee, McCann, and Messenger, 2007).

According to Messenger (2018); Lee, McCann, and Messenger (2007) and Young (2018), several other working time Conventions were subsequently implemented: International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention of 1930 (No. 30), for instance, extended the 48-hour working week to workers in commerce and offices in 1930; and Convention 1935 (No. 47) established

a new standard of the 40-hour working week. The standard of a minimum of one-day weekly rest was introduced in the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14) and the Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957 (No. 106), (Lee, McCann, and Messenger, 2007). Conventions concerning night work and holidays with pay also followed. According to ILO (1958: 3),

The eight-hour day, implying the 48-hour week, was a key demand of the working class all over the world before the ILO was established... To the workers, the extension and generalized application of the eight-hour day represented a reform which no other could equal in value – a chance to share in the distribution of the new wealth created by modern industry and to receive that share in the form of spare time. More generally, the need to safeguard the health and well-being of workers was recognised; overlong hours had been shown to be harmful to economic efficiency as well as to material and moral welfare of the workers and to be incompatible with political democracy. Finally, there was a feeling in many quarters that international standards relating to hours of work might be a useful means of limiting the possibilities of unfair competition. In reflection of this trend of world opinion, the adoption of the eight-hour day and 48-hour week was a prime objective of the ILO.

The ILO has been the locus of working time debates since its inception, especially with regard to the relationship between working time, health and safety, and job creation. These debates have developed, however, to incorporate additional policy goals, most notably those of ensuring that working hours allow workers adequate time to devote to their families and other elements of their lives. The role of the ILO, however, appears to have lost its momentum over the last two decades, with the most intense debates being conducted at the European level (ILO ,1958: 5).

2.2.2 Definition of Absenteeism

Absenteeism is an age-long issue for practically every employer. It affects both the private and public sectors, but more essentially prominent in an industrialised society. It is also an international phenomenon experienced in all countries of the world at varying degrees. According to the ILO, absenteeism is the practice of an employee who does not show up for work for a period of one or more days (or shifts,) when he has been assigned for a day of work (ILO, 2018). According to Vignoli and Bonfiglioli (2016), absenteeism is perpetrated when

“an employee is away from work for short periods, unauthorised absence of the employee from the work and includes arriving late, leaving early and taking extended tea brakes or lunch breaks”. As this review of related literature seeks to gain proper understandings of the concept of absenteeism, the fact is sustained that there are a plethora of meanings and terminologies on absenteeism. Lokke (2016:24) further classifies absenteeism as “late coming, absences from an employee’s workstation, and absences from the workplace for itself for short periods.”

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF ABSENTEEISM

Previous research has highlighted various definitions of absenteeism. Bustillos and Vargas (2015:192) define absenteeism as the failure to report for work as scheduled, regardless of the reason. Jansen and Otten (2017:4) define absenteeism as “the number of days that people are absent from work for any reason other than an approved vacation”. McGrandle and Ohemeng (2017) define absenteeism as an unplanned, unjustifiable, and disruptive incident, which is further characterised by a lack of physical presence of the employee at work, such as scheduled, extended breaks, late coming or leaving his/her workstation. Absenteeism has also been defined as an absence of workers from the regular work without prior permission (Lieke, Johns, Lyons and Hoeven, 2016). Gellatly and Hedberg (2016) define absenteeism as withdrawal behaviour when it is used as a means to escape an undesirable working environment. This definition is further elaborated upon by introducing the element of motivational levels. In particular, the minimum level of motivation involves doing less than required, the expected level of motivation involves doing just what is required, and the maximum level of motivation involves doing more than necessary (Heiko, Sascha, Caroline, Joachim, Maria, Mariella and Tianan, 2018). Kocukulah, Kelley, Mitchell and Ruggieri, (2016) and Nel, Dyke, Haasbroek, Sono and Werner (2006) explain that when an employee is functioning at the minimum or maximum level, it may be a cause of absenteeism.

2.4 TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM

Most schools of thought argue that absenteeism occurs when employees are not present at work when they are scheduled to be there and it is measured by the frequency or duration of work days missed (Fitzgerald, Kirby, Murphy and Geaney, 2016; Magee, Gordon and Robinson, 2017). The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA), as amended, does not include annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, family responsibility leave, and in some cases, chronic illnesses as absenteeism. Birioukov (2016:341) differentiates between

involuntary absence and voluntary absence. He maintains that involuntary absence relates to certified sickness or funeral attendance and is beyond the employee's immediate control, whereas voluntary absence relates to uncertified sickness and shirking that is under the direct control of the employee and is often based on the employee's personal aims Birioukov (2016: 341). Sharifian, Aminian, and Kolahi (2017:2) mention three main categories of absence, namely: sick leave, authorised absence and unauthorised absence. Sick leave is granted when an employee is absent due to a reported illness, whether the illness is genuine or feigned. Company policy will usually state at what stage a medical certificate is required, such as being absent from work for more than two consecutive days or more than two occasions in an eight-week period, as stated in the BCEA. Authorised absence occurs when the employee is absent for a reason other than illness, such as annual leave, paternity leave, and such reasons as may be deemed acceptable to management and for which permission is granted (Nardi, Michel-Crosato and Biazevic, 2016). Unauthorised absence occurs when an employee is absent without permission, no explanation is generally given, and the absence is deemed to be unexcused (SA Policy, 2017).

2.5 CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

This section explores some of the most common underlying causes of absenteeism.

2.5.1 Job satisfaction

Employees are considered one of the most important assets in an organisation. One can then deduce that job satisfaction is a crucial factor in the success of an organisation. Motivation is a key component of the behaviour and the performance of an employee, which has a direct effect on whether an organisation is successful or not. Job satisfaction has been defined as the attitude that employees may have towards their jobs and the organisations in which they work (Reichenberg and Lofren, 2019). Though there are various factors that affect job satisfaction, the level of job satisfaction will differ from individual to individual” (Jaarsveld, 2018:25). Managers must strive to maintain an acceptable or high level of job satisfaction amongst the workforce. This is due to the fact that job dissatisfaction may increase the rate of absenteeism and may then negatively impact on the organisation's ability to perform in order to successfully meet its organisational goals (Theron, 2014). Low morale and hindered productivity may result from the increased pressure, increased workload, and frustration from a shortage of staff that

may result in absenteeism (Netshidzati,2012:19). A satisfied employee is motivated to be present at work daily.

2.5.2 Morale

Mundaly and Nkosi (2015: 623) assert that absenteeism may lead to low morale within the organisation, particularly amongst the employees who do regularly come to work. This is because employees who do regularly come to work are then faced with taking over the workload of the employee who is regularly absent. Morale determines the spirit of a person or group, and as such, low employee morale is likely to have a negative impact on the delivery of the service provided (Netshidzati, 2012:17). Mundaly and Nkosi (2015: 624) claim that low employee morale can be destructive in the organisation and lead to dissatisfaction, poor productivity and absenteeism.

2.5.3 Work overload

Netshidzati (2012: 17-20) and Singh, Chetty and Karodia, (2016:109) found that work overload may lead to inefficient service delivery which may result in the occurrence of on-site theft. If an employee is paid overtime for extra hours worked, this is an extra cost to the company. Poor management could also leave employees feeling undervalued and this, in turn, could affect employee morale and lead to excessive absenteeism (Singh, Chetty and Karodia, 2016:109-110). Thus, municipalities may be affected by the extra cost due to absenteeism. It is, therefore, important to measure the effect of work overload on absenteeism at the UMDM.

2.5.4 Organisational culture and leadership

Jourdain and Chenevert (2015: 177) define organisational culture as a system of shared meaning across organisational members and is different between organisations. It includes the values, norms, customs and beliefs commonly held among a group of people that guide the behaviour of a particular group of people, giving the group its unique characteristics (Løkke Møller, and Krøtel, 2018). Furthermore, Sampaio and Baptista (2019) see organisational culture as a social phenomenon which has to be entrenched into the minds of workers so that they melt into the culture of the organisation with a commitment that will minimise absenteeism and increase performance. Leadership is a critical component in the pursuit of organisational goals and leaders convey the organisation's culture through their actions and behaviour (Kefela, 2010:1). A leadership style can be viewed as the ability of a leader to influence employees to accomplish an objective and direct the organisation in a way that makes

it efficient. Therefore, leaders can play an important role in shaping and maintaining a specific culture in an organisation (George, Chiba and Scheepers, 2017:2). When the workforce has a good relationship with their supervisors or managers and receives support from them, they become more satisfied with their jobs and as a result, are more likely to attend work regularly (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2016). Accordingly, it is important to ascertain the effect of organisational culture and leadership on absenteeism at UMDM.

2.5.5 Working conditions

Employers must strive to ensure that working conditions are satisfactory so that the physical and mental health of employees is assured (Kocakulah and Kelley, 2016: 90). Poor health conditions at the workplace can lead to absenteeism, low productivity, loss of income, loss of contracts and in extreme cases, the loss of employees who are difficult to replace due to their skills, experience and expertise. Stromberg, Aboagye, Hagberg and Bergstrom (2017:1059) state that workers' health and job satisfaction may be influenced by a number of working conditions, such as the number of working hours per day and paid low salaries. It is, therefore, crucial to assess the effect of working conditions on absenteeism at UMDM.

2.5.6 Stress

Kocakulah, Kelley and Mitchell (2016:91) claim that stress occurs when an employee feels that the demand imposed exceeds his/her ability to function. Stress is an inevitable part of our lives and therefore, cannot be avoided. However, one can attempt to control and minimise stress. Martin and Matiaske (2017:250) assert that stress is a cause for concern in an organisation as it can have varying effects on individuals and the resulting absenteeism can impact on the organisation's performance. However, Nel *et al.*, (2006:12) state that stress is not necessarily bad because a modest amount of stress is needed to be productive and creative in the workplace. Stress is caused by both personal and work-related factors, such as work overload, irregular work hours, boredom, lack of autonomy, conflict and unrealistic objectives (Birioukov,2016:344). These factors can have an impact on each other, and, together, can lead to absenteeism (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2016).

2.5.7 Illness

Genuine illness is regarded as one of the main reasons for employee absenteeism in the workplace. Illness is very costly as it increases the rate of absenteeism with the accompanying financial cost to the company, since employees are paid for not being productive (Kocakulah,

2016:90). Sick leave is a right afforded to employees so that they can have time to recover from illness. Unfortunately, having sick leave available can increase the absenteeism rate when employees tend to abuse their sick leave entitlements. Employees may believe that sick leave is a right that they are entitled to use, irrespective of whether the illness is genuine or feigned (Brugh, Teplitskaya and Dutta, 2018). In addition, Maestas, Mullen and Renname (2018) argues that taking sick leave has a negative impact on the organisation, as the organisation cannot function efficiently if employees do not report for duty.

2.5.8 Personal problems and uncontrollable events

Personal problems may be encountered by municipality employees, which hinder them from reporting to work (Kocakulah and Bryan, 2018). These problems may range from a sick child who has to be taken to a hospital, an urgent financial crisis where employees do not have money for transport to go to work, or the death of a close relative or domestic crisis whereby the employee has to stay at home to address the situation. Uncontrollable events, as identified by Singh, Chetty, and Karodia (2016:111), are events in which employees fail to go to work due to heavy rain and/or the road to work might have been washed away, family matters, and a lack of transport to get to work, such as taxi drivers were on strike. It is, therefore, important to find out whether personal problems and uncontrollable events are causes of absenteeism at UMDM.

2.5.9 Age

Goecke (2018:521) states that age is one of the most studied demographic factors relating to absenteeism. It has been found that young employees tend to take short periods of sick leave when compared to those periods of sick leave taken by older employees (Baigi and Stewart, 2015:447-448). This can be due to the fact that older employees are usually in responsible positions, have a greater work ethic and are more committed to their work. They, therefore, are less likely to be absent. Younger employees have greater family responsibilities, and, therefore, may be absent from work more often (Netshidzeti ,2012 :19).

2.5.10 Tenure

Length of service may be a contributing factor to the rate of employee absenteeism (Sheikha and Younis, 2006). Magee, Caputi and Lee (2016) state that longer periods of service with an organisation may result in less absenteeism as the loyalty of employees to an organisation may strengthen over time. Van Jaarsveld, J. A. (2018), Barmby, Ercolani and Treble (2002), report that employees with longer tenure have high absenteeism rates. These employees believe that

their jobs are secure. Jinnett, Schwatka, Tenney and Brockbanl (2017) add that this can also be due to boredom, emotional problems, and burnout.

2.6 EFFECT OF ABSENTEEISM ON PRODUCTIVITY

Absenteeism in the workplace is a complex multi-dimensional problem involving the indirect interface of the workplace, employer, worker, social, and economic factors. Absenteeism often constitutes a detrimental condition when the absence of one member of a task team impacts negatively on the entire productivity, both qualitatively and quantitatively (Zhang, Sun, Woodcock, 2017; Jinnett and Schwatka, 2017). Furthermore, the economic implication of absenteeism cannot be overemphasized. The financial impacts range from the costs emanating from the absent persons' overheads; the costs of handling the immediate problems of absenteeism; the costs of filling the gaps created by absent employees and; the costs associated with the shortfall in quantity and/or quality of output (Stromberg *et al.*, 2017).

Primarily in the private sector, absenteeism directly impacts on the cost of production, which in turn, creates lost productivity that affects the entire economy one way or the other. It affects the public sector's service delivery both in quantity quality and time. Therefore, in general, absenteeism inflates the cost of production, diminishes the quality of public and private goods and services and encumbers the employers, workers and the end users of good and services (Birioukov, 2016:340). Thus, the study assessed the impact of absenteeism on service delivery at UMDM.

A brief history of local government in South Africa

The local government with an elected council system originated in 1836 when the Municipal ordinance for the Cape Colony took effect (Scheepers, 2015; Cloete, 1988: 238). The ordinance was used as a framework for future municipalities' regulations. Local governments in South Africa were used as the mechanism through which racial and cultural groups were kept separate. An effort was made by the apartheid regime to introduce a system called "own management" to ensure service delivery to black residents at the local level as blacks were totally excluded from the local government during early years of apartheid (The White paper on Local government, 1998).

During the apartheid regime, the government services were perceived as either an "own affair" or a "general affair" (Netshidzati,2012:24). "Own affairs would affect a population group in

relation to the maintenance of its identity and the upholding and furtherance of its way of life, culture, traditions, and customs” (Sithole and Mathonsi, 2015: 8). The “own affairs” was seen as a way to reinforce the policies of segregation (The White Paper on Local Government, 1998).

With regard to the transition of local government in South Africa, three main phases were used. The first phase, the Local Government Transition Act took effect. The second phase started in 1995/1996 after the first local elections were held, and the third phase in 2000, when the current form of municipalities was established (Powell, 2012; Cloete, De Villiers, Hoffschulte, Magi, Malherbe, Naidu and Thornhill, 2008).

2.7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994

In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, (Act 108, Section 40), government consists of three layers: national, provincial and local government which is recognised as distinctive, interdependent and interrelated. The term “local government” refers to a sphere of government and not to an individual municipality. Local government is made up of individual municipalities put together (Reddy, 1996:50). Municipalities are established to render services in their areas of jurisdiction (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, (Act 108, Section 151).

2.8 STATUS OF MUNICIPALITIES

According to Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, (Act 108), a municipality enjoys the same status as national and provincial spheres and operates independently of the two. The following conditions are applicable to local government in the Republic of South Africa:

- The local sphere of government consists of municipalities that must be established in the whole of the Republic.
- National and provincial governments may not impede a municipality's right to exercise its powers.
- The municipal council has the legislative and executive authority of a given municipality.

A municipality has a right to govern on its own initiative, subject to national and provincial legislation (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, (Act 108), Section 151)

2.9 CHARACTERISTICS OF MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities operate within the framework of both national and provincial governments and within the ambit Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, (Act 108). It is in this regard that a municipality cannot pass by-laws that contradict the national or provincial legislation (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Act (108), Section 41). Ismail, Bayat, and Meyer (1997:5) mention the following as the characteristics of municipalities that distinguish them from other spheres of government:

- Well-defined areas of jurisdiction-municipalities can govern the affairs and the people of only a particular geographical area.
- Municipalities can pass by-laws that are legally binding.
- Municipalities can employ personnel to do and manage their business.
- Municipalities provide direct participation in the local government through elections held every five years.
- Municipalities exist to provide particular basic services.
- Municipalities have constitutional powers to charge rates and taxes.

2.10 CATEGORIES OF MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities are established under three categories:

- Category A: a municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area.
- Category B: a municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a category C municipality within whose area it falls.
- Category C: a municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality (Republic of South Africa, 1998, Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998, Section.8)

A Municipality consists of three different role-players, namely:

- Council
- Community
- Administration (Republic of South Africa, 2000, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (1998), Section 2). The Municipal Council is made up of representatives that are elected through local government elections conducted every five years (Republic of South Africa, 1998, Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, Section

12). It is this body of the Municipality that carries the responsibility of realising the aspirations of the people. The Council is accountable to the community on all promises made while canvassing for votes. The Republic of South Africa, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, (1998), Section 4) empowers the Municipal Council with both legislative and executive authority. The election process involves all interested political parties canvassing for votes. The Republic of South Africa (Municipal Electoral Act no. 27, 2000) regulates the manner in which elections for local government are conducted in the Republic of South Africa. The parties develop election manifestos around issues that are considered to be the priority needs of the community. It is at this stage that promises are made and expectations are formulated by members of the community. People have personal needs that shape their expectations when they choose to vote a particular councillor or political party into power. The national government develops policies that inform processes in all spheres of the government of how services are to be delivered to communities. The Municipal Council takes the cue from national policies and develops implementation strategies that are founded on the national government principles.

The Municipal administration is responsible for the implementation of the policies developed by the local, national and provincial spheres of government. Councillors, through community participation processes, consult communities to confirm their expectations on the level of the quality of services. Communities become part of the service design and provide an opportunity to the Municipality to narrow the gap between what is expected and the actual service experience.

2.11 SERVICE DELIVERY IN MUNICIPALITIES

Quite a number of policies and legislation have been instituted by the South African Government. This allows the municipalities to expedite and implement service delivery in their respective jurisdiction. In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Act 108 of 1996, Section 40 (1), local government is the most proximate to the community among the three tiers of government. It is the most immediate level of the government which relates directly with the citizens on crucial matters of their lives. Therefore, it could be said to be the reflector of the failures or successes of the national government. The purpose of this segment of the literature review is to explain the context of local government in South Africa and to look at service delivery in uMgungundlovu District Municipality within this context.

2.11.1 Historical Context of Service Delivery in Local Government

Ever since 1994, a process of transformation from the apartheid system to a democratic society has never ceased in South Africa. According to Van Niekerk (2002:34), the apartheid system is generally known for its social, institutional and geographical disassociation along racial contours, a complete contrast to democracy. In fact, Van Niekerk (2002:34) defines apartheid as “a value system, a form of government and a policy of racial segregation ...” as opposed to the core tenet of inclusiveness embedded in democracy. Therefore, during the apartheid regime, the distribution of public resources was fashioned along racial lines. Ample municipal services and amenities were deliberately assigned to the urban white areas to the detriments of the black communities. Therefore, when the African National Congress (ANC) democratically took over power in 1994, one of its main objectives was to stabilize these historical inequities by making sure that basic amenities are equally reachable and utilised by all citizens. In the Constitution of the RSA, 1996, (Act 108 chapter four), which talks about the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) and other policy documents, the commitment of the government is clearly documented on this subject.

