

Masters Research Project

Investigation of Underlying Processes influencing Absenteeism

By

Jessie Banks

202521191

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Social Sciences in the School of Psychology Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Howard College

Supervisor: Dr A. Moola

March 2009

Declaration:

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Social Sciences in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the Degree of Masters of Social Sciences in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name: Jessie Banks

Signature  \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 03 March 2009

## Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals who provided time, guidance and support towards making this study possible:

- ❖ First and foremost I thank God for giving me strength and seeing me through it all.
  
- ❖ My supervisor, Dr Moola, thank you so much for all your guidance, support, assistance and encouragement. Your advice, patience and commitment are invaluable and greatly appreciated. You are an inspiration.
  
- ❖ My family and friends, your words of encouragement and support gave me strength and determination. You are all bright shining stars in my life. Thank you.

## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to use Adams' Equity Theory in order to examine the underlying processes/factors influencing absenteeism. Two primary issues were investigated. One was to examine the potential relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism. The second was to examine the potential relationship between the demographic characteristics of the perceiver and the perception of inequity and equity. A random stratified sample of 110 was drawn from automotive component manufacturing companies in KwaZulu-Natal. A specifically constructed questionnaire comprising of a biographical data section and another on assessing perceptions of inequity was administered. Data was analysed using SPSS. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The results indicated a significant relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism rates. Therefore, participants who perceived an inequitable situation in the workplace were absent more often than participants who perceived an equitable situation. Furthermore a significant relationship was found between age and tenure and the perception of inequity. Participants who perceived inequity were in the 31-35 age group and had been employed by their current company for between 6-10 years. No relationship was found between the biographical characteristics of gender, ethnic background, educational levels and the perception of inequity and equity. A major limitation of the study was access to historical absenteeism data of the participants. In order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that underlie the relationship between perceived inequity in the workplace and behavioural reactions such as absenteeism, within a South African context, further research on the application of the theory must be done in future.

## Table of Contents

	Page Number
Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
Appendices	vi
Tables	vii
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	1 - 16
1.1 General Problem Statement	1
1.2 Literature Review	1
1.2.1 Motivation and Work Motivation Theories	1
1.2.2 Background to Adams' Equity Theory	2
1.2.2.1 Relative Deprivation	2
1.2.2.2 Distributive Justice	2
1.2.3 Adams' Equity Theory	4
1.2.4 Absenteeism defined	7
1.2.5 Past research on Absenteeism and Perceived Inequity	7
1.2.6 Research on Demographic Characteristics and the perception of inequity	10
1.3 Objectives of the study	11
1.4 Hypotheses of the study	12
1.5 Motivation and Significance of the study	13
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>Design and Methodology</b>	16 - 21
2.1 Research Design	16
2.2 Methodology	17
2.2.1 Sample and Population	17
2.2.2 Instrumentation	18

2.2.2.1	Purpose and Construction of the Questionnaire	18
2.2.2.2	Psychometric Properties of the Questionnaire	18
2.2.2.2.1	Reliability	18
2.2.2.2.2	Validity	19
2.2.3	Procedures	19
2.2.4	Data Analysis	20
2.2.4.1	Descriptive Statistics	20
2.2.4.2	Inferential Statistics	21
2.2.5	Limitations of Design	21
<b>Chapter 3</b>		
<b>Interpretation of Results</b>		22 - 37
3.1	Introduction	22
3.2	Validity and Reliability	22
3.2.1	Content and Face Validity	22
3.2.2	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha	22
3.3	Response Rate	23
3.4	Approaches to Data Analysis	23
3.5	Descriptive Statistics	25
3.5.1	Background Characteristics	25
3.5.2	Absenteeism Rates	26
3.6	Inferential Statistics	27
3.6.1	Hypothesis 1: Employees who perceive inequity are absent more often than those who perceive equity in the workplace	27
3.6.2	Hypothesis 2: There will be a relationship between the age of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	31
3.6.3	Hypothesis 3: There will be a relationship between the age of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	32
3.6.4	Hypothesis 4: There will be a relationship between the ethnic background of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	33

3.6.5 Hypothesis 5: There will be a relationship between the number of years the employees have been employed at their current company and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	34
3.6.6 Hypothesis 6: There will be a relationship between the educational levels of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	36
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Discussion</b>	37 - 45
4.1 Introduction	37
4.2 Descriptive Statistics	37
4.2.1 Background Characteristics and Absenteeism Rates	37
4.3 Inferential Statistics	39
4.3.1 Hypothesis tests of whether employees who perceive inequity are absent more often than those who perceive equity in the workplace	39
4.3.2 Hypothesis tests of potential relationships between age, gender, ethnic background, number of years employed by current company, educational levels and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	43
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
<b>Limitations, Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	45 - 47
5.1 Limitations	45
5.2 Conclusion	46
5.3 Recommendations	46
References	48 - 52

## Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form	53
Appendix B: Questionnaire	54
Appendix C: Proposed Schedule for Study Completion	55

## Tables

Table 1: Correlation Table: Paterson, Peromnes and TASK Grades	17
Table 2: Background Characteristics for all the Participants	25
Table 3: Total Absenteeism rates for the participants	26
Table 4: Unexcused Absenteeism rates for the participants	27
Table 5: T-test between unexcused absenteeism rates and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	28
Table 6: T-test between total absenteeism rates and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	28
Table 7: Cross-tabulation between unexcused absenteeism rates for the participants and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	29
Table 8: Cross-tabulation between the total absenteeism rates for the participants and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	30
Table 9: T-test between age of participants and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	31
Table 10: Cross-tabulation between the age of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	32
Table 11: Cross-tabulation between gender of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	33
Table 12: Cross-tabulation between the ethnic background of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	34
Table 13: T-test between total number of years employed by the current company and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	35
Table 14: Cross-tabulation between the number of years the employees have been employed at their current company and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	35
Table 15: Cross-tabulation between the educational levels obtained by employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace	36

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 General Problem Statement*

The purpose of this study is to use Adams' Equity Theory in order to examine the underlying processes/factors influencing absenteeism. The potential relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism and the potential relationship between the demographic characteristics of the perceiver and the perception of inequity and equity will be investigated.

### *1.2 Literature Review*

#### *1.2.1 Motivation and Work Motivation Theories*

Many authors have defined the concept of motivation and therefore it is difficult to find a universally acceptable definition. Rollinson, Broadfield and Edwards (2005) and Muchinsky (2006) conceptualise motivation as an explanatory concept which consists of three components of behaviour that have an impact on performance: direction, intensity and persistence. Direction pertains to activities which direct an individual's energy and behaviour and is greatly influenced by an individual's desires. Intensity pertains to the amount of motivation and energy the individual expends in a particular direction in pursuit of such desires. Lastly, persistence pertains to the individual's sustained energy over time and the willingness to maintain the chosen direction even when obstacles are encountered (Muchinsky, 2006; Rollinson et al. 2005). Many theories have been developed in order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of motivation within the workplace.

Work motivation theories have tended to split into two major streams, each of which deals with a different aspect of motivation (Rollinson et al. 2005). Content theories focus on the needs, wants and desires of people as the main impetus for motivated behaviour (Rollinson et al. 2005; Steers, Mowday & Shapiro, 2004). Content theories include Maslow's Needs Theory (1954), Herzberg's Two-factor theory (1959), McClelland's Theory of Learned Needs (1967) and Alderfer's ERG Theory (1972) (as cited in Rollinson et al. 2005). Although content theories discuss particular work-related factors that could impact on motivation, they do not discuss the underlying processes of motivation (Rollinson et al. 2005). Process theories contrast sharply with content theories as they view work from a dynamic perspective and attempt to understand the underlying mechanisms, namely thought processes, which impact on motivation and assist in

predicting employee behaviour (Rollinson et al. 2005; Steers et al. 2004). Among the process theories are Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), Goal-setting Theory (Locke, 1968; Steers & Porter, 1974) and Adams' Equity Theory (1965) (as cited in Rollinson et al. 2005). Adams' equity theory (1965), a process theory, proposes that perceived inequity is a motivational force. Equity theory attempts to explain the underlying mechanisms or thought processes, relating to the perception of equity or inequity, which impact on employee motivation. Thus, in order to generate a comprehensive understanding of employee absenteeism in relation to motivation, equity theory will be used.

### *1.2.2 Background to Adams' Equity Theory*

#### *1.2.2.1 Relative deprivation*

Relative deprivation is a condition that occurs eliciting feelings of injustice. In turn, these feelings of injustice trigger expressions of dissatisfaction. These feelings of injustice may mediate the effects of relative deprivation. What is *just* is based upon relatively strong expectations, such as the expectation that educational achievement will be correlated with job status achievement and promotion at approximately the same rate as one's colleagues or co-worker(s) (Adams, 1965). Thus, a comparative process is inherent in developing expectations and the perception of injustice, as implied by the term *relative* deprivation. This comparative process is evident in a study conducted by Stouffer, Suchman, DeVusney, Starr, Shirley and Williams (1949) on relative deprivation within the military. In relation to the general mobility of men in the Air Corps, injustice was experienced by those who had not been promoted. Whereas there was no such felt injustice among policemen in the military when they compared their rate of promotion to the overall low promotion rate prevalent amongst policemen in the military (Stouffer et al. 1949). Therefore, as indicated in the study, injustice is experienced as a response to the *discrepancy* between what is perceived to be and what is perceived should be.

#### *1.2.2.2 Distributive Justice*

This concept has been explored by political philosophers and others from the time of Aristotle. According to Homans (1950, 1953, 1961 as cited in Adams, 1965), distributive justice amongst individuals in an exchange relationship with one another remains *just* when the profits (referred to as 'outcomes' in Adams' Equity Theory) are proportional to their investments

(referred to as 'inputs' in Adams' Equity Theory). Profits or outcomes consist of that which is received in the exchange. Investments or inputs in an exchange are the relevant attributes that are brought by individuals to the exchange. According to Homans (1950, 1953, 1961 as cited in Adams, 1965) when inequality between these proportions exists, certain individuals in the exchange will experience feelings of injustice and deprivation. This individual, experiencing relative deprivation, will incur a ratio whereby his/her investments are larger than the profits he/she receives. This relation between ratios of profits to investments results in felt justice or injustice.

The theory of distributive justice can also be applied to the case of two or more persons, each of whom receives his/her rewards from a third party such as an employer, for example Homans (1950, 1953, 1961 as cited in Adams, 1965). In such an instance, each of the individuals is in an exchange with the employer and will expect that the employer will maintain a fair ratio of profits (outcomes) to investments (inputs) between himself and the other individuals in the exchange. A possible difficulty with such a situation is that an individual's perception of his/her profits and investments are not necessarily identical with another individual's perception. Furthermore, two individuals might agree as to what both of their investments are and yet disagree as to the weight each investment should be given. Should more weight be given to age, gender, job experience, education and so on. When equality is achieved and maintained satisfaction ought to be experienced. When inequality exists, on the other hand, between the ratios this causes pressures for redress, accompanied by dissatisfaction.

The theoretical concepts of relative deprivation and distributive justice specify some of the conditions that arouse perceptions of injustice and the conditions that lead individuals to feel that their relations with others are just (Adams, 1965). However, these concepts fail to specify theoretically what the consequences of felt injustice are, other than dissatisfaction. Homans (1961 as cited in Adams, 1965) cites a study by Clark (1958) in which a female employee reported slowing her pace of work as a means of establishing a more just relation with a co-worker. Therefore, individuals do not simply become dissatisfied with conditions they perceive to be unjust 'they usually do something about it' (Clark, 1958).

