PERCEIVED FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM AT KENYA PORTS AUTHORITY

BY

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DECLARATION

I certify that this is my original work and has not been presented to any other University or college for the award of degree diploma or for examination purposes.

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This research project has been submitted with my approval as the University supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my loving husband Rextone Mutanda and my children Kenya and Abrianna. I would also want to dedicate it to my mother who has taught me that education is the key to many things in life.

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ACRONYMS

KPA Kenya Ports Authority

CIPD Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

ABSTRACT

Absenteeism is a major problem faced by almost all employers of today. It places huge financial burdens on organizations and has a detrimental effect on productivity and performance. Although researchers have attempted to identify the factors that cause, or are related to absenteeism so that appropriate solutions can be developed, little research has been done to determine the factors from the point of view of the staff themselves. As a result, the purpose of the study was to determine the perceived factors that contribute to employee absenteeism in Kenya Ports Authority.

A descriptive research design was adopted and survey method was used to solicit information. Purposive sampling was first adopted as the study was interested in the staff working in Kenya Ports Authority in Mombasa Offices. In addition, stratified sampling was applied to establish the respondents of the study from every department. The study relied on a sample size of 80 staff members of Kenya Ports Authority and data was collected by the use of questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics with assistance of statistical package for social scientist (SPSS) and content analysis for qualitative data. The study found that 79% of the respondents indicated that Absenteeism is a problem in the organization. The reasons perceived by employees as contributing to absenteeism included drug abuse, family problems and lack of motivation. Some other reasons cited include, poor management style, injury and accident, organizational culture and lack or poor adherence to policy on absence. Employees were then asked to rate the importance of some of the factors causing absenteeism. The findings indicated that, under- promotion was perceived as fairly high followed by employee attitude and drug and substance abuse. Finally, the respondents were required to highlight changes they believed when implemented would help to reduce absenteeism among staff. Some of the mostly cited reasons included strict adherence to set down policies on absenteeism, counseling and rehabilitation of staff who have drug and substance problems, improved supervision of staff, fair treatment, motivation and recognition of staff and also rewarding of good attendance. The recommendations were therefore to adopt the four approaches to managing attendance as suggested by Bevan (2003) namely: management policy, managing long-term absence, preventative measures and rewarding attendance.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the study

Absenteeism has long been a major human relations problem for managers and supervisors. It places huge financial burdens on organizations and has a detrimental effect on productivity and performance. Barmase and Shukla (2013) states that, 'Absenteeism is a serious workplace problem and an expensive occurrence. It is a major problem faced by almost all employers of today.'According to a survey by Mercer (2008) on the Total Financial Impact of Employee Absenteeism, the cost of absence is often misunderstood, seen as unmeasurable, or dismissed as a negligible amount but the full cost of employee absences is very significant, amounting to 36 % of payroll. Perry (1997) postulated that, 'the real cost of chronic absenteeism is lowered morale among other employees who must shoulder the work load, lost revenue from sales not made, the loss of customers who flee to competitors for better services, a decline in business from poor service and the expense of additional temporary workers'. Additionally, absenteeism is positively correlated with turnover.

Since absenteeism is so costly, researchers have attempted to identify the factors that cause, or are related to absenteeism so that appropriate solutions can be developed. Different models have been put forward by various authors to try and explain the causes of absenteeism (Nicholson, (1970), Steers and Rhodes (1978) and Rhodes and Steers (1990)). The current study focuses on employee absenteeism in Kenya Ports Authority. The port of Mombasa is an important facility for the Eastern African region since itis considered a port of choice for the following countries, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi and Northern Tanzania. The

countries rely heavily on imports and this in effect places huge responsibility on KPA to provide effective, reliable and efficient services (KPA Handbook 2012-13). To achieve this, the port needs a dedicated staff that is committed and available on duty. This research therefore focuses on perceived factors that contribute to employee absenteeism in Kenya Ports Authority.

1.1.1 Employee Absenteeism

Absenteeism is failure to report to work and it occurs when employees who were scheduled for work do not attend (Huczyunski and Fitzpatrick, 1989). Failure to report to work is detrimental to the organization as it impacts negatively on the overall goal of the organization. Experience shows that better attendance is synonymous with better quality, lower costs, and greater productivity (Hazzard, 1990). Since scheduled work is the critical defining point, vacations and excused holidays are not considered forms of absence (Price and Mueller, 1986).

Lambert et al, (2005) states that, several absenteeism models have been developed to try and explain the causes of absenteeism. In 1977, Nicholson presented one of the first theoretical explanations of employee absenteeism. He postulated that personal characteristics, work involvement and attachment to the organization, attendance motivation, and random factors such as travel problems influences a worker's frequency of attendance and absence. Steers and Rhodes (1978) on the other hand formulated the model on employee attendance and absenteeism. In the model, Steers and Rhodes argued that personal characteristics for example level of education, tenure, age, sex, and family size, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, ability to attend circumstances for example illness, accidents, family responsibilities, and

transportation problems, and pressures to attend for example, reward and incentive systems, and work group norms, influence employee absenteeism.

In 1990, Steers and Rhodes developed the Diagnostic Model of Employee Attendance which was intended for use by managers in understanding absence in their organizations. The authors theorized three key influences on attendance motivation namely, organisational practices, absence culture, and employee attitudes, values and goals. The model also incorporates factors acting as barriers to attendance such as illness, family responsibilities and travel problems but which may also be influnced by organisational policies. Evans, et al (2002) analysed the antecedents and correlates of worker absenteeism broadly into three categories namely: Personal characteristics, factors within the organisation and factors outside the organisation. This forms the basis of the analysis of the potential causes of employee absence in this research.

1.1.2 The concept of Perception

Perception is the process whereby people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into meaningful information about their work environment (Ranganayakulu, 2005). Perception is a subjective process, thus the reality is perceived differently by different people (Robbins and Judge, 2007).Steinberg (1995) states that,'the perceptual occurs in three phases namely: selection, organization and interpretation. The three phases take place relatively unconsciously and almost simultaneously.'

According to Singh (2012), Perceptual selectionis the process by which people filter out most stimuli so that they can deal with the most important ones. Perceptual

selection depends on several factors some of which are external environment and some of which are internal to the perceiver. External factors are characteristics that influence whether the stimuli will be noticed. Jain (2005) highlights the external factors as size, intensity, status, contrast, movement, frequency, order and novelty and familiarity. Internal factors on the other hand include personality of the perceiver, learning where perception is based on past experiences and motivation where perception is influenced by a person's most urgent needs and desires at any particular time (Jain, 2005).

Singh (2012) defines perceptual organization as the process by which people group environmental stimuli into recognizable patterns. Factors that influence perceptual organization include: continuity, which is the tendency to perceive objects as continuous patterns; closure, which is the tendency to compute an object and perceive it as a constant overall form; proximity, which principle states that a group of objects may be perceived as related because of their nearness to each other, and similarity principle which states that the more alike objects or ideas are, the greater is the tendency to perceive them as a common group.

Perceptual interpretation on the other hand entails the assessment of the information collected for the purpose of making interpretation or judgement. As perceptual interpretation is influenced by characteristics of both the perceiver and the situation, accuracy in perception can be improved when the perceiver understands these potential biases (Singh, 2012). According to Jain (2005) perceptual errors include: perceptual defense which is the tendency of people to protect themselves against ideas, objects or situations that are threatening,stereotyping which is the tendency to

assign attributes to someone solely on the basis of the category in which the person has been placed, halo effect which refers to evaluation of another person solely on the basis of one attribute, either favorable or unfavorable, projection which is the tendency for people to see their own traits in other people; expectancy effects, is the extent to which prior expectations bias perception of events, objects and people and self-fulfilling prophecy is expecting certain things to happen shapes the behaviour of the perceiver in such a way that the expects is more likely to happen.