2.11.2 Normative Guidelines of Public Administration

In section 195 of Act 108 of the Constitution of 1996 of the Republic of South Africa, the ethics of unbiased service delivery are unreservedly enshrined. The Act stipulates people-orientated administration and effective utilisation of public resources with high regards for transparency, impartiality and inclusiveness. These principles are meant to be applicable to all structures and tiers of government (Constitution of Republic of South Africa, 1996, Act 108:195). According to the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997:8), there are eight principles that serve as guidelines on service delivery in the public service in the RSA: they are popularly known as Batho Pele Principles (Republic of South Africa, 1997: 8). Batho Pele means “people first”, that is the government's commitment to serving people and putting the public first. These principles are aimed at improving the quality of services and exceeding customer satisfaction (Republic of South Africa, 1997, White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery). The Batho-Pele principles are applicable to all spheres of government and are described as follows:

2.11.2.1 Access

Chapter Eight of the constitution the Republic of South Africa (1996); Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) states that municipalities must ensure that communities

have equal access to basic services and that these are reviewed regularly with a view to upgrading and improving quality. The Republic of South Africa, Constitution of 1996, (Act 108), Section 9 states that no organ of state may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on any grounds, including race, gender, sex, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, and language. Public servants have a special role to play, to make sure that those who need extra assistance get it. Managers should ensure that these services are accessible to disabled people and that people who use wheelchairs and walking aids can get into public buildings. Special arrangements should be made to assist people with hearing or visual disabilities. However, the bureaucratic framework becomes unfavourable for the implementer when attention is not given to social, economic, political, and legal context. This variable in the 5C Protocol is known as Context, it submits that the larger context impacts greatly on the implementation process (Batho Pele Principles, Republic of South Africa, 1997).

2.11.2.2 Consultation

Consultation as one of the components of Batho Pele principles requires that citizens are consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered. Such consultation could be done by interacting with, listening to and learning from the people they serve. Public servants are to ensure that they stay in touch with the people they serve in order to ensure that the goals are achieved. Therefore, consultation as one of the Batho Pele principles, interlink with all eight principles. For example, the promotion of the principles of access requires that consultation takes place with citizens to better understand their needs and to ensure services can be accessible to them. Consultation is critical in the deepening of good governance and democracy but also as players in decision- making on service delivery.

It is mandatory for the municipality to consult the community when preparing the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance and must, for this purpose, encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality (Constitution of Republic of South Africa 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000). Consultation provides the municipality with an opportunity to understand the expectations of the community so as to improve the service offering and narrow the gap between customer expectations and management's perceptions of such customer requirements (Batho Pele Principles, Republic of South Africa, 1997).

2.11.2.3 Courtesy

Public servants must behave in a manner that shows respect to members of the public. This principle can also be associated with two service quality dimensions, namely: assurance and empathy. One of the service quality dimensions is the responsiveness of employees to the needs of customers. The Constitution of Republic of South Africa, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000) calls for all municipalities to be responsive to the needs of the community. Citizens should be treated with courtesy and dignity. Public servants have to remember that they are employed to help the people and to give them access to the services that are their rights. This means that in their interaction with the citizen, public servants should always be courteous and helpful (Batho Pele Principles, Republic of South Africa, 1997).

2.11.2.4 Information

Decision-making should be influenced by the high-quality level of information gathered and managed by the municipality. Information should be disseminated to different municipal stakeholders to allow for active participation in the affairs of the municipality. All municipalities are required to develop the performance management system that has clear objectives of the municipality and performance indicators for objective assessment. Members of the public are encouraged to participate in the process of developing, implementing and evaluating the objectives, targets, and indicators of the performance management system. Providing accurate information empowers members of the public to determine what can realistically be expected from the municipality and thereby developing what can be regarded as adequate service expectation. Members of the public or customers cannot accurately determine the level of tolerance if there is no information available on which to base what can be realistically expected, in terms of service quality level from the municipality (Batho Pele Principles, Republic of South Africa, 1997).

2.11.2.5 Service standards

All public service institutions must uphold high service standards. The level of the quality of service must be communicated to the members of the public. By communicating the level of the quality of service, members of the public are being assured of the service level to expect, on which a comparison will be made to formulate service perceptions. Service standards should clearly state how long it takes to deliver and exactly what people can expect from the public service. The strength of the reliability of the municipality is measured against what is being

promised to the community in terms of service quality. Can the municipality be depended upon for service delivery? The production and consumption of services cannot be separated. The consumer becomes part of the production process. Municipalities solicit the ideas of the public regarding the level and the quality of service to be delivered.

2.11.2.6 Openness and transparency

Municipalities must be open and transparent in all the operations and decisions taken. Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge. It is very important for the Public Service and administration to be run as an open book. The Public Service is there to serve the people and they have a right to the services it offers. Many people, especially poor people, do not yet have access to things like free basic services, or social grants, simply because they do not have the information to access it. The people also have the right to know how decisions are made, how a department works, who is in charge and what its plans and budgets are (White Paper on transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997).

2.11.2.7 Redress

Municipalities are to conduct their affairs and deploy their resources in the manner that progressively attempts to redress the imbalances created by the apartheid policies in terms of service delivery. The new democratic dispensation provides hope in the minds of the public that hardships experienced as a result of apartheid will be adequately addressed by providing services equitably. If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation, and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response. When people do not get what they are entitled to from the Public Service, they have a right to redress. This means that the public servant should immediately apologise to them and also tell them what solution they are offering to their problem. If the public servant has none, they should speak to their manager or supervisor and make sure that the problem is sorted out. The Public Service's success and the image are built on its ability to deliver what people expect from them. When complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic and positive response. The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act allows for citizens to ask for reasons for any decision taken by the government that affects them. The Act ensures that citizens have a right to administrative decisions that are lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair. Where citizens are dissatisfied with

the reasons given, the Act allows people to appeal the decision or ask for the review of the administrative action by a court or, where appropriate, an independent and impartial tribunal (White Paper on transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997).

2.11.2.8 Value for Money

Municipalities should endeavor to provide the best service with the least available resources (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money. It is very important that public servants do not waste the scarce resources of government and that they deliver a service that is as cost-effective and efficient as possible. It is their duty to inform management of any wastage of resources and to look for ways of saving money and time, without compromising the quality of the service delivered to people (White Paper on transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997).

2.12 MUNICIPALITIES AND SERVICE PROVISION

Local government and municipalities exist primarily to bring government closer to the people by providing services to the communities for which they were created. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 (Constitution) identifies the following objectives of a municipality which underpin their role in the provision of services:

- Promoting social and economic development.
- Promoting a safe and healthy environment.
- Encouraging the involvement of the community in the matters of the municipality. The personal needs of customers in a Municipality revolve around issues like availability of water, electricity, roads, housing and many more necessities that support human life.

A municipality must exercise its rights and discharge its duties in the provision of services in a sustainable manner taking into consideration the financial and administrative capacity following an Integrated Development Planning (IDP) approach (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000).

2.13 INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Integrated Development Planning is an approach to planning that involves the whole municipality and its citizens in finding the best solutions to achieve effective long-term development (Community law centre, 2013:13). An IDP is a broad plan for an area that gives

an overall framework for development. It looks at existing conditions and facilities, at the problems and needs and finally at the resources available for development (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996: Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000) require all municipalities to promote public participation in all municipal affairs, including the integrated development planning process. As part of the IDP process, a forum must be established where different stakeholders of the municipality, including the community, meet and are afforded the opportunity to say what their needs are (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000). This exercise provides a good opportunity for narrowing gap 1 and 2 of the service quality model. It is at this stage that the municipality gets to understand the expectations of the community better and it should design the kind of services that will meet the expectations of the customers. There are six main reasons why a municipality should have an IDP (Education and Training Unit, 2003:4). These are to:

- Make good use of scarce resources.
- Help speed up delivery of services to poor areas.
- Attract additional funds (government departments and private investors are more willing to invest their money where municipalities have an IDP).
- Strengthen democracy.
- Overcome the inequalities and discrimination of the apartheid system.
- Promote coordination between the local, provincial and national government.

All municipalities have to draw up an IDP in consultation with local forums and stakeholders. In other words, the public must participate fully in the process (The Constitution of Republic of South Africa 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000). The final IDP document has to be approved by the Council. The plan must show:

- The basic needs of the disadvantaged sections of the community.
- The long-term vision for meeting those needs.
- The need for these sections of the community to advance socially and economically.
- How the plan will be financed and whether it is financially sustainable, that there will be money in the future to keep the plan going.

- The capacity of the municipal council to carry out the plan and what resources are available to help carry out the plan. (The Constitution of Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000).
- The Municipal Council is responsible for coordinating the IDP and must draw in other stakeholders in the area, who can help and/or benefit from development in the area (The Constitution of Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000).

All municipal planning, including municipal services planning, must take place using the IDP as a guide and the annual Council budget should be based on the IDP.

2.14 MUNICIPAL SERVICES

It is at the level of local government that people interact directly with the government. All government interventions and programmes directed at improving the plight of the people are intended to impact at this level of government. Municipal services are those services identified in the Constitution and other services that may be assigned by national or provincial legislation to a municipal council (The Constitution of Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000).

Municipalities must make sure that people in their areas have at least the basic services they need. There are a large number of services that they provide, the most important of which are: air pollution, childcare facilities, electricity and gas supply, local tourism, municipal health services, municipal planning, municipal parks and recreation, refuse removal, municipal roads and stormwater drainage, sewage collection and disposal, street lighting and water supply (Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 117 of 1998).

These services have a direct and immediate effect on the quality of the lives of the people in that particular community. For example, if the water that is provided is of poor quality or refuse is not collected regularly, it will contribute to the creation of unhealthy and unsafe living conditions. The municipal services are offered in various forms and levels.

2.15 MECHANISMS OF PROVIDING SERVICES BY MUNICIPALITY

A municipality can decide on the level of the service to provide and whether to provide services directly to the community or explore alternative mechanisms (The Constitution of Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000).

It is possible for a municipality to improve and expand the delivery of services by improving its own ability to do so (Education and Training Unit, 2003:4). By improving a number of skills, municipalities may be better able to deliver services effectively and efficiently from inside. Better communication between the municipality and citizens will help the Council determine the needs of the community and whether or not they are being met. Improved financial planning will help find the best possible ways to use available funds. Better technical skills will improve the delivery of a particular municipal service.

A municipality may also outsource the provision of a service. In other words, it may choose to hire someone else to deliver the service, but it remains the responsibility of the municipality to choose the service provider and to make sure that they deliver the service properly. The most important factor for the municipality to consider is the level (or standard) at which the service is provided. The choice of the level of a particular service is influenced by affordability as well as community needs. When municipalities make decisions about the level of services, they should seriously consider the long-term viability of providing a service at that level (Education and Training Unit, 2003:2). If a municipality provides a service at a higher level the costs to provide the service increases and so does the price that the municipality will have to charge its customers. Since municipalities rely heavily on income received from users, if the costs are too high and people are unable to pay, the municipality will lose money and will not be able to continue to provide the service (The Constitution of Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000).

2.16 FREE BASIC SERVICES

The most complex issue to consider when discussing the provision of free basic services is the funding of such services (Department of Local Government Free Basic Services, 2004). Municipalities receive their part of the equitable share.

They can apply for infrastructure grants and they raise their own revenue through service charges (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 56 of 2003). Municipalities need to analyse what their costs for free basic services provision are, what allocations they receive and what their internal resource base is (Department of Local Government-Free Basic Services, 2004). This should then form the basis of what would be affordable and therefore what the most suitable options for implementation would be. One of the basic principles of the Reconstruction and

Development Programme recognises that the legacy of apartheid cannot be addressed in a piecemeal fashion, but requires the integration of all available resources and strategies to achieve sustainable development. Therefore, municipalities cannot afford to neglect the issue of absenteeism as absenteeism affects the service delivery which in turn affects the people of South Africa. The next section will discuss in detail the policy process for the national government (Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000).

2.17 POLICY PROCESS FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

According to Cloete, Coning Wissink and Rabie (2018:6), policy is “a statement of intent” which stipulates the fundamental principles set to be followed in order to achieve some definite goals. Birkland (2016) and Weible and Carter (2017:24) define “public policies as deliberate decisions by governments or equivalent authorities to take action or nonaction toward specific objectives”. Thus, the policy is a product of a process which necessitates the participation of diverse stakeholders who play different roles. It is important to note here that the policy process is essentially different from the planning process. This segment discusses Policy Process in national government under the following headings: Agenda Setting, Policy Formulation/design, Policy Adoption, Policy Implementation and Policy Evaluation.

2.17.1 Agenda Setting

According to Cloete, Coning Wissink and Rabie (2018:137), policy agenda setting is “a deliberate planning process through which policy issues are identified, problems defined and prioritised, support mobilised and decision makers lobbied to take appropriate action.” However, *en passant*, policy issues occur when controversies and attention about the policy generate public debates. A policy issue becomes a policy problem “when it starts to have a negative or detrimental impact in or on society that needs to be addressed” (Cloete et al., 2018).

Policy agenda setting is the first step in the policy process after a policy issue or problem have been identified by the stakeholders and brought to the government’s attention for action. It is a process where the stakeholders embark on lobbying and persuading the policymakers to respond by acting in favourable consideration of their problem in order to instigate the required transformation in society (Cloete *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, to Cloete and Meyer (2018:139), agenda-setting is

A crucial phase in public policy making for two main reasons; firstly, it determines how stakeholders influence the policy agenda. Secondly, it determines who influences or controls the policy-making process.

Hence, policy agenda setting could be said to be both procedural and substantive: procedural in the sense of an agenda as a list of matters to be addressed during a meeting. Therefore, this simple perception of agenda setting implies that it defines the order in which the matters are considered. According to Cloete and Meyer (2018:140), the earliest matter to appear on the agenda stands the better chance to be considered, while the last ones to appear stands under probability for consideration, or, at best, of being adjourned for subsequent meetings. Therefore, policy agenda setting means the prioritizing of policy problems or issues for the policy or decision making.

According to Cloete and Meyer (2006:105-106) identification and definition of policy problems “is the way in which the policy has been structured [which] will determine the feasibility, manageability, and sustainability of the policy design and the implementation strategies devised to deal with it.” Therefore, the pre-screening stage is as important as the policy-making stage, because of the great impact of the problem structure on policy design for problem-solving.

Furthermore, the most imperative thing about policy agenda setting is the fact that policy-making is essentially a situational or contextual process (Dubnick & Romzek, 1999:190). In the South African perspective, for instance, policy-making involves political power and it is all about structuring and restructuring of social and political life. Hence, due to the contextual nature of policy agenda setting. Cloete, Coning Wissink and Rabie (2018:112) submit that it “can therefore not be studied in isolation from political, economic, social, technological, cultural and global factors”.

2.17.2 Participation of Stakeholders

In democratic scenery, the main actors in policy agenda setting are the political representatives elected by the public, the political appointees who are the career public managers, the judiciary, various relevant interest groups and the media. The elected politicians provide public policies contents and promote public analysis during legislative processes. The political appointees, on the other hand, receive and refine policy problems and their power to decide on policy problems or issue to be scheduled into the policy agenda is considerable. According to Cloete, Coning

Wissink and Rabie (2018:139), “in the presidential systems, the legislative and judicial branches of the government are also important potential policy agenda setters, because of the balance of power among those organs of state. They have considerable power to determine what goes onto the policy agenda because they directly control the implementation of the resources of the government. Politicians are politically accountable for governmental decisions and actions, but officials are the statutory accountable financial and administrative officers”.

The appointed political officials use the following criteria: first consider the urgency of the matter; secondly, they consider whether the matter is private or public; thirdly, they establish the rank of the matter on the policy agenda; fourthly, they consider if the problem is budgeted for; fifthly, they strategize problem prioritization; sixthly, they assess the internal capacity of the system to respond to the policy problems before the matters are put on the agenda.

The judiciary also recognised as the legal profession, contribute to the policy agenda setting. Their contribution goes beyond the narrow interpretation of legal frameworks and provisions. The judiciary comes in direct contact with inherent policy content and implementation weakness. Judicial officers like judges and magistrates can play a significant role in drawing the attention of the legislature and the executive to issues for broader public policy agenda. Therefore, the court offers direction to both the executive and the legislative dimensions of public policy issues. Lastly, the role of media in policy agenda setting cannot be overemphasized. By its vast resources, and its access to passive audiences, the media is good at shaping public opinion (Cloete et al., 2018:274). According to Cloete, Coning Wissink and Rabie (2018:139), through media the public is both educated, informed, and mobilised on policy issues. It can also empower individuals to become independent thinkers, to be critical, etc. the media can be in the form of print, visual, audio, or social media. Through such media involvement that policy issues gain popular support on the policy agenda.

2.17.3 Policy Formulation

In the last three decades, the literature on policy formulation has expanded meaningfully (Wolmen 1981; Thomas 2001; Wu et al., 2010; Howlett, 2011). According to Howlett (2011: 29) and Sidney (2017), it is the stage of the policy process” in which options that might help resolve issues and problems recognised at the agenda-setting stage are identified, refined, appraised and formalised” the process of identifying and comparing substitute actions is said to shape the following stage that of decision making.

2.17.4 Policy Formulation/Design

Cloete, Coning, Wissink and Rabie (2018:159) define policy design as “the planning and development of policy content. The policy design process comprises the conversion of mainly intellectual and financial resources into a plan of action, including goal and objective setting, prioritisation, options generation, and assessment”. Policy design requires clear goals and objectives in order to be successful. Cloete et al. (2018; 269), further state that selecting appropriate goals and objectives is a vital guiding activity in the process. National or provincial governments usually presents its transformative vision as a framework to regulate its activities.

Due to the continuous developmental and changing nature of the society, a policy designed by local government can never be complete in terms of its outcomes or effects over time.

2.17.5 Policy Adoption

Policy adoption is the stage in the policy process where the formulated policy is submitted as a proposal before the council for review, endorsement, and adoption (Cloete *et al.*, 2018). The process is carried out not without the due consultation with the citizens to foster its legitimacy. “It happens that council can refer a matter back to the officials for further investigations. As that happens, citizens can be informed and be included as the outcome of the recommendations is sure to affect them” (Cloete *et al.*, 2018).

2.17.6 Policy Implementation

According to Cloete et al., (2018:197) implementation “is regarded as the conversion of main physical and financial resources into concrete service-delivery outputs in the form of facilities and services, or into other concrete outputs aimed at achieving policy objectives”.

Policy implementation is guided by 7-C protocols namely content, context, commitment, capacity, clients/coalitions, communication, and coordination.

- The content of the policy highlights what it sets out to do (goals), how the policy is related to the issue (causal theory), and how the policy aims to resolve the apparent problem.
- The context (standard operating procedures) seen as the channel through which policy must travel, and by whose boundaries the policy is limited in the implementation process.

- The commitment of people entrusted with conducting the implementation at various levels to the goals.
- The capacity of those who are entrusted to carry out the changes desired of them.
- The support of client/coalitions, people who are going to benefit or be threatened by the policy.
- The communication of the policy: the goals, roles, objectives, and responsibilities should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders responsible for the implementation.
- The coordination of the policy entails all the strategies and plans of the stakeholders in implementing the policy (Cloete et al., 2018:206-212).

Policy implementation is a complex process that cut across many segments of the society, and to make it a success, the participation of citizenry should be a priority.

2.17.7 Policy Evaluation

According to According Cloete et al., (2018:274) public policy evaluation “is the systematic assessment of the policy design (plan), implementation processes (the operations) and the end product and changes (results) of the policy against the intended goals of the policy, programme or project, and against the explicit or implicit values or standards that informed this intent. The evaluation can focus on the content of what should/needs to be done, on the implementation processes or retrospectively assess the end outcomes of the policy for the past accountability and future decision-making purposes”.

There are different phases in policy evaluation (Cloete et al., 2018:270):

- Diagnostic evaluation: the aim here is to provide empirical evidence on the nature of the issue (problem), the causes and the substitute solutions for addressing the issue.
- Design evaluation: the aim is to guarantee a strong theory of change and plan of action to attain the purpose of the policy.
- Implementation evaluation: the aim is to verify and ensure that the policy is working accordingly.

The aim of these evaluations is to take the necessary corrective steps and to ensure public accountability. If the policy evaluation reveals any shortcomings or deviations or even the existence of new policy problems, these can be channelled into the policy process and the entire process repeats itself.

