

**STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO ABSENTEEISM BY MOBILE TELEPHONY
CALL CENTRES WITHIN NAIROBI**

BY

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DECLARATION

This research proposal is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree in any other university or institution of higher learning for examination.

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This research project has been presented for examination with my approval as the appointed University supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This project paper is dedicated to my parents ;Mr. & Mrs. Alexander Nyaga who worked tirelessly to provide me with a solid educational foundation.

It is also dedicated to my brothers and sisters for their prayers love and support that I received during the study. I particularly dedicate it to my dear sister Lucy Gakii for all the encouragement she has given to me during this period.

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ABSTRACT

The telecommunication industry specifically the mobile communication industry has been one industry that has exponentially grown in just a matter of few years. Call Centre representatives work in unique environments since they constantly manage customer interactions and are expected to adhere to strict targets .They are subjected to high levels of monitoring and control resulting to high level of stress and absenteeism.This study was conducted to establish the strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers to absenteeism in Kenya. The first specific objective was to identify the causes of absenteeism in the call centers. The second specific objective was to determine the strategic responses to absenteeism by Mobile Telephony Call Centers in Kenya. It was conducted through a survey design and questionnaires issued to call center employees in each of the three companies that were included in the survey. Data collected was quantitative and was analyzed by use of SPSS program. The study found out that the major causes of absenteeism in the call center are lack of motivation, management/supervision style, nature of job, customer appreciation (or lack of), work target, shift work and task characteristics.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Over the past few years, the call center has emerged as the essential component of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategy now widespread among companies. Many companies are quickly learning that service is the key to attracting and retaining customers, which leads to increased business and revenue. Consumers on the other hand are expecting more value from the products and services being offered and are quickly adopting the communication channels made possible by advances in telecommunications and the internet. Having an excellent call Centre is an important strategic asset that will not only improve a company's image, but also improve customer relations. Through the contact Centre, companies learn more about their clients, and with that knowledge, they learn how to serve them better, leading to an improved bottom line.

1.1.1 Concept of strategy

Strategy is a multi-dimensional concept and various authors have defined it in different ways. A company's strategy is the game plan management has for the company in the chosen market arena for competing successful, pleasing customers and achieving good business performance (Ansoff, 1987).

According to Thompson et al (2005), a company's strategy consists of all the competitive moves and business approaches that managers are employing to grow the business, attract

and please customers, compete successfully, conduct operations, and achieve the targeted levels of organizational performance. There is no shortage of opportunity to fashion a strategy that both tightly fits a company's own particular situation and is discernibly different from the strategies of rivals.

Strategy is also defined as the direction and the scope of an organization over the long term, which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stockholders expectations (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, 1998).

Strategy is all about competition and the ultimate warfare in the business world. In a simple conceptualization, Hill and Jones (2004) assert that the term strategy refers to the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of relevant courses of action and the allocation of resources to carry out these goals. There is another view which states that strategy involves a pattern of decisions in a corporate enterprise that determines and reveals its objectives, purposes or goals, produces the principal policies and plans for achieving these goals. The strategy of a corporate entity defines the business in which it will compete, preferably in a way that focuses resources to convert distinctive competence into competitive advantage (Pearce II and Robinson Jr., 1998).

On his part, Delaney (2008) argues that strategy is the weapon fashioned against competitive attacks from competitors in the corporate world. This is because the best

weapon against competition is preparation of relevant arsenal to ward off competitors' actions in the company's line of business. This implies that companies never believe that the competitors will never attack. Therefore, they are always prepared for such as it will amount to sheer folly to believe that a corporate entity will sit idle by given an engagement in business competition. According to Hill and Jones (2004), strategy represents a company's game plan in the world of stiff competition. In essence, strategy is a large scale, future oriented plans for interacting with the competitive environment to optimize achievement of organization objectives. Therefore, grand strategy, for instance, specifies how the organization will be operated and run, and what entrepreneurial, competitive and functional area approaches and actions will be taken to put the organization into the desired position that would realize chosen objectives.

1.1.2 Strategic responses

Every industry has unique characteristics that influence behavior and strategy adopted. Strategic management is however context sensitive. The responsiveness of a firm's organizational capability must be matched to the environmental turbulence (Ansoff, 1987). Therefore various types of strategic responses have been explained in the paragraphs below. First and foremost, Wallace and Eagleson (2000) argued that there was a divergence between managers and subordinates in their perception of management style. Wallace and Eagleson (2000) further argued that most supervisors are more of task focused than being relations focused. He advocated for a balance between tasked focused and relations focused supervisors and stated that a supervisor should be both relations and task focused. Therefore a situation where the employees are able to express themselves freely to their supervisors and that the supervisors provide timely feedback and

communication to issues affecting their work reduces chances of absenteeism. The supervisors or team leaders could delegate work to call center agents hence giving the agents an opportunity to acquire more skills and knowledge outside the calls they handle every day.

In his study Levin (2004), argues that motivated employees have a reciprocal effect on the entire organization. He claims that motivated employees provide customers with better service than unmotivated employees. Customers who are pleased with a service that he or she receives are more inclined to buy more products and remain loyal in using your services. When customers buy more, the organization's profitability and chances for success naturally increase. Thus, a main motivation for doing a good job in call center is the acquisition of practical communication skills and work experience, in order to achieve promotion.