In what follows, Adams' theory will specify both the antecedents of perceived injustice and its consequences. It is not a new theory but rather builds upon the work previously described in relation to relative deprivation and distributive justice.

### *1.2.3 Adams' Equity Theory*

Adams' equity theory is a model of motivation that explains how individuals strive for fairness and justice in social exchanges in order to maintain equitable relationships and that individuals cognitively evaluate these relationships in order to assess the degree of equity (Adams, 1965). Conditions necessary to produce equity or inequity are based on the individual's perception of inputs and outputs (Adams, 1965). In order to establish and maintain equity in relationships, individuals must perceive that outcomes are proportional to their contributions. When individuals experience inequitable relationships, they encounter cognitive dissonance and are motivated to reduce that dissonance (Adams, 1965; Allen, Biderman & White, 2003).

The basic tenet of equity theory is that people compare themselves with a referent doing similar work. Adams (1965) defines this other person as the 'comparison other.' Although Adams does not specify who the comparison other will be he does state that this comparison other may be a group average, another employee, a job role, or a friend working under the same conditions (Adams, 1965). A number of studies support the notion that the comparison other is chosen on the basis of salience (most prominent or noticeable individuals), similarity and availability (McKenna, 2000; Northcraft & Neale, 1994; Rollinson et al, 2005; Stepina & Perrewe, 1991).

Inputs are usually multiple and refer to contributions such as: acceptance of responsibility, job knowledge, experience, personal involvement with work, dedication, effort, seniority, time, skill and performance (Aldag & Brief, 1981; McKenna, 2000; Northcraft & Neale, 1994). Outcomes are received for one's inputs into his/her work and generally consist of rewards or benefits such as: pay, promotional opportunities, praise, prestige, recognition, interpersonal relations with supervisors and co-workers, status, increases in salary and fringe benefits (Aldag & Brief, 1981; McKenna, 2000; Northcraft & Neale, 1994). In the employment situation the most important outcome is likely to be pay (Muchinsky, 2006).

The theory proposes that people calculate a mental ratio of inputs to outcomes which becomes a process of social comparison in whereby each employee compares his/her inputs and outcomes to another individual's or comparison other (Furnham, 1992; Weller, 1995). According to Rollinson et al. (2005) some people are more sensitive to perceptions of inequity than others because perceiving inequity is a subjective experience. The following equation (which indicates an equitable relationship) proposed by Adams in 1965 is used in order to determine whether an equitable relationship exists or not (Adams, 1965; Aldag & Brief, 1981; Cosier & Dalton, 1983; McCormick & Tiffin, 1975).

$$\frac{O_p}{I_p} = \frac{O_o}{I_o}$$

Where:  $O_p$  is the person's perception of outcomes he/she is receiving.

$I_p$  is the person's perception of his/her inputs.

$O_o$  is the person's perception of the outcomes his/her 'comparison other' is receiving.

$I_o$  is the person's perception of the inputs of his/her 'comparison other.'

(Cosier & Dalton, 1983, p. 312)

According to Adams' (1965) equity or inequity is based on the ratio of outcomes over inputs which can be determined using the equation above. Based on this equation, situations of equity and inequity (overreward and underreward) may arise. Equity is achieved when the ratio of employee outcomes ( $O_p$ ) over inputs ( $I_p$ ) is equal to the comparison others outcomes ( $O_o$ ) over inputs ( $I_o$ ) (Adams, 1965). In this equitable (literally 'fair') situation it is proposed that the individual is content and will not take any actions to restore equity to the situation as it is not necessary (Adams, 1965; Cosier & Dalton, 1983). An inequitable situation of overreward may be perceived when the ratio of employee outcomes ( $O_p$ ) over inputs ( $I_p$ ) is greater than the comparison other's outcomes ( $O_o$ ) over inputs ( $I_o$ ) which can lead to feelings of guilt and consequent actions to restore equity to the situation (Adams, 1965; Cosier & Dalton, 1983; Northcraft & Neale, 1994).

More importantly, for purposes of the study, the inequitable (literally ‘unfair’) situation of underreward is perceived when the ratio of the employee’s outcomes ( $O_p$ ) over inputs ( $I_p$ ) is less than the comparison other’s outcomes ( $O_o$ ) over inputs ( $I_o$ ). In this situation the person perceives that he/she is receiving fewer outcomes than the comparison other is receiving for his/her inputs even though both are contributing the same inputs (Adams, 1965; Cosier & Dalton, 1983; Northcraft & Neale, 1994). Thus, when the ratio is not equal, the person experiences a sense of inequity; that is, an emotion of discontent or cognitive dissonance (or feelings of psychological discomfort) which the individual will be motivated to reduce via behavioural or cognitive actions in order to restore it to an equitable situation (Adams, 1965; Allen, Biderman & White, 2003; McCormick & Tiffin, 1975; Weller, 1995). The tension caused by this cognitive dissonance as a result of perceived inequity varies and the greater the tension the greater the motivation to act in order to reduce it and restore equity (Adams, 1965; Geurts, Schaufeli & Rutte, 1999). However, not everyone will take actions to restore equity as some individuals have a tolerance to it (Rollinson et al. 2005). This tolerance appears to be a personality variable. It’s investigation falls outside the scope of this study (see Recommendations on page 46).

Equity theory is concerned with outcomes and inputs as they are perceived by the people involved, not necessarily as they actually are, although that in itself is often very difficult to measure (Adams, 1965). Therefore, workers may disagree about what constitutes equity and inequity on the job (Adams, 1965). Equity is therefore a subjective, not objective, experience which makes it more susceptible to being influenced by personality and demographic factors (Furnham, 1992). Consequently, perceptions of inequity may also be influenced by the characteristics (age, gender, race, tenure and educational level) of the individual perceiving the situation (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Thus, in order to generate a comprehensive understanding of the underlying processes of absenteeism in relation to equity theory it is imperative to understand how an individual’s demographic characteristics impact on perception of inequity (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Furnham, 1992).

According to Muchinsky (2006) Adams does not specify exactly which form of inequity reduction an individual will choose. Those individuals, however, who do choose to take cognitive or behavioural actions in order to decrease the psychological discomfort caused by

perceived inequity and restore equity, one or a combination of the following actions can be chosen: Modify one's inputs or outcomes, distort or modify perceptions of self, distort or modify perceptions of the comparison other, change the comparison other, get the comparison other to change his/her inputs and outcomes, or leave the organisation (Adams, 1965; Aldag & Brief, 1981; Geurts et al. 1999; McCormick & Tiffin, 1975; McKenna, 2000; Muchinsky, 2006; Northcraft & Neale, 1994; Rollinson et al. 2005; Weller, 1995). Adams (1965) states that behavioural withdrawal (or in equity terms 'leaving the field') is another means available to restore equity when perceived inequity exists. This option of temporary withdrawal from the organisation in the form of absenteeism in response to perceived inequity (due to underreward) is supported further by literature and previous studies (Aldag & Brief, 1981; Geurts, Buunk & Schaufeli, 1994; Geurts et al. 1999; Northcraft and Neale, 1994; Van Yperen, Hagedoorn & Geurts, 1996). Absenteeism, as a withdrawal reaction to perceived inequity, is a withdrawal from work obligations and from the organisation in order to lower the employee's inputs and weaken the exchange relationship with the organisation (De Boer, Bakker, Syroit & Schaufeli, 2002). Basically, absence is a withdrawal behaviour used to restore equity by removing inputs (Cohen-Charash, 2001; Furnham, 1992). Equity theory has its problems: how to deal with the concept of negative inputs, the point at which equity becomes inequity. This theory, however, has stimulated an enormous amount of literature which addresses itself to the issue of motivation (Adams, 1965). In essence, then, the theory predicts that people are motivated to achieve subjectively perceived equity (Furnham, 1992).

#### *1.2.4 Absenteeism defined*

Absenteeism will be defined as: "The non-attendance of employees for scheduled work when they are expected to attend" (Huczynski & Fitzpatrick, 1989, pg.3) and "the non-attendance when an employee is scheduled to work" (Cilliers, 1977, pg.5). Therefore, absenteeism is a disruptive incident which relates to the non-attendance when employees are expected or scheduled to be at work and can be classified as unexcused absence (Van der Merwe & Miller, 1988). Unexcused absence will be used for the purposes of the current study.

#### *1.2.5 Past research on absenteeism and perceived inequity*

Adams (1965) states that behavioural withdrawal (or in equity terms 'leaving the field') is

another means available to restore equity when perceived inequity exists and this is further supported by literature and previous studies (Aldag & Brief, 1981; Geurts et al. 1994; Geurts et al. 1999; Northcraft and Neale, 1994; Van Yperen et al. 1996). Such studies in organisational behaviour that have tested assumptions and predictions derived from equity theory have contributed substantially to our understanding of individual behaviour in organisations (Stepina & Perrewe, 1991). Dittrich and Carell (1979) conducted a study which examined whether job satisfaction and/or perceptions of inequitable treatment were related to employee behaviours such as absence and turnover. The study revealed that employee perceptions of inequitable treatment were stronger predictors of absence and turnover than job satisfaction. Chadwick-Jones, Nicholson and Brown (1982, as cited in Geurts et al. 1999) stated in their social theory of absenteeism, that absenteeism is a negative exchange behaviour whereby employees withdraw their presence from work in order to make up for work load pressures, stress or other negative aspects of their jobs.

Geurts and associates have conducted studies relating perceived inequity to absenteeism within the workplace and these studies have yielded significant results (Geurts et al. 1994; Geurts et al. 1999; Van Yperen et al. 1996). Geurts et al. (1994) investigated absence frequency amongst male Dutch blue-collar workers who worked in a metal manufacturing plant. This study demonstrated that absenteeism was the result of the perception of inequity when employees compared several job aspects to those of their comparison others and that employees tended to adjust their personal absence norm to that of their work group. Van Yperen et al. (1996) also conducted a similar study to Geurts et al. (1994) which used Dutch blue-collar workers in a metal manufacturing plant. The study conducted by Van Yperen et al. (1996) also investigated the relationship between perceived inequity and absenteeism. A significant relationship between perceived inequity and absenteeism was discovered, however, some employees who perceived an intolerant group absence norm were less likely to report sick despite their perception of inequity in the workplace (Van Yperen et al. 1996). Furthermore, a study conducted by Geurts et al. (1999) amongst Dutch health-care professionals investigated whether there was a direct or indirect relationship between perceived inequity, absenteeism and turnover in the workplace. The study revealed that there was a strong direct link between perceived inequity and absenteeism in the workplace and that this relationship was not mediated by any other factors. Thus, it was

concluded that absenteeism could be considered to be a direct withdrawal behavioural reaction to perceived inequity (Geurts et al. 1999).

Furthermore, Hirschfeld, Smitt and Bedeian (2002) conducted a study which explored the relationship of skill variety and task significance (both intrinsic job characteristics and job-content perceptions) and instrumentality (extent to which job performance leads to desirable outcomes) with absenteeism in a sample of low-wage public-sector clerical employees. Their study revealed that those who perceived to be receiving especially low performance-rewards and who considered their jobs to require high skill variety and task significance were likely to be absent more often in order to create a more equitable exchange with the organisation (Hirschfeld et al. 2002). These studies support the equity theory claim that when employees perceive an inequitable situation, it causes cognitive dissonance and in order to restore equity the individual may use the behavioural response of being absent from work.