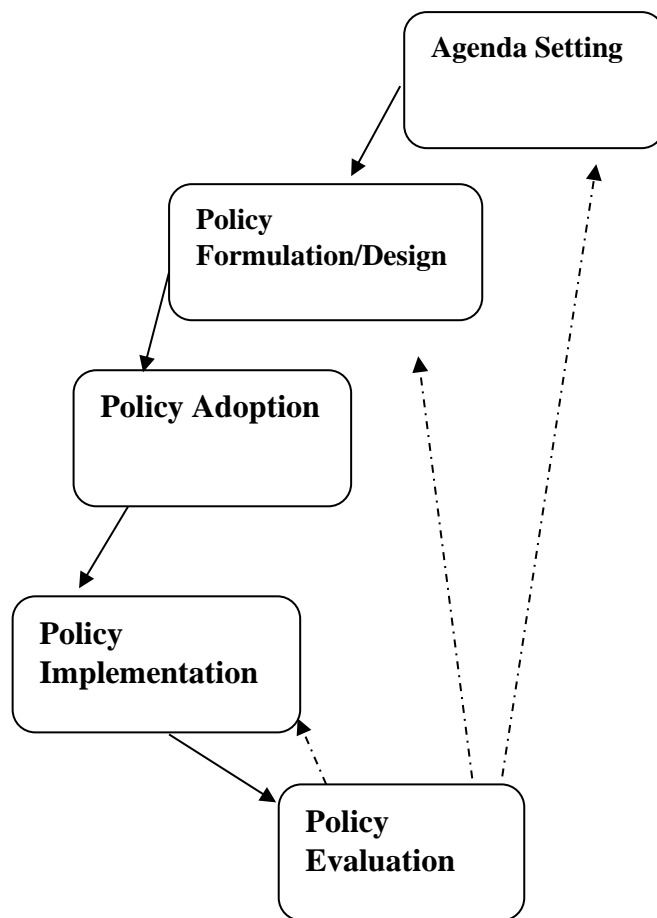


Figure 2.1 Steps in the Policy Making Process by Cloete *et al.*, 2018

2.18 TYPES OF PUBLIC POLICY

Public policies appear in a variety of types to meet the demands highlighted in the policy agenda. Lowi (1972: 299) defines this typology as ‘policy taxonomy’. Therefore, the term types, typologies and, taxonomies of policies are used interchangeably in this segment. However, Kraft and Furlong (2013:107) argue that the aim of policy taxonomies is to understand the fundamental distinctions between “policies and the political conditions” that

affect the types of policies that be. In essence, Steinberger (1980:192) posits that policy taxonomies give a truthful definition of public policy. According to De Coning & Wissink, (2011:15), policy typologies can be based on sectoral classifications, such as “protective policies”; “regulatory policies”; “development/growth-orientated policies” and “welfare policies”.

The Justice Crime Prevention and Security Cluster (South African Government, 2016). These clusters suggest the policy taxonomy under which the country policies fall. Furthermore, these sectoral clusters help the process of drafting public policies and assist in promoting an integrated system that supports Government in improving planning; decision-making and service delivery (South African Government, 2016). Gladden (1972: 67-69) and Marume, Ndudzo and Jericha (2016) asserted that public policy should be categorised into four, namely: political policy, executive policy, administrative policy, and technical/operational.

2.18.1 Political Policy

According to Marume (2015), the supreme political authority is responsible to lay down the political policy on the different levels of government. In the modern world, political policy systems originate from a political party. The political party has to examine the life of the community to come up with solutions in term of policies. The main of any political policy is to keep power, to demonstrate power or to increase power (Cloete et al., 2018:274).

2.18.2 Executive policy

According to Marume, Ndudzo and Jaricha (2015: 24) “the executive policy is the form in which the executive body may be a cabinet, an executive committee, or a management committee, carefully shapes the features of the political policy in order that it may be put into practice”. The budget is the most important exposition of the executive policy as it lays down the annual work program of the political party in power.

2.18.3 Administrative policy

The will of the government of the day is practically implemented by policy officials in the form of administrative policy. Once the political and executive policies have been made known, the attention is focused now on the third type of policy which is the administrative policy. It is the practical steps that give effect to the executive policy. The administrative policy is continuous

and deals with serious issues of the community (Cloete et al., 2018:271). The administrative policy entails all the feasibility steps, programs, systems, procedures and methods of the political and executive policies (Marume *et al.*, 2015: 24-26).

2.18.4 Technical/operational policy

After developing political, executive and administrative policies, decisions on various matters of the policy might still be taken at the operational level. The technical/operational policy is considered as the day-to-day policy adopted by technical personnel, experts and public officials in the implementation of the already decided administrative policies (Marume *et al.*, 2015: 24-26).

According to Marume *et al.*, (2015: 24), technical/operational policy “is the policy worked out by the officials in operating the techniques of their professions, and is always coloured by officials, professional skills, insights, education, experiences, capabilities, capacities, perceptions, behavioural attitudes and morale. Therefore, all officials with discretion are in the position to make technical and operational policies”. The next section will focus on the procedure that is followed in the case of abscondment.

2.19 DEALING WITH ABSCONDMENT

Abscondment is the term for a situation where an employee absents himself or herself from work without authority or permission (Albertyn, 2017). In terms of the recent outcome of the South African local government bargaining council on the disciplinary procedure for such an offence, the collective agreement reached on the 08 February 2018 States that:

An employee who has absented himself for a period longer than ten (10) days without notification to the employer, shall be deemed to have absconded from duty. The employer shall attempt to establish the whereabouts of the employee and shall inform the employee, in writing by letter, of the alleged abscondment and the consequences thereof, if the employee cannot be located or has not responded to communication, the Employer shall proceed with the Disciplinary Hearing in his absence. If the Employee reports for duty after the steps referred to in clauses above have already been taken. The employee shall be afforded the opportunity to

make verbal or written representations, either personally or through a representative, to the Municipal Manager or his authorised representative as to why he/she should be reinstated. The Municipal Manager or his authorised representative may, after considering the employee's representations, either reinstate him/her or confirm his dismissal. The decision to reinstate or confirm the dismissal shall be in writing and communicated to the employee within five days after it has been made (South African Local Government Bargaining Council, 2018:14).

2.19.1 Disciplinary Procedure

Should the dismissal be confirmed, the employee may appeal the decision utilising the appeal process provided. Below is the disciplinary procedure as resolved by the bargaining Council:

All allegation of Misconduct against an employee shall be brought to the attention of the MM or his authorised representation for consideration and decision. The MM or his authorised representative shall proceed forthwith, without undue delay, and with due regard to the necessity for disciplinary proceeding to commence promptly. If the MM or his authorised representative is satisfied that there is prima facia cause to believe that an act of misconduct has been committed, he may institute disciplinary proceedings against the employee concerned. The Disciplinary Hearing shall commence as soon as reasonably possible, but not later than 3 months from the date of the MM or his authorised representatives' decision to institute disciplinary proceedings. In the event of an act of misconduct by an employee that appears less serious, warranting a sanction less than a final written warning, a formal Disciplinary Hearing will not be required. The employee shall be given an opportunity to make either verbal or written representations, either personally or through his representative, prior to a determination being made. Proper records shall be kept of the aforementioned proceedings (South African Local Government Bargaining Council, 2018:14).

2.20 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY MAKING.

Policymaking process can be differentiated to guide the process of developing policies at local government level. Dunn's policy-making model is a process model which is generally regarded

as representative of the international experience of policy-making (Cloete and Wissink, 2005:45). It shows that the phases of agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy assessment are fairly common. Ismael et al. (1999:151-153) also base their approach on the Dunn model and state that the policy process at the local government level could be seen as consisting of the following phases, specifically agenda-setting, formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Therefore, having discussed these processes in details in section 2.17, this segment focuses on the framework for the local government policy-making, as a basic structure underlying a system, concept, or text.

2.20.1 Framework for Local Government Policy-Making

The Constitution of South Africa contains the country's important law. It provides the framework for the governance of the nation and the principles under which its government operates, including local government. For instance, under section 151(3) of the South African Constitution, a municipality has a right to administer the local government affairs in line with the national and provincial legislation. Therefore, a municipality cannot use repressive powers, and all policies must follow definite minimum requirements, namely: equity, justice and balance. Justice means that advantages should be shared and disadvantages should be distributed (Lamont, 2017; Craythorne, 1997:88). In terms of Section 9 of the Constitution the following principles apply in the milieu of equality:

(1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. (2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken. (3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth. (4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more of those grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination. (5) Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

Craythorne (1999:88) noticed that balance should prevail in the provision of services even where equity and justice are the norms of decision and policy-making.

2.20.2 Decisions in Policy-Making

Public policy-making begins with a decision and it concludes with a final policy decision. The policy decision-making process involves the decisions to select the most effective means of solving a particular problem. Anderson (2006:136) and Nagel (2018) indicate that the decision-makers often “devise rules of thumb, or guidelines”, to simplify decision-making but that no set of decision rules is common to decision makers. Cloete and Wissink (2005:151) state that decision-making is nothing else than a choice between alternatives at a given moment. Decision-making involves the consideration of facts and values and is usually the product of many accompanying decisions. Cloete and Wissink (2005:152) explain that facts refer to “concrete, relatively immutable data, while values cannot be accurately measured or assessed and depend on the policymaker’s beliefs about what is right and wrong”. In the local government context, municipal officials will provide the members of the municipal council with facts. The values of the community will have a determining influence on the final decision of the council. The Municipal Structures Act determines how decisions can be taken at local government level. Section 30 (2) and (3) of the Act stipulates the following:

(2) All questions concerning matters mentioned in section 160(2) of the Constitution are determined by a decision taken by a municipal council with a supporting vote of a majority of the councillors. (3) All other questions before a municipal council are determined by a majority of the votes cast ...

Decision-making at the local government level is a rational attempt by a manager to achieve the objectives of his institution. Decision-making is required from the time when objectives are set at an early stage of the policy planning process and it requires discernment, creativity, capability, and experience. Before the appropriate policymaking actions can be taken, it is necessary to identify policy challenges and problems which require attention. Alternatives should then be developed and analysed where after the appropriate policy path of action is decided upon (Boshoff, 2008).

To put the procedure and activities of decision-making into perspective it is important to note the existence of different types of decision-making. Cloete and Wissink (2005:153) identify the following types of decision-making:

- **Impulsive decision-making:** Impulsive decision-making occurs spontaneously and no discretion, value judgment or alternatives are considered.
- **Intuitive decision-making:** The decision-maker relies on instinct, on the basis of facts, that a specific alternative will have the desired result.
- **Programmed decision-making:** Programmed decisions are standing decisions. They guide the public manager in the making of repetitive and routine decisions.
- **Unprogrammed decision-making:** Occasionally decisions are made that require a large measure of creativity and even a greater measure of discretion.
- **Single choice decisions:** The decision-maker has only two choices: either accept the alternative or reject it.

Decision-making has a specific significance for local government policy-making. In the entire process of public policy-making, there is a multitude of different decisions between the very first decision and the last one. According to Cloete and Wissink (2005:162), the “quality of decision-making will also enhance the quality of the policy-making process”. This will in the end also contribute towards efficiency and effectiveness. The decisions taken during the policy-making process are of the utmost importance to ensure that municipalities reach their objectives effectively. Thus, the uMgungundlovu District Municipality should consider its policy-making process as an important phase as it should impact the decision making.

2.20.3 Excellence in Local Government

All citizens have a legitimate expectation for the provision of proper services by municipalities. Local government is after all the “delivery arm” of government and in terms of the Constitution must ensure sustainable provision of services to communities in an environment of local government excellence. Van der Waldt and du Toit (1997:68) and Morden (2017) refer to the management by excellence approach that emphasises a set of basic characteristics a municipality should pursue in order to achieve its goals effectively. These characteristics refer, among others, to precision in rendering services, sustained contact and involvement with clients (community), the promotion of entrepreneurship, motivation, a commitment to matters for which the institution possesses the necessary expertise, and a simple and streamlined institution

In terms of Chapter 10 of the Constitution, every sphere of government including local government must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution. To be able to clarify what is implied with “excellence in local government” the

principles of Chapter 10 of the Constitution can act as a regulatory and a normative framework for local government. The following principles are provided in section 195(1) of the Constitution:

(a) A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained. (b) Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted. (c) Public administration must be development-orientated. (d) Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias. (e) People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making. (f) Public administration must be accountable. (g) Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information. (h) Good human resource management and career-development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated. (i) Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Thabo Mbeki (2006) remarked that it was extremely important for the machinery of government, especially the local government sphere, to discharge its responsibilities effectively and efficiently, honouring the precepts of Batho Pele. He further emphasised that the system of cooperative governance had to be respected and within this context, local government should be empowered to discharge its development and service rendering obligations. Since 1994 significant achievements in the local government sector reflect specific actions to support local government excellence (RSA, 2004). These include:

- The establishment of a non-racial, democratic developmental local government system.
- The rationalisation of the number of municipalities from over 1200 to 284.
- Conducting democratic local government elections of over 8900 councillors.
- The establishment of progressive policy and institutional framework and regulatory environment for developmental local government.

The government's Imbizo campaign and the profiling of the current status quo in the 284 municipalities in South Africa are also further examples of objectives to realise excellence (Project Consolidate a hands-on Local Government Programme, Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2004:13).

- Municipalities must build their capacity and develop systems that will enable them to discharge their constitutional mandate.
- The effect of the new local government system should be optimised and demonstrated.
- Communities, institutions, and individuals who, despite South Africa's legacy of the past, contribute positively to local government excellence should be recognised and encouraged.

Against the background of Project Consolidate section 19(2) of the Municipal Structures Act stipulates that a municipal council must annually review the needs of the community, its priorities to meet those needs, its processes for involving the community, its organisational and provide mechanisms for meeting the needs of the community and its overall performance in achieving the objectives. These provisions can be regarded as a further foundation to achieve local government excellence.

In terms of section 73(1) of the Municipal Systems Act, a municipality must give effect to the provisions of the Constitution and should prioritise the basic needs of the local community. A municipality must also promote the development of the local community and ensure that all members of the local community have access to at least the minimum level of basic municipal services. Section 73(2) of the Systems Act identifies specific principles for municipal services and if neglected, excellence in local government will not prevail:

*(a) be equitable and accessible; (b) be provided in a manner that is conducive to—
 (i) the prudent, economic, efficient and effective use of available resources; and
 (ii) the improvement of standards of quality over time; (c) be financially sustainable; (d) be environmentally sustainable; and (e) be regularly reviewed with a view to upgrading, extension and improvement.*

Local government has to achieve specific constitutional objectives to be able to adhere to specific constitutional demands. The existing legislative framework requires accessible and affordable service provision, which is of high quality and which incorporates the values of accountability and sustainability. The achievement and compliance with the constitutional demands on service rendering are required to achieve local government excellence (Boshoff, 2011).

2.21 MUNICIPAL POLICY-MAKING TO CONTEND WITH SERVICE RENDERING CHALLENGES

The White Paper on Local Government states, “Good basic services, apart from being a constitutional right, are essential to enable people to support family life, find employment, develop their skills or establish their own small business”. The major contribution that local government, therefore, can make to the development of the community and its environment is the provision of basic services to everyone, particularly those who currently have little or no access to services. The basis of the current model of local government is established by the Constitution that promotes the concept of local government as an autonomous sphere. In terms of the Constitution local government must be developmental, that is, it must give priority to the basic needs of the community and promote socio-economic development. The objectives of local government as set out in section 152(1) of the Constitution are as follows:

(a) to provide democratic and accountable local government for local communities; (b) to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner; (c) to promote social and economic development; (d) to promote a safe and healthy environment; and (e) to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

However, the levels of dissatisfaction among the community concerning the standard of the services that are provided by municipalities are on the increase. The provision of “good basic services” as envisioned in the White Paper is contrary to reality. Therefore, the development of policies by municipalities is of utmost importance to address the critical service rendering challenges confronting local government these days. It is essential to identify those policy challenges and problems that require attention, specifically during the agenda-setting phase in the policy-making process. Challenges that need to be addressed to ensure better quality service provision are deliberated in this section (White Paper on Local Government, 1997).

In terms of section 27 of the Constitution, the government must take deliberate and rational measures, within available resources, to ensure that all South Africans have access to adequate housing, health care, education, food, water, and social security. Local government has been identified as playing a critical role in the realisation of the government’s broad poverty eradication programme, its strategic objectives, and targets. In his 2004 State of the Nation address, President Thabo Mbeki also provided clear direction to municipalities on

government's targets for the provision of free basic services (Mbeki, 2004). He made the following commitments in respect of service provision targets:

- Within the next five years, all households must be provided with easy access to clean running water.
- By December 2004, 10 million South Africans will have clean and potable water.
- During 2004 more than 300 000 households would be provided with basic sanitation.
- Local government in conjunction with Eskom will, within the next eight years, ensure that each household has access to electricity.
- A programme to ensure easy access to clean water for all the households within five years will also help in the fight against cholera and other waterborne diseases.

As a critical participant, the local government will not address the government's targets for the provision of free basic services if the concern expressed by PROPAC is not addressed. The concern is that in the absence of policies, accounting officers of municipalities do not comply with the responsibilities allocated to them (Republic of South Africa, 2001).

The report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Local Government Transformation (Republic of South Africa, 2001) identified the following challenges local government faces:

- The need to ensure accountable government at a local level and effective leadership and functional service rendering.
- To achieve and sustain financial and fiscal stability, building a long-term fiscal base and managing the costs associated with amalgamation.
- Reconciling operational and information systems between amalgamating municipalities and the establishment of new organisational structures.
- Ensuring municipal service provision to all households, irrespective of income levels, and to all businesses. In this regard, municipalities also have to ensure continued provision of quality services to all consumers in order to promote local economic performance and payment for services.
- Managing the problems created by increases in bulk service costs that place pressure on municipalities.
- Managing the competing pressures on limited resources available for service provision, especially in the context of the government's commitment to providing basic services free of charge to poor communities.

- The establishment of effective local government in South Africa's rural areas in the context of low revenues, weak institutions, poor service rendering and high levels of poverty.

Concluded from the report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Local Government Transformation, local government is faced with immense challenges to ensure the provision of an acceptable level of municipal services to the community. It is therefore of the utmost importance that municipalities should put the necessary administrative and political systems in place to confirm that the process of policy-making is improved to ensure that local government meets these challenges.

There are also a number of other challenges local government faces. Bekink (2006:68-69) and Shelton, Fulton, Villegas and Krause (2018) categorise certain service provision challenges. He indicates, among others, that addressing the huge backlogs in service infrastructure in almost all historically underdeveloped areas in South Africa remains a major municipal service provision challenge. Expenditure far in excess of the revenue that is currently available to municipalities is required to address these challenges. Furthermore, he notes that the transformation of the former decision-making approaches and administrative systems in local government after the amalgamation of municipalities in 2000 and the promulgation of new legislation, to ensure sustainable provision of services to the broad community, also need to be addressed. Bekink (2006:69) also points out that other challenges facing municipalities are to address the poor creditworthiness of municipalities and the reforming of administrative capacity in most municipalities as some of the municipalities have little or no pre-existing institutional foundation to build on.

To ensure service provision excellence in local government the challenges documented in this section as examples, have to be calculated and be included in the agenda-setting of municipalities. By developing policies to specify the basic principles to be pursued in attaining specific goals, a municipality is embarking on a concrete legislative and executive method to address those challenges.

Local government is obliged to perform its functions and to exercise its powers in such a manner as to achieve its objectives and to fulfil its developmental duties. Effective service provision is at the heart of the local government function and it makes this sphere of government the sphere closest to the people. As established in this research most municipalities are characterised by low levels of legal compliance especially when it relates to policy-making.

Although municipalities have legislative and executive powers to develop and adopt policies, municipal policies are not developed adequately. This research identified a number of factors contributing to municipalities' policy-making challenges. The most significant factor for the unsatisfactory development of policies at the local government level is the lack of the necessary financial and human resource capacity. Another contributing factor is the plethora of national and provincial legislation that has a direct influence on local government.