Nelson (2008), states that, survey questions that assess perception as compared to those assessing factual knowledge are intended at identifying the processes that not only underlie how individuals acquire, interpret, organize and make sense of the environment in which they live, but also help to measure the extent to which such perceptions affect individual behaviour and attitudes as a function of the individuals past experiences, biological make-up, expectations, goals and/or culture.Most of the research on absence focuses on the causes of employee absenteeism and only few studies have examined the antecedents of employee absence as employees themselves perceive it. A focus on employee perception on absence will thus complement the focus of existing literature on the general factors determining absence.

1.1.3 Kenya Ports Authority

Kenya Ports Authority was established by an act of Parliament on 20th January 1978 and it is mandated to maintain, operate, improve and regulate all scheduled seaports situated along the Kenya's coastline. It provides the following services: Marine services which entail Pilotage, Towage, Berthing, Mooring, Dry Docking, Provision of aids to navigation and maintenance of the channel and turning basins; Stevedoring

and Shore handling services for containers, general cargo, dry bulk, oils and bulk liquids; storage of cargo; and receiving of cruise ships (KPA Human Resource Manual, 2012). The port plays a major role in facilitating trade and development of East and Central Africa region becausethe imports that pass through the port of Mombasa are critical to Kenya's economic growth and to the economic well-being of its neighbors. It has a huge responsibility to provide effective and reliable and efficient maritime service and to achieve this, the port needs a dedicated staff that is committed and available on duty. To fulfill its mandate,KPA has eight (8) functional divisions namely Managing Director's office, Legal services, Human Resources and Administration, Operations Technical Services, Finance, Corporate Services and Marine Services. It has a work force of 7,065 employees (KPA Records, 2013).

Absenteeism has a negative impact on the provision of services in KPA and the cost implications to the organization. According to Mbuvi (2011), during 2010/2011 financial year, the Man Hours lost due to absenteeism were 206,976.57 which translated into Kshs. 28,382,524.67. In KPA absence cases rank highest among the disciplinary cases. In the year 2012, absenteeism cases comprised 40% of the total discipline cases reported in the organization. Most of these discipline cases were from staff working in operational areas (KPA records, 2012). The cases were also mostly found among the lower cadre staff i.e. the operatives. Mbuvi, (2011) established that, the work area that is greatly affected by substance abuse which in turn leads to employee absence is Operations Division.There however exist minimal studies on employee absence that have been conducted at the organization or in Kenya on the subject for any logical conclusion.

According to the KPA Human Resources Manual (2012), employee absence is categorized into two, namely: authorized and unauthorized absence. Authorized absence refers to the leave that has been approved and it includes annual leave, maternity/paternity leave, sick leave and unpaid leave. Only approved absences are deemed legitimate and acceptable. Uncertified/casual absences include all absences which are not verified by medical certification and exclude gazette public holidays, compassionate leave, and authorized absences. Except when on leave, the employee has to apply for a medical certificate from the immediate supervisor which is presented to the medical personnel at the organization's clinic in order to receive treatment. Employees are eligible for free medical attention from the organization's clinic found within the organization's premises. Therefore when an employee fails to produce a medical certificate, he is deemed to have been on an unauthorized absence from duty. Regular and punctual attendance of all employees is vital. Employees are instructed to notify their supervisor and/or the Human Resources Department in the event that theyare not able to attend work, and to do so as early in advance as possible. Uncertified absences in the excess of ten consecutive days results in automatic and immediate dismissal. Unauthorized absence from duty for not less than ten days attracts a warning letter. A third warning issued within a period of 365 days from the second warning also results in summary dismissal.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Unscheduled absence is disruptive and costly. When an employee is not available to perform his job as expected, this often means that the work is done less efficiently by another employee or is not done at all. It is therefore imperative for managers to focus on employee absence as it can become extremely costly to organizations. The main

focus of this research was the perceived factors contributing to employee absence. The main reason for focusing on perceived causes of absence was that, recent research done on employee absence focused on the general factors causing the absence, moreover the findings were inconsistent.

Currently, the services at the port are labour intensive, and since it plays a major role in facilitating trade and development of East and Central Africa region because it is the only seaport on Africa's East coast between Tanzania and the Red Sea, it thus has a huge responsibility to provide effective, reliable and efficient maritime services. To achieve this, the port needs a dedicated staff that is committed and has a high level of attendance. Although absenteeism places huge financial cost on KPA (Mbuvi, 2011), little research has been done on the issue of absence in the organization. Research done on absenteeism in Kenya has also focused on the Education and Health sector (Muthama, et al, 2008, Cheruto, 1998). The researcher's extensive review of the pertinent literature did not reveal any study on the causes of absenteeism in any parastatal in Kenya.

Josias (2005) in a study of the relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism in a selected field services section within an Electricity Utility in the Western Cape found a strong relationship between absenteeism and gender, age, marital status and tenure. Therewas however no statistically significant difference in absenteeism based on job level amongst the selected sample of employees. Mc Clenney (1992) on the other hand in a Study of the Relationship Between Absenteeism and Job Satisfaction, Certain Personal Characteristics, and Situational Factors for Employees in a Public Agency, found no significant relationship between absenteeism and age, gender,

marital status and tenure Bynoe (2008) suggests that more absenteeism research needs to be carried out from the perspective of the employee and more specifically from the perspective of the absentee; only then will a rich understanding of absenteeism emerge. It is therefore in the pursuit of this understanding that this study chose to focus on the employee absence from the employee's point of view. The study was therefore meant to answer the question: what are the perceived factors contributing to employee absenteeism in KPA?

1.3 Objective of the study

To establish the factors perceived by the employees as causing or contributing to employee absenteeism at Kenya Ports Authority.

1.4 Value of the Study

The study will benefit Kenya Ports Authority top managers. The top management can use the report in making sound strategic decisions on the way forward on reducing employee absence. The study may be of significance to other organizations who could replicate the study to find out the extent of employee absence and its perceived causes and therefore enable the Human Resource Managers to come up with good Policies and strategies on dealing with the issue.

Academically, the findings of the study may be used as a reference for future research work by anyone who is interested in this area of study. The study may also stimulate the desire among other academicians to carry out more research on specific factors that contribute to employee absence in different institutions thereby developing suitable case studies that may be used in institutions of higher learning.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the theory and literature related to absenteeism, effects of absence and the causes of employee absenteeism.

2.2 Employee Absenteeism

Absenteeism is commonly defined as the failure of workers to report on the job when they are scheduled to work (Huczyunski and Fitzpatrick, 1989). Harrison and Price (2004) defined absence as, 'lack of physical presence at a behavioral setting when and where one is expected to be.' Absenteeism should however be distinguished from tardiness wherein the employee reports for work some minutes or hours after the regular reporting time and from turnover which indicates an employee permanently leaving the employment.

Employee absence is a phenomenon that is present in organizations that are large and small, public or private, urban or rural. It is an issue of concern for many managers which is costly to the organizations as well as the individuals. It is estimated that a firm in Kenya losses about eight days a year because of worker absenteeism. That is equivalent to just about 3% of working time in a calendar year (Larossi, 2009).There has been considerable research on the area of employee absenteeism. This may be attributed to among other factors, the need to understand the multiple causes of this phenomenon, the detrimental effects of absenteeism on workflow and performance, and the considerable costs of absence behavior to organizations (Nicholson and Martocchio, 1995).