Although a number of studies have been conducted investigating the relationship between absenteeism and perceived inequity in the workplace more current research is necessary in order to investigate this relationship further. According to Stepina and Perrewé (1991), areas that require further research involve the theory's major components regarding feelings of inequity and the consequences of these feelings for employee reactions. This state of affairs is an important motivator for the need to further our knowledge and therefore generate more research regarding absenteeism as a result of perceived inequity and this study sets out to attempt to bridge this gap. There is also a need to further research into the potential influence that biographical details (age, gender, and so on) may have on absence norms and the value they attach to the violation of specific fairness rules which may influence their perception of inequity (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; De Boer et al. 2002). The current study attempts to explore the degree to which age, gender, length of employment and educational level impact on an individual's perception of inequity and absenteeism. Furthermore, there is a necessity to research equity theory and its propositions within South Africa's diverse and complex workforces. The current research is being conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and will investigate whether the behavioural response of absenteeism will be used by employees to restore equity in a perceived inequitable situation in the workplace. The current study's findings are likely to

generate rich and current information regarding the application of Adams's equity theory within the South African workplace.

#### *1.2.6 Research on demographic characteristics and the perception of inequity*

According to Adams (1965), biographical characteristics such as age, education, ethnic background, social status and tenure are seen as contributions to the input/output ratio in relation to a comparison other. Thus, biographical characteristics are seen as factors that have a potential relationship to the person's perception of inequity or equity. Research on individual differences suggests that a number of demographic variables affect how individuals perceive and react to inequitable treatment (Huseman, Hatfield & Miles, 1987; Taris, Kalimo & Schaufeli, 2002). This is further supported by Goodman and Friedman (1971), in their examination of Adams' theory of inequity, who stated that characteristics of the individual can affect feelings of inequity.

Klein and Maher (1966, as cited in Goodman & Friedman, 1971) investigated education as a characteristic influencing the perception of inequity and discovered that college educated respondents were more likely to feel dissatisfied with their pay than noncollege respondents when comparing their input/output ratio to that of a comparison other. A study conducted by Kulik, Lind, Ambrose and MacCoun (1996) investigated gender differences in treatment and judgements of distributive and procedural justice. Their study revealed that men and women did differ in how they perceived distributive justice which deals with the perceived fairness of outcomes (such as pay and promotions) and the relations of these justice perceptions to certain inputs (such as quality and quantity of work). Another study concerned with the effects of demographic factors on equity and inequity perception concluded that an individual's perception of equity in relation to pay for inputs was significantly affected by the individual's perceived earning potential as a result of his/her education, age and gender (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978). Furthermore, laboratory studies (Taynor & Deaux, 1973; Taynor, Janet & Deaux, 1975, as cited in Carrell & Dittrich, 1978) found that gender is a demographic factor that influences an individual's equity and inequity perceptions.

According to Carrell and Dittrich (1978, p.205) a number of studies of perception support the theory that an individual's perception of equity and inequity is 'based on an internal socially-

derived standard of inputs/outcomes, rather than a particular comparison person'. Consequently, according to this view, identifying the demographic characteristics of a participant (age, gender, ethnic background and education) is integral in understanding their impact on the individual's mental ratio of inputs/outcomes which determines whether or not an individual perceives inequity or equity (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978).

According to Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) demographic characteristics such as gender, race and age might influence justice perceptions via self-interest or egocentric bias. In this case, beneficiaries of certain outcomes and procedures might prefer them over other outcomes and procedures. For example: an affirmative action program that emphasises race might be perceived as fair by the races benefiting from such a program and might be perceived as unfair by the races that are not benefited by it (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Self-interest explanations by themselves are limited in their ability to explain justice preferences; however, they help in explaining that preferences for justice and fairness will shift with the specific circumstance of the perceiver (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). However, it is not necessarily the case that all members of the same demographic group share similar experiences and hence have similar justice perceptions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). According to a meta-analysis conducted by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) on the role of justice in organisations, findings indicated that regardless of age, gender, race, educational level and tenure employees tended to perceive justice similarly. Thus age, gender, race, education and tenure were not strongly related to the perception of equity or inequity. These findings are inconsistent with findings from a study conducted by Brockner and Adsit (1986) (as cited in Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001) which indicated that males reacted more strongly and perceived a higher degree of perceived inequity than females in relation to inequitable situations within the workplace.

### *1.3 Objectives of the study*

- To identify the employees' perceived inputs and outcomes.
- To identify the employees' perception of his/her comparison other's inputs and outcomes.
- To identify the participants' absenteeism rate for a period of three months prior to the study.

- To examine the potential relationship between perceived inequity and absenteeism.
- To identify the characteristics of the perceiver in relation to: age, gender, ethnic background, educational level and number of years employed in current company.
- To investigate the potential relationship between perceived inequity and equity and the underlying characteristics of the perceiver with regards to: age, gender, ethnic group, educational level and number of years employed by current company.

#### *1.4 Hypotheses of the study*

1. Employees who perceive inequity are absent more often than those who perceive equity in the workplace.
2. There will be a relationship between the age of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.
3. There will be a relationship between the gender of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.
4. There will be a relationship between the ethnic background of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.
5. There will be a relationship between the number of years the employees have been employed at their current company and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.
6. There will be a relationship between the educational levels of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.

In this study there are two main relationships between dependent and independent variables that are being tested. In the first relationship, absenteeism is the dependent or outcome variable and perceived inequity is the independent variable. The independent variable influences the dependent variable in either a negative or positive way (Sekaran, 2000). Therefore, perceived inequity, a motivational factor, is the independent variable because it potentially influences absenteeism as individuals who perceive inequity have a greater chance of being absent from work in order to restore equity. In the second relationship perceived inequity becomes the

dependent variable and gender, age, ethnic background, number of years employed by current company and educational levels are the independent variables. These independent variables are used in the study to determine whether or not they potentially influence the perception of inequity.

### *1.5 Motivation and Significance of the study*

The unemployment rate declined from 23.5% over the period of January to March 2008 to 23.1% in the period of April to June 2008 (down 0.4 of one percentage point). This was due to the slight expansion in employment and the slight reduction in unemployment. The decline in the unemployment rate reflects a decline for both men (down from 20.6% in the first quarter to 19.9% in the second quarter) and women (down from 26.9% in the first quarter to 26.8% in the second quarter (Statistics South Africa, 2008). Therefore, the number of employed individuals is gradually increasing in South Africa; however, absenteeism is still a major cost for organisations (Lilford, 2008). Absenteeism in South Africa is reaching high levels, and could be costing the country's economy as much as R12 billion per year (Lilford, 2008). While this figure, which was suggested in a recent study conducted in several South African companies by AIC Insurance, sounds very high it is not surprising if you consider all of the costs associated with absenteeism. This would include both indirect and direct costs. According to this study conducted by the AIC Insurance Company, on any given day, absenteeism rates can range from 4.5% to as high as 18% (Lilford, 2008). These absenteeism rates would represent considerable losses to any company. The underlying reasons as to why some companies are experiencing such losses in productivity and increased absenteeism needs to be investigated (Lilford, 2008).

As a result of globalisation, human capital is considered vital for companies to remain competitive. Companies need to optimise the performance of their workforces by decreasing absenteeism and generating motivated employees who work harder and smarter, resulting in improved productivity and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, companies need to optimise the performance of their workforces and minimise the effects and costs of absenteeism not only for their economic performance but also for the overall economic performance of South Africa. Thus, absenteeism which is costing the country and its businesses heavily, needs to be addressed

(Lilford, 2008). It is, therefore, necessary to generate more research in order to understand the complexities that underlie absenteeism in order to be able to create a more motivated workforce and decrease cost to the organisation caused by absenteeism in the South African workplace. Adams' equity theory will be used in order to investigate some of the underlying processes influencing absenteeism in the workplace in order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of this costly phenomenon.

Employee absenteeism is a costly yet poorly understood organisational phenomenon (Gellatly, 1995; Martocchio & Harrison, 1993; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). This cost is one of the reasons why much effort has been directed towards understanding the causes or antecedents of absenteeism. Despite being costly, absenteeism is also a pervasive problem in organisations (Blau & Boal, 1987; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Gellatly, 1995). Absenteeism disrupts scheduled work which results in a decrease in production and raises organisational running costs (Gordon, 1987; Huczynski & Fitzpatrick, 1989). It has been estimated that one day's absence costs the organisation one and a half to three times the daily rate of pay (Van Der Merwe & Miller, 1988). The cost of absenteeism can be divided into direct costs (sick pay, cost of fringe benefits not earned and the cost of overtime and overstaffing) and indirect costs (reduced employee morale, disruption of work, reduced productivity, lower quality products, customer dissatisfaction or loss as a result of missed deadlines or poor quality, management and supervisor time spent handling discipline, grievance procedures, following-up, and so forth (Gordon, 1987; Huczynski & Fitzpatrick, 1989; Van Der Merwe & Miller, 1988). As a result, an understanding of the underlying processes of absenteeism are necessary in order to be able to manage and decrease such a costly phenomenon (absenteeism) in the workplace (Furnham, 1992).

The direct relationship between equity theory and work related effects offer a fertile area for field research (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978; H Kotze, 1996). Carrel and Dittrich (1978, p.207) state that a 'promising research path is in studying workers' use of absence to reduce effort in situations of perceived inequity'. Adams' equity theory of motivation will be used in this study in order to determine the relationship between perceived inequity and the behavioural withdrawal response of being absent from work. The study is significant as its results will add to the existing body of research regarding the perception of inequity and absenteeism and consequently generate

a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying processes of absenteeism in South Africa. South Africa has a complex workforce and needs an in-depth analysis into certain psychological processes that influence behaviour in the workplace. Equity theory provides such a framework.

According to Goodman and Friedman (1971, p. 283) a major contribution to equity research would be to 'develop methods to capture the multiple cognitions used to define inequity and to resolve it'. This study has developed its own self-administered, structured questionnaire in order to gather information regarding: an individual's perception of inequity, his/her demographic characteristics which may potentially influence the perception of inequity and the behavioural responses used to resolve an inequitable situation. Furnham (1992, p.250) states that 'studies appear to have focused on issues such as organizational commitment rather than personality factors or demographic characteristics like age and length of service' in understanding justice perceptions and absenteeism and 'although there are fairly complicated and sophisticated models of absenteeism, few consider individual differences or subjectively perceived reasons for lack of attendance'. Demographic characteristics which have an impact on whether or not individuals perceive inequity and equity need to be further investigated (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Goodman & Friedman, 1971). Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001, p.308) 'see it as a challenge for future research to examine this question further and to furnish us with a better knowledge of the conditions, if any, under which various demographic and personality variables affect justice perceptions'. This study sets out to explore the potential relationship between biographical characteristics (age, gender, ethnic background, educational level and tenure) and perception of inequity and equity.

According to Carrell and Dittrich (1978) applied field research is a more appropriate approach to studying equity theory principles. Goodman and Friedman (1971), in their examination of inequity, indicated that most studies have used a relatively small sample size. Furthermore, in a case study conducted by Kotze (1996), which investigated the principles of equity theory on a small firm, it was concluded that further research needed to be done on the applicability of equity principles in a number of large companies. The current study proposes to bridge some of these gaps by doing field research in automotive component manufacturing

companies in KwaZulu-Natal, with an envisaged sample size of approximately 180 participants.

There is a need to understand absenteeism in South Africa, where a special, possibly unique, work situation exists. Absenteeism is of increasing concern to industry and to society as a whole. Viewed as a sign that there is something amiss in the relationship of workers with their employing organisation in industrial societies, absenteeism reflects a 'social disease' and also influences the economy adversely (Teunis, 1979). This study will take place in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and generate current information regarding absenteeism in relation to perceived inequity within the workplace. Furthermore, it will investigate whether demographic characteristics have an impact on an individual's perception of inequity or equity in the workplace. The results from this study can be used to help develop more effective interventions to address the reduction of absenteeism. Interventions such as attendance reward programmes, progressive disciplinary interventions and attendance policies may be designed based on information generated from this study.