Municipalities have to be well acquainted and in compliance with all the legislative provisions to be able to perform their functions and to execute their powers. The new local government system, and specifically the amalgamation of municipalities in South Africa since 2000 resulted in specific policy implementation challenges. These challenges include the consolidation of policy documents and the setting of parity principles with regard to employee benefits. In the process of executing the responsibility of providing effective municipal services, the local government has neglected the responsibility of continuously developing, adopting and implementing policies. In addressing the policy-making responsibility some municipalities identified the critical policies that had to be developed in terms of legislation. Municipalities mainly concentrate on the development of policies in compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act and applicable labour legislation, whilst other policies are neglected. It is apparent that there are significant challenges that municipalities will have to overcome to perform its functions effectively. The appropriate fulfilment of the powers and functions of municipalities can only be enhanced by committed and capacitated municipalities, where the advancement of the policy-making process at the local government level is prioritised to ensure that these challenges are addressed in line with established systems and procedures (Justice).

2.22 POLICY PROCESS AT THE UMGUNGUDLOVU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

The policy development process involves the development, implementation and management of policies at UMDM. The process runs from the planning stage all the way down to the communicating stage, as briefly discussed below (UMDM policy, 2015).

2.22.1 Policy Planning and Justification

The planning stage is where the goals or objectives are identified, strategies to achieve them are formulated, and the means necessary to implement and monitor all steps in their proper sequence is structured. At UMDM, policy planning stage highlights the purpose of the policy, the scope, boundaries, development of a business case and selection of advisory groups. At this

stage and throughout the stages of the UMDM's policy process, Legal Advisor is involved (UMDM, 2015).

2.22.2 Research, Analysis, and Direction

The development of the policy at the UMDM began with the gathering and analyzing of information, both from within and outside the organization. This is imperative to set a clear direction for the implementation of the policy. At this stage, testing of assumptions is logically carried out alongside the business case.

2.22.3 Policy Formulation/Design

After the data have been generated and analyzed, the guiding principles of the policy are eventually identified and highlighted. Therefore, the UMDM is able to define the vision of the policy, to clarify its objectives and, to develop multiple policy options based on the complexity of the issues involved. The design of the policy is chosen here base on the principles, vision and, objectives, with the ultimate purpose in view (UMDM, 2015).

2.22.4 The Consultation

When a policy process reaches this advanced stage, the UMDM offers all stakeholders the opportunity to examine the proposed policy and provide suggestion where necessary. However, its scope of consultation is dependent on such factors as: “the nature and complexity of the policy; the extent to which it will require changes and the number of service users, staff and other stakeholders the policy is likely to have an impact upon” (UMDM, 2015).

The Departmental Policy Project Manager, Senior Managers of the Policy and Research Unit, and the Manager of Communications are responsible for the discussions on who to consult and how to consult. However, key consultations outside the organization are carefully planned and implemented, and the policy author is responsible for the review of all responses. The report is thus compiled stressing the important themes of the rejoinder therein before presenting it to the policy owner.

2.22.5 Finalise the Policy and Complete an Impact Assessment

Following the consultation process, a new version of the policy document is re-drafted and, it is at this stage that the policy is subjected to a preliminary evaluation via the use of the Impact Assessment template (i.e. the Resources Pack). In the absence of any adverse outcomes, the

policy document is, therefore, submitted to the Council for final approval. However, if any unjustifiable adverse impact is acknowledged, the policy then undergoes further development and another evaluation as soon as the changes are affected (UMDM, 2015).

2.22.6 Getting Council Approval

At this point, all Head of Departments are offered the opportunity to make last observation, change and improvements to draft policy. An item on the draft policy is then submitted to various Council structures, and then the final draft is approved by Council.

2.22.7 Planning for Publication

Following Council approval, the policy document is ready for publication. Therefore, in consultation with the Policy Development Manager and the Communications Manager, a feasible and effective communication plan is developed and implemented (UMDM, 2015).

2.22.8 Communicating the Policy Launch

The Policy Sponsor informs all Directors and Unit Senior Managers about the new policy which is ready for implementation. All staff members are made aware of the launch of a new policy through various acceptable means of communication. An implementation pack such as briefing for staff and a PowerPoint presentation which Directors/ Senior Managers can use to introduce the policy to their teams. The policy implementation is monitor by the Policy Author through the Departmental reports and issues are being raised such as confusion around the meaning of certain text then these should be referred to the Policy Sponsor or Lead Officer. Furthermore, a report on the level of policy compliance is circulated amongst Unit Senior Managers, quarterly (UMDM, 2015).

2.22.9 Reviewing a Policy

All UMDM policies are subject to an annual review. Inevitably, the demands of the organisation can change over a year and it is important to consider whether the policy needs to be amended to reflect these changes. It is also essential for UMgungundlovu District Municipality to stimulate views from across the organization about the success of the policy, what has worked and what has not, obvious gaps and any newly emerging issues (UMDM, 2015).

2.23 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, six different conceptual models are briefly discussed because of their relevance to this study. The first four models focus on absenteeism and the last two focus specifically on service delivery. More so, having identified their strengths and weaknesses regarding the thematic area of the research, two frameworks are considered to be appropriate for this study. One is utilised to analyse absenteeism in its broad term, while the other is used for the analysis of service delivery. These models are Steers and Rhodes' "Process Model" Theory; Nicholson's "Attachment" Theory; Erickson, Nichols and Ritter's "Expanded Process Model" Theory; Brooke and Prince's "Causal Model" Theory; the SERVQUAL model of service quality and the Grönroos service quality model.

However, the Steers and Rhodes' "Process Model" Theory and the Grönroos service quality model were adopted for the analysis of data related to absenteeism and service delivery, respectively.

2.23.1 Steers and Rhodes' "Process Model" Theory

Steers and Rhodes' (1978) model utilises a multi-variable method that incorporates psychological variables and demographic variables such as individual characteristics of workers. The demographic variables include personal and family-related characteristics while psychological variables comprise of job satisfaction, drive to be absent, and the ability to be present at work. However, the model underscores that work attendance is greatly subjective to the organizational practices, a lack of work ethics, coupled with employee attitudes, morals, and aims (Steers and Rhodes, 1978). Basically, the model is influenced by two main factors namely attendance motivation (voluntary absenteeism) and ability to attend (involuntary absenteeism). Attendance motivation is influenced by the satisfaction of an employee with their job situation while personal characteristics such as age, sex, education and tenure influence the ability to attend. This can affect the ability to attend through problems such as sickness, family problems. Broke (1986, p.346) posits that attendance motivation is the vital determinant of attendance given that the worker is able to attend. Both attendance motivation and ability to attend interact with each other and produce the result of actual attendance. Steers and Rhodes 'Process Model' is one of the most prominent and frequently cited models in the literature. So, Singh, 2015; Hedges, 1973; Steers and Rhodes, 1978 and; Erickson, Nichols and Ritter, 2000, are reviewed for more insight on this theory.

2.23.2 An Expanded Process Model (Erickson, Nichols, and Ritter)

In the Expanded Process Model, Erickson, Nichols, and Ritter (2000) affirm that the Process Model stresses attendance motivation as a sole factor with the capacity to impact on absenteeism. The Expanded Process Model regards affective responses such as work attitudes and burnout as indirectly enabling improved job attendance too (Erickson, Nichols and Ritter, 2000). Thus, examining the link between the attitudinal variables and absenteeism at the uMgungundlovu District Municipality is central to the Expanded Process Model proponents (Erickson, Nichols and Ritter, 2000).

2.23.3 A Causal Model (Brooke and Prince)

The Causal Model consists of routinisation, distributive justice, role ambiguity, pay, work involvement, kinship responsibility, centralisation, organisational permissiveness and conflict, and overload. The Causal Model is an outgrowth and a consequence of limitations of the model propounded by Steers and Rhodes. However, the effort of operationalising their model was cumbersome due to lack of precision and clarity, particularly in areas such as the scope of the job, systems of benefits and incentives, ability to attend and other areas such as construct validity of the key components of the model, imprecise variables, mixing variables and theoretical concepts that are associated with absenteeism (Brooke and Prince, 1989). The Causal Model became “a basis for systematically investigating multivariate relationships among variables which previously have been linked to non-attendance at the zero-order level” (Brooke and Prince, 1989).

2.23.4 Nicholson’s “Attachment” Theory

Nicholson elaborated the Attachment Theory, which he devised when observed that other theories had fragmented insights, for the analysis and prediction of employee absence (Egan, 2001). His assumption was that the circumstances that give rise to absenteeism were unique to every person and that this was the case because of the mediating effect of attendance motivation (Egan, 2001). According to him, an understanding of absence must entail an examination of the effects, beliefs and policy guidelines that an organisation has (Egan, 2011). The attachment consists of four principal influences, namely: personality traits, work orientation, job involvement and employment relationship (Stubbs, 2018). His theory details the factor that imbues an employee with a drive to go to work and views job satisfaction, a feeling of being

appreciated and personal motivation as some of the variables that make an employee more committed to an organisation (Bryant and Chan, 2017).

2.23.5 The SERVQUAL model of service quality

SERVQUAL model of service delivery was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1986). It simply conceptualises service quality as a gap between customers' expectations and perceptions (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985). Exploratory research was conducted to investigate the service quality concept. Business executives were interviewed from various service companies and the study revealed that discrepancies exist between what constitutes service quality to the management and what customers perceive to be service quality. The initial model had 10 dimensions of service quality that are proposed as a service quality gap model. Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988:15) then, modified the model to five dimensions that can be applied. One of the criticisms of the SERVQUAL model is the challenge of evaluating expectations (Gilmore & McMullan, 2009:645; McDougal & Levesque, 1995; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Carman, 1990). Wilson *et al.*, 2008; Babakus & Boller, 1992; Carman, 1990; Juga, Juntunen & Grant, 2010; Ladhari, 2009; McDougal & Levesque, 1995), are also relevant in this argument.

The SERVQUAL model has been widely used by researchers and practitioners (Awan, Bukhari, and Iqbal, 2011; Raza, Jawaid and Hassan, 2015) from several management studies.

The five dimensions of the SERVQUAL designed by Parasuraman *et al.*, (1988) are noted as follows:

- Reliability- the ability to perform services accurately.
- Tangibles – include physical facilities, staff, equipment, building, appearance.
- Responsiveness – as the willingness to help and respond to the customer.
- Empathy- attention, caring and individual service is given to the customer)
- Assurance (staff ability to inspire, confidence, trust, and courtesy.

2.23.6 The Grönroos service quality model

Grönroos (1984) posits that an appropriate formulation of definition for service quality should be consumer-oriented (Grönroos, 1984). Therefore, this model emphasises customer's perceptions of service quality as its main feature and the factors that influence the quality of service are incorporated into it. The Grönroos service quality model underscores the interface

between the buyer and seller, which he claims, is as important as the eventual outcome. Therefore, the basic assumption of this model is that service quality centres around the appraisal of two variables, namely: the anticipated service and the actual service delivered as perceived by customers (Grönroos, 1984). The result of this juxtaposition approach is taken as the perceived service quality. According to Grönroos (1988), performance appraisals involve two dimensions, namely a technical dimension (outcomes) and a functional dimension (process-related). He further argues that service quality is not determined only by the product of service (technical dimension), rather, the way in which a service is accomplished (functional dimension), as well. This study used Grönroos model to assess the employee's perception on absenteeism policy, and the effect of absenteeism on service delivery.

2.24 OVERVIEW OF THE UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

uMgungundlovu District Municipality has been identified as the location for this study. The Municipality consists of 1,095 865 population. Out of this total population, 862,543 are Black Africans, that is 84.75%; 68, 029 are Indian or Asian (6.68%); 63,935 are White (6.28%); 20,538 are Coloured (2.02%), and 2, 718 represents other (0.27%) (Statistics South Africa, 2016). uMgungundlovu Municipality is among the eleven district municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, with its capital in Pietermaritzburg. The District is largely a rural area with a high representation of traditional settlements (uMgungundlovu Integrated Development plan, 2017/2018).

The Municipality is the largest district municipality in South Africa comprising of seven different local municipalities, namely uMsunduzi, uMngeni, Impendle, Mpofana, Richmond, uMshwathi, and uMkhambathini. According to the South African Local Government Act, a total of forty-five councillors are represented in the administration of the Municipality (the Municipal Structures Act: 1998). Furthermore, there are five departments within uMgungundlovu District Municipality, namely: Office of the Municipal Manager, Community Services Department, Financial Services Department, Corporate Services Department and Technical Services Department. The main functions of the uMgungundlovu District Municipality are to deliver water, electricity, firefighting, environmental health, sewerage and sanitation as well as solid waste.

2.25 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter presented the review of literature on the nexuses between absenteeism and service delivery. This was necessary in order to position the research within a context and to establish the study gap thereof. Therefore, this literature review endeavours to first provide valuable insight into the complexity of absenteeism. A global overview on absenteeism was discussed, the concept, causes, effect, and types of absenteeism were discussed in depth. Furthermore, the conceptual and theoretical framework were discussed to structure the research problem. The context of local government, in the Republic of South Africa, was explicated and then the service delivery in uMgungundlovu District Municipality was examined within the context. A discussion on policy processes such as policy formulation, policy makers, policy planning, policy design. This was done to be able to discuss how absenteeism impacts on productivity or service delivery. Finally, the study gap was identified and discussed. The next chapter (Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to conduct this research study.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two focused on the review of existing literature on absenteeism and its impact on productivity and service delivery, local government and policy formulation. This is so because literature review should go beyond a simple list of academic collections. Therefore, a range of scholarly works on the themes related to the nexuses between absenteeism and service delivery were analytically presented and the study gap was established, thus setting the study within a researchable context. The literature review affords useful insight into the intricacy of absenteeism: the concept, the type and the causes of absenteeism. In addition, the context of local government in the Republic of South Africa was examined and, in particular, the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal was examined in relation to its service delivery. Therefore, the literature review is hence projected as the rational constituent within what the study is constructed since it helped the researcher to form the theoretical framework for the study, which was also presented in chapter two.

Accordingly, this chapter presents the systematic methods that the study employed in carrying out the research. This includes the method adopted for the research, the paradigm that guides the research, the research design, population, sampling techniques, method of data collection and the choice of instruments for the analysis. For this study, qualitative data analysis was done using thematic content analysis. The instruments used to generate the data are a questionnaire, focus group discussion, and interview due to the nature of the research problem under investigation. The validity and reliability of research methods as well as ethical issues were discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

The specific objectives of the study were:

- To ascertain the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery.

- To identify the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.
- To determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.
- Steps taken by Management to deal with the employees who absenting themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery.

3.3 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study responded to the following research questions:

- What are the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery?
- What are the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
- Who are the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
- What Steps taken by Management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery?

3.4 RESEARCH SITE: BRIEF PROFILE OF THE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

This study involves district and local municipalities that fall within the uMgungundlovu District Municipality area of jurisdiction in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). South Africa is currently made up of nine Provinces and KZN is one of them. The Province has eleven (10) District Municipalities and Metropolitan Municipality. It is important to note that uMgungundlovu District Municipality is of the above-mentioned District municipalities (Statistics South Africa, 2014).

3.4.1 uMgungundlovu District Municipality

uMgungundlovu District Municipality has been identified as the location for this study. The Municipality consists of 1,095 865 population. Out of this total population, 33.1% are under 15, 62.8% of the population is between 15 and 64 and 4.1% of the population is over 65 years old (Municipalities, 2016). 84.75% are black Africans; 6.68% of the population are Indian or Asian; 6.28% of the population is White; 2.02% of the population are Coloured, and 0.27% of the population represents others (Statistics South Africa, 2016). UMgungundlovu Municipality is among the ten districts municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, with

its capital in Pietermaritzburg and the District is mostly a rural area with a high representation of traditional settlements (uMgungundlovu Integrated Development Plan, 2017/2018). The Municipality is the largest district municipality in South Africa comprising of seven different local municipalities, namely uMsunduzi, uMngeni, Impendle, Mpofana, Richmond, uMshwathi, and uMkhambathini. Therefore, the focus is on the six municipalities under uMgungundlovu District Municipality (uMgungundlovu Integrated Development Plan, 2017/2018).

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the specific techniques employed to generate, select, process, and analyse data in response to a research problem. The methodology helps to critically evaluate, by and large, the authenticity of the study and also explicates how data are generated and analysed (Kumar, 2019:151). According to Kumar (2019: 59), research methodology is the general approach utilised to carry out a research undertaking. However, LeCompte and Schensul (2015: 71) could not clearly distinguish between the research methodology and research design, Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012:1) maintain that methodology is a combination of the designs and the frameworks. However, Flick (2015), in a somewhat different notion, upholds that methodology is a combination of methods, design and the entire process that informs the choice of research methods. For research, methods or approaches are essential to the choices of techniques employed to produce and analyse data (Fletcher, 2017:36).

3.6 RESEARCH METHODS

According to Mackey and Gass (2015: 9) and Quinlan, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2019), research methods are basically the procedures employed to execute a research study. Therefore, research methods generally refer to the data collection tools or techniques used for a research process (Humphries, 2017). These could primarily be categorized into two major brands, namely: quantitative and qualitative (Kalof, Dan, and Dietz, 2008: 34; and Silverman, 2016). Hence, Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015: 91) and Quinlan (2011: 308) recommend that graduate students should comprehend and develop their aptitude to utilise both qualitative and quantitative methodologies effectively, in their scholastic endeavours, however, Brannen (2017: 127) underscores the ambiguity of the distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mertler (2018) observes that hot debate has led to divisions on this ambiguity

between educational researchers. However, some scholars have simply differentiated qualitative method from a quantitative method based on the use non-use of numerical or statistical data (Hammersley, 2017:36; Bernard, 2017: 53-55; Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2007: 29). Quantitative research approach principally uses statistical data while the qualitative approach is not primarily dependent on numerical data (Brannen, 2017; Kalof, Dan, and Dietz, 2008: 14-15 and Babbie, 2011: 24). Hartas (2015) opines that a quantitative approach to research seeks to evaluate a phenomenon by the use of numbers and other statistical procedures to generate and analyse data and to recapitulate the results. According to Brannen (2017:6), a quantitative research approach relies on variables that are numerically evaluated and that are scientifically verifiable.

Creswell and Creswell (2017:12) indicate that qualitative research may sometime require the use of some kind of statistical information “to facilitate pattern recognition or otherwise to extract meaning from qualitative data”. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 2), posit that the difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches is what influences the overall choice of method for data collection and analysis. Berger (2019) concedes the importance of revolving qualitative information with quantitative statistics. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005: 379) and Maxwell (2010: 480), this revolving process could gear toward the complementarities of the general research data. Creswell and Clark (2017:4), submit that it is not uncommon this day to find researchers combining both methods in a singular study.

3.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is basically a plan or a draft of how a researcher intends to methodically handle the data needed to respond to the research questions (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Yin, 2017; Patten and Newhart, 2017). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015: 22), a research design is made up of the structure of the investigation. McKenney and Reeves (2018:12) and Kumar (2019:170) maintain that a research design enables a researcher to objectively answer the research questions. Research becomes objective when the individual sentiments of the researcher do not affect the study findings (Mertens, 2012: 23). Therefore, “validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2008: 30). A research design assists the researcher to identify and use appropriate data collection methods (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001: 31 and Patton, 2002: 10). Correspondingly, Tredoux and Smith (2006: 161) and Kumar (2019: 94) state that choosing an appropriate research design guides a study towards more valid and reliable results. This is

because the research design provides an accurate framework for data collection and suitable data analysis (Dannels, 2018). Leavy (2017) submits that a proper research design enables the researcher to justly achieve the research objectives.

Boudah (2011: 160) noted that survey design is not essentially linear but rather flexible, and it basically assists in understanding the following important elements that were also appropriate for the purpose of the current study:

- Determine the research statement or the purpose of the study: which was to investigate the impact of absenteeism on service delivery in uMgungundlovu municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.
- Select an appropriate research sample that needs to reflect the population: all subgroups of international postgraduate students were selected for the sample.
- Design instruments and develop reliable and valid research questions: questionnaire, focus group schedule and semi-structured interview schedule was logically designed.
- Determine the data collection methods: a questionnaire, focus group discussion and interview methods were used in the study and they yielded good research outcomes.
- Explain clearly data analysis and discussion of the results.