2.2.1 The Effects of Absenteeism

Excessive absenteeism is synonymous with various significant costs and negative effects. Cascio and Boudreau (2010) categorized the costs associated with employee absenteeism into four categories namely: Costs associated with absentee themselves, Costs associated with managing absenteeism problems, Costs associated with substitute employees and costs related to the reduced quantity or quality of work outputs.

Costs associated with the absentee themselves include employee benefits and salaries since the employee is still paid out during the absence. It also includes time spent by supervisors counseling or reprimanding the absent worker (Lawson, 1998). On the other hand, costs associated with managing absenteeism problems consists of those costs associated with the supervisors' time spent dealing with operational issues caused by the failure of one or more employee to come to work (Cascio and Boudreau, 2010). These costs include adjustments in work schedules which results in a rise in production costs.

According to Cascio and Boudreau (2010) costs associated with substitute employees include costs of overtime allowances to meet the delivery dates whereas the rates of overtime allowances are usually double the normal rates of salaries. There is also misallocation of skills and talents of employees for the substitute employees while human resource planning is rendered impossible. There is increased human resource complement to meet staffing needs. These costs also include training and monitoring of the substitute employee. Research shows that absenteeism is positively correlated

with turnover. The resulting turnover also financially impacts a business because of the costs associated with finding and training a permanent replacement.

Costs related to the reduced quantity or quality of work outputs refer to those costs originating from the use of casual or replacement employees. This usually leads to an increase in machine downtime, rejection of finished products due to deterioration in quality of goods produced, increased scrap, lost efficiency in work crews, breakdown of machinery and consequent idle machine-hours (Lawson, 1998). They also include costs that burden employers financially due to lost productivity and also lead to loss of revenue from not meeting project schedules. This in turn leads to hampered supply to valued customers and poor customer service.

2.2.2 Absenteeism Models

Most recent research emphasize the complex nature of the factors influencing absence taking into account both absence and attendance i.e. factors that influence attendance and those factors that might prevent it and is associated with the ideas of Nicholson (1977) Steers and Rhodes (1978) and Rhodes and Steers (1990) models on absence. Nicholson's Model of Attendance Motivationwas put forward by Nigel Nicholson and it takes into account factors influencing both absence and attendance. Nicholson starts from the assumption that attendance is normal behavior, and that the search for the causes of absence is a search for those factor's that disturb the regularity of attendance (Nicholson, 1977). The reasons why the workers actually attend in a specific set of circumstances depend on a number of variables which affect attachment and attendance motivation, each of which is influenced by a 'contextual factor.'

The contextual factors include the following: personal characteristics of employees – such as age and gender – which influence absence. Secondly, orientations or attitudes to work differ according to occupational experience and background reflected, for example, higher levels of absence are reported among blue collar workers than white collar workers. Thirdly, the nature of jobs and the opportunities they provide for satisfaction and involvement vary, as reflected in the differences between manual and non-manual worker absence. A fourth influence arises out of the rule of the work place which may either be strict, or lenient on absence. A final influence is referred to as 'random' and refers to domestic or travel difficulties which may affect ability to attend. This results to an absence continuum, ranging from unavoidable influences which impact on frequency of absence to avoidable influences which impact on frequency of attendance. Nicholson therefore argues that absence-control policies should be aimed at tackling the avoidable influences, recognizing that these will vary between individuals and work settings. (Evans et al, 2002)

Steers and Rhodes Process Model of Employee Attendancehas been called one of the most influential and often-cited models in the absenteeism literature (Harrison and Martocchio, 1998). Burton et al, (2002) advances that, 'the process model of employee attendance is primarily determined by two dependent variables namely, an employee's ability and motivation to attend. These two variables are also theorized to interact such that someone's perceived ability to attend moderates the motivation to attend-attendance relationship. Motivation to attend on the other hand is influenced by a person's job satisfaction with his/her job situation and various pressures to attend.' According to this model then, as long as the employee is motivated andable to attend, then he is bound to attend work.

Attendance motivation is influenced by job satisfaction which is influenced by other variables such as personal characteristics (e.g. education and tenure) and the job situation, for example; higher educational attainments are more likely to lead to pursuit of career or profession with which lower absence levels are associated, for example non manual jobs. Attendance motivation is also influenced by pressures to attend work. In times of economic uncertainty, for example, fear of losing one's job may result in pressure to be present. Work – group or peer pressure may act either to encourage absence or attendance, according to the prevailing culture norms.

The model recognizes the role of ability to attend. Circumstances arise, even for the most highly motivated employee in which attendance is not possible for example genuine illness and travel difficulties. Ability to attend is also influence by the employee's personal circumstances for example, the distance from home to work or the complexity of the journey undertaken, (Evans et al, 2002). Finally, ability to attend work is also influence by personal characteristics (such as age, sex and family size). Absence patterns thus vary between individuals according to the particular influences on their behavior. From a management perspective, the model therefore stresses the importance of understanding the prevailing influences on absence for each group of employees and applying appropriate policies. (Evans et al, 2002)

Rhodes and Steers (1990) developed the Diagnostic Model of Employee Attendance for use by managers in understanding absence in their organizations. It recognizes three key influences on attendance motivation. First, organizational practices must set out clear attendance standards and procedures, pay due attention to work design, involve recruitment and selection practices that screen for past absence behavior and

incorporate the communication of clear attendance standards to staff. Secondly, the importance of absence cultures should be recognized. In the absence of appropriate control policies, employee behaviors are likely to reflect the norms of the work group, which may either stress attendance or encourage absence. In addition, to clear attendance standards, absence culture can be influenced by attention to work design and the establishment of self-managing teams with highly interdependent roles. The third area of influence is on employee attitudes, values and goals which are in turn strongly influenced by the kinds of organizational practices and cultures stated above. The diagnostic model also incorporates factors which may act as barriers to attendance such as illness, family responsibilities and travel problems but which may also be influenced by organizational policies such as provision of healthcare programs. (Evans et al, 2002)

2.3   Causes of absenteeism

In determining what characteristics to examine, the research will rely on the extensive work of Evans et al (2002). The writers considered the causes of absence among employees and grouped those under three categories namely: Differences in absence due to personal characteristic of individuals, Factors within the direct influence of organizations, and Factors external to the workplace. The categories will form the basis for analysis of the perceived causes of employee absenteeism for this study.

2.3.1 Personal characteristics

Rhodes and Steers (1990) and Huczynski and Fitzpatrick (1989) identified the following personal characteristics as influencing worker absence:Age is one of the

most studied cause of absenteeism. Studies examining the relationship between age, and absenteeism have resulted in mixed findings. The proponents of the argument that absenteeism increases with age argue that older staff will exhibit a lower absence rate than younger staff because of a better person-organization fit that emerges over time (Martocchio, 1989). On the other hand, the opponents of the argument that absenteeism increases with age argue that older workers are expected to have higher absence rates due to sickness attributed to old age. There is however a general agreement from research that younger people tend to have more frequent short spells of absence whereas older people have fewer short spells are absent longer in each spell, especially after the age of fifty, (Huczynski and Fitzpatrick, 1989).

Tenure refers to the time an employee has been working for the organization. Proponents of the notion that absence decreases with tenure argue that it may be attributed to the fact that employees with longer tenure normally have a higher degree of organizational commitment to the company and have a higher need for job stability. They may also achieve promotion to higher grade or status positions by virtue of their service. However, there is an argument that absence increases with tenure which may be attributed to the fact that employees with a longer tenure are less dispensable and therefore less likely to be fired for any given level of absenteeism. In addition, workers with longer tenure on a job particularly those who have passed the probationary period are likely to be governed by more lenient work rules (Freeman and Holzer, 1986). They may also perceive a higher degree of job security and may be more willing to make themselves absent in cases of mild illness (Barmby, et al, 2000).