## 2. Design and Methodology

### *2.1 Research Design*

The current study is based on a theory testing approach (or a deductive research strategy approach) which deduces certain propositions from Adams' equity theory which will be tested in order to investigate underlying processes influencing employee absenteeism. The theoretical framework of Adams' equity theory would therefore guide the research process. The theory would determine the measures that would be used to collect and analyse data.

It is an empirical study with primary data collected via self-administered, structured questionnaires. The research design has been used in order to gather quantitative data that will be analysed in order to determine whether or not there is a relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism. Quantitative data will also be used to analyse the potential relationship between underlying demographic characteristics and perception of inequity and equity.

## 2.2 Methodology

### 2.2.1 Sample and Population

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of cases in order to draw conclusions about the entire set (Singleton, Straits & Straits, 1993). Probability sampling is the ideal method of sampling in research as it draws a sample from a population such that each member of the population has a known probability of being included in the sample (De Vaus, 2001). For the purposes of this study stratified random sampling was used. Stratified random sampling encompasses a method used to divide a population into homogenous subgroups (or strata). Random or systematic sampling is then used in each stratum. This improves the representativeness of the sample by reducing sampling error. The population will consist of lower level employees from automotive component manufacturing companies in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The sample size comprised of 110 lower level employees. These employees were from the unskilled, semi-skilled and lower level skilled categories. As this sample was drawn from companies that use different job grading systems such as the Paterson, Peromnes and TASK systems the following standardised, South African, equivalence was used (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Correlation Table: Paterson, Peromnes and TASK Grades*

Job Evaluation Methodologies			Task Skill Level
<i>Paterson</i>	<i>Peromnes</i>	<i>TASK</i>	
A1	18/19	1	Basic-skilled/Unskilled
A2	17	2	
A3	16	3	
B1	15	4	Semi-Skilled
B2	14	5	
B3	13	6	
B4	12	7	
B5	11	8	
C1	11	9	Lower level Skilled/Skilled

(Nel, Gerber, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono, & Werner, 2001).

### *2.2.2 Instrumentation*

In order to collect data self-administered questionnaires were sent to the organisations via mail. Detailed instructions were included with the questionnaires for the Human Resource Manager within each organisation. The composition of the sample had been previously determined through earlier discussions with the Human Resource Manager and would encompass ten employees from each organisation comprising a representative sample of males and females, age, tenure and educational levels. This type of data collection method is time consuming, expensive, does not avoid potential interviewer bias and has a response rate of less than 50% (Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991). It was necessary to mail the questionnaires and instructions as the sample was drawn from across the KwaZulu-Natal area.

#### *2.2.2.1 Purpose and Construction of the Questionnaire*

A self-administered, structured questionnaire was developed for the purposes of this study. Its aims were to identify factors which may impact on the degree to which an individual perceived an inequitable situation within the workplace. It was based on an ipsative/forced-choice response format. Likert-type response formats are easier to analyse and complete but are subject to the halo effect, response bias and central tendency (Baron, 1996; Closs, 1996; Tenopyr, 1988). Ipsative/forced-choice response formats, on the other hand, have shown to reduce response bias, central tendency and faking (Baron, 1996; Dunlap & Cornwell, 1994; Tenopyr, 1988). However, ipsative/forced-choice response formats can be more cognitively demanding for the participant (Baron, 1996; Tenopyr, 1988).

The questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section A contained biographical data relating to age, gender, ethnic group, number of years employed by current company and level of education. Section B comprised of 13 items relating to variables in the study. The items in Section B, referring to inequity, were developed in accordance with Adams' equity theory principles (Adams, 1965). These items were used to measure the participants' perceptions of fairness or justice. The Likert scale items used in the questionnaire were modified and adapted from investigations of perceptions of inequity conducted by Geurts et al. (1999) and Van Yperen et al. (1996).

#### *2.2.2.2 Psychometric Properties of the Questionnaire*

##### *2.2.2.2.1 Reliability*

According to Babbie (1990) reliability is concerned with stability and consistency and refers to whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object would yield the same result each time. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. This is an internal-consistency reliability measure which correlates each item with each other item in the questionnaire in order to assess the consistency or homogeneity among the items. It has the most utility for multi-item scales at the interval level of measurement (Singleton et al. 1993).

#### *2.2.2.2.2 Validity*

Validity refers to the extent to which the measurement instrument accurately measures the concept it is intended to measure (Babbie, 1990; Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001). A valid questionnaire contains items which are related to the construct being measured. In this study validity will be determined by means of content and face validity. Face validity is assessed by making a judgement on whether or not a specific question appears, on the surface, to measure the concept it is intended to measure (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001; Mutchnick & Berg, 1996). Content Validity is the degree to which subject matter experts agree that the items in an instrument are a representative sample of the domain of knowledge the instrument purports to measure (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001; Muchinsky, 2006).

#### *2.2.3 Procedures*

Self-administered questionnaires were administered to 110 lower-level employees from automotive component manufacturing companies in the KwaZulu-Natal area. Upon completion the questionnaires were sent back to the researcher via mail. All participants were expected to sign an informed consent form before participating in the study.

The record keeping for absenteeism in the different companies varied extensively. Several companies stated that they had changed their record keeping systems recently. Therefore, access to historical data had been an unexpected and extremely difficult issue to manage. Additionally, many companies were not prepared to incur the cost of allowing access to their archive material. It therefore, became necessary to determine a time frame from which to gather absenteeism data from the company's record systems. A three-month period was considered to be the best option in this case because the company with the most recent transition to a new system occurred three

months ago. Therefore, the participant's absenteeism records were collected for analysis for the past three months prior to the study.

Data analysis was used to determine whether or not there was a significant relationship between perceived inequity and absenteeism and whether or not there was a significant relationship between certain underlying characteristics of the perceiver and the perception of inequity and equity.

#### *2.2.4 Data Analysis*

##### *2.2.4.1 Descriptive Statistics*

Data was analysed using quantitative research methodology. Measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode) were used to indicate the typical or average value for a distribution (Argyrous, 2000). The mean indicates the average of a set of data and is calculated by the sum of the scores divided by the number of scores (Mutchnick & Berg, 1996). The median is the value that sits right in the middle of all data entries when they are listed in ascending order (Argyrous, 2000; Babbie, 1990). The final measure of central tendency is the mode which is the value in a distribution with the highest frequency (Argyrous, 2000). Measures of dispersion (standard deviation) are descriptive statistics that indicate the spread or variety of scores in a distribution (Argyrous, 2000). The standard deviation indicates the spread of each score from the mean (Argyrous, 2000; Babbie, 1990). Frequencies refer to the number of times that a particular score appears in a set of data (Argyrous, 2000; Sekaran, 2000). From frequencies the percentage and cumulative percentage of the occurrence of the sub categories can be easily calculated (Sekaran, 2000). Percentages simplify data by reducing all numbers to range from 0 to 100 and they translate the data into a standard form with a base of 100 for relative comparisons (Sekaran, 2000). Graphical representation of data (pie graphs, histogram with a normal curve) may also be used to present the distribution of cases such as the demographic characteristics of the sample (Argyrous, 2000).

Furthermore, for the purposes of the current study recoding of variables was used. Recoding is a statistical command used to create new values and value labels based on existing variable definitions (Argyrous, 2000). Recoding is often used to collapse the original values of a variable

down into a smaller and more manageable number of values (Argyrous, 2000). Frequencies were used to generate tables of the new recoded variables (Argyrous, 2000).

Cross-tabulations, or bivariate tables, were also used to display the joint frequency distribution for two variables in order to determine whether two variables are related (Argyrous, 2000).

#### *2.2.4.2 Inferential Statistics*

Inferential statistics are numerical techniques used in order to make conclusions or generalisations about a population based on the information obtained from a random sample drawn from that population (Argyrous, 2000). The Chi-square test, the t-test, Anova, and correlation analysis are inferential statistics that will be utilised in this study. The chi-square will be used to test whether or not there is a significant relationship between two discrete variables (Babbie, 1990). The t-test will be used to determine whether there is significant mean difference between two independent variables on a particular interval or ratio-scaled dependent variable (Babbie, 1990). For example: in this study the t-test will be used to determine whether there is a significant mean difference between employees who perceived inequity and employees who perceived equity in the workplace (independent variables) on the dependent variable, absenteeism rates. The Anova determines if there is a significant mean difference among more than two independent variables on a particular variable of interest, the dependant variable (Babbie, 1990). For example: in this study the Anova will be used to determine whether there is a significant mean difference among the ethnic background, gender, educational levels, age and tenure (independent variables) of the participants on the dependent variable, perception of inequity (See page 12-13). The Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is a measure of association and ranges from 0 (no relationship) to plus or minus 1 (perfect positive and negative relationships) (Healey, Babbie & Halley, 1997). Pearson's correlation analysis will be used to indicate the direction, strength, and the significance of the bivariate relationships among variables of the study such as between the age of employees, tenure, educational levels and the perception of inequity in the workplace (Sekaran, 2000).

#### *2.2.5 Limitations of Design*

The sample is not representative of the wider population but rather only the population from which it was drawn. This population consisted of automotive component manufacturing

companies in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, the results will not be able to be generalised to a wider, national population. A further limitation is that historical, absenteeism data was not available for use in the current study.

### 3. Results

#### *3.1 Introduction*

The data is presented and briefly discussed under two sections: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. According to Muchinsky (2006), in psychology human behaviour is difficult to investigate because humans are far too variable and complex to be defined or fully explained by a single formula or equation as in physics or chemistry. For this reason it is not only important to interpret the results of this research along the theoretical base from which it was developed, but to also take into account other external factors including socio-economic issues that could have impacted on the results.

#### *3.2 Validity and Reliability*

##### *3.2.1 Content and Face Validity*

Face validity is assessed by making a judgement on whether or not a specific question appears, on the surface, to measure the concept it is intended to measure (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001; Mutchnick & Berg, 1996). Content validity is the degree to which subject matter experts agree that the items in an instrument are a representative sample of the domain of knowledge the instrument purports to measure (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2001; Muchinsky, 2006). In this study validity was determined by means of both content and face validity.

##### *3.2.2 Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha*

The first five items in the questionnaire pertaining to an individual's perception of his/her inputs in relation to his/her comparison other yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80 using the Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The next five statements relating to the individual's perception of his/her outcomes in relation to his/her comparison other yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.847 using the same formula. Combined, the first 10 statements generated a reliability coefficient of 0.89. The final three statements relating to behavioural responses to perceived inequity yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87.

Overall, the questionnaire, consisting of 13 items, developed for the purposes of investigating the perception of inequity and equity in the study generated a coefficient alpha of 0.88 for 13 items for a sample size of 110. The accepted social science cut-off is that alpha should be 0.70 or higher (Singleton et al. 1993). Therefore it can be concluded that there is internal consistency of the items in the scale signifying that the questionnaire used in this study is reliable according to Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

### *3.3 Response Rate*

Of the eighteen component manufacturing companies identified as possible participants in the study, eleven (61%) participated. Each of the 11 automotive component manufacturers identified 10 participants, according to the stratified random sampling method. Participants were chosen randomly by the company from their database and were based on the following criteria: that they were between the age range of below 20 years old - above 50 years of age, according to gender, education, race and tenure. The 10 participants from 11 automotive component manufacturers took part in the study and completed the questionnaire. Thus there were 110 participants out of a total of 180 in the study. According to Singleton et al. (1993) a response rate of between sixty – eighty percent is acceptable.