There is a number of research designs that can be used in the study, but common research designs that are used by most researchers are explanatory research, exploratory research, and descriptive research design. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), the explanatory research design is used when the researcher wants to find an explanation on certain things as solutions for particular situations. Descriptive research seeks to describe the relationship between variables as well as relations between phenomena, while exploratory research is mostly utilised to explore new or unknown areas. For exploratory research, the design is mostly used for the purpose of new discoveries, more particularly in such a study, which has never been done before (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014:29). Therefore, for this study, it seemed more appropriate to use the exploratory way, since it seems to have a new understanding of the effect of absenteeism on service delivery at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.

3.7.1 Types of Research Approaches

There are three types of research approaches, namely: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Sekaran and Bougie (2016:332) and Locke, Silverman, and Spirduso (2010: 182) claim that quantitative and qualitative methodologies reflect different paradigms. However, Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018: 161; Creswell and Poth (2017) and Babbie (2011: 276) posit that when a researcher resolves to combine both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study, it is imperative to cautiously examine their weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, the three methods are expatiated in this segment, for the purposes of academic lucidity, and justification.

3.7.2 Quantitative Research Approach

According to Kumar (2019:171), the quantitative research method is known to possess some “specific, well-structured features, which have been tested for their validity and reliability, and can be explicitly defined and recognised”. Bryman (2017: 15) supports this view by stating that these validity and reliability notions are not secluded from some sorts of quantitative implications. Bryman (2017: 17) maintain that quantitative research would usually entail a survey that poses similar questions to its entire respondents. Bryman (2017:18) affirms that the quantitative method mainly entails generating statistical data that can be measured. Parker (2011: 36), states that a quantitative method is concerned with measurable data. According to Payne (2011: 13), the data computation in this regard normally happens “in a wide range of research and analysis”. Creswell (2017) argues that quantitative methods are projected to research measurable variables and also to provide solutions to problems that arise between different variables. Usually, “a quantitative variable is a variable that varies in degree or amount. It usually involves numbers” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012: 39). According to Kalof, Dan, and Dietz (2008: 59), independent variables signify the “cause” while the dependent variables stand for the “effect”. Babbie (2011: 15) defines a variable as “a logical set of attributes”, while attributes connote qualities that describe an individual or a thing. Therefore, the fundamental distinction between a variable and a concept is the “measurability” (Kumar, 2019:175).

A quantitative method usually employs a deductive approach when analysing data (Brannen, 2017:30; McCusker and Gunaydin, 2015:5). According to DePoy and Gitlin (2011: 8), a deductive analysis comprises of “moving from a general principle to understanding a specific

case”, while inductive analysis is from the specific principle to the general one. Interestingly, many researchers prefer to use both inductive and deductive analysis complementarily (Armat, Assarroudi, Rad, Sharifi and Heydari, 2018: 23). However, it is important to note that an inductive analysis is more expensive than a deductive method (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009: 91). Although, Fletcher (2017) and Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman (2017) recommend that a deductive approach is more applicable to a quantitative analysis process than the inductive.

3.7.3 Qualitative Research Method

Silverman (2016: 39) submit that through qualitative research method researchers are able to comprehend the world surrounding them. This is not isolated from the fact that the qualitative approach provides more explanations than the quantitative research method (Gibbs, 2018). Rubin (2008); Silverman (2016:32) and Bogdan and DeVault (2015) also admit that qualitative method is more suitable for researching human behaviour, hence making it a choice for this study. Qualitative method is more flexible than the quantitative for research and its primary focus is to appreciate the “value, beliefs and experience of people” (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2017; Bernard, 2017:168). Merriam and Grenier (2019: 21-22) delineated six main approaches to exploiting qualitative research:

1. Basic qualitative method is interested in how people conceptualize and rationalise their own situations and their own world.
2. Phenomenology qualitative approach focuses on the fundamental structure of a people’s situation or their world (Alase, 2017; Edmonds and Kennedy 2013: 136; Starks and Trinidad 2007: 1373-74; Collingridge and Gannt 2008: 393);
3. Grounded theory qualitative method talks about the development of a functional theory about people’s phenomenon of interest, according to Eich (2008: 176) and Charmaz (2000: 509). Glaser and Strauss (1967) who were the protagonists of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2010: 183).
4. Ethnography qualitative method seeks to understand human society and their cultural constellations (Press, 2018; Creswell 2007: 218; McNeill and Chapman 2005: 89 and Werner 2004: 73), it seeks to understand social values (Brewer 2000: 6) and it opines that in a very flexible manner (Delamont and Atkinson 2004: 667).

5. Narrative analysis qualitative approach implies “the oldest and the most natural form of sense-making” (Jonassen and Hernandez-Serrano 2002: 66), which is founded on literary storytelling (Smith, 2016; Edmonds and Kennedy 2013: 129; Pinnegar and Daynes 2007: 4, and Riessman 2002: 218). The approach believes that every group of people have stories to tell (Atkinson 2007: 224 and Czarniawaska 2004: 649). Therefore, the method is more relevant in the qualitative social sciences research (Smith, 2016; Chase 2010: 208 and Elliott 2005: 4).
6. The critical qualitative approach seeks “to critique and change society” (Patton 2002: 131).

According to Plano, Clark and Badiee (2011: 288) and Kumar (2019:195), a qualitative inquiry would always apply inductive reasoning. Tjora (2018: 5) affirms that “the extent to which a qualitative approach is inductive or deductive differs along a continuum”. Flick (2018) declares that the essence of a qualitative method is essentially contextualised and construed research outcomes by the use of the inductive process to generate conceivable explanations predicated on experiential phenomena. Furthermore, in substantiating this assertion, Fusch and Ness (2015:56) support that the qualitative method is a more suitable approach, particularly in situations where the research problem contains complex characteristics. Qualitative research has the quality to remain flexible for relevant changes (Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). What meaning they attribute to their experiences. Therefore, Kalof, Dan, and Dietz (2008: 20) affirm that “the best approach to understanding the world is to examine how people see and define it”. The appropriate method to gaining such understanding, however, would commonly involve the application of a qualitative inquiry (Mauthner *et al.*, 2012: 176).

Silverman (2017: 126) maintain that “qualitative research is more than one thing”. Therefore, philosophically, Braun and Clarke (2013: 25) posit that the qualitative research method is a category of a series of interpretive practices. This notion has been reinforced, in recent time, by several scholars, among which are, Seidman (2013); Silverman (2017); Maxwell (2010, 2012); Creswell (2007: 20). According to Locke, Silverman, and Spirduso (2010: 183), the main objective of the interpretive research is “to understand a situation from the perspective of the participant”. It helps to understand “how people interpret their experience, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experience” (Merriam, 2009:

5). Banks (2018:5) submits that qualitative research would mostly incline toward an open approach in order to allow for various other disciplines.

Having adopted the qualitative approach for this research, Silverman’s (2013: 324) major rules for conducting effective qualitative research were applied:

- The research was kept simple enough by focusing on one specific research problem and by using one relevant theoretical model for investigation;
- The researcher did not presume that people are only concerned with subjective experience.
- The researcher was flexible during the research process.
- The researcher judiciously plans and implement data analysis without any delay to avoid the complication of drowning in data.
- “Journalistic” questions and answers were deliberately avoided. The researcher rather applied acquired skills and meticulously followed constructive academic guidelines (Silverman 2013: 324-328).

3.7.4 Qualitative and Quantitative Research

The major characteristics of quantitative data analysis diverge from those of qualitative data analysis (Patton, 2002: 13-14; Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018). The table below, as represented by (Merriam, 2009: 18), demonstrates the comparison of the general characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research,

Table 3.1: Characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research

Point of comparison	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Focus of research	Quality (nature and essence).	Quantity (how much, how many).
Philosophical Roots	Phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, constructivism.	Positivism, logical empiricism, realism.
Associated phrases	Fieldwork, ethnographic, naturalistic, grounded, constructivism.	Experimental, empirical, statistical.
Goal of investigation	Understanding, description, discovery, meaning, hypothesis generating.	Prediction, control, description, confirmation, hypothesis testing.
Design characteristics	Flexible, evolving, emergent.	Predetermined, structured.

Sample	Small, non-random, purposeful, theoretical.	Large, random, representative.
Data collection	Research as primary instrument, interviews, observations, documents.	Inanimate instruments : Scales, tests, Survey, questionnaires, computers.
Primary mode of analysis	Inductive, constant comparative method.	Deductive, numerical.
Findings	Comprehensive, holistic, expansive, richly descriptive.	Precise, numerical.

Source: Merriam (2009: 18)

In summary, quantitative research reduces data to figures; it is mostly applied to quantify a phenomenon by generating numerical data for onward into statistics to help to solve a research problem. The quantitative methodology can be utilised to measure opinions, attitudes, behaviours, and any definite construct (Creswell, 2014:88). It makes use of quantifiable data to unpack pattern and devise research facts (Wagner, Kawilich and Garner, 2012). On the other hand, qualitative methodology concerns itself with gaining a deeper understanding of the fundamental rationale, views, and motivations of a research problem, and seeks to provide insights to the issue under investigation. However, a mixed method is the combination of both quantitative and qualitative in one study. This study uses a qualitative research methodology to examine the effect of absenteeism on service delivery at the uMgungundlovu District Municipality. The qualitative approach helped the researcher to be flexible during the data collection process. Furthermore, the researcher timely adapted for change that took place in the course of the research. The study adopted the qualitative method because its main features justify the purpose of using the approach for this particular study.

3.8 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The term ‘paradigm’ gained its root from the work of Kuhn (1962 revised 1970) commenting on the structure of scientific revolutions (Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer, 2012: 7; Schensul, 2012: 76). However, using Jackson’s (2003: 37) definition, a paradigm is a “set of ideas, assumptions, and beliefs that shaped and guided the activity of a particular scientific community”. According to Babbie (2011: 32), a paradigm is the basic model that reflects a profound comprehension of what and how things are viewed by an individual or a people. “Paradigms provided important frameworks of ideas for thinking about research methodology” (Somekh and Lewin, 2011). Paradigms are, to some degrees, being considered as research traditions or assumptions since the early 1990s (Blaikie, 2010: 20). Ever since then, the concept of ‘paradigm’ becomes more popular within academic research (Grix and Watkins, 2010: 17;

Morgan, 2007: 53). Babbie (2011: 32) asserts that “social scientists have developed several paradigms for understanding social behaviour”.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 40-41) and Creswell (2007: 19), there are four major paradigms that could be considered for academic research, namely: post-positivism, social constructivism, participatory and pragmatism. Therefore, relying on the work of Kuhn (1996), this study generates ideas on how to use paradigm during the research process. Blaikie (2010: 62) and Kaczynski, Salmona and Smith (2014: 127) opine that researchers, having considered the research problem and the key research questions need to identify the paradigm suitable for a specific study. Punch (2006: 36) suggests that a researcher should clearly explain the importance of a chosen paradigm for the research.

Creswell and Clark (2017: 40) noted that the post-positivism paradigm is more associated with quantitative research. DeCuir-Gunby (2008: 127) considered post-positivism as a fresh version of positivism. Patton (2002: 92-93) explained that the post-positivism paradigm considers that some appropriate theories may be successfully used to interpret the possible observable reality. Sale and Brazil (2004: 353) noted that the positivists suggest that quantitatively “all phenomena can be reduced to empirical indicators which represent the truth”. Von Glasersfeld (2005: 33) mentioned that positivism naturally has some links with the behaviourism approach from an educational perspective. Turner (1992: 157) states that positivism initially involves the process of collecting data, observing regularities, and extracting laws. From a positivism viewpoint, McNeill and Chapman (2005: 15) indicate that people’s life experiences are governed by laws. Grix and Watkins (2010: 146) indicated that at some point, positivist researchers typically tend to determine predictions of human behaviour in order to gain the truth. Patton (2002: 93) noted that positivists believe that knowledge is relative instead of being absolute.

Poland and Pedersen (1998: 301) argued that some researchers expect a good respondent to be a person “who offers appropriately thoughtful rationales or explanations for behaviour and experiences”. Barbour (2008: 27) expresses that in most cases it is difficult to certify that participants were telling the researcher the truth and she then suggested the use of cross-checking questions to reduce the degree of uncertainty about the gathered research information. Corbetta (2003: 20) noted that post-positivism is more appropriate than the constructivism paradigm based on the nature of the study. Grix and Watkins (2010: 23) suggested using cross-checking questions with the aim of improving the level of understanding of the research

outcomes. Fischer (1998: 136-137) describes the post-positivist paradigm as a useful approach which can facilitate accurate interpretation and in-depth analysis of empirical research which was considered relevant for the purpose of the present study.

The post-positivist paradigm can either quantitative or qualitative approaches for the purpose of a study (Nieuwenhuis, 2010: 65). This paradigm could also use a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide more value to research outcomes (Swanson and Holton 1997: 93) however, this study uses the qualitative method. Dzurec and Abraham (1993: 75) indicated that “the objectives, scopes, and nature of inquiry are consistent across methods and across paradigms”. The post-positivist paradigm provides two main advantages, namely data collection can appropriately be completed in a short time and statistical analysis can be accurately applied (Creswell, 2009: 7). The post-positivist paradigm is regarded as a suitable approach especially to investigate the behaviour of individuals (Creswell 2009: 7). The study adopted a post-positivist paradigm and uses qualitative methodologies.

3.9 POPULATION

A population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects with characteristics need for a study to be conducted making it the main focus of a scientific study (Maxwell, 2012:16; Silverman, 2017). Greenfield and Greener (2016: 201) define a population in research as “the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements”. Therefore, a study population is a collection of selected individuals that constitute the focus of the research analysis (Schensul, 2012: 72). According to Allison, Hilton, O’Sullivan, Owen, and Rothwell (2016: 32), a target population is “a group of persons or other units for whom the study results will apply”. A group could be any collective unit (Fink, 2010: 63) and could also be “any group of persons, objects or institutions that have at least one attribute in common” (Carey and Asbury, 2016: 15).

The study was conducted at uMgungundlovu District Municipality (UMDM) which comprises of 5 departments (Office of the Municipal Manager, Corporate Services, Finance Department, Community Services, and Technical Services department) and only 2 of these departments (Community and Technical Services department) are service delivery wing of the Municipality. The other 3 are administrative (support) departments the total staff complement of UMDM is 604 employees. Only 202 employees are field workers (Community and Technical Services department), deployed to seven local municipalities for the purpose of delivering services to

local communities. The study focused on these field workers (202) who directly involved in service delivery and practically interact with the community members on a daily basis.

3.9.1 Target population

It is not optional for the researcher to be categorically clear on the focus of research population. For that reason, the researcher has to use her/his rationality, for there are no prescribed guidelines for this process. However, it is required in academic research that the definition of population is in accordance with the study objectives. The target population is a group of people or objects the research is interested in (Ackerman, Schmid, Rudolph and Seamans, 2018). This study considered 202 employees from the Department of Community Services and Technical services of uMgungundlovu District Municipality. Staff categories: Targeted employees at UMDM are plumbers (48), technician (14), general workers (48) and fire-fighters (56) and environmental health practitioners (7). Managers are (7) Junior Managers (Level 13 -15), (7) Divisional Managers (Level 16-19) and (15) Supervisors (Level 10-12).

3.9.2 Sample

A sample is a subgroup of the entire population selected to participate in a study (Chow, Shao, Wang and Lokhnygina, 2017). The sample in this study comprises of employees from seven local municipalities in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality selected from the 202 staff members. This is because the entire staff members cannot be participants in the study, hence a manageable representation is required. Boddy (2016:4) defines sampling as “the process of selecting individuals to partake in a research study”. Bonett (2015) argued that sampling is a vital element of a research project because it guides the study when determining the specific group of subjecta to be observed. The aim of sampling was to obtain a representative sample or small collection of units from a much larger population for the purpose of this study.

3.9.3 Sampling strategies

Sampling is defined as a process of choosing a small group of the population to participate in a study (Yin, 2009; Van Wyk, 2013:9). Sampling methods allow researchers to select a group of people or objects from the larger population to be enrolled in the study. A non-probability sampling that employs convenience and purposive techniques was used to select respondents for the study. In a convenience sampling, the sample consists merely of elements which are known or are quickly and easily accessible whereas purposive is when the researcher purposefully chooses the elements that he/she wishes to include in the sample, based on a set

list of characteristics (Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). It deviates from the accidental sampling, in that, the people most probably to be convenient are known people or those who are familiar to the researcher (Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Accidental sampling has no specific frame for sampling but includes people who are available at the right place at the right time (Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The convenience sampling method is adopted because it is appropriate for the study, this is not unconnected with the fact that the researcher is one of the management staff of the Municipality under investigation. The researcher felt that there are important stakeholders that should form part of the study, hence the purposive method was also used.

3.9.4 Sample Size

Creswell (2014) defines a sample size as the entire number of people or items chosen from the larger population to be part of the study. The total number of employees that were selected for this study is 44. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, the required sample size was ascertained to be 44 respondents. This was derived from a total population (TP) of 604, Population size (N) of 202 and, Sample size (S) of 134 according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Using the formula to the required sample size (s): $N \times S \div TP = s$ which is $202 \times 134 \div 604 = 44$. The 44 respondents were distributed as follows:

Employee Representatives	
Plumbers	6
General Workers	6
Firefighters	6
Technician	6
Environmental Health practitioners	6
Total Employees to be interviewed	30

Senior Management Representation	
Divisional Manager (uMsunduzi)	1
Divisional Manager (uMgeni)	1
Divisional Manager (Mpofana)	1
Divisional Manager (Impendle)	1
Divisional Manager (Richmond)	1

Divisional Manager (Camperdown)	1
Divisional Manager (uMshwathi)	1
Total Managers to be interviewed	7

Junior Management Representation	
Supervisor (Umsunduzi)	1
Supervisor(uMngeni)	1
Supervisor (Mpofana)	1
Supervisor (Impendle)	1
Supervisor (Richmond)	1
Supervisor (Camperdown)	1
Supervisor (Umshwathi)	1
Total Supervisors to be interviewed	7

3.10 DATA COLLECTION

In pursuance of the research objectives, the study used both primary and secondary data. The resources of secondary data were from written material collected from the works of different scholars on different issues concerning absenteeism and its effect on productivity. This involved going through books, academic journals, conference papers, internet articles and other relevant published and unpublished dissertations, newspapers and magazines. In addition, this study used semi-structured interviews for purposes of obtaining relevant qualitative data for the study. The target participants were the main source of the required data because they are directly involved with the communities. The interview responses from the respondents were digitally recorded and notes were also taken for a backup.

3.10.1 Research instrument

A total of 15 questions were used for this study and each participant spent approximately 30 minutes. 6 questions are specifically designated to the managers and the other 9 are for junior employees. The researcher wanted to get different information from the managers and junior employees. This study used a structure interview guide for data collection. The choice of structured interview guide was motivated by the fact that the structured interview provides less interviewer bias, faster execution, comparable responses or consistency. The questions used in

the interview guide were drawn from the factors, constructs identified in the literature. To address the research objectives, the interview guide is divided into three sections namely, section A, B, and C.

Section A consists of nine questions on demographic, the section B has five questions and the questions were about general questions. The effect of factors such as work overload, working conditions, leadership style on absenteeism. The section C has ten questions, and the questions were policy related questions. The aim of these ten questions was to assess the respondents' understanding of absenteeism policies.

Data collection took place in mid-2018, the researcher travelled to local municipalities to conduct face to face interview with the respondents. The researcher held a meeting first with municipal managers to seek authorisation to talk and conduct interview with the staff. A request was then made to employees to avail themselves for the interview. It was arranged with the employees on specific days they wanted to be interviewed. Permission was sought to record the interview session. The researcher ensured respondents that their names will be not revealed, and the recordings will be kept in a protected password file for 5 years, and thereafter be destroyed as recommended by the Ethical committee of UKZN. Before starting the interview, the researcher had to explain the purpose of the study to the respondents, and how the interview will take place. The recordings were in audio format, to ensure privacy during privacy, the recording took place in a secured room and respondents were required to do not divulge their names.