Marital status also influences absences and appears to do so differentially by sex. Married men, perhaps because of their commitment and obligations to home and family life, are absent less frequently than their single counterparts. Probably because of the same commitment, married female employees are absent more frequently than their never married counterparts. Barmby, et al (2000) in their study found out that single men have the lowest absence rates whereas married women have the highest absence rates which they attributed to the difference social responsibilities for gender groups outside the workplace.

Researchon the gender-absenteeism relationship indicates that women are more absent than males. Rhodes and Steers (1990) proposed that this may be due to their traditional responsibilities for caring for the family. They also note that the absence decreases with career progression due to decreased family responsibilities as children grow up, and increases with increasing family size. Barmby, et al (2000) states that women are expected to be absent more often since they are, traditionally seen, more inclined with taking care of the household. The number of children under 18 years old and marital status are variables that represent kinship responsibilities and are considered a major contributor to absence (Borda and Norman, 1997). Dionne and Dostie (2007) on a study on determinants of absenteeism concluded that women were more likely than men to be absent but being married reduced absenteeim. They however did not find evidence that women with children had higher levels of absenteeism which they attributed perhaps to the notion that childcare is a more equally shared responsibility now than in the past.

Level of education also influences absenteeism. Studies indicate that workers who are better educated are thought of to be less absent than their counterparts who are less educated. Evans et al, (2002) states that, 'Education is intricately related to both job responsibility and occupational status, and it is probably these factors rather than education which are the more important variables in absence behavior. It can further be argued that the more one is educated, then the job status is higher and thus are likely to work in less hazardous conditions and therefore less prone to occupational hazards.' Dionne and Dostie (2007) in a study found out that education was positively associated with absences.

According to Evans, et al (2002), Employee Attitudes, Values and Expectations will depend partly on factors outside the workplace as a result of family, education, community, class and other influences in people's upbringing. Experience of work generally and for some people activities other than work will be more central to life goals will also influence the employee attitude. Where family responsibilities, hobbies or other non-work interests take precedence, it might be reasonable be expected that this will be conducive for higher absence (Rhodes and Steers, 1990)

2.3.2 Factors within the Direct Influence of the Organization

This consists of those variables that characterize the nature of the job and the surrounding work environment. Job satisfaction, working conditions, supervision and the like contribute to the absentee behaviour. According to Singh (2002), excessive hours of working, natural fatigue, monotonous work, poor supervision, and adverse working conditions all contribute to employee's absence from work. Evans et al

(2002) proposed that the influence of organizational context may be seen from the following perspectives:

Work designs. Work designs are related to job satisfaction and motivation which in turn affects absence. According to Evans et al (2002), Work design characterized by division of labour and specialization leads to efficiency since the worker gains expertise in a specific field, but it also culminates into boredom, apathy and minimum commitment to the job and the organization since many work roles consist mainly of simple fragmented, routine and repetitive tasks. This in turn may lead to employees taking time off since there is minimal commitment due to low levels of autonomy, responsibility and decision-making. Huczyunski and Fitzpatrick, (1989)posits that, a great deal of research associates high levels of task repetitiveness with low satisfaction which in turn has been positively correlated with absence.The consensus appears to be that routine, repetitive and fragmented tasks under the traditional scientific management approaches to job design are likely to lead to higher absence frequency and therefore it should be expected that if jobs are redesigned to reduce this repetitive nature it ought to lower absence frequency, (Evans et al, 2002).

Stress is increasingly being recognized as a significant cause of workplace absence and in the CIPD (2012) survey on absence was rated among the most important cause of time lost. According to Odgers and Keeling (2000), stress may be defined, as any external stimulus that produces wear and tear on a person's psychological or physical wellbeing. According to the two authors, work is the leading cause of stress. Ejere (2010) in a study of teacher absenteeism in selected public primary schools in Uyo, Nigeria found out that stress is a contributory factor to teacher absence since majority

of the respondents 74.5 % found their job stressful. Huczyunski and Fitzpatrick, (1989) in Evans et al (2002) identified a number of causes of stress at work as namely: Poor working conditions, physical dangers and even the distraction caused by an open office can lead to employee stress. Shift work is another cause of stress, Evans, et al, (2002) argue that, shift workers were more likely than others to be absent for sickness and injury. Work overload or under load including repetitive work or periods of high activity. Studies have connected both work overload and under load with absence.

Role ambiguity and role conflict are other causes of stress. Role ambiguity refers to the lack of clarity about what is expected while role conflict refers to where expectations are clear but they conflict with each other. Role conflict can arise where there is conflict between work demands and other non-work roles such as the family. Career development is another cause of stress in the workplace. There are two aspects, over-promotion associated with difficulties in coping with work and under-promotion, associated with feelings of lack of status or recognition and stifled career ambitions. Bevan and Hayday (1998) argue that, career dissatisfaction is one of the most powerful predictors of absence as well as being linked to the likelihood of leaving. Other factors leading to stress include, poor relationships at work, lack of consultation and little participation in decision-making.Managers can either cause or help prevent stress through how they manage people. They are also the people in an organization that are most likely to be able to pick up on the early warning signs that might indicate someone is suffering from stress. (CIPD, 2008)

Leadership style also influences absence.A number of studies have identified links between the style of first line supervisors and absence behaviour in work groups. Saiyadain (2009), states that, 'while workers did not question the supervisor's competence, habitual absentees have reservations regarding supervisors' concern for them as individuals'. Langenhoff, (2011) however found no relation between absenteeism and supervision. He attributed this to the hierarchy of companies where Intermediate supervisory and supervisory covers all the supervisory functions within a company. Since an employee can be a supervisor and be supervised at the same time, the direct effect of this hypothesized relation could be influenced. Another reason for these results may stem from the fact that the designed model controls for the influence of the level of education, where previous research did not. It could be assumed that employees with a higher education work as a supervisor more often.

The size of the organization and the work group size influence the rate of absence of its employees. Evans, et al (2002) argues that the larger the firm the more absent employees tends to be. In smaller companies, a single employee is relatively more important than in larger companies. When one employee is sick, there are less other employees who could potentially cover for this sick employee. In larger firms people tend to work more in teams and do more complementary work which makes it easier to cover for a sick person's job. Leaker (2008) provided further support with a statement from a report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in 2008; smaller organizations typically record lower levels of absence because absence is more disruptive and harder to cover for.

Another factor influencing absence is work group norms and culture.Evans, et al (2002) claims that absence levels may be associated with both formal and informal organizational socialization. The formal process which involves the communication to the new employees of the rules and standards of conduct of the organization, reinforced by the subsequent behaviour of those authorized to enforce them. With time people will tend to establish whether the rules operate in practice or are just a part of management rhetoric and can be ignored. Informal socialization on the other hand occurs where new employees on arrival within their work group learn what behaviour is appropriate and because people want to be accepted by the group, they tend to conform to the established norms. In the case of absence, they learn by observation the absence behaviour of the group and the consequences by their superiors.It can be then concluded that the actions of the supervisor have an important influence on establishing acceptable norms of behaviour.

Some organizational practices and policies may also contribute to absence albeit unintentionally. For example, fragmented job roles involving routine and repetitive tasks, minimum of variety and lack of opportunities to learn new skills tend to encourage higher levels of absence levels. Sick pay policies also tend to influence the levels of absence in an organization. It can be concluded that where generous sickness benefits are provided, absence levels tend to rise. This is especially so for those organizations that have employers' occupational sick pay scheme (Evans et al, 2002).