### *3.4 Approaches to data analysis*

The current study was based on a more in-depth analysis of an exploratory study conducted by Banks (2006). A number of different data analysis techniques were used in the exploratory study conducted by Banks (2006) in order to make sense of the data generated from the questionnaire. The current study used the data analysis technique rendered most appropriate from the previous exploratory study conducted by Banks (2006).

According to Adams (1965) the ratio of outcomes over inputs of individuals in relation to comparison others will determine the extent to which an individual will perceive inequity or equity in the workplace. The questionnaire used in this study was designed in a manner that incorporated this comparison and ratio aspect of equity theory.

All the statements in the questionnaire designed for this study had a comparative aspect as individuals had to rate the items in relation to their co-worker(s) (i.e. comparison other). The first five items pertained to an individual's perception of his/her inputs in relation to his/her comparison other. The next five statements related to the individual's perception of his/her outcomes in relation to his/her comparison other. All the statements were based on an ipsative/forced-choice format which ranged from '1' (strongly disagree) to '4' (strongly agree) and all the statements were positive. This approach to data analysis used mean score ranges based on the questionnaire to categorise the participants into those who perceived equity and those who perceived inequity. A high mean score for the questionnaire indicated perception of inequity whilst a low mean score indicated perception of equity. In order to establish the precise cut-off point to determine what would be classified as a high mean score (perception of inequity) and a low mean score (perception of equity) the medians of both the input and outcome items were used.

To find the overall median for the questionnaire items pertaining to inputs and those pertaining to outcomes, the medians for the two categories of items were averaged to generate an overall median which was computed to be 3.1 (rounded cut-off to 3). This indicated the cut-off point whereby low mean scores (perception of equity) would include means ranging from 0 to 2.9 for items pertaining both to inputs and items pertaining to outcomes. A high mean score (perception of inequity) incorporated a mean ranging from 3 to 4 for both items pertaining to inputs and items pertaining to outcomes. Participants were then assigned into one of two categories depending on their overall mean scores for the input and outcome items. Participants with mean scores ranging from 0 to 2.9 for items pertaining both to inputs and outcomes were categorised as perceiving equity. Participants with mean scores ranging from 3 to 4 for both items pertaining to inputs and outcomes were categorised as perceiving inequity.

The approach to data analysis used in the current study enabled the use of the entire sample which was a necessity for data analysis. Parametric statistical tests, the t-test for example, that test comparisons across groups make it more difficult to claim statistical significance the smaller the sample size and number of subjects in each cell. Thus, it is a prime concern to ensure that cell sample size is as high as can be afforded, considering one's resources (Black, 1999).

### 3.5 Descriptive Statistics

#### 3.5.1 Background Characteristics

The background characteristics of the participants in the study are presented in Table 2. The sample consists of 110 lower level employees from automotive manufacturing companies in KwaZulu-Natal. These employees were from the unskilled, semi-skilled and lower level skilled categories. As this sample was drawn from companies that used different job grading systems the standardised, South African, equivalence was used (see Table 1).

Table 2

#### *Background Characteristics for all the Participants*

Background Characteristics	N	%
Gender		
Male	57	52
Female	53	48
Age		
Up to 20	3	3
20-25	24	22
26-30	22	20
31-35	22	20
36-40	9	8
41-45	14	13
46-50	7	6
50+	9	8
Ethnic Group		
Black	40	36
Coloured	21	19
Indian	32	29
White	17	16
Highest Level of Education obtained		
No education	1	1
Grade 1-8	19	17
Grade 8-12	78	71
Tertiary education	12	11
Number of Years Employed by Current Company		
0-5	66	60
6-10	29	26
11-15	12	11
16-20	2	2
31+	1	1
N	110	

Of the participants in this study males comprised the slightly larger proportion of the sample (52%) whilst females comprised of the remaining 48%. Results regarding the age distribution of the participants in this study indicated the following: the majority, 42%, were between 20-30 years old (22% were between 20-25 years old, 20% were between 26-30 years old), 28% were between 31-40, 19% were between 41-50 and 8% were 51 years and older. The mean age group was between 31-35 years of age. The majority of the participants, 36%, were Black, 29% were Indian, 19% were Coloured and 16% were from the White ethnic group.

In relation to education: 1% had received no education, the majority (71%) had obtained their grade 8-12, 17% had obtained grade 1-8 and 11% had received tertiary education. Therefore, the cumulative percentage indicates that the majority, 99%, of the participants had received some level of education of which 88% had obtained education up to secondary school level. The mean level of education obtained was grade 8-12.

Of the 110 participants the majority, 60%, had only been employed by their current company for up to five years whilst the remaining 40% of the participants had been employed at their current company for more than five years. The mean number of years participants were employed by their current company was up to five years.

### 3.5.2 Absenteeism Rates

Table 3 presents the total absenteeism rates (which includes unexcused and excused absence; for example, sick leave) for the participants for a period of three months prior to the study.

Table 3

#### *Total Absenteeism rates for the participants*

Total Absenteeism Rates	N	%
0 Days	32	29
1-5 Days	50	45
6-10 Days	22	20
11+ Days	6	6
N	110	100

Of the 110 participants, 32 individuals (29%) had not been absent in the three month period prior to the study, 50 individuals (45%) had been absent from work for a period of between one to five days, 22 individuals (20%) had been absent for a period of six to ten days and six individuals (6%) had been absent from work for a period of more than eleven days. The mean number of days absent was approximately four days with a standard deviation of 3.5 indicating a wide dispersion of scores ( $M=3.6$ ,  $SD=3.5$ ). With regards to unexcused absenteeism rates the following results were generated (Table 4).

Table 4

*Unexcused Absenteeism rates for the participants*

Unexcused Absenteeism Rates	N	%
0 Days	74	67
1-5 Days	24	22
6-10 Days	12	11
N	110	100

Of the 110 participants, 74 individuals (67%) had not been absent within the three month period prior to the study, 24 individuals (22%) had been absent from work for a period of between one to five days and 12 individuals (11%) had been absent for a period of six to ten days. The mean number of days absent was approximately one day with a standard deviation of 2.5 indicating a wide dispersion of scores ( $M=1.4$ ,  $SD=2.5$ ).

*3.6 Inferential Statistics**3.6.1 Hypothesis 1: Employees who perceive inequity are absent more often than those who perceive equity in the workplace.*

In order to investigate the first hypothesis the t-test, Anova, chi-square test and correlation analysis were used (with additional information provided via frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations).

With regards to the Anova between unexcused absenteeism rates and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace the results indicated a very significant result ( $f=19.56$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ). The results indicate a significant difference between the

mean number of days of those who perceived inequity and those who perceived equity within the workplace. This was further explored with a t-test. The t-test results relating to the first hypothesis were as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5

*T-test between unexcused absenteeism rates and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

	N	Mean no. of days	Sig
Equity	42	0.17	
Inequity	68	2.15	0.00*
N	110		

\*p< 0.01

The results indicate that there is a very significant ( $t=-4.42$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) relationship between the unexcused absenteeism rates for the 110 participants and the perception of inequity and equity at the 1 percent level ( $p< 0.01$ ). Participants who perceived equity were not absent within the three month period ( $M=0.17$ ) whilst participants who perceived inequity who were absent for a mean total of approximately two days ( $M=2.15$ ).

Whilst this is not the focus of the study the following results generated from a t-test between the total absenteeism rates and the perception of inequity and equity are displayed in the following table (Table 6).

Table 6

*T-test between total absenteeism rates and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

	N	Mean no. of days	Sig
Equity	42	1.40	
Inequity	68	5.00	0.00*
N	110		

\*p< 0.01

The t-test results indicate that there is a very significant ( $t=-6.19$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) relationship between the total absenteeism rates for the 110 participants and the perception of inequity and

equity at the 1 percent level ( $p < 0.01$ ). Participants who perceived equity were absent for approximately one day within the three month period ( $M=1.40$ ) which is lower than participants who perceived inequity who were absent for a mean total of approximately five days ( $M=5.00$ ).

The following table (Table 7) indicates the results for the cross-tabulation between the unexcused absenteeism rates for participants and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.

Table 7

*Cross-tabulation between the unexcused absenteeism rates for the participants and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

Unexcused Absenteeism Rates	Perception			
	Equity		Inequity	
	n	%	n	%
0 days	40	96	34	50
1-5 days	1	2	23	34
6-10 days	1	2	11	16
N	42	100	68	100

Of the participants who perceived equity the majority, 96%, were not absent within a three month period, 2% were absent for a period of up to five days and 2% were absent for between six to ten days. Of the participants who perceived inequity the majority, 50%, were not absent within the three month period, 34% were absent for up to five days and 11 individuals, 16%, were absent for six to ten days within the three month period. The chi-square test indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=24.19$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) between the perception of inequity and equity and unexcused absenteeism rates at the 1 percent level ( $p < 0.01$ ). A correlation analysis was also conducted in order to determine the association between the total absenteeism rates and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace. Pearson's correlation coefficient for unexcused absenteeism rates and perception of inequity and equity was 0.39 ( $r=0.39$ ) and the relationship was statistically significant ( $p=0.00$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Although not the focus of the study the following table (Table 8) indicates the results for the cross-tabulation between the total absenteeism rates for participants and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.

Table 8

*Cross-tabulation between the total absenteeism rates for the participants and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

Total Absenteeism Rates	Perception			
	Equity		Inequity	
	n	%	n	%
0 days	23	55	9	13
1-5 days	18	43	32	47
6-10 days	1	2	21	31
11+ days	0	0	6	9
N	42	100	68	100

Of the participants who perceived equity the majority, 55%, were not absent, 43%, were absent for a period of up to five days and 2% were absent for between six to ten days. There were no participants who were absent for more than eleven days over a period of three months prior to the study. Of the participants who perceived inequity, 13% were not absent, the majority, 47%, were absent for up to five days and 31% were absent for six to ten days within a three month period. There were six individuals, 9%, who perceived inequity within the workplace and were absent for more than eleven days over a period of three months prior to the study. The chi-square test indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=29.74$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) between the perception of inequity and equity and total absenteeism rates at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ). A correlation analysis was also conducted in order to determine the association between the total absenteeism rates and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace. Pearson's correlation coefficient for absenteeism rates and perception of inequity and equity was 0.51 ( $r=0.51$ ) and the relationship was statistically significant ( $p=0.00$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ).

*3.6.2 Hypothesis 2: There will be a relationship between the age of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.*

In order to test the second hypothesis a t-test, Anova, chi-square test and correlation analysis were used. The Anova indicated a very significant result ( $f=6.50$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ).

This was investigated further with the t-test. Table 9 presents the results of the t-test.

Table 9

*T-test between age of participants and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

	N	Mean age group	Sig
Equity	42	3.50	
Inequity	68	4.50	0.01*
N	110		

\* $p < 0.01$

The results of the t-test indicate that there is a very significant ( $t=-2.55$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) relationship between the age of the participants and the perception of inequity and equity at the 1 percent level ( $p < 0.01$ ). Participants who perceived equity were from the 26-30 year age group ( $M=3.5$ ) whilst participants who perceived inequity were from the 31-35 year age group ( $M=4.5$ ).

Table 10 indicates the results from the cross-tabulation and chi-square test between participants who perceived inequity and equity in the workplace and their corresponding age ranges.

Table 10 shows that the majority of individuals who perceived equity in the workplace were from the age groups of between 20-30 years old (59%) and 31-40 years old (24%). The remaining 17% were from the ages of 41 years and older. With regards to individuals who perceived inequity in the workplace, the majority were between 20-30 years old (35%), 31% were between 31-40 years old and 34% were 41 years and older.