3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is defined as the organization and interpretation of the data gathered in a study (Creswell, 2007). This study used content analysis for the purpose of analysing data which were generated during the investigation. Kalof, Dan and Dietz (2008) contend that “the main goal of content analysis is to systematically classify words, phrases and other units of text into a series of meaningful categories”. Struwig and Stead (2001) affirm that content analysis emphasizes on collecting and analysing textual data. Neuendorf (2016) also opines that content analysis develops valid inferences from the text in the form of themes. Content analysis facilitates the gaining of an in-depth comprehension of textual representation (Krippendorff, 2018).

3.12 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

In order to have a credible study, it is important to put in place several data quality control measures that include validity and reliability (Leung, 2015: 324-327). This qualitative study adhered strictly to these two principles and procedures with the aim of ensuring that the findings are credible in measuring the phenomenon under study.

3.13 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

There are instances where face to face interviews were not possible owing to the geographic dispersion of the respondents. To address that challenge, the researcher had to interview 6 respondents via landline telephone. This study used the qualitative approach only and that constitutes the main limitation as a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) might yield better results. Another limitation that emerged is the fact that the study only used 44 respondents and this limits the result to be generalised. Furthermore, the study did not make use of some of the HR reports (statistics) from the Municipality in the analysis.

3.14 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Silverman (2016:413) states that validity refers to the extent to which the gathered data truthfully demonstrates the phenomenon being studied. On the other hand, reliability “is the extent to which to an instrument measures what it purports to measure” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016, 12). The theoretical frameworks and the literature studied were used to strengthen the reliability of this process in this study. The study also used triangulated data from different sources (observation, interviews, documentation) to improve reliability (Barratt, Choi, and Li, 2011: 331).

This study used two methods, namely: “transactional and transformational validity” to enhance the “trustworthiness” (Cho and Trent, 2006: 321; Pandey and Patnaik, 2014:46). Credibility, according to Merriam and Tisdell, (2015) refers to the qualitative study’s comparable concept, i.e. credibility, deals with the question: “How congruent are the findings with reality”? Thus, ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. To ensure trustworthiness in this study, the researcher employed cognitive interviewing, member checking inter-observer, reflective journal, and peer-debriefing techniques. Cognitive interviewing, the researcher practiced the interviews on individuals who could be part of the study, but were not selected. In order to ensure credibility, the researcher also asked the

respondents to review the transcripts of their responses to ensure what the researcher recorded was what they meant to say. Furthermore, the researcher asked three PhD holders to review the analysis, and provide objective feedback on the data analysis and report.

Furthermore, to ensure validity a pilot study was conducted whereby 10 questionnaires were drafted and submitted to 15 participants to check if there are in order and only 2 questions out of 15 questions were corrected thereafter. Those participants who were given the questionnaire were not part of the study.

3.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher requested the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal to grant ethical clearance. The researcher requested the uMgungundlovu District Municipality to assist by providing the gatekeeper's permission letter. Prior to requesting respondents' consent, the study was explained in detail to all the respondents. Furthermore, the researcher avoided and averted any harm to the respondents' rights by upholding the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy. No respondent was compelled to participate in this study.

3.16 CONCLUSION

This chapter explained the research approach applied in the study, namely: qualitative approach. The chapter described and discussed the paradigm and design underpinning the study and how the exploratory design was selected due to the nature of the research problem investigated. The population of the study, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, and data analysis methods were systematically conversed in this chapter. Research instruments were triangulated with the aim of obtaining richer data. Consideration of ethical issues was coherently discussed to ensure validity and reliability of research findings. The next chapter focuses on the presentation of research results.

Chapter Four:

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided the research methodology underpinning this study. This chapter describes and presents the analysed data. The data were collected through the use of the interviews discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014:12-13) define “data analysis as three concurrent flows of activity, namely: data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing or verification”. Data condensation “refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstraction, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus of written-up fields’ notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials”. Data display refers” generally display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that allows conclusion drawing and action. Most data display for qualitative in the past has been extended text (Miles *et al.*, 2014).” Miles *et al* (2014) argued that good display is a major avenue to robust qualitative analysis. Therefore, matrices, graphs, charts, and networks should be used a well in qualitative analysis.

This study used content analysis as a qualitative data analysis method. The method consists of systematically classified words, phrases and other units of text into a series of meaningful categories (Kalof, dan, and Dietz, 2008). In this study, the process of coding was made up of main categories and sub-categories. Main categories are proportion of the material the researcher was most interested in and sub-categories expressed what is said in the date about the main categories. Within the data collected, a portion of the data was used in developing coding frame. The researcher read, reflected and established ideas within the data collected, then broke codes into categories and themes. The codes were combined to make up categories, then categories made up themes presented in this study. The coding process was important in building themes that address the research objectives.

4.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

The data were analysed in order to address the following specific research objectives:

1. To ascertain the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery.
2. To identify the human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.
3. To determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.
4. Steps taken by management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery.

4.3 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study responded to the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery?
2. What are the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
3. Who are the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
4. What Steps taken by Management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery?

The findings are presented according to the structure of the interview guide which is attached to the appendix. The interview guide has fifteen questions divided into three sections. The first section contains the respondents' demographic data which is presented in the form of graphs. Section B contains general questions on absenteeism and the last section C contains technical questions on the policies in place. The themes, sub-themes and categories are described. The texts in *italics* are direct quotations and were not edited from responses obtained from the respondents. Some graphs were used to illustrate and present all the yes or no questions from the interview and the demographic data. The respondent' names were omitted in this study and are referred to as respondent 1 or respondent 2 and so on.

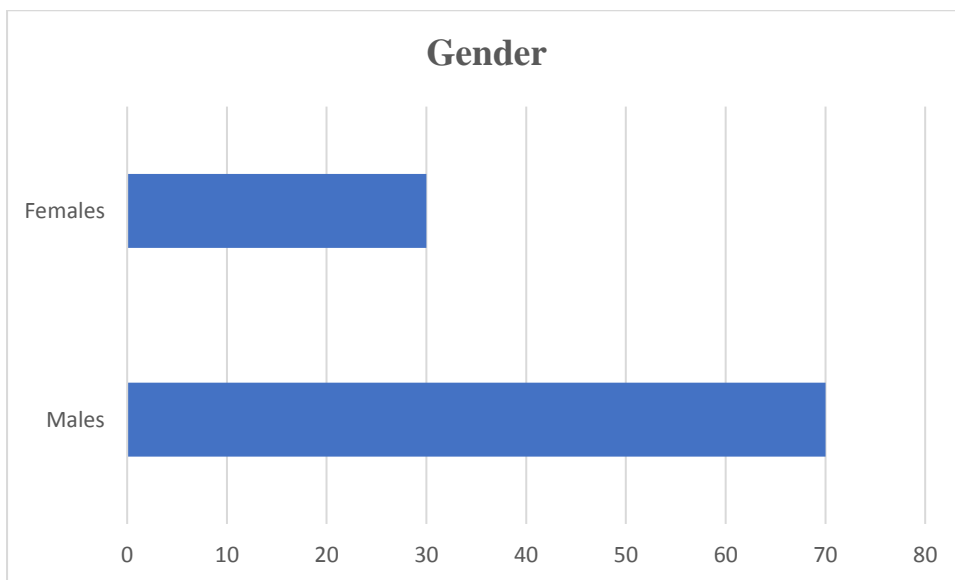
4.4 RESPONSE RATE

The sample consisted of 44 respondents of various levels at uMgungundlovu District Municipality. 7 out of 44 respondents were managers. The response rate was 100%.

4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

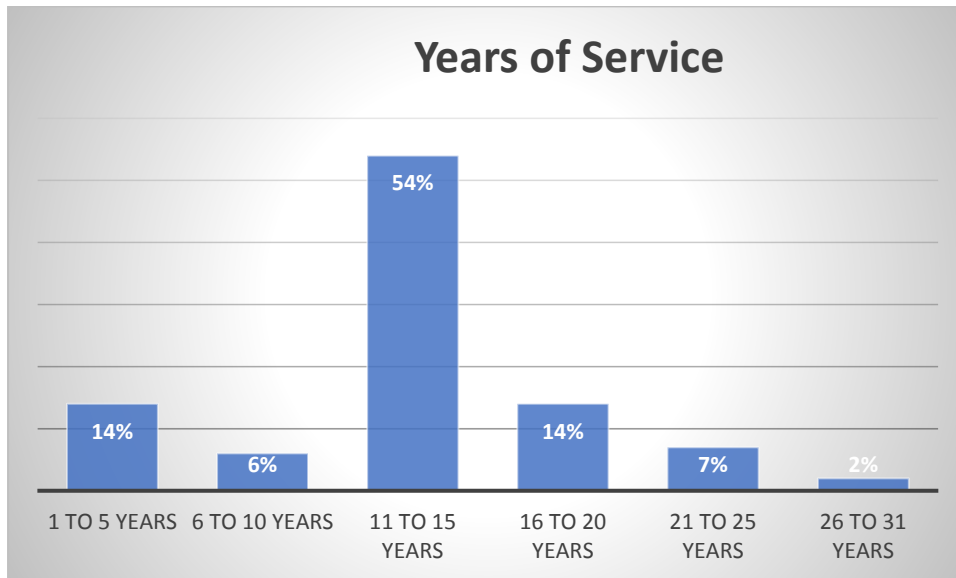
The data inform us that the majority of the respondent (70%) were males and 30 % were females as depicted in figure 4.1. The type of jobs, namely: plumbing and fire-fighting might be the reason for the dominance of males.

Figure 4.1 Description of respondents by Gender



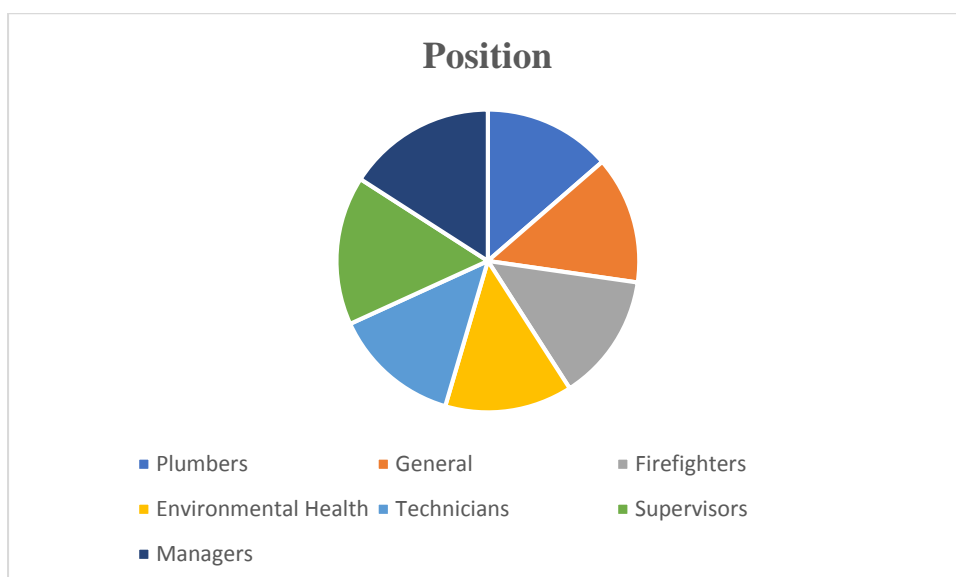
The data inform us that the majority of respondents (54%) have between 11 to 15 years of service, 14% of the respondents have between 16 to 20 years of service, 14% between 1 to 5 years of service, 6% between 6 to 10 years of service, 7% between 21 to 25 years of service, and 2% between 26 to 31 years of service as depicted in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Description of Respondents by Years of Service



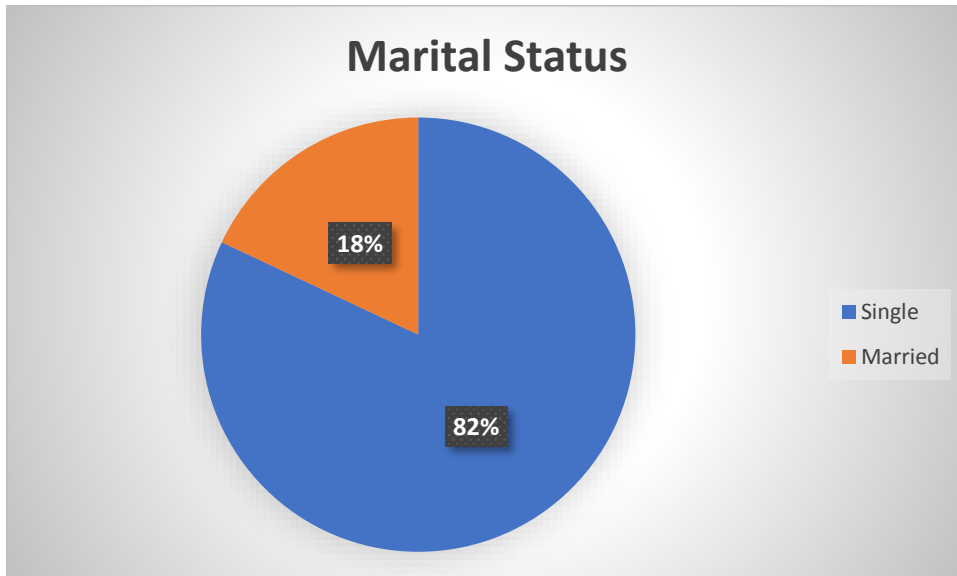
As mentioned in the previous chapter, the sample has 6 plumbers, 6 general workers, 6 fire-fighters, 6 technicians, 6 environmental health practitioners, one supervisor and one divisional manager from Umsunduzi, one supervisor and one divisional manager from uMngeni, one supervisor and one divisional manager from Mpofana, one supervisor and one divisional manager from Impendle, one supervisor and one divisional manager from Richmond, one supervisor and one divisional manager from Camperdown, and one supervisor and one divisional manager from Umshwathi as depicted in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 Description of respondents by Position



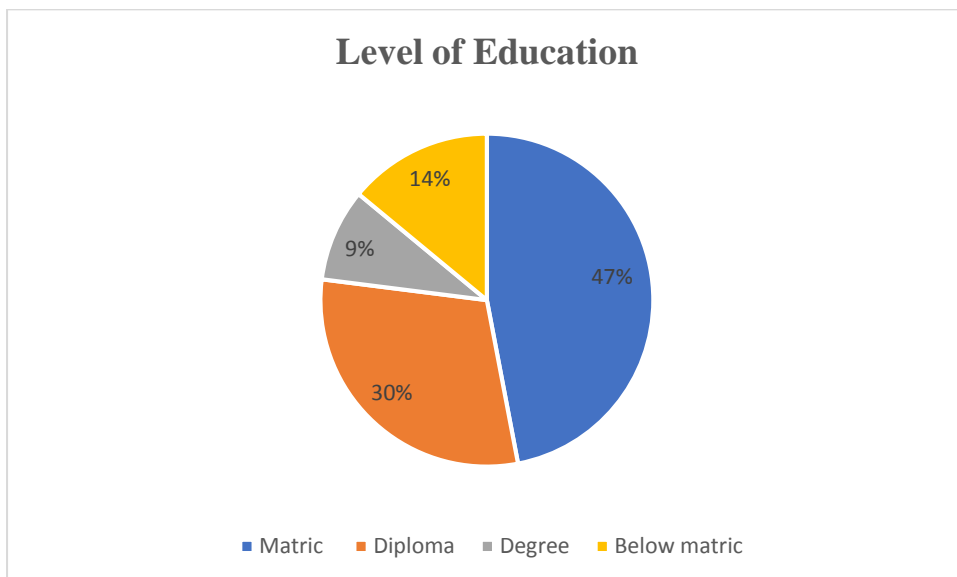
The analysed data show that the majority of respondents (82%) were single and 18% were married as depicted in figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 Description of Respondents by Marital Status



The majority of respondents have matric (47%), only 30 % of respondents have diplomas, 9% have degrees and 14% below matric as depicted in figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Description of respondents by level of Education



The finding indicates that 47% of respondents have matric, 30% of respondents have diplomas, 14% of the respondents have below matric and only 9% of the respondents have a degree as depicted in figure 4.5.

4.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1: To ascertain the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery.

In order to ascertain the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District municipality and its effects on service delivery, each respondent was asked five questions that appeared in the interview guide.

4.4.1 Work overload contribution to absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality

Table 4.1 Work overload contribution to absenteeism

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Shortage of staff	17	R1,7,3,4,6,9,17,23,26,33,11,15,20, 37,29,13,5
Work stress	12	R31,41,44,21,12,16,17,24,25,27,2,8
Fatigue	7	R34,35,36,37,38,40,43
No, work overload can be the cause	8	R22,14,13,8,18,28,10,32

Table 4.1 shows some themes that emerged from this objective, namely: shortage of staff, work stress and fatigue.

The majority of employees clearly specified that work overload can contribute to absenteeism at the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in the sense that when employees are overworked, it will cause fatigue and demotivation which will in turn, lead to taking leave or finding an excuse for not going to work the following days. Some employees (n=17) as depicted in table 4.1 acknowledge that work overload is due to the shortage of staff. *“...If there is too much work - or because of pressure/stress one will end up taking stress leave in order to try to be away from work...” (Respondent 1).*

When one person is doing the job of two or more people, the employee ends up being overworked and might decide to not present himself/herself at work the following day *“...Yes*

- It can because sometimes we get tired after working so hard owing to the fact that we are short staffed thereafter we don't see the reason to come to work if since we are mental/physical distress due to the shortage of staff...“(Respondent 3). “...Yes, work- load due to a shortage of staff...” (Respondent 7).

Another group of respondents (n=12) specified that work overload adds work stress on employees which may lead to employees deciding to skip work in an attempt to get some rest. “...It contributes a lot, work stress, depressed...” (Respondent 31). Few employees (n=7) clearly specified that work overload adds fatigue on employees which may lead to absenteeism. “...Yes, workload adds fatigue....” (Respondent 41).

Another group of employees (n=8), however, express their views by not agreeing to the fact that work overload can contribute to absenteeism. One has to plan her/his work properly to avoid work overload. This group of respondents stated that unless one is lazy, then work overload can contribute to absenteeism. “...No, work overload cannot contribute to absenteeism unless you are spoilt...” (Respondent 22). “...No, it cannot unless you have other motives...” (Respondent 14).

4.4.2 Working conditions as a cause of absenteeism in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality

Table 4.2 Working conditions a cause of absenteeism

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Poor working conditions	38	R14,42,27,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,12, 15,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,27, 28,29,30,31,32,33, 34,35,36,38,39,40,41,43,44
I do not see how working conditions can cause absenteeism	6	R1,37,26,16,13,6

The majority of employees (n=38) as depicted in table 4.2 express their views about this topic by stating that poor working conditions in terms of insufficient resources, not conducive environment, trauma from incidents, unfair treatment by the supervisors, managers or colleagues can cause one to absent from work since the person will not be in the right mind to do his/her work properly. Employees clearly emphasize the unfair treatment from their supervisors and insufficient resources to do their job as their main working conditions that can probably lead them to absent themselves from work. “...Yes – if the environment and the working conditions are not conducive then it is highly unlikely that one will not be able to attend to work regularly – No resources and so on...” (respondent14). “...Yes, poor working conditions contribute to the level of demotivation...” (Respondent 42). “Insufficient resources, poor working condition, no overtime pay...” (Respondent 27).

However, few employees (n=6) did not see how working conditions can be the cause of absenteeism in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality. “...No, cannot be the cause no matter what the condition is...” (Respondent 1). “...Not really, finish your daily work and avoid piling of work...” (Respondent 37).