2.3.3 Factors External to the Organization

External factors refer to potential causes of employee absence that emanate mainly from outside the workplace and may therefore lie outside the immediate control of

management. Johns (1997) asserts that withdrawal models, which link absenteeism to workplace attitudes such as low job satisfaction or organizational commitment, have historically been the most popular from an absenteeism research perspective. In reality however, these factors represent only a limited cause of absenteeism. Outside forces such as family responsibilities and other contextual factors must be considered when studying absence. According to Evans et al, (2002) these causes are viewed by the absence models as those that restrict employees' ability to attend and include:

Genuine illness and accident also influence employee absence.Evans, et al (2002), state that, absence caused by sickness has its main attribution to incapacity related to illness or injury. Genuine illness attributed to two thirds of absence according to respondents in the CIPD's (2012) absence survey.Employees whoare in poor health are more likely to suffer from illnesses and diseases, and, as such, more likelyto use sick leave. Leigh (1991) postulates that, healthy workers in an organization are more likely to attend work, and when they are absent, they tend to miss lesstime. Langenhoff, (2011) in a study on employee absenteeism- construction of a model for international comparison of influential determinants, found out that the influence of self-assessed health on employee absence are significant. He further argues that in countries with more strict regulations about safety in the workplace, fewer employees get injured or ill from their work.

Transport and travel difficulties affect people's ability to go to work despite their willingness to do so. Some of the factors associated with these transport problems include the distance to work, traffic congestion, and standard of public transport system and weather conditions. A long distance coupled with bad weather or traffic

congestion increases the likelihood of an employee not reporting to work. Booyens (1998) argues that, employees living on the work premises have less absenteeism than those who walk to work. Bad weather is a deterrent to employees who walk to work as well as those who need to travel by more than one transport system in order to reach work. According to Evans et al (2002), family responsibilities have been shown to contribute to the gender difference in absence;this is because they are mostly considered the women's responsibility. Family responsibilities include dependent children and elderly relatives.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse is one of the major factors leading to absence. Booyens (1998) reported an increased frequency of absence from work among alcoholics and drug abusers. According to Foster and Vaughan, (2005) every employee who is affected by substance abuse costs organisations billions of dollars, not only because of absenteeism, but also because of occupational accidents and loss of productivity.Mbuvi (2011) on a study of the effects of substance abuse on work productivity and safety at Kenya Ports Authority states that, 'Substance abuse is a problem to the workers as the abuser could compromise their safety and also lowers morale of other employees who have to perform extra work due to absence of the abuser.'

The problem of employee absence affects majority of organizations. Studies done on employee absenteeism, some studies have tried to highlight the general causes of absenteeism in the workplace while other studies have focused on how various factors interact and lead to absenteeism. However something missing from this body of literature is attention to the manner in which the workers themselves account for

absence. As a process, the intent to be absence may actually begin long before the actual act of absenteeism from duty takes place. This may develop in an employee when certain experiences or events occur, such as being overlooked for promotion, conflicts at work, major organizational restructuring, or lack of rotation at work. In addition to instances of the actual absence from duty, the problem can remain which may affect the efficiency of the employee. Minor et al, (2009) argues taht the manner in which people attribute the causes of events and issues in their lives shapes what they expect to see happen and, in turn, how they behave. So there is good reason to consider staff perceptions of the absenteeism issue.The present study is thus meant to complement and extend past research on worker absenteeism by examining data on employees' perceptions of the absence problem.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This chapter indicates the research design that was used in the study, the target population, the sample size, the method used to collect data and how data collected was analyzed.

3.2   Research Design

The study used descriptive survey research design.The survey design is regarded as the most appropriate research design to measure the perceptions of the respondents in a study (Shaughnessy, et al, 2011). This design enabled the researcher to collect cross sectional data important for comparative analysis

3.3   Population of the Study

The population of this study was all the employees of KPA. According to the Kenya Ports Authority Human Resources Manual (2012) an employee is defined as 'any person employed in the Authority for wages and salaries'. There were 7,065 employees as at June, 2013 (KPA Records, 2013).

3.4   Sampling and Sampling Design

The respondents were selected using Proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation by division and rank, (i.e., management versus unionized staff) is achieved on these variables. In this sampling method, the number of elements allocated to the various strata is proportional to the representation of the strata in the

target population. This technique was best for this study as it ensured that respondents from different divisions were equally selected and that the sample was representative of the population. It also gives better comparison amongst sub groupsand has more statistical precision because the variability within the subgroups is lower as compared to the variations of dealing with an entire population.A sample of 80respondents was selected from the target population. From the 8 Divisions which formed the strata, 10 respondents from each stratum were selected based on the proportion of management staff and unionized staff in each Division. The respondents were then selected randomly. This gave a total of 32 Management and 48 unionized staff.

3.5   Data Collection

The research used primary data. A well predesigned structured questionnaire containing both open and closed questions was used to collect the primary data (See Appendix I). The questionnaire used in this study had four parts. The first part solicited the staff's demographic and background information. Part (B) of the survey was meant to assess participants' past absence behaviour in the last twelve months. Subsequently, participants were asked to provide anopen-ended response describing the reason(s) for the absence. Part (C) asked staff to indicate whether they perceived absence as a problem among staff and if so, to provide anopen-ended description of the top three reasons they believe staff absent themselves. Participants were also asked to rate the importance of 25 factors in promoting employee absence. Ratings ranged from, 'to no extent', to, 'to a large extent'. The factors were selected based on the literature review. The fourth part of the survey was an open-ended item asking participants to describe the most important change(s) KPA could implement to reduce employee absenteeism. The instrument was considered appropriate for the study

because it is less costly in terms of time and more flexible for busy respondents. The questionnaire was pretested to ensure its effectiveness and standardization.It was administered through 'drop and pick later' method.

3.6   Data Analysis

After collection of data from the field, it was edited for completeness and consistency. It was then analyzed using SPSS.Data was presented using Descriptive statistics comprising of standard deviations, percentages and tables to simplify and characterize data and to summarize the findings. Qualitative data was analyzed using the content analysis method.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the results of the study, findings about the demographics of the study participants, preliminary analyses of the data, and the statistical analysis used to establish the perceived causes of employee absence.

4.2 Response Rate of Employees Surveyed

The study was a survey and targeted 80 employees of KPA. A total number of 80 Questionnaires were administered and only 63 were returned back. This constituted 79% of the target population which was considered adequate for the study.

4.3 Survey Part A

The first part of the questionnaire sought to solicit for the organization and demographic profiles of the respondents that include; gender, age, years of service, and years of existence were analyzed to determine the general classification of the respondents. The results of the analysis are found on the tables given below:

4.3.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Table 4.1 summaries that the respondents gender. The results show that 69.8% of the respondents were male and 30.2% were female. This indicates that majority of the respondents interviewed were male.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
MALE	44	69.8
FEMALE	19	30.2
Total	63	100.0

Source: Research Data

4.3.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age

Table 4.2 summarizes the respondent's age. 46% of the respondents fall in the category of 30-39 years, while 39.7% fall in the category of 40-49 years, 3.2% fall in the category of 20-29 years and 11.1% fall in the category of 50-59 years. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were aged between 30-39 years.

Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-29	2	3.2
30-39	29	46.0
40-49	25	39.7
50-59	7	11.1
Total	63	100.0

Source: Research Data

4.3.3 Distribution of the Respondents by Marital Status

Table 4.3 summaries the respondent's marital status. The results indicate that most of the respondents were married comprising 77.8% of the respondents, 11.1% of the respondents have never been married while 6.3% were divorced/separated and 4.8% were widowed.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Never Been Married	7	11.1
Divorced/Separated	4	6.3
Married	49	77.8
Widowed	3	4.8

Source: Research Data

4.3.4 Distribution of Respondents by Divisions.

Table 4.4 shows the distribution of respondents by Divisions. Although the researcher issued 10 questionnaires per each division, the response rate was different for each division. Operations and Engineering services Division had the highest response rate while Infrastructure Development, Managing Director and Legal Divisions had the lowest response rate.

Table 4.4 Distribution of Respondents by Divisions

	Frequency	Percent
Managing Director	7	11.1
Legal	7	11.1
HR And Admin	8	12.7
Operations	9	14.3
Eng. Services	9	14.3
Finance	8	12.7
Cooperate Services	8	12.7
Infrastructure Development	7	11.1
Total	63	100.0

Source: Research Data

4.3.5 Distribution of the Respondents by Grade

Table 4.5 summaries the respondent's grade. The results indicate that 66.7% of the respondents were unionized staff while 33.3% were management staff. Of the unionized staff, most respondents were grade HG. 1 which is the highest level of the category while among the management staff, most respondents were grade HM. 4 which is the lowest grade of the category of staff.

Table 4.5 Distribution of Respondents by Grade

	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percentage
HG1	15	23.8		
HG2	8	12.7		
HG3	8	12.7		
HG4	11	17.5	42	66.7

HM2	2	3.25		
HM3	8	12.7		
HM4	11	17.5	21	33.3
Total	63	100.0	63	100

Source: Research Data

4.3.6 Distribution of Respondents by Length of Service

Table 4.6 summaries that the respondents years of experience. 41.3% of the respondents fall in the category of 11-20 years of experience, while 38.1% fall in the category of 1-10 years, 17.5% fall in the category of 21-30 years and 3.2% fall in the category of 30 or more years of experience.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Respondents by experience

No. of years	Frequency	Percent
0-10	24	38.1
11-20	26	41.3
21-30	11	17.5
30 Plus	2	3.2
Total	63	100.0

Source: Research Data

4.3.7 Distribution of Respondents by Source of Income

Table 4.7 summaries whether the respondents are the primary sources of income or not. 87.3% of the respondents are the primary sources of income while 12.7 % of the respondents were not the primary source of income.

Table 4.7 Distribution of Respondents by Source of Income

Primary source of income	Frequency	Percent
YES	55	87.3
NO	8	12.7
Total	63	100.0

4.3.8 Distribution of Respondents by Number of Dependents

Table 4.8 summaries number of dependents per respondent, most respondents had over six dependents i.e. 38.1 %, 22.2% had 3-4 dependents while 20.65 of the respondents had 5-6 dependents. 19% of the respondents had between 1-2 dependents.

Table 4.8 Distribution of Respondents by Number of Dependents

No. of Dependents	Frequency	Percent
1-2	12	19.0
3-4	14	22.2
5-6	13	20.6
>6	24	38.1
Total	63	100.0

4.4 Survey Part B

This section sought to assess the participants' past absence behaviour in the last twelve months, subsequently, participants were asked to provide anopen-ended response describing the reason(s) for the absence.

4.4.1 Being on unauthorized absence from duty

15 responses which translated to 23.8% of the respondents indicated that they have

been absent without permission whereas 76.2 % responded that they have not been

absent without permission.

Table 4.9 Being on unauthorized absence from duty

	Frequency	Percent
YES	15	23.8
NO	48	76.2
Total	63	100.0

Source: Research Data

4.4.2 Reasons for the absence

The respondents who admitted having been on unauthorized absence were asked to

cite reasons why they were absent without permission. The reasons mentioned

broadly fell into two categories namely, family issues, and genuine sickness. 53% of

the respondents who admitted to have been on unauthorized absence said it was

because they were attending to family issues which ranged from attending to a sick

child, taking child to school or sorting out domestic issues.37% cited genuine illness

or injury while 3.2% did not mention any reason.

4.5 Survey Part C

Part (C) asked staff to indicate whether they perceived absence as a problem among staff and if so, to provide an open-ended description of the top three reasons they believe staff absent themselves.

4.5.1 Is absenteeism a problem among staff?

79% of the respondents indicated that absenteeism is a problem which translated to 50 respondents whereas 21% indicated that it is not a problem.

Table 4.10 Is Absenteeism a Problem among Staff?

	Frequency	Percent
YES	50	79.4
NO	13	20.6
Total	63	100.0

Source: Research Data

4.5.2 Perceived reasons why staff absent themselves

Respondents who indicated that absenteeism is a problem cited reasons they perceive as contributing to employee absence. Among the reasons cited include: - Drug abuse, was cited as the major factor staff perceived as a cause of employee absence from duty. This was cited by 57% of the respondents. Problems with the family and lack of motivation were also rated among the top reasons for employee absenteeism cited by 33% and 30% respectively. Additionally, 21% cited poor management style as a reason. 19% mentioned injury or accident.

Apart from factors relating to the individual, staff also cited other factors pertaining to the organization. For example, organizational culture and lack or poor adherence to policies on absenteeism were both cited by 19% of the respondents. Lesser proportions of respondents attributed turnover to other factors namely stress, work monotony, problems with remuneration, financial problems and travelling problems.

Table 4.11Perceived Reasons Why Staff Absent Themselves

	N	Percentage
Drug Abuse	36	27.3
Management Style	13	9.8
Personal/family Reasons	21	15.9
Policy on Staff Absence	9	6.8
Organizational Culture	9	6.8
Injury/ Sickness	12	9.1
Lack of Motivation	19	14.4
Others	13	9.8
Total	132	100

Source: Research Data

4.5.2 Importance of Selected Factors in Contributing to Absence among Staff

Descriptive statistics was used to measure the factors that staff perceived to contribute to unauthorized absence among employees in the organization. This was measured by a four point scale to rate the factors, where 4 = to a great extent, 3 = to a moderate extent, 2 = to a less extent and 1 = not at all. Data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations as summarized in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Importance of Selected Factors in Contributing to Employee Absenteeism

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	1.93	.915
Gender	1.89	.900
Length Of Service	2.05	.981
Marital Status	2.02	1.077
Level Of Education	2.26	1.188
Role Ambiguity	2.30	.893
Role Conflict	2.23	.945
Lack Of Participation In Decision Making	2.80	.961
Organizational Culture Or Climate	2.85	1.113
Over Promotion	2.11	1.031
Under Promotion	3.13	1.010
Excessive Work Load	2.46	1.023
Employees Attitude And Expectations	3.06	.979
Interaction With Supervisor	2.66	1.032
Nature Of Work	2.58	1.066
Management Style	2.82	1.011
Size Of Work Group/Department	2.27	1.044
Policies On Absenteeism	2.60	1.011
Stressful Work Environment	2.70	1.117
Genuine Sickness	2.84	1.085
Injury At Work	2.73	.990
Drug And Substance Abuse	3.05	1.034
Family Responsibilities	2.47	1.002
Transport Difficulties	2.19	1.060
Travel Difficulties	2.14	.953

Source: Research Data

The mean scores for the 25 elements show that the respondents perceive most of the factors as important contributors of absenteeism. All except two of the factors had a mean score of greater than 2.0. A mean score greater that 2.5 (Mean >2.5) is considered to imply to a great extent, a mean >2.0 but <2.5 is considered to imply to a moderate extent and a mean score 2.0 < implies to a less extent. The standard deviation for all the factors was relatively low indicating that most of the respondents did not have significant variance on the answers they gave. A standard deviation > 1.1 is considered to imply a significant variance in the responses of the respondents.