Table 10

*Cross-tabulation between the age of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

Age of participant (in years)	Perception			
	Equity		Inequity	
	n	%	n	%
Up to 20-30	25	59	24	35
31-40	10	24	21	31
41+	7	17	23	34
N	42	100	68	100

The chi-square test indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=6.69$ ,  $p=0.04$ ) between the variables of age and perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). A correlation analysis was also used to establish whether or not there was a significant correlation between age and the perception of inequity and equity. The analysis indicated a correlation of 0.24 ( $r=0.24$ ) that was statistically significant ( $p=0.01$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ) between the age of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.

### *3.6.3 Hypothesis 3: There will be a relationship between the gender of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.*

An Anova, t-test, chi-square test and a correlation analysis were used to test this hypothesis. The results of the Anova indicated that there was not a significant relationship ( $f=0.47$ ,  $p=0.49$ ) between the gender of the participants and the perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ).

Furthermore, the results of the t-test analysis indicates that there is no significant result ( $t=0.69$ ,  $p=0.49$ ) between the gender of employees and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 11 displays the results of the cross-tabulation between the gender of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.

Table 11

*Cross-tabulation between gender of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

Gender of participant	Perception			
	Equity		Inequity	
	n	%	n	%
Male	20	48	37	54
Female	22	52	31	46
N	42	100	68	100

Table 11 shows that of the participants who perceived equity the majority, 52%, were female. Whilst the majority of the individuals, 54%, who perceived inequity were male. The chi-square statistic was 0.48 ( $\chi^2=0.48$ ) and was not significant ( $p=0.49$ ) at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ). A correlation analysis between the gender of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace also indicated that there was no significant relationship ( $r=-0.07$ ,  $p=0.50$ ) between these variables as the result was greater than 0.05 ( $p>0.05$ ).

*3.6.4. Hypothesis 4: There will be a relationship between the ethnic background of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.*

The relationship between the ethnic background and the perception of employees was tested using an Anova, chi-square test and correlation analysis. Table 12 shows the results of this hypothesis testing.

The results for the Anova did not indicate a significant result ( $f=0.48$ ,  $p=0.49$ ) at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ). Therefore, there was not a significant difference between the mean number of days absent for the different ethnic groups and the perception of inequity and equity within the workplace.

The following table (Table 12) represents results from the cross-tabulation analysis.

Table 12

*Cross-tabulation between the ethnic background of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

Ethnic background of the participants	Perception			
	Equity		Inequity	
	n	%	n	%
Black	15	36	25	37
Coloured	11	26	10	15
Indian	11	26	21	31
White	5	12	12	17
N	42	100	68	100

The majority, 36%, of the participants who perceived equity were from the Black ethnic group. A similar finding revealed that the majority, 37%, of those who perceived inequity in the workplace were also from the Black ethnic group. The chi-square test did not indicate a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=2.55$ ,  $p=0.47$ ) between these variables at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ). Furthermore, a correlation analysis between the ethnic background of the employees and the perception of inequity and equity indicated that there was no significant relationship ( $r=0.07$ ,  $p=0.49$ ) between these variables at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ).

*3.6.5. Hypothesis 5: There will be a relationship between the number of years the employees have been employed at their current company and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.*

An Anova, t-test, chi-square test and correlation analysis was used to test this hypothesis. The Anova generated a significant result ( $f=5.54$ ,  $p=0.02$ ) at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). Table 13 presents the results of the t-test between the number of years the participants have been employed by their current company and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.

The results of the t-test indicate that there is a significant ( $t=-2.12$ ,  $p=0.04$ ) relationship between the number of years employed by the current company and the perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Participants who perceived equity had been employed by their current company for between 0-5 years ( $M=1.4$ ) whilst participants who perceived inequity had been employed by their current company for between 6-10 years ( $M=1.7$ ).

Table 13

*T-test between total number of years employed by the current company and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

	N	Mean tenure	Sig
Equity	42	1.40	
Inequity	68	1.70	0.04*
N	110		

\* $p < 0.05$

Table 14 presents the results of the cross-tabulation between the number of years the employees have been employed at their current company and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.

Table 14

*Cross-tabulation between the number of years the employees have been employed at their current company and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

Number of years employed by current company	Perception			
	Equity		Inequity	
	n	%	n	%
0-5 years	32	76	34	50
6-10 years	6	14	23	34
11-15 years	4	10	11	16
N	42	100	68	100

Table 14 shows that the majority, 76%, of the participants who perceived equity had been employed by their current company for up to five years. Of those employees who perceived

inequity the majority, 50%, had also been employed for up to five years by their current company. The chi-square test indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=7.57$ ,  $p=0.02$ ) between these variables at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). A correlation analysis generated a result of 0.20 ( $r=0.20$ ) and indicated a significant relationship ( $p=0.04$ ) between the number of years the employees had been employed by their current company and the perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ).

*3.6.6. Hypothesis 6: There will be a relationship between the educational levels of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.*

The relationship between educational levels and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace was analysed using an Anova, chi-square test and correlation analysis. The Anova generated a result that was not significant ( $f=0.80$ ,  $p=0.37$ ) suggesting that there is no significant difference between the educational level of employees and whether or not they perceived inequity or equity in the workplace at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ). The results of the cross-tabulation are illustrated in Table 15.

Table 15

*Cross-tabulation between the educational levels obtained by employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace*

Highest educational level obtained	Perception			
	Equity		Inequity	
	n	%	n	%
No education	1	2	0	0
Grade 1-8	6	14	13	19
Grade 8-12	33	79	45	66
Tertiary education	2	5	10	15
N	42	100	68	100

Of those individuals who perceived equity in the workplace, the majority, 79%, had obtained up to grade 12. Similarly, of those who perceived inequity in the workplace, the majority, 66%, had obtained education up to grade 12. The chi-square test indicated that there was no significant relationship ( $\chi^2=4.89$ ,  $p=0.18$ ) between the variables at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ). A

correlation analysis also indicated that there was no significant correlation ( $r=0.09$ ,  $p=0.37$ ) between educational levels and perception of inequity and equity in the workplace at the 5 percent level ( $p>0.05$ ).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the results gathered from the study. This chapter will briefly repeat the results and explain them. The results will be explained in relation to equity theory principles, comparing the findings of this study to the findings of other studies and discussing significant similarities or differences between the results of the current study and others.

### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

#### 4.2.1 Background Characteristics and Absenteeism Rates

The current study comprised a stratified random sample of 110 employees. A description of the background characteristics of this sample are presented in Table 2. The following paragraphs will explore the descriptive statistics in more detail.

The majority, 57%, of participants in the study were male whilst females comprised of the remaining 53% (refer to Table 2). Therefore there was a balanced sample of males and females in the sample. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of age ranges within the sample. The majority, 42%, were between 20-30 years old (22% were between 20-25 years old, 20% were between 26-30 years old), 28% were between 31-40, 19% were between 41-50 and 8% were 51 years and older. The mean age group was between 31-35 years of age. The relatively wide standard deviation indicated that the participant's ages were spread throughout the different age groups.

The majority of the participants, 36%, were Black, 29% were Indian, 19% were Coloured and 16% were from the White ethnic group. Therefore, the sample comprised mainly of employees from the Black ethnic group. Despite the majority in the current study being Black (36%) there was still a relatively balanced representation from the other ethnic groups.

The educational levels obtained by participants in the sample indicated that the majority (71%) had obtained grades 8-12, 17% had obtained grades 1-8 and 11% had tertiary education. The cumulative percentage indicates that the majority, 99%, of the participants had some level of education. Of these 88% (n=97) had education up to secondary school level. The mean level of education was grade 8-12. Overall, the majority of participants had obtained education at secondary school level.

Regarding tenure, of the 110 participants the majority, 60%, had only been employed by their current company for up to five years whilst the remaining 40% of the participants had been employed at their current company for more than five years. The mean number of years employees had been employed at their current company was 0-5 years. The small standard deviation of 0.9 indicated a narrow dispersion of scores. Therefore, the majority of the sample had worked for the company for only a short period of time and length of service was not a very prevalent characteristic of the employees in the study. Thus, the majority of the participants did not have a relatively long length of service.

The 110 participants' total absenteeism rates were obtained for a period of three months prior to the study. The definitions of Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) and Cilliers (1977) were used for the purposes of this study. They defined employee absenteeism as non-attendance when scheduled to work. Therefore, unexcused absence contributed to the absenteeism rate. Table 4 presents the total unexcused absenteeism rates for the sample. It shows that of the 110 participants a cumulative percentage of 33% of the participants had been absent for a period of between one to ten days within a three month period. The mean number of days absent was approximately one day with a standard deviation of 2.5 indicating a wide dispersion of scores (M=1.4, SD=2.5). With regards to the total absenteeism rates (refer to Table 3) of the 110 participants a cumulative percentage of 65% of the participants had been absent for a period of between one to ten days and six individuals (6%) had been absent from work for a period of more than eleven days within a three month period. The mean number of days absent was approximately 4 days with a standard deviation of 3.5 indicating a wide dispersion of scores (M=3.6, SD=3.5).

The total absenteeism rates for the entire sample (see Table 3) indicated a high degree of absenteeism amongst participants for a three month period prior to the study. These results can be compared to a study utilising total absenteeism rates conducted by Banks (2006) on Equity Theory and Employee Absenteeism which found a mean number of 4 days absent with a standard deviation of 3.6 days indicating a wide dispersion of scores ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=3.6$ ). The current study indicated a high rate of absenteeism within a three month period as a study conducted by Geurts et al. (1999) on absenteeism, turnover intention and inequity in the employment relationship amongst mental health care professionals revealed a mean absenteeism rate of only one day ( $M=1.79$ ,  $SD=2.17$ ) and a standard deviation of 2.17 for a 12 month period prior to the survey.

It has been estimated that one day's absence costs the organisation one and a half to three times the daily rate of pay (Van Der Merwe & Miller, 1988). Absenteeism has an indirect and direct effect on companies and their employees. Direct effects of absenteeism include overtime to perform the absent employee's duties, the cost of overstaffing or retaining extra employees who can fulfil the absent employee's duties and making additional provisions for sick pay (Mets, 1979). The indirect effects of absenteeism are also costly for the company as absenteeism can reduce employee morale, disrupt job processes, reduce productivity, decrease quality of products and cause customer dissatisfaction with missed deadlines or poor quality products (Mets, 1979; Van Der Merwe & Miller, 1988). Therefore, absenteeism is likely to be a costly phenomenon to organisations.

### *4.3 Inferential Statistics*

#### *4.3.1 Hypothesis tests of whether employees who perceive inequity are absent more often than those who perceive equity in the workplace.*

Equity theory attempts to explain the underlying mechanisms or thought processes regarding the perception of equity or inequity. These thought processes impact on employee motivation. According to Adams (1965) equity is perceived when the ratio of employee outcomes over inputs equals the comparison others' outcomes over inputs. In an equitable situation it is proposed that the individual is content and will not be motivated to take any actions to restore equity to the situation as it is not necessary (Adams, 1965).

To restate, inequity is perceived when the ratio of employee's outcomes over inputs is less than the comparison other's outcomes over inputs (Adams, 1965). In this situation the person perceives that he/she is receiving fewer outcomes than the comparison other is receiving for his/her inputs even though both are contributing the same inputs (Adams, 1965; Cosier & Dalton, 1983; Northcraft & Neale, 1994). When inequity is perceived the individual will usually experience a state of cognitive dissonance (or feelings of psychological discomfort) which the individual will be motivated to reduce (McCormick & Tiffin, 1975; Weller, 1995). The option of temporary withdrawal from the organisation in the form of absenteeism is one of the responses to perceived inequity in the workplace (Adams, 1965). Thus the perception of inequity is a motivational force influencing absenteeism.