4.4.3 Leadership style as a cause of absenteeism in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality that affects service delivery

Table 4.3 Leadership style as a cause of absenteeism

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Poor leadership style	28	R2,10,12,14,15,17,20,22,23,24,25,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44
Lack of communication	9	R28,5,11,13,16,18,19,21,26
Biased leadership	7	R7,6,4,3,8,1,9

Employees clearly express their views in asserting that poor leadership style, lack of communication and biased leadership are likely to depress employees and this may cause absenteeism which will impact service delivery to the municipality. Some employees (n=28)

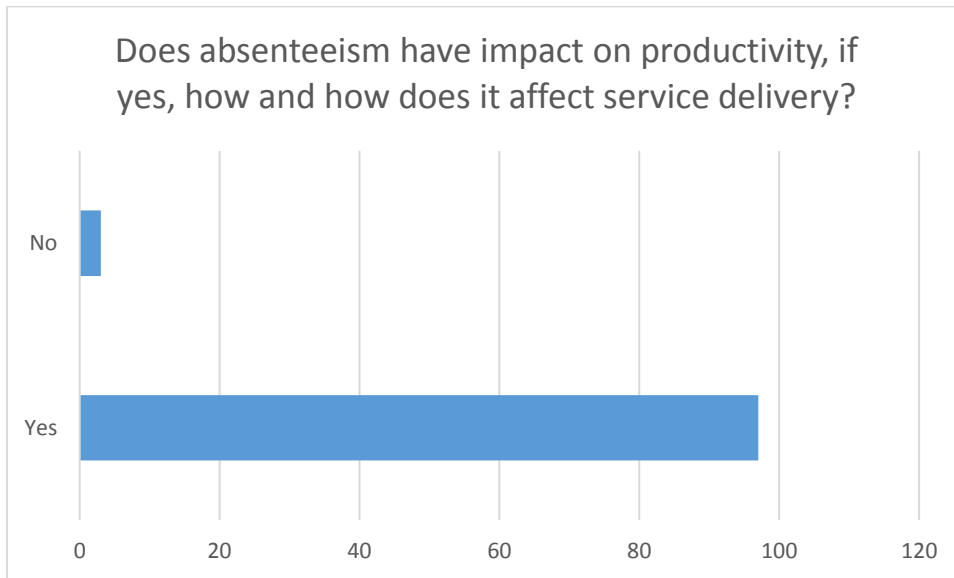
as depicted in table 4.3 emphasise that some leaders do not recognise their good work and do not motivate them to excel. “...*Poor leadership style, a leader who does not communicate well, treat us unfairly...*” (Respondent2). Another group of employees (n=7) acknowledged that some leaders do not treat them fairly (biased leadership). “...*Yes, does not want to listen to us, unfair treatment...*” (Respondent 7). Another group (n=9) acknowledged that lack of communication between employees and managers is the cause of absenteeism as some leaders (supervisors or managers) do not listen to them which in turn, affect their motivation to come to work, “...*Yes, poor leadership style and unfair treatment...*” (Respondent 28), “...*Yes, if the leader is biased, unfair treatment, does not listen to your complains...*” (Respondent 5).

4.4.4 Impact of absenteeism on productivity and service delivery

Table 4.4 Impact of Absenteeism on productivity

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Yes, absenteeism has an impact on productivity	41	R1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,31,32,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43
Absenteeism does not have an impact on productivity.	3	R30,33,44

Figure 4.6 impact of absenteeism on productivity



The majority of respondents (n=41) as depicted in table 4.4 clearly agreed that absenteeism has an impact on the productivity of uMgungundlovu District Municipality. They clearly explained that absenteeism leads to the shortage of staff which in turn, affects service delivery as the Municipality will not have enough manpower to deliver and the community will be affected as well. “...Yes, it has a huge effect -because if we are short staffed, few of us who are at work are unable to deliver the quality service and community ends up complaining...” (Respondent 2). “...Yes, shortage of staff will impact, unable to deliver service accordingly...” (Respondent 8).

A group of employees (n=3) indicated that absenteeism does not have an impact on productivity. Furthermore, they did not agree that the shortage of staff due to absenteeism will not affect productivity as they feel that the Municipality has mechanisms to cover up for absentees. The majority of respondents of this study covered theme 1 and theme 2 about this question 4. “...No, because we always try to improvise...” (Respondent 30).

4.4.5 The effect of absenteeism on the high turnover rate in the context of service delivery

Table 4.5 Effect of absenteeism on the high turnover

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Not sure	32	R1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,41,42,43,44,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
Somehow influence the turnover	12	R11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,30,31

The majority of respondents (n=32) as depicted in table 4.5 were not sure about the effect of absenteeism on the high turnover rate. Specifically, respondents did not think that there is any relationship between absenteeism and the high turnover rate. “...*Not sure but minimal relationship...*” (Respondent 5). “...*I don’t see the linkage...*” (Respondent 32). “...*Not really, can’t cause turnover no cannot be the cause...*” (Respondent 26).

Another group of respondents (n=12) expressed different views, stating that absenteeism has somehow an influence on the turnover as absentees might get punished then end up resigning. Furthermore, absentees might lose pension money because of the disciplinary procedure they might be subjected to. “...*Can’t produce require documents, dock salary then end resigning...*” (Respondent 11). “...*People will absent themselves and get irritated after docking their salaries then resign...*” (Respondent 3).

4.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: To identify the human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.

In order to identify the human resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality, each respondent was asked four questions that appeared in the interview guide.

4.5.1 The policies in place to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to ensure service delivery

Table 4.6 Policies in place to deal with absenteeism

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Sick leave, maternity leave, family responsibility leave, study leave, ordinary leave	44	R1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,
Not sure how the policies work	20	R1,2,3,5,6,4,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,24,25,26,27,28,33,39

The majority of respondents (n=44) as depicted in table 4.6 were knowledgeable about the policies and were able to list them. All the respondents (n=44) listed sick leave, annual leave, maternity leave, family responsibility leave, study leave and ordinary leave, “...*Annually leave, family responsibility leave special, study leave, sick leave, I’m not sure how they work, but nobody told us as to how these things work...*” (Respondent11). However, out of the 44 respondents who were able to list the leave policies, some respondents (n=20) were not sure how these leave policies work and requested a training or workshop on them to be provided, “...*Sick leave, annual leave, FRL, not sure how the study leave work...*” (Respondent 30). “...*Study leave, sick leave, maternity leave, ordinary leave...*” (Respondent 23).

The majority of respondents of this study covered theme 1 and theme 2 about this question.

4.5.2 The understanding of the absenteeism policies in place at uMgungundlovu District municipality

Table 4.7 understanding of the absenteeism policies

	Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
1	Easy to understand	36	R20,19,18,26,16,15,14,13,12,11, 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1,30,31,32,25,34,35 36,37,40,41,44,43,24,42,28
2	Implementation and adherence	27	R20,19,18,26,16,15,14,13,12,11, 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1,30,31,32,25,34,35 36
3	Not easy to understand	8	R20,21,22,23,26,24,27,29

The majority of respondents (n=36) as depicted in table 4.7 acknowledged that the policies that deal with absenteeism in place at uMgungundlovu District municipality are easy to understand. “...*Straightforward and simple – Some of the documents were given to us years ago when we joined the organization...*” (Respondent 20). However, respondents have diverse views as to why they say the policies that deal with absenteeism are easy to understand. It was noticed that, out of the majority (n=36) who acknowledged that the policies that deal with absenteeism are easy to understand, some respondents (n=27) agreed that the implementation and adherence to these policies remain a problem in the organisation. Therefore, there is a need for employees to be trained or have workshops regularly. “...*Is it easy to understand but other people play ignorance however they need to be a workshop on a monthly basis...*” (Respondent17).

Few respondents (n=8) doubted that the policies that deal with absenteeism are easy to understand as the policies are only written in English and are lengthy documents. “...*Most of them are written in English and these documents are thick and are not easy to read them, it would better if someone explain them to us...*” (Respondent33).

Most respondents covered the themes 1, 2 and 3 about this question.

4.5.3 The enforcement of the absenteeism policies at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to ensure service delivery?

Table 4.8 enforcement of the absenteeism policies

	Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
1	Enforced	38	R1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20, 21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,38,37,36,35,34,33,32,40,44
2	Room for improvement	26	R1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20, 21,22,23,24,25,26

The majority of respondents (n=38) as depicted in table 4.8 clearly stated that the absenteeism policies are enforced by the Municipality as managers do request the evidence such as sick notes to make sure that the absentees complied with the policies. Respondents acknowledged that they have seen some employees being punished if they do not produce the evidence. However, out of the 38 respondents who acknowledged that the policies are enforced, some respondents (n= 26) clearly stated that there is still room for improvement in enforcing these policies as some employees do not comply and some managers do not care about enforcing them. The majority of respondents of this study covered theme 1 and theme 2 about this question. “...Yes, by ensuring that you get punished if don’t comply...” (respondent 9). “...Enforcement is a serious challenge as managers believe its HR function...” (respondents 20).

4.5.4 The effectiveness of the policies put in place to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District municipality to ensure service delivery

Table 4.9 Effectiveness of the policies in place

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Not effective as should be	34	R17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,28,29,31,32,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,11,12,13,14,15,16,18,19
Effective	10	R27,3,2,1,4,5,6,7,8,9,17

The respondents expressed different views on this topic. Some respondents (n=34) as depicted in table 4.9 said that the policies that deal with absenteeism are not effective as the rate of absenteeism is still high, “...*Not very effective as employees do as pleased, although policies on absenteeism are there...*” (Respondent 17). In addition, they said that the policies are just a piece of papers/documents for compliance. Other respondents (n=10) said the policies are effective but employees will always be employees meaning that employees will always find a way to circumvent the policies. “...*Yes, there are but policies are policies, people will always find ways to dodge them...*” (Respondent 27). “...*Not really effective, implementation is still a problem...*” (Respondent 3).

4.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3: To determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.

In order to determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality, each respondent was asked one question.

4.6.1 The role of managers, union representatives and Councillors in the development of policies that deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to ensure service delivery

Table 4.10 Role of stakeholders in the policy development

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Able to describe	36	R14,8,28,27,26,25,24,23,21,31,32,33,34,35,36,38,39,44,43,42,41,40,1,11,12,13,17,19
Not sure about councillors	8	R29,7,37,6,5,4,3,2,

The respondents expressed different views on this topic. Some respondents (n=36) as depicted in table 4.10, explained that managers develop policies; union representatives ensure that the developed policies benefit the employees and the councillors as representatives of the community approve the policies which can benefit the community by providing quality service delivery. “...*Councillors approve policies and represent the community, management develops them and union representative are the ears and eyes of the employees...*” (Respondent 14). Another group of respondents (8) were able to describe the role of managers and union representative but did not know the role of councillors in the development of policies that deal with absenteeism. “...*Union represents employees, management develops policies, not sure about councillors...*” (Respondents 29). “...*Management deals with the employees, union represent us in case there is something...*” (Respondent 7). “...*No idea, not sure...*” (Respondent 37).

4.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4: Steps taken by management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery.

In order to determine the steps taken by management to deal with absenteeism, each respondent was asked five questions.

4.7.1 Interview conducted by management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to quickly understand the reasons for absence to ensure service delivery

Table 4.11 Conducting of interview to understand the reason for absence

	Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
1	Interview conducted	12	R6,7,8,9,10,13,15,16,17,19 29,27
2	Interview not conducted	24	R35,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44 20,23,24,25,26,27,1,2,3,4,5, 7,11,12,31
3	Interview sometimes conducted	8	R21,22,28,30,32,33,34,36

The majority of respondents (n=24) stated that management does not conduct return to work interviews to understand the reasons for absence. The majority of the respondents said if interviews were conducted, the rate of absenteeism could reasonably decrease. “...*No if interviews were done; the rate of absenteeism will lower...*” (Respondent 35). Some respondents (n=12) acknowledged that the interview is sometimes conducted but not all the times. “...*Sometimes but not all the times...*” (Respondent 6). Few respondents (n=8) agreed that interviews are done to understand the reason for the absence. Furthermore, the managers interviewed in this study acknowledged that return to work interviews are conducted to understand the reasons for absence. “...*Yes, interviews are conducted, sometimes involve union...*” (Respondent 21).

4.7.2 Disciplinary procedure or code in place used by management on staff members who absent themselves from work without authority

Table 4.12 Disciplinary Procedure

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
Yes, there is	42	R1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,12,13 14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23 24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33 34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44
No, there is not	2	R11,27

The majority of the respondents (n=42) as depicted in table 4.12 clearly acknowledged that there is disciplinary procedure or code used by management to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality. “...Yes, there is, seen punished employees...” (Respondent 40). As the evidence to support the respondents’ claims, respondents said they have seen some colleagues being punished. Some have seen their salary being docked, others got warning letters. “...Yes, warning letter given...” (Respondent 3). However, some respondents said that the implementation of the disciplinary procedure or code needs to be improved. “...Yes, depend on who you are, implementation is a problem...” (Respondent 9). Another group of employees (n=2) indicated that there is no disciplinary procedure or code used by management. “...I’m not sure if there is...” (Respondent 11).

4.7.3 Management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality prioritise the need to control absenteeism to ensure service delivery

Table 4. 13 Prioritisation of absenteeism policies

Theme	Frequency of response	Respondent number
Yes, do prioritise	6	R13,5, 7,11,14,17
No, do not prioritise	38	R9,10,1,2,3,4,6,8,12,15,16,18, 19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29 30,31,32,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44

The majority of respondents (n=38) clearly indicated that the management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality does not prioritise the need to control absenteeism to ensure service delivery. “...Do not prioritise, they focus on other things...” (Respondent 9). The high rate of absenteeism is due to that. The few respondents (n=6), who agreed that management does prioritise the need to control absenteeism, supported their claim by stating that some employees have been charged and sometimes management talks about the importance of coming to work on a regular basis. “...Yes, they do, sometimes management talks about the importance of attending work on a regularly basis...” (Respondent 13). “...Yes, they are trying but the problem still there, severe punishment needed...” (Respondent 5).

4.7.4 Management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality offer employees’ attendance incentives or reward to ensure service delivery

Table 4.14 attendance incentives or reward

Themes	Frequency of responses
There is no incentives or reward	44

The majority of respondents (n=44) were adamant that there is no incentives or reward. The respondents acknowledged that such incentives or reward could motivate them to attend work

daily as depicted in table 4.14. “...Nothing – if there was definitely, most of us would be motivated...” (Respondent4). “... No, if there was something like that one will be motivated...” (Respondent 29). “...No- if it was definitely it will be a change...” (Respondent 16).

4.7.4 Management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality make absence management strategy part of its long-term plan to ensure service delivery

Table 4.15 Absence management strategy part of its long-term plan

Themes	Frequency of responses	Respondent number
management does not make the absence management strategy part its long-term plan	34	R44,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11 12,13,14,15,16,18,19,20 ,21,22,23,24,25,26,28,29,30,31, 32,33,34,35,
may be the strategy is known only by the management as management does not communicate it to employees	3	R37,27,17
Managers acknowledged that the management does make the absence management strategy part of its long-term plan	7	R43,42,41,40,37,36,38

The respondents expressed diverse views on this question. The majority of respondents (n=34), clearly indicated that the management does not make the absence management strategy part its long-term plan to ensure service delivery. “...No, no strategy at all...” (Respondent 44). Few

respondents (n=3) were not sure as they said that may be the strategy is known only by the management as management does not communicate it to employees, “...*Probably there is a strategy but not working, need for communication of the strategy...*” (Respondent 37). The managers (n=7) interviewed in this study acknowledged that the management does make the absence management strategy part of its long-term plan to ensure service delivery. “...*Yes, absence management strategy is part of long –term plan of the municipality...*” (Respondent 43).

4.7.5 Open-ended Question: Closing remarks

Around one third of respondents provided their closing remarks saying that management should implement a reward or incentives system to encourage workers who come to work on a regular basis. Management should also improve the communication between management and employees as well as to stop unfair treatment and favouritism and to hire more staff as some departments are understaffed which might lead to work overload, thus absenteeism.

4.8 SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter was to present the analysis of the collected data. The interview instrument and the research objectives guided the presentation of the analysed data. Tables and some graphs were used to present and summarise the data. The findings presented in this chapter will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the results presented in chapter four. The goal of this study was to assess the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery at the uMgungundlovu District Municipality. To this end, the findings are discussed in relation to the guiding research questions. A conclusion of the study is provided to summarise the study and recommendations are made based on the discussion of the findings.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study started by introducing and contextualising the phenomenon (absenteeism) under investigation. Chapter two positioned the phenomenon under investigation in the body of knowledge and highlighted the gap. The study focused on the causes of absenteeism and its consequences both in the private sector and public sector. Personal causes, internal causes and external were identified as different categories of absenteeism at the workplace. Furthermore, chapter two gave an overview of the UMDM and how policies are developed and implemented. Chapter 3 described the methodology employed for this study. This study opted for a qualitative approach and collected data from 44 respondents. The findings reveal that poor working conditions, work overload and poor leadership style as causes of absenteeism in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in line with the literature review and provides recommendations as well as a concluding statement.

5.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal.

The data were analysed in order to address the following specific research objectives:

1. To ascertain the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery.
2. To identify the human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.

3. To determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.
4. Steps taken by management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery.

5.4 KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study responded to the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery?
2. What are the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
3. Who are the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?
4. What Steps taken by Management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery?

5.5 Research objective1: To ascertain the causes and effects of Absenteeism in uMgungundlovu District Municipality

Shortage of staff, work stress, fatigue as a result of work overload, poor working conditions, poor leadership, poor leadership style, lack of communication, lack of rewards or incentives and biased leadership were identified by the majority of respondents as causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality. Cucchiella, Gastaldi and Ranieri (2014) state that absenteeism is linked to a plurality of causes and represents a symptom of social, economic and organizational inefficiency and its causes should not be taken lightly. The finding (n=17) 39% clearly indicated that **work overload due** to the shortage of staff is a cause of absenteeism at UMDM. Furthermore, **stress caused by work overload** is identified by respondents (n=12) 27% as a cause of absenteeism at UMDM as well as **fatigue** caused by **work overload** is also identified by respondents (n=7) 16% as a cause of absenteeism. These findings are in line with the finding of Netshidzati (2012) and Sing *et al.*, (2016) who found that work overload might lead to absence which in turn, lead to inefficient service delivery. Sing *et al.*, (2016) argued that long and/or irregular working hours may cause poor employees' health, thereby resulting in more sick leave which affect service delivery. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with

the study conducted by Martin and Matiaske (2017); Nanjundeswaraswamy, (2016) and Kocukulah *et al.*, (2016) who argue that stress has various effects on employees including leading to employees absenting themselves from work.

Work stress, fatigue as a result of work overload, poor working conditions, poor leadership, poor leadership style, lack of communication and lack of rewards or incentives can affect the morale of employees and this may result in increased absenteeism. Mundaly and Nkosi (2015) assert that low employee morale can be destructive to the organisation and lead to poor productivity, dissatisfaction and absenteeism. In support of this viewpoint, Netshidzati (2012) asserts that low morale is likely to have a negative impact on the delivery of service. The study indicates that the respondents (n=38) 86% acknowledge that poor working conditions such as lack of adequate resources and inadequate working environment are key factors that may affect the mental, moral and physical health of employees, thus leading to absenteeism. The finding is consistent with Aboagye *et al.*, (2017); Cronje (2015); Nanjundeswaraswamy (2016); Chauke (2007) and Kocakulah and Kelley (2016); Stromberg *et al.*, (2017) who assert that poor working conditions/environment such as inappropriate resources and poor working environment are a cause of absenteeism.