Among the selected factors, under promotion was perceived as fairly high with a mean score of 3.13 and standard deviation of 1.0, followed by employee attitude and drug and substance abuse which had a mean score of 3.05 and 3.06 with standard deviations of 0.99 and 1.03 respectively. Other items with relatively high mean ratings of over a mean score of greater than 2.5 include organizational culture, genuine sickness, management style, lack of participation in decision making, injury at work, stressful work environment, interaction with the supervisor, policies on absenteeism and nature of work. Age and gender were perceived as rather low with a mean score of 1.93 and 1.89 respectively and both had a standard deviation of 0.90.

Correlations were computed to study the relationship between ratings and staff demographic variables. Four significant relationships were found, three involving age and one involving education. Ratings on lack of participation decreased as age increased ($r = -28$, $p = .04$) as well as ratings on interaction with supervisor which also decreased as age increased, ($r = -.38$, $p = .004$). Staff with less education had

higher ratings of the factor "genuine sickness and injury" ($r = -.308$, $p = .005$).

Finally, ratings on this same factor decreased as age increased ($r = -375$, $p = .005$).

4.6 Survey Part D

The respondents identified a number of important changes they believed the organization i.e. KPA would make to reduce staff absenteeism. Strict adherence to set down policies on absenteeismwhich included automation of time management by far was the most commonly cited change (63% of respondents). 52 % of the respondents suggested counseling and rehabilitation of staff who have drug and substance problems. Similarly, 45% made reference to improved supervision of staff. 32% described the need for improved treatment, motivation and recognition of officers. 30% cited rewarding of good attendance. Other changes were mentioned with less frequency. These included improved communication and teamwork (9%), ensure promotion of staff on merit (5.6%), including of junior staff in decision making (3.4%), improvements to work environment safety (3.4%), provision of car loans to staff (2.1%), and increasing housing (1.1%).

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research findings emanating from the study. It also provides conclusions that can be drawn from the research and offers suggestions for future research on staff absenteeism.

5.2 Summary

The aim of this study was to establish the perceived factors contributing to employee absenteeism at KPA. A high level of absenteeism among staff can impair organizational effectiveness, and can even lead to staff turnover. Being absent may seem like a small matter to an employee but if a manager needs twelve people in a unit to get the work done, and four of the twelve are absent, most of the time the work of the unit will decrease some or additional workers will have to be hired to provide results. An organization can solve their staff absenteeism by identifying and attending to factors its employees perceive as important in promoting and controlling absenteeism. These employees are uniquely positioned to understand the problem due to their own direct experiences as well as their interactions with and observations of other employees.

The causal attributions people make about issues they encounter affect their expectations and behaviors (Carver and Scheier, 2008). According to Minor, et al (2009), it is reasonable to believe that employees of all organizations have ideas about

causes of organizational problems generally. Direct and vicarious experiences in an organization help establish and confirm (or disconfirm) employees' attributions regarding organizational problems. In this case employee attributions concerning absenteeism could affect intent to absent themselves and ultimately the behavior.

From the data analysis it was established that few staff self-reported being absent from duty for the last twelve months which translated to 23.8%. This came at a background of majority of the employees stating that staff absenteeism is a problem in the organization. This could be explained by the fact that people might have been afraid of the ramifications i.e. if they reported being on unauthorized absence from duty. Most of the respondents were from the age bracket of 30-39 and a high number of the respondents were married with over 6 dependents. The respondents were mostly lower cadre staff specifically grade HG. 4 mainly from Engineering, Finance and Infrastructure development divisions. The respondents cited attending to family issues as the main cause of their unauthorized absence from duty, followed by genuine illness and/or injury.

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that staff absenteeism is a problem in KPA. Asked what reasons they perceived as causing or contributed to the unauthorized absence from duty, 57% cited Drug abuse, followed by family problems and lack of motivation with 33% and 30% respectively. Some other reasons cited include, poor management style with 21%, injury and accident, organizational culture and lack or poor adherence to policy on absence were all cited by 19% of the respondents. A look at the cited reasons indicates that the top reasons were personal factors followed by factors pertaining to the organization.

The findings also indicated that among selected factors that contribute to absenteeism, under promotion was perceived as fairly high with a mean score of 3.13 followed by employee attitude and drug and substance abuse which had a mean score of 3.05 and 3.06 respectively. Other items with relatively high mean ratings of over a mean score of greater than 2.5 include organizational culture, genuine sickness, management style, lack of participation in decision making, injury at work, stressful work environment, interaction with the supervisor, policies on absenteeism and nature of work. Correlations were computed to study the relationship between ratings and staff demographic variables and four significant relationships were found. Ratings on lack of participation decreased as age increased, ratings on interaction with supervisor also decreased as age increased, while ratings on genuine sickness and injury decreased as age increased. Staff with less education had higher ratings of the factor "genuine sickness and injury". Finally, ratings on genuine sickness and injury decreased as age increased.

Finally, respondents cited some reasons they felt would help improve the staff absence situation in the organization which included strict adherence to set down policies on absenteeism, counseling and rehabilitation of staff who have drug and substance problems, improved supervision of staff, fair treatment, motivation and recognition of staff and also rewarding of good attendance. Other changes mentioned included improving communication and teamwork, promotion of staff on merit, including of junior staff in decision making, improvements to work environment safety, provision of car loans to staff, and increasing housing facilities.

5.3 Conclusion

From this research it is evident that most of the respondents concurred that absenteeism is a problem among staff in KPA. It is also evident that the cause of employee absenteeism according to staff in the organization can be said to be mostly related to personal factors and also organization factors. From the research it can be concluded that the organization can assist in reducing the cases of employee absenteeism based on the factors staff felt promoted absence, for example, organizing for Drug and Substance abuse rehabilitation and counseling for affected staff and adopting Change-Management programme to deal with the organizational culture. Enforcing adherence to set policies on absenteeism is also very vital in reducing employee absenteeism since the policies are already in place.

5.4 Recommendations

Since from the research it can be established that absenteeism is a problem in the organization, measures need to be put in place to reduce absenteeism. According to Bevan (2003) four approaches to managing attendance can be adopted namely: management policy, managing long-term absence, preventative measures and rewarding attendance.

Management policies: There are a number of importance elements of a basic attendance policy. These include having clear procedures in that employees should be made clear that it is their responsibility to report that they are unable to attend, to estimate the likely duration of their absence and to provide a reason for their absence. It also entails formal review if an unacceptable pattern or level of absence continues, reference for professional intervention or, in extreme cases, recourse to established

disciplinary procedures. Any attendance policy should be clearly communicated to all staff so that they are aware not only of what is required of them, but also what support may be available to them, for example, counseling services. There should also be return-to-work interviews, these interviews, held immediately on the day of returning to work by line managers, emphasize the point that the period of absence which has just finished, has not gone unnoticed. It also provides the employee and their manager with an opportunity to discuss, informally, unless there is a recurrent problem, any ongoing or underlying problems. Research has also shown that previous absence records are a reliable indicator of future attendance behaviour. Absence risk can be assessed during recruitment by screening of the staff by requesting absence data from previous employers and/or asking about absence record in interviews. Line managers should also receive appropriate training and guidance in a number of areas. These include how to implement agreed procedures, how to influence factors that contribute to absence (such as working environment, aspects of morale, access to flexible working arrangements, etc.) and also how their actions can affect the attendance of staff.

Managing long-term absence is another approach that can be adopted. There are clearly problems of skill, time, disposition, confidence and awareness among many of the line managers in many organizations. Management should provide sufficient guidance to either line managers, to employees or unions about their roles and accountabilities. Organizations should also train enough line managers in long-term absence management procedures and also the point at which long-term absence becomes a disciplinary issue.