The current study investigated whether or not there was a significant relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism in the workplace. The hypothesis regarding perception of inequity and absenteeism was tested using equity theory principles to explain the high rate of absenteeism in this study.

In order to determine if there was a significant mean difference among more than two groups (independent variables) on a particular variable of interest (dependant variable) the Anova was used. The Anova generated a very significant result ( $f=19.56$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ) for unexcused absenteeism rates and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace. This significant result was explored further with a t-test. The t-test was used to determine the significant mean difference between the variable of perception of inequity and equity on the interval or ratio-scaled dependent variable of unexcused absenteeism rates. Table 5 illustrates the results of the t-test between unexcused absenteeism rates and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace. Participants who perceived equity were not absent within the three month period prior to the study ( $M=0.17$ ) whilst participants who perceived inequity were absent for a mean total of approximately two days ( $M=2.15$ ). This difference in mean absenteeism rates for participants who perceived inequity and equity was statistically significant at the 1 percent level. Therefore those individuals who perceived inequity were absent more often (approximately two days) than those individuals who perceived equity in the workplace.

The study by Banks (2006) also yielded significant results between absenteeism rates and the perception of equity and inequity in the workplace. Banks (2006) investigated the relationship between perception of inequity and equity and absenteeism rates using a t-test and generated a significant result ( $p=0.005$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ). Participants who perceived equity were absent for a mean total of approximately three days ( $M=3.10$ ) which is lower than participants who perceived inequity who were absent for a mean total of approximately six days ( $M=5.90$ ). The significant relationship between perceived inequity and absenteeism generated in the current study is further supported by a study by Van Yperen et al. (1996) who conducted a study between perceived inequity and absenteeism amongst Dutch blue-collar workers in a metal manufacturing plant. The results of the study by Van Yperen et al. (1996) revealed a significant relationship, using the Anova, at the 1 percent level between perceived inequity and the intent to report sick. Similarly, a study conducted by Geurts et al. (1994) also investigated absence frequency amongst male Dutch blue-collar workers in a metal manufacturing plant. The findings of the Geurts et al. (1994) study were that absenteeism was the result of the perception of inequity when employees compared several job aspects to those of their comparison others.

Other studies have also revealed a significant relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism. Dittrich and Carell (1979) conducted a study which showed that employee perceptions of inequitable treatment were stronger predictors of absence and turnover than job satisfaction. Chadwick-Jones et al. (1982, as cited in Geurts et al. 1999) conducted a study which discussed absenteeism as a psychological phenomenon. Chadwick-Jones et al. (1982, as cited in Geurts et al. 1999) revealed that absenteeism was a negative exchange behaviour whereby employees withdrew their presence from work in order to make up for work load pressures, stress or other negative aspects of their jobs. Kotze (1996) conducted a case study regarding Equity theory in a small South African firm. Kotze's (1996) case study found that perceived inequity amongst a workforce led to a change in employee inputs resulting in high absenteeism and increased customer complaints.

Furthermore, Hirschfeld et al. (2002) conducted a study which explored the relationship of skill variety, task significance and instrumentality with absenteeism in a sample of low-wage

public-sector clerical employees. Their study revealed that those who were perceived to be receiving especially low performance-rewards and who considered their jobs to require high skill variety and task significance were likely to be absent more often in order to create a more equitable exchange with the organisation (Hirschfeld et al. 2002). Therefore the findings of the current study, namely the significant relationship between perceived inequity and absenteeism amongst employees in automotive component manufacturing organisations, are consistent with previous studies.

The chi-square test conducted in the current study to determine the relationship between the perception of inequity and equity and absenteeism indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=24.19$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ). Furthermore, Pearson's correlation coefficient found in the current study was 0.39 ( $r=0.39$ ) which indicated a moderate positive relationship between absenteeism rates and perception of inequity. This relationship was statistically significant ( $p=0.00$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ) indicating a very significant relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism rates. The results of the chi-square test and correlation analysis support the significant Anova and t-test findings in the current study which indicated a significant relationship between absenteeism and perception of inequity. The study by Geurts et al. (1999) on absenteeism, turnover intention and inequity in the employment relationship amongst mental health care professionals support the findings of the current study. Geurts et al. (1999) conducted a correlation analysis between perception of inequity and absenteeism and also yielded a moderate, positive ( $r=0.34$ ) and significant relationship between these variables at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ).

The hypothesis testing regarding perception of inequity and absenteeism show a significant relationship between these variables. When employees perceive an inequitable situation, it causes cognitive dissonance which motivates them to restore equity via the behavioural response of being absent from work (Adams, 1965). Thus, equity theory explains employee absenteeism in relation to the motivational aspect of employees' perception of inequity. These equity theory principles can be used to explain the high rate of absenteeism in the current study. Participants who perceived an inequitable situation in the current study were motivated to restore equity via the behavioural response of being absent from work. According to Rollinson et al. (2005) some

people are more sensitive to perceptions of inequity than others because perceiving inequity is a subjective experience.

*4.3.2 Hypothesis tests of potential relationships between age, gender, ethnic background, number of years employed by current company, educational levels and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace.*

In order to test these hypotheses Anovas, t-tests, chi-square tests and correlations were used. The Anova between age and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace generated a significant result ( $f=6.50$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ). This significant result was explored further with a t-test. The results of the t-test indicated that there was a very significant ( $t=-2.55$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) relationship between the age of the participants and the perception of inequity and equity at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ). Participants who perceived equity were in the 26-30 year age group whilst participants who perceived inequity were in the 31-35 year age group. Thus, indicating that the participants who perceived inequity were from a slightly older age group than those who perceived equity. This finding is similar to a study conducted by Mets (1979) which explored absenteeism in a motor car manufacturing plant. Mets (1979) found that employees within the age group of between 20-44 showed higher perceptions of injustice and absentee rates than employees from age groups older than 44 years of age.

The chi-square test indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=6.69$ ,  $p=0.04$ ) between the age of the participants and perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). A correlation analysis was used to establish whether or not there was a significant correlation between age and the perception of inequity and equity. The analysis indicated a correlation of 0.24 ( $r=0.24$ ) which was significant ( $p=0.01$ ) at the 1 percent level ( $p<0.01$ ) between the age of employees and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace. The results found in the current study were different to a meta-analysis conducted by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) on the role of justice in organisations. According to their results age was not found to have a strong relation to justice perceptions in the workplace.

The Anova between the number of years the participants were employed in their current company (tenure) and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace generated a

significant result ( $f=5.54$ ,  $p=0.02$ ) at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). This significant result was explored further with a t-test. The results of the t-test indicated that there was a significant relationship ( $t=-2.12$ ,  $p=0.04$ ) between the number of years employed by the current company and the perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). Participants who perceived equity had been employed by their current company for between 0-5 years whilst participants who perceived inequity had been employed by their current company for between 6-10 years.

With regards to tenure the chi-square test indicated a statistically significant relationship ( $\chi^2=7.57$ ,  $p=0.02$ ) between tenure and perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). Furthermore, a correlation analysis generated a result of 0.20 ( $r=0.20$ ) and indicated a significant relationship ( $p=0.04$ ) between the number of years the employees had been employed by their current company and the perception of inequity and equity at the 5 percent level ( $p<0.05$ ). The results of the current study were different to the meta-analysis of Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) on the role of justice in organisations. According to Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) tenure was not found to have a strong relation to justice perceptions in the workplace. Furthermore, according to Mets (1979) length of service (tenure) has been researched more extensively in relation to labour turnover than in relation to perceptions of justice and absenteeism. The results from Mets's (1979) analysis highlight the need for more research on the relationship between tenure and the justice perceptions of employees and their absentee rates.

The Anovas, t-tests, chi-square tests and correlation analyses between gender, ethnic background, educational levels and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace indicate that there was no relationship between these variables. Therefore gender, ethnic background and educational levels were not significantly associated with the perception of inequity and equity in the current study. These results indicate that no specific variable (for example: gender) impacted significantly on the employee's perception of inequity or equity. These findings are supported by a meta-analysis conducted by Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) on the role of justice in organisations. Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) indicated that regardless of gender, race and educational level employees tended to perceive justice similarly.

Although, in the current study, no significant results were found between gender, ethnic background, educational levels and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace the cross-tabulations indicated the following results: the majority (52%) who perceived equity were female whilst the majority (54%) who perceived inequity were male. These findings are consistent with findings from a study conducted by Brockner and Adsit (1986, as cited in Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001) which indicated that males reacted more strongly and perceived a higher degree of perceived inequity than females in relation to inequitable situations within the workplace.

With regards to ethnic background, educational levels and perception of inequity and equity the cross-tabulations yielded similar patterns. The majority of participants who perceived equity (36%) and the majority who perceived inequity (37%) came from the Black ethnic group (as shown in Table 12). The majority of participants who perceived equity (79%) and the majority who perceived inequity (66%) had obtained an educational level of up to secondary school level (shown in Table 15). Therefore the majority of those participants who perceived equity and inequity had common characteristics, namely ethnic background and educational levels. Although stratified random sampling was used caution must be exercised as the sample size was still relatively small which may have impacted on the findings.

## 5. Limitations, Conclusion and Recommendations

### *5.1 Limitations*

A limitation of the study is that the sample was not representative of all the automotive component manufacturing companies in KwaZulu-Natal as the findings were limited to those who responded. Therefore, the results will not be able to be generalised to the wider KwaZulu-Natal or to the national population.

Another limitation is that historical absenteeism data was not available for use in the current study. The record keeping for absenteeism in the different companies varied extensively. For this reason a three-month period was considered to be the best option.

### *5.2 Conclusion*

The current study revealed a significant relationship between the perception of inequity and absenteeism. When employees perceive an inequitable situation, it causes cognitive dissonance which motivates them to restore equity via the behavioural response of being absent from work (Adams, 1965). Participants who perceived an inequitable situation in this workplace were absent more often as a motivated behavioural response of restoring the perceived imbalance. There were significant relationships between age and tenure and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace. However, there were no significant relationships between gender, ethnic background, educational levels and the perception of inequity. This study used a specifically constructed questionnaire to apply equity theory principles towards understanding the phenomenon of absenteeism in this workplace. The organisations sampled in the study had a high degree of absenteeism and a significant relationship was found between high absenteeism rates and the perception of inequity.

### *5.3 Recommendations*

Future research should include a lengthier historical representation of absenteeism data. Furthermore in order to make inferences from data analysis results of automotive component manufacturers at a national level a sample ought to be drawn from this.

From research conducted by Homans (1950, 1953, 1961 as cited in Adams), Clark (1958) and Stouffer et al. (1949) a relationship between the perception of inequity and equity and perceptions of justice in the organisation were found. Therefore, further research needs to be done on perceptions of organisational justice and the fundamental principles of Equity theory. Further analysis of the significant results found between age and tenure and the perception of inequity and equity in the workplace is required. Investigation into the tolerance certain individuals might have to taking actions to restore equity in an inequitable situation is also an interesting area for further analysis.

The results of the current study indicate that the perception of inequity was significantly associated with absenteeism rates. The absenteeism rates for participants in the study within a three month period were relatively high indicating that absenteeism is a pervasive problem.

Comprehending absenteeism from the Equity theory perspective can help organisations devise measures and interventions to help decrease and control absenteeism rates. The current study took place in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and generated current information regarding absenteeism in relation to perceived inequity within the workplace. Interventions such as attendance reward programmes, progressive disciplinary interventions and attendance policies may be designed based on information generated from the current study.

In order to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that underlie the relationship between perceived inequity in the workplace and behavioural reactions such as absenteeism, within a South African context, further research on the application of the theory must be done in future.