The finding of this study too, indicates that respondents (n=28) 64%, believe that **poor leadership style** has a negative impact on service delivery. The study further indicates that respondents (n=9) 20%, believe that **lack of communication** between the employees and managers can cause one to absent himself/herself. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Nanjundeswaraswamy (2016) which found that the relationship between workers and managers had an effect on workers' absenteeism. Furthermore, Cucchiella, Gastaldi and Ranieri (2014) state that leadership style plays a role in the management of absenteeism at work. Sampaio and Batista (2019) also claimed that organisational culture and leadership play a vital role in tackling absenteeism at workplace. The study indicates that respondents (n=41) 93%, agreed that absenteeism has a negative impact on productivity. This finding is consistent with the studies conducted by Maestas *et al.*, (2018), Stromberg *et al.*, (2017), Zhang *et al.*, (2017), Jinnett and Schwatka, (2017), Badubi (2017), Cooper & Dewe (2013), Parsee (2008), and Chauke (2007) which found that absenteeism has the potential to negatively impact on the overall productivity and output of the organisation. However, the finding of this study suggests that the respondents (n=42) 95%, were not sure about the **effect of absenteeism on high turnover rate** and did not see any relationship between high rate turnover and absenteeism.

Respondents stated that absenteeism is not the cause of the high rate turnover as they indicated the two were not related.

The results of this study on the causes of absenteeism and its effects on service delivery show that employees have cited shortage of staff, poor working conditions, poor leadership style and work overload are the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and have negative effects on service delivery as depicted in sections 4.4.1; 4.4.2; 4.4.3. The finding is consistent with Rhodes and Steers (1978) Model, Hackett (1989) and Brooke (1986) which found that job conditions such as work overload, opportunities for advancement and salaries may promote employee absence.

This study has provided evidence that poor working conditions, poor leadership style, work overload and lack of incentives or rewards are considered by respondents as major causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District municipality. This study further indicates that due to the above-mentioned causes, service delivery is affected. The normative guidelines of Public Administration stipulate that all municipalities must ensure equal access to basic services and uphold high service standards. Therefore, uMgungundlovu District Municipality must minimise the rate of absenteeism so that the District Municipality can keep up with the public administration guidelines in terms of access and service standards.

The findings of this study support the expanded Process model by Erickson *et al.*, (2000) who posits that work attitudes and burnout has an influence on absenteeism. The study reveals that certain attitudinal variables and some organisational practices have an influence on absenteeism. This then affects the service delivery of the uMgungundlovu District Municipality. Grönroos (1984) posits that service quality centres around the appraisal of two variables, namely: the anticipated service and the actual service delivered. The findings of this study clearly indicate that the service delivery of uMgungundlovu District Municipality is affected by the high rate of absenteeism. Therefore, there is a gap between the anticipated service by communities and the actual service delivered to the communities at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.

5.6 Research Objective 2: To identify the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.

To address this objective, themes such **awareness of policies in place, the ease to understand the policies in place, the enforcement of policies by the management, the effectiveness of the policies and room for improvement**, emerged.

Cloete, Coning Wissink and Rabie (2018:6), policy is “a statement of intent” which stipulates the fundamental principles set to be followed in order to achieve some definite goals. The finding reveals that the majority of respondents (n=100%) were able to list the different leave policies developed by the Human Resource office. **Sick leave, maternity leave, annual leave and family responsibility leave** were the policies listed by the majority of the respondents. The finding clearly shows that employees are aware of the three types of absenteeism, namely: authorised and planned leave, unplanned but genuine absence as explained by Beira (2008:29) and unauthorized or suspect absence as stipulated by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, Soma Initiative (2002:2) and Cucchiella *et al.*, (2014). The study (n=20) 45% reveals that there is no clear understanding of how the absenteeism policies in the municipality work. The respondents expressed different views on the understanding of these policies. Some respondents (n= 36) 82% acknowledged that the policies were easy to understand while others (n=8) 18% revealed that the policies are **not easy to understand**. Respondents (n=27) 61% indicated that the implementation and adherence of/to the absenteeism policies is still an issue. Furthermore, respondents (n=38) 86%, believe that the policies are enforced but out of the 86% of respondents, 59% believe that there is **still room for improvement in enforcing the policies** as respondents (n=34) 77% believe that the policies are not as effective as they should be. The management should find ways to make the policies as effective as possible since the rate of absenteeism in the Municipality is still high. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Beira (2008:28) which found that there is a high rate of absenteeism in South Africa, 70% of which account for unplanned /unscheduled absence.

The results of this research on the policies developed by human resource show that the respondents (employees) were aware of policies relating to authorised, unauthorised absence. However, respondents were not sure about understanding the policies as they expressed different views. Furthermore, the results show that the respondents acknowledged that the

management is trying to enforce these policies but the enforcement is not as effective as it should be.

This study has provided evidence that respondents were able to list types of leaves, namely: study leave, annual leave, parental leave, family responsibility leave, sick leave and ordinary leave. The effectiveness of these policies is deficient. Furthermore, all the steps to enforce the policies were not followed accordingly. Understanding these policies was still a problem for some employees and absenteeism does negatively affect service delivery. Gladden (1972) asserts that public policy is categorised into four, namely: political policy, executive policy, administrative policy, and technical/operational policy. Policies that deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality fall under the administrative and operational policies category.

5.7 Research Objective 3: To determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.

Themes such as **being able to describe the role of managers, union representatives and councillors in policy development**, emerged.

Mogobe (2013) recommends that stakeholders such as management, unions, medical schemes and human resources should be part of the entities assigned to develop an effective programme dealing with absenteeism. Furthermore, McGrandle and Ohemeng (2017) argue that policy-makers union representative should all have the same understanding of the absenteeism issue so that they can be able to come up with a solid solution. The finding shows that the majority of the respondents (n=36) 82% were able to describe the role of the managers and union representatives in policy development. However, the respondents (n=8) 18% were not sure about the role of councillors in policy development. This can indicate that the involvement of councillors in the development of policies that deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality is perhaps not given much significance. Wissink and Rabie (2018) assert that the legislative and judicial branches of the government are important policy agenda setters.

The results of this research objective on the stakeholders involved in the policy development at uMgungundlovu District Municipality show that respondents (employees) were aware of the role of managers and union representatives in the policy development at uMgungundlovu district municipality as depicted in section 4.6.1. The finding is consistent with the UMDM

(2015) which suggests that senior managers are involved in the policy development and the council for approval. Cloete *et al.*, (2018) claim that in the presidential systems, the legislative and judicial branches of the government are important policy agenda stakeholders. The legislative and judiciary branches of the government have considerable power to determine what goes onto the policy agenda. The judiciary assesses the legal aspect of the proposed policy. However, the stakeholders listed by Cloete *et al.*, (2018) deal with the central government which differs from the stakeholders involved in the development of policy at uMgungundlovu district municipality as local government as described by UMDM (2015). UMDM (2015) states that the development policy at uMgungundlovu District Municipality starts from the planning phase, research and analysis stage, policy formulation stage, consultation stage, impact assessment stage, council approval stage, planning for publication stage, communication of the policy stage and review of policy stage. As the finding indicates, uMgungundlovu District Municipality should further ensure that the employees are knowledgeable about all the stakeholders involved in the development of policies. This would help both the employees and community to exercise their rights to direct any concern to the relevant entity.

The study has provided evidence that the roles of managers and union representatives in the development of absenteeism policies were fully described by the majority of. However, few respondents were not able to explain the role of councillors in the development of policies. That was indicative of the fact that the councillor's roles were not clearly defined within the Municipality. Therefore, uMgungundlovu District Municipality has to ensure that employees have a full understanding of the stakeholders and steps involved in the development of absenteeism policies. Although the study did not assess whether the employees are knowledgeable about the role of entities such as media, judiciary, medical scheme, etc. in policy development, the uMgungundlovu District Municipality has the obligation to communicate to its employees the specific role of each entity involved in the development of policies that deal with absenteeism.

5.8 Research Objective 4: Steps taken by Management to deal with the employees who absenting themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery.

Themes such as **interview conducted to understand the reason for absence, the disciplinary procedure used by management, reward or attendance incentives and the absence management strategy as a long-term plan**, emerged.

Navarro & Bass (2006:32) assert that “proper absenteeism management involves developing a programme with guidelines that are clear and consistent, incorporating legal requirements so that they can be established across the entire organisation”.

The finding (n=24) 55% revealed that managers do not regularly conduct interviews to understand the reason for absence. Mogobe (2013) asserts that the return to work interview is an important feature of the absenteeism management programme. He further states that it is an important step in the absenteeism management programme. The study (n= 42) 95% revealed that employees believe that there is a **disciplinary procedure or code at UMDM**. Levy (2003:5-6) suggests that employers should take early actions against employees who contravene the set rules. Furthermore, the study indicates that the employees (n=38) 86% believed that **management does not prioritise the need to control absenteeism** which indicates that the uMgungundlovu District Municipality is not paying attention to the absenteeism issue, thus compromising the quality of service rendered to the community. The totality of respondents (n=44) 100 % indicated that management does not offer an incentive or reward to honour presenteeism. Pillay (2009:6) asserts that consistent attendance should be rewarded. Furthermore, Paton (2006:9) states that the reward should be in the form of attendance bonus. The study indicates that respondents (n=34) 77% believed that the management does not make the absence management strategy part of its long-term plan. However, managers (n=7) 16% interviewed stated that the management that the absence management strategy is part of the municipality long-term plan and that the interviews are conducted to understand the reasons for absence.

The results of this research on the steps taken by management to deal with employees who absent themselves from work to ensure the continuation of service delivery show that **return to work interviews are not conducted, disciplinary procedures** need improvement, the **management does not prioritize the need to control absenteeism** as depicted in section 4.7.3. The finding is an indication that the steps detailed by South African Local Government

Bargaining Council, (2018:14) are not fully implemented and adhered to. It stipulates that in case of abscondment, the employers shall attempt to establish the whereabouts of the employee who absents himself/herself for about ten days without any notification to the municipality. If the employee cannot be located or does not respond to the written letter then the employer can proceed with the disciplinary hearing in his/her absence and the decision to reinstate or dismiss the absentee shall be in writing and communicated to the employee within five days after it has been made (South African Local Government Bargaining Council, 2018:14).

Furthermore, the Municipality does not provide any incentive or rewards to workers who consistently attend work as depicted in section 4.7.4. Organisations that use incentive or rewards systems are able to motivate their employees to go to work regularly. Cohen and Golan (2007:427) claim that job dissatisfaction might increase the rate of absenteeism and may affect service delivery.

The study has provided evidence that all the steps to enforce the policies to ensure the continuation of service delivery were not followed properly. There is a room for improvement in this regard. Furthermore, this study indicates that as long as the disciplinary procedures (steps) are not enforced in line with the disciplinary code of the District Municipality, the rate of absenteeism will not decrease. The uMgungundlovu District Municipality must ensure that the disciplinary procedures are followed and that there is a proper system to deal with absenteeism as any form of absenteeism be it authorised or authorised do affect service delivery. Therefore, the uMgungundlovu District Municipality must introduce an effective and formal system to tackle the issue of absenteeism so ensure the effectiveness of service delivery. Incentive or rewards is a method used to motivate and encourage employees to regularly attend work. Consequently, the uMgungundlovu District Municipality should incorporate such a method in its “absenteeism management system” to motivate and encourage its employees.

Table 5.1 Summary of the findings

<p>Objective 1:</p> <p>To ascertain the causes of absenteeism at UMDM and its effects on service delivery.</p>	<p>Objective 2:</p> <p>To identify the human resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at UMDM.</p>	<p>Objective 3:</p> <p>to determine the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at UMDM.</p>	<p>Objective 4:</p> <p>Steps taken by management to deal with the employees who absenting themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery.</p>
<p>RQ1: What are the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality and its effects on service delivery?</p>	<p>RQ2: What are the Human Resource policies developed and implemented to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?</p>	<p>RQ3: Who are the stakeholders involved in the policy development necessary to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality?</p>	<p>RQ4: What Steps taken by Management to deal with the employees who absent themselves from work for ensuring the continuation of service delivery?</p>
<p>Finding1:</p> <p>The study reveals that generally, the respondents consider poor working conditions, poor leadership style, work overload, lack of incentives or rewards as major causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality.</p>	<p>Finding2:</p> <p>The study reveals that respondents were able to list types of leaves namely, study leave, annual leave, parental leave, family responsibility leave, sick leave and ordinary leave. Respondents believe that the policies are not as effective as should be. Furthermore, all the steps to enforce the policies were not followed. The understanding of these policies was a problem for some employees and absenteeism does negatively affect service delivery.</p>	<p>Finding3:</p> <p>The study reveals that the majority of respondents were able to explain the role of managers and union representatives in the development of absenteeism policies. However, few respondents were not able to explain the role of councillors in the development of policies.</p>	<p>Finding4:</p> <p>The study reveals that all the steps to enforce the policies to ensure the continuation of service delivery were not followed properly.</p>

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

- A well elaborate absenteeism management system aimed at dealing with and addressing absenteeism should be developed in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The absenteeism management programme should continuously record absence. The system should be able to identify and monitor trends in absenteeism and patterns so as to flag them to the appropriate department. The programme should include an incentive or reward system to boost staff morale. Additionally, the programme should include counseling to workers who experience psychological disorder, especially after experiencing accidents at work.
- The management should conduct regular workshops explaining the different absenteeism policies to emphasise the importance of coming to work regularly.
- The management should enforce the return to work interviews.
- The management should correct employees who do not comply with the rules and regulations.
- The municipality should improve the communication between managers/supervisor and employees by adding more communication channels.
- The management should consider social factors and economic factors when developing absenteeism policies.
- Employees should commit to attending work on a regular basis and should be aware that if they do not comply, punishment will be enforced.
- The consequences of absenteeism should be clearly stated in the contract signed between the Municipality and its employees.
- The management should update/upgrade the equipment.
- The management should hire more workers, as employees complained that they are sometimes overworked not due to absenteeism but there are some posts which need new employees.
- The management should keep employees motivated so that the rate of absenteeism can be reduced.
- The management should introduce a system that deals with unfair treatment (favouritism).

5.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Further research with a large population and mixed methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) are required so that the findings can be generalised. Future research should also include national, provincial and local absenteeism statistics to provide more insights into the understanding of absenteeism in the public sector. Furthermore, future research should include the recipients of the service delivery as respondents to fully understand the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery.

5.11 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality. Specifically, the study targeted the causes of absenteeism and how they affect service delivery. To this end, potential factors that might be the causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality were examined and measured, namely: working conditions, leadership style, work overload, incentives or rewards, the awareness of absenteeism policies, understanding of the absenteeism policies, the role of managers, union representatives and councillors in policies development, effectiveness of the policies, return to work interview, the need to control absenteeism by management and absence management as part of long-term strategy. These factors were selected from the literature. In this study, absenteeism was defined as the failure to report for work as scheduled, regardless of the reason (Cascio and Boudreau, 2010).

The study reveals that generally, the respondents consider poor working conditions, poor leadership style, work overload, lack of incentives or rewards as fundamental causes of absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District municipality. The study also reveals that respondents believe that the policies are not as effective as should be. Furthermore, all the steps to enforce the policies were not followed. The understanding of these policies was a problem for some employees, and absenteeism does negatively affect service delivery. The study reveals that employees would expect incentives or rewards for attending work regularly to motivate them and therefore, reduce the rate of absenteeism.

This research study found that there were different views between the six managers interviewed and the rest of the respondents (employees) in terms of the disciplinary procedures, return to work interview and the absence management strategy being part of the long-term plan. The

findings of this study reveal that the employees clearly stated that disciplinary procedures are not followed and ineffective, while managers said that the disciplinary procedures are enforced. Furthermore, on the one hand, employees expressed views on the absence strategy as they were not aware of any absence management strategy as being part of long-term plan. On the other hand, managers revealed that there is an absence management strategy as a long-term plan.

The uMgungundlovu District Municipality can make use of the findings of this study to improve the management of absenteeism in the municipalities. This study sheds more light on the absenteeism problem and provides recommendations.

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APPENDICES

1. Ethical Clearance



07 August 2018

Mr Emmanuel Xolani Muthwa (211559490)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Muthwa,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0978/018M

Project Title: Assessing the impact of absenteeism policies on service delivery in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal Province

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 24 July 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Brian K Majola
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Isabel Martins
Cc School Administrator: Ms Debbie Cunynghame

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [simhap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:simbhap@ukzn.ac.za) / snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunpd@ukzn.ac.za

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3. Supervisor's Report




UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
School of Management, IT and Governance

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

Supervisor's Name	Dr Brian Kwazi Majola
Student's Name	Emmanuel Xolani Muthwa
Student Number	211559490
Dissertation Title	THE IMPACT OF ABSENTEEISM POLICIES ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

What was the duration of the project and its supervision?	
When was it first registered?	February 2018
When did the supervision begin?	March 2018
Was a schedule of work and consultations drawn up and adhered to?	Yes
How frequently, and for how long, did the student and you meet for supervisory sessions?	During and after each chapter has been submitted.
What guidance or assistance was given to the student in formulating the research topic, drawing up the research proposal, conducting the literature search, defining the theoretical basis for the study, devising a suitable research methodology, adopting appropriate referencing and bibliographic methods, designing questionnaires, conducting fieldwork research, and developing the argument?	Guidance and assistance was given from the beginning of the study until completion.
Comment on the extent to which the collection of data, the solution of problems, deductions and critical discussion have resulted from the candidate's own efforts, or from discussion between the candidate and the supervisor, and how responsive the student has been to suggestions and recommendations	The supervisor-student relationship was good as the student would call, SMS and or send emails when he needed advise or any kind of assistance. He has been a very dedicated and committed student.
Where there resource constraints or opportunities, or equipment problems, which might have been that impacted on the research?	The student had access to the library, laboratory and internet even outside the university.
What assistance has been given to the student regarding matters of expression, style and general presentation?	The student is aware of the language department and editors dealing academic writing.
Is there any particular information that the examiners need to be aware of?	No
Have you seen and approved of the entire final draft of the dissertation?	Yes
Are you satisfied that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no plagiarism in the dissertation?	The turnitin report has been submitted.



 SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR

2019/05/28

 DATE:

4. Interview Guide

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- Gender.
- Age
- Home Language
- Marital Status
- Level of Education
- Designation
- Department
- Years of Experience in the Municipality
- Date of Interview

SECTION B: GENERAL QUESTIONS

- 1) Shed more light, how is work overload contributes to absenteeism in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality?

- 2) Explain to me how working conditions can be a cause of absenteeism in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality?

- 3) How does leadership style causes absenteeism in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality that affects service delivery?

- 4) Does absenteeism have impact on productivity, if yes, how and how does it affect service delivery?

- 5) Tell me, what is the effect of absenteeism on high turnover rate in the context of service delivery?

SECTION C: TECHNICAL QUESTIONS OR POLICY RELATED QUESTIONS

- 6) What are the policies put in place to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to ensure service delivery, can you list them for me?

- 7) Is it easy to understand the absenteeism policies that are in place at uMgungundlovu District Municipality? And why do you say that?

- 8) How the Municipality ensures the enforcement of the policies that deals with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to ensure service delivery?

- 9) How effective are the policies put in place to deal with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to ensure service delivery?

- 10) What is the role of managers, Union representatives and Councillors in the development of policies that deals with absenteeism at uMgungundlovu District Municipality to ensure service delivery?

- 11) Does management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality conduct return to work interviews to quickly understand the reasons for absence to ensure service delivery?

12) Is there Disciplinary procedure or code that is used by management on staff members who absent themselves from work without authority?

13) Does management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality prioritise the need to control absenteeism to ensure service delivery, if yes how?

14) Does management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality offer employees attendance incentives or reward to ensure service delivery?

15) Does management at uMgungundlovu District Municipality make absence management strategy part of its long-term plan to ensure service delivery?

Closing Remarks

- Is there anything else on these issues you would like to add that I did not cover in this interview?

Thank you for making the time to meet with me!

5. Gatekeeper



04 July 2018

RE: GATEKEEPER'S CONSENT

I Dr Raymond Ngcobo in my capacity as Municipal Manager hereby give permission to **Student name: Emmanuel Xolani Muthwa (Student No. 211 559 490)** to conduct research in my organization.

The student may use the name of the organisation in the dissertation.

Sincerely;



DR MRB NGCOBO
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Company Stamp:



Date: 12/07/2018

Office of the Municipal Manager
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242 Langalibalele Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
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