Preventative measures: Clear and consistently applied procedures play an important part in managing attendance, however, these mechanisms do not easily address some of the underlying causes of absence. It is in some of these areas where prevention may, indeed, be better than cure. Provision of flexible working arrangement represents steps which can be taken as preventive measures. These can range from mechanisms to allow individuals to have more flexible start or finish times, to job-share, or to convert from full- to part-time. They can also involve greater flexibility in shift rostering.

Improving the physical working environment is also important as preventive measures concern over workplace hazards can affect employees' attendance. They may have the effect of exacerbating the effects of poor morale or dull and routine work content. Therefore, paying attention to the ambience of the working environment should result in changes to layout, heat, lighting, noise etc, where these are felt to cause problems. Job design is another aspect of preventive measures. If aspects of job satisfaction and morale affect absence levels to a greater degree among some employee groups than others, then there may be scope for adopting one or more of a number of job design techniques to improve their job interest and involvement. These include: Job rotation which entails moving individuals between tasks in order to provide variety. Job enlargement which entails building extra tasks into jobs to increase variety and responsibility and Job enrichment which is giving individuals greater control over a related sequence of tasks. All this will aid at reducing monotony and boredom which will in turn increase job satisfaction and in return reduce absenteeism.

Another measure is rewarding attendance. Although attending work may be considered an obligation on the part of the staff, rewarding good attendance can serve to encourage attendance. In conclusion, aside from ensuring that effective and clear absence policies and procedures are in place and being used, the approaches to attendance management should be applied where they will have most impact. This can only be done effectively on the basis of good data about prevailing patterns and causes of absence among key groups in the workforce.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The results from the survey are employees' perceptions and hence subject to possible biases. As noted by Wright, et al (2005), human resource practices have not been studied through predictive designs very often and this creates results that lack causal inference.

Although the questionnaires were well developed, pre-tested and revised, some respondents had problems of understanding the questions while some had fear of a negative consequence of a truthful response thus hindering the employees from freely expressing their views especially on the question that respondents were required to indicate whether they have been absent from duty in the last twelve months.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Despite several limitations in this study, scholars should be able to utilize these findings to create novel studies to further investigations on the perceived causes of employee absenteeism. Seeking the employee's take on what they perceive as contributing to absenteeism will contribute to organizations determining the correct measures to apply

inorder to reduce absenteeism amongst its staff and in turn reduce the costs to the organizations associated with staff absence from duty.

Some of the limitations of the research were that data for the present study came from a single organization, the number of respondents was limited, and the data obtained were largely descriptive in nature. Future investigations could uselarger samples with greater variation in staff demographics and organizations. While descriptive studies such as this are valuable for generating hypotheses, data collection instruments could be redesigned to allow for more inferential analyses.

This study raises the need for additional inquiry into possible reasons why employees from different organizations may perceive differently factors they believe contribute to their coworkers absenting themselves from duty.

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APPENDIX I: Tables

Table 1.1 : Grading Structure

	LEVEL	**GRADE**
Management Staff	Senior Management	HE 2 to HE 1
	Middle Management	HM 2 to HM 1
	Lower Management	HM 4 to HM 3
Unionisable Staff	Supervisory Staff	HG 2 to HG 1
	Operatives	HG 4 to HG 3

Source: Human resource services records, Kenya Ports Authority, 2013

Table 1.2: Staff Distribution Table

Division	Management	Unionized employees	Total
Managing Directors Office	44	350	394
Board & Legal Services	31	14	45
Human Resources & Administration	184	355	539
Operations	821	3,457	4,278
Engineering Services	325	606	931
Finance	213	114	327
Corporate Services	97	39	136
Infrastructure Development	99	316	415
Total	**1,814**	**5,251**	**7,065**

Source: Human resource services records, Kenya Ports Authority, 2013

Table 3.1: Sampling Frame

Division	Management employees		Unionized employees		Frequency
Managing Directors Office	11.2%	1	88.8%	9	10
Board & Legal Services	68.9%	7	31.1%	3	10
Human Resources & Adm.	34.1%	3	65.9%	7	10
Operations	19.2%	2	80.8%	8	10
Engineering Services	34.9%	3	65.1%	7	10
Finance	65.1%	7	34.9%	3	10
Corporate Services	71.3%	7	28.7%	3	10
Infrastructure Development	23.9%	2	76.1%	8	10
Total	**25.1%**	**32**	**74.9%**	**48**	**80**

Appendix II: Letter of Introduction

Esther K. Karanja
School of Business
University of Nairobi
Mombasa Campus
MOMBASA

21st September, 2013

Dear Respondent,

REF: FILLING IN OF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a postgraduate student of the University of Nairobi pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in Human Resources Management.

As part of the requirements for this degree, I am undertaking an academicresearch project entitled: "Perceived Factors Contributing to Employee Absenteeism at Kenya Ports Authority". You have been selected to be part of this study by virtue of you being an employee in the organization.

I am therefore kindly requesting you to take some time and fill the questionnaire form attached. Please note that the information that you provide will be treated with utmost confidentiality and thatit will be used for academic purpose only.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Esther K. Karanja
MBA Student
University of Nairobi

APPENDIX III: Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS

    i. Indicate your response by marking with a tick (√), and provide details where required

    ii. Please answer the questions as frankly, honestly and objectively as possible.

    iii. Please answer the questions as they apply to you personally.

PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Indicate your age bracket in years: (tick one)

   20-29: (   )   40-49: (   )

   30-39: (   )   50-59: (   )

2. Indicate your gender:

   Male: (   )

   Female: (   )

3. Indicate your marital status: (tick one)

   Never been married: (   )   Married: (   )

   Divorced/ Separated: (   )   Widowed: (   )

4. Indicate your highest level of education: (tick appropriately)

   Primary School   : (   )   Degree   : (   )

   High school   : (   )   Post Graduate   : (   )

   Certificate/Diploma : (   )

5. Indicate your department: _____

6. Indicate your Grade? (tick appropriately)

7. What is the total number of years you have worked in KPA? _____

8. Are you the primary source of income in your household?

   Yes: (   ) No: (   )

9. How many dependents do you have: _____

Part B:

10. a) During the past twelve months have you been on **unauthorized** absence from work?   Yes: (   ) No: (   )

   b) If yes, briefly state the causes of the absence.

      i.   _____

      ii.   _____

      iii.   _____

      iv.   _____

      v.   _____

Part C:

11. Is absence a problem among staff of Kenya Ports Authority?

Yes (   ) No (   )

12. What in your opinion are the top three reasons employees are absent from work

      i.   _____

      ii.   _____

      iii.   _____

13. To what extent do you believe that employees are absent due to the following reasons? Tick appropriately

Perceived Factors Causing Employee Absence	To no extent	To a limited extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent
Age				
Gender				
Length of service				
Marital status				
Level of education				
Role ambiguity (refers to the lack of clarity about what is expected)				
Role conflict(refers to where expectations are clear but they conflict with each other)				
Lack of participation in decision making				
Organizational culture or climate				
Over promotion				
Under promotion				
Excessive work load				
Employees attitude and expectations				
Interaction with supervisor				
Nature of work				
Management style				
Size of work group/department				
Policies on absenteeism				
Stressful work environment				
Genuine sickness				
Injury at work				
Drug and substance abuse				
Family Responsibilities (e.g. taking care of young children)				
Transport difficulties (e.g. traffic congestion)				
Travel difficulties (e.g. distance from home)				

Part: D

14. Briefly outline the changes KPA could implement to reduce absence.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank You.