## References

- Aldag, R.J. & Brief, A.P. (1981). *Managing Organisational Behaviour*. Minnesota: West Publishing.
- Adams, J.S. (1965). Inequity in Social Exchange. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2, 267-299.
- Allen, R.S., Biderman, M. & White, C.S. (2003). Emotional Intelligence and its Relation to Equity Sensitivity and Responses to Under-Reward Situation. *The Journal of Behavioural and Applied Management*, 114-136.
- Argyrous, G. (2000). *Statistics for Social & Health Research: With a Guide to SPSS*. London: Sage.
- Babbie, E. (1990). *Survey Research Methods (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)*. California: Wadsworth.
- Banks, J. (2006). *Equity Theory and Employee Absenteeism*. Unpublished Honours Treatise, University of KwaZulu-Natal, KwaZulu-Natal.
- Baron, H. (1996). Strengths and Limitations of Ipsative instruments. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 69, 49-56.
- Blau, G.J. & Boal, K.B. (1987). Conceptualizing How Job Involvement and Organizational Commitment Affect Turnover and Absenteeism. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(2), 288-300.
- Carrell, M.R. & Dittrich, J.E. (1978). Equity Theory: The Recent Literature, Methodological Considerations, and New Directions. *The Academy of Management Review*, 3(2), 202-210.
- Cilliers, S.P. (1977). *Absenteeism in Cape Industries: A Summary Report*. University of

Stellenbosch.

Closs, S.J. (1996). On the Factoring and Interpretation of Ipsative Data. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 69, 41-47.

Cohen-Charash, Y. & Spector, P.E. (2001). The Role of Justice in Organizations: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 86(2), 278-321.

Cosier, R.A. & Dalton, D.R. (1983). Equity Theory and Time: A Reformulation. *Journal of Management Review*, 8(2), 311-319.

De Boer, E.M., Bakker, A.B., Syroit, J.E. & Schaufeli, W.B. (2002). Unfairness at Work as a Predictor of Absenteeism. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(2), 181-191.

De Vause, D. (2001). *Research Design in Social Research*. London: Sage.

Dittrich, J.E. & Carrell, M.R. (1979). Organizational Equity Perceptions, Employee Job Satisfaction and Departmental Absence and Turnover Rates. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 24, 29-40.

Dunlap, W.P. & Cornwell, J.M. (1994). Factor Analysis of Ipsative Measures. *Multivariate Behavioural Research*, 29, 115-126.

Foxcroft, C. & Roodt, G. (2001). *An Introduction to Psychological Assessment in the South African Context*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Furnham, A. (1992). *Personality at Work: The Role of Individual Differences in the Workplace*. London: Routledge.

Gellatly, I.R. (1995). Individual and Group Determinants of Employee Absenteeism: Test of a

- Causal Model. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 16, 469-485.
- Geurts, S.A., Buunk, B.P. & Schaufeli, W.B. (1994). Social Comparisons and Absenteeism: A Structural Modeling Approach. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 24(21), 1871-1890.
- Geurts, S.A., Schaufeli, W.B. & Rutte, C.G. (1999). Absenteeism, Turnover Intention and Inequity in the Employment Relationship. *Work and Stress*, 13(3), 253-267.
- Goodman, P.S. & Friedman. (1971). An Examination of Adams' Equity Theory of Inequity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16(3), 271-288.
- Gordon, J.R. (1987). *A Diagnostic Approach to Organizational Behavior (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hirschfeld, R.R., Schmitt, L.P. & Bedeian, A.G. (2002). Job-Content Perceptions, Performance-Reward Expectancies, and Absenteeism among Low-Wage Public-Sector Clerical Employees. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 16(4), 553-564.
- Huczynski, A.A. & Fitzpatrick, M.J. (1989). *Managing Employee Absence for a Competitive Edge*. London: Pitman Publishing.
- Huseman, R.C., Hatfield, J.D. & Miles, E.W. (1987). A New Perspective of Equity Theory: The Equity Sensitivity Construct. *The Academy of Management Review*, 12 (2), 222-234.
- Judd, C.M., Smith, E.R. & Kidder, L.H. (1991). *Research Methods in Social Relations: International Edition (6<sup>th</sup> Ed)*. Orlando: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Kotze, H. (1996). Equity Theory of Work Motivation: A Case Study in a Small South African Firm. Dissertation, University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
- Kulik, C.T., Lind, E.A., Ambrose, M.L. & MacCoun, R.J. (1996). *Understanding Gender*

- Differences in Distributive and Procedural Justice*. Journal Social Justice Research, 9(4), 351-269.
- Lilford, N. (2008). Absenteeism Reaches New Heights in South Africa. Retrieved March 28, 2008, from [http://www.hrfuture.net/display\\_web\\_article](http://www.hrfuture.net/display_web_article).
- McCormick, E.J. & Tiffin, J. (1975). *Industrial Psychology (6th Ed)*. London: Prentice-Hall.
- McKenna, E. (2000). *Business Psychology and Organisational Behaviour: A Student's Handbook (3rd Ed)*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Mets, J.T. (1979). *Absenteeism in a Motor Car Manufacturing Plant: A Contribution to the Study of Absence-Behaviour and Medicaaly Certified Absence from Work in South Africa*. Dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Muchinsky, P.M. (2006). *Psychology Applied to Work: An Introduction to Industrial and Organizational Psychology (8th Ed)*. California: Wadsworth.
- Mutchnick, R.J. & Berg, B.L. (1996). *Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Practice and Applications*. Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.
- Nel, PS., Gerber, RD., Haasbroek, G.D., Schultz, H.B., Sono, T. & Werner, A. (2001). *Human Resource Management (5th Ed)*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Northcraft, G.B. & Neale, M.A. (1994). *Organizational Behavior: A Management Challenge (2nd Ed)*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College.
- Rollinson, D., Broadfield, A. & Edwards, D.J. (2005). *Organisational Behaviour and Analysis: An Integrated Approach (3rd Ed)*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Sekaran, U. (2000). *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-building Approach (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed)*. United

States of America: John Wiley and Sons.

Singleton, R.A., Straits, B.C. & Straits, M.M. (1993). *Approaches to Social Research (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)*. New York: Oxford University Press.

*Statistics South Africa: Labour Force Survey*. (2007). Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

Steers, R.M., Mowday, R.T. & Shapiro, D.L. (2004). The Future of Work Motivation Theory. *Journal of Academy of Management Review*, 29(3), 379-388.

Stepina, L.P. & Perrewe, P.L. (1991). The Stability of Comparative Referent Choice and Feelings of Inequity: A Longitudinal Field Study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 12(3), 185-200.

Stouffer, S.A., Suchman, B.A., DeVusney, L.C., Starr, Shirley A, and Williams, R.N. (1949). *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life (Vol 1)*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Tenopyr, M.L. (1988). Artifactual Reliability of Forced-Choice Scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 73, 749-751.

Van Der Merwe, R & Miller, S. (1988). *Measuring Absence and Labour Turnover: A Practical Guide to Recording and Control*. Johannesburg: Lexicon.

Van Yperen, N.W., Hagedoorn, M. & Geurts, S.A. (1996). Intent to Leave and Absenteeism as Reactions to Perceived Inequity: The Role of Psychological and Social Constraints. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 69, 367-372.

Weller, D.L. (1995). The Equity Factor: A Vital Part of the Quality Equation. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 3(4), 44-50.



## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I give my informed consent to participate in this study which investigates the underlying factors influencing absenteeism. This study is being conducted by the investigator for the completion of her Psychology Masters Degree at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. I consent to publication of study results so long as the information is anonymous and that no identification can be made. Personal information will not be used in any way in the reports to ensure respondents' anonymity and confidentiality.

1. I have been informed that my participation in this study will involve me completing a questionnaire and my absenteeism records will be accessed as part of the study.
2. I have been informed that there are no known expected discomforts or risks involved in my participation in this study, and have been asked about any medical conditions which might create a risk for me when I participate.
3. I have been informed that the investigator will explain before the study commences the precise aims, and will answer any questions regarding the procedures of this study.
4. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of any kind.
5. I have been informed that the study will help generate information that will help employers better understand motivational aspects with regards to their employees which will be beneficial for both employers and employees.
6. I have been informed that all information generated from this research will be presented honestly and without any distortion.

## Contact Details:

Supervisor:

A.MOOLA

031 260 1087

Researcher:

J.BANKS

031 260 1572/082 484 1790

---

PARTICIPANT

---

RESEARCHER

---

DATE

APPENDIX B

Dear Participant

The researcher is undertaking this investigation of the underlying factors influencing absenteeism. The researcher hopes to study how various factors may impact on the degree to which an individual perceives an inequitable situation within the workplace.

- Instruction 1:

There are two sections to this questionnaire: Section A and B. Please complete the **WHOLE** questionnaire (both sections of the questionnaire).

- Instruction 2:

Please respond honestly to the questions in this questionnaire as your anonymity is guaranteed and the respondent's answers will not be revealed to others without the consent of the respondent and will be kept confidential.

- Instruction 3:

Please hand in your completed questionnaire to the researcher/administrator once it is completed.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

J.BANKS  
RESEARCHER  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Participant Number **Section A: Biographical Information**

**Instruction:** Please respond to the following questions by **ticking** the correct box.  
Please only tick **one** response for each numbered statement.

## 1. Age

Up to 20 years	
20-25 years	
26-30 years	
31-35 years	
36-40 years	
41-45 years	
46-50 years	
50+ years	

## 2. Gender

Male	
Female	

## 3. Ethnic Group

Black	
Coloured	
Indian	
White	

## 4. Number of Years Employed by Current Company

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
21-25 years	
26-30 years	
31 years and over	

## 5. Highest Level of Education obtained

No Education	
Grade 1-8	
Grade 8-12	
Tertiary education	

### **Part B: Perception of Inequity**

**Instruction:** For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by **ticking** your chosen response as demonstrated in the following example:

I enjoy coming to work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Agree
------------------------	-------------------	----------	---	----------------

**Section 1:** Please respond to the set of statements below in relation to your co-workers (those who are expected to perform similar job tasks).

I have more knowledge and experience than my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I put in more effort into the work I do for my organisation than my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have been working for the organisation for a longer period of time than my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am more skilled than my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I spend more time at work than my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I receive less recognition (i.e. appreciation, thanks, acknowledgement) from my supervisor than my co-workers who perform similar job tasks	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I receive less income (i.e. pay) than my co-workers who perform similar job tasks	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I receive fewer bonuses than my co-workers who perform similar job tasks	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My co-workers receive more benefits (e.g. pension fund, medical aid, petrol money, car allowance) for performing similar job tasks	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that I am being treated unfairly in my job in relation to my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

**Section 2:** Please respond to the next set of statements below in regard to your individual perception of inequity in the workplace

I would come late to work if I perceived that I was not being treated fairly in my job in relation to my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would leave work early if I perceived that I was not being treated fairly in my job in relation to my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would take days off work if I perceived that I was not being treated fairly in my job in relation to my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C

PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR STUDY COMPLETION

Month	Description	Outcomes
April 2007	Sampling	Generate sample for study (get access to company information and use stratified random sampling to generate sample)
August 2007	Hand out Questionnaire Capture Data from Questionnaire Analyse Data	Go to companies and hand out questionnaire. Capture data into SPSS Analyse data using SPSS to generate findings
November 2007	Work on Literature Review	
March 2008	Draft of project	
June-July 2008	Research project draft	Compile first draft of research project with literature review, methodology, results and discussion
September 2008	Work on final project	
October 2008	Hand in final project	Complete final project