According to Rose and Wright (2005), high staff turnover and absenteeism are major characteristics of call centres. In Kenya due to high unemployment rates, most call Centre agents are higher national diploma holders or university graduates from diverse academic backgrounds. They join call centers in anticipation of being absorbed into the job market, and in in-house call centers, with the hope of being promoted to their areas of expertise. However most of them leave the call centers after working for a short period of time due to lack of clear trajectories.

Rose and Wright (2005) have characterized call Centre jobs as dead end with low status. Most call centers are located in open offices where there is no possibilities for the call Centre representatives to adjust to the indoor climate (temperature, draught) or quality (humidity and dust) and lighting to an individual level, which could lead to negative effects e.g. tiredness and eye discomfort (Woody, 2002). Call Centre representatives need to be comfortable during the long, unbroken periods they spend at their workstations, so optimal environmental conditions are required. Call Centre representatives often work with constrained awkward postures and with repetitive arm/hand movement.

In most call centers , the main cause of absenteeism is unsupportive management .Some of the most effective techniques for reducing absenteeism are nothing more than good management .Thoughtful management of call centres people can go a long way towards improving attendance levels.Normally,such effective management would include :listening to employee suggestions, providing more training and relevant support, decreasing the emphasis on statistics which focus on quantity not quality and improving the ‘‘people attitude’’ of managers and supervisors.

1.1.3 Concept of absenteeism

This is the state of chronic absence from work during normal scheduled hours. (CCHSGA,2001). Gunchard (1988) defines absenteeism as non-presence at work, a voluntary reduction by the individual of his or her working time, aimed at intentionally reducing the prescribed time of labour. Absenteeism in call centres is increasingly being linked to the work environment (Chang et al, 2000). Although typically treated as adaptations to conventional offices, call centers are unique because there are additional

considerations related to technology, ergonomics and continuous availability of customer care representative 's to customers, these include shift work, ergonomics, incoming call volume and hot-desking.

1.1.4 Mobile telephony sector

The mobile phone industry in Kenya has come a long way to what we have today. Before 1998, all telecommunications in Kenya were controlled by the state-owned monopoly Kenya Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (KP&TC). In the year 1998, the Kenyan Parliament passed the Kenya Telecommunications Act as proposed by the Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK).CCK then set up Telkom Kenya in 1999. Mobile phone telephony in Kenya started in the year 2000 when both Ken cell (rebranded as Celtel in 2004 and Zain in 2008) and Safaricom were launched on 5th May and 19th October respectively. (www.cck.go.ke)

1.1.5 Mobile telephony call centers

The development of call centers in Kenya is a fairly new industry which is rapidly growing due to the recent completion of the Fiber optic cable in July 2009 which has led to improved telecommunication infrastructure at affordable price. In addition many firms in the US and Europe have adopted Business Process Outsourcing which is a form of outsourcing involving contracting the operations and responsibilities of a specific business function or processes to a third party provider. Kenya is making great strides toward becoming an outsourcing giant in Africa and hopes to partake in Business Process Outsourcing. The growth of the call Centre industry will create more employment opportunities for the call center agents who will be working in the call

centers .In this study the researcher was concerned with the responses to call Centre absenteeism by mobile telephony call centers in Kenya. In this light the major causes of absenteeism were discussed.

1.2 Research Problem

Call centers are generally associated with low levels of satisfaction due to the fairly low skilled nature of their work which makes it less challenging (Rose and wright, 2005). Most call centers are generally associated with high stress levels, limited career growth, lack of motivation, the perceived low status of the job by call center agents and customers. The quality of supervision in call centers, the job design and the working hours greatly affect job satisfaction of the call center agents resulting to increased cases of absenteeism and high staff turnover. This study was aimed at establishing the strategic responses to absenteeism by mobile phone call centers in Kenya. Records of absence obtained from Safaricom Limited between April and June 2009 show an average absence rate of 39%.Comparatively, within the same time period absenteeism records of other sections of customer management department like the back office and specialists as well as other departments with the company are at 8% and 11%(SFC Workforce Management ,2006).

There are a number of related studies that have been done in this area. Such studies include those of Macharia (2010) who did a case study on Safaricom limited on ‘assessment of works environment influence in call centers’ and found out that the major determinants of absenteeism are poor management policies and work environment

.Other external environmental factors: political, social, economic and cultural. Wanjao(2009) in her study on job satisfaction within call centers established that job design ,motivation, quality of supervision, career growth and perceived status of the job affected job satisfaction within call centers .In his study Holman(2003) focused on aspects such as causes of burnout ,employee stress and wellbeing .It is for this reason that it was found appropriate to undertake a study on the strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers within Nairobi to absenteeism .In this light the researcher chose to focus on four mobile telephony call centers namely:Safaricom,Zain,Yu and Orange and was guided the following questions:

- i. What are the causes of absenteeism in the call center?
- ii. What are the strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers to absenteeism in Kenya?

1.3 Research objectives

- i. To identify the causes of absenteeism in the call center.
- ii. To determine the strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers in Kenya to absenteeism.

1.4 Value of the study

The findings of this study would be useful to human resource planners within mobile telephony industry. It would also enable them gain a better a better understanding of employees leaving employment hence enabling them plan for human resources requirements in their organisations.it would also provide the management with a better

and an in-depth understanding of why there is need to manage the human resources of the organization.

In addition, the findings would also help in the training managers to design effective induction courses, which usually keep turnover rates low during the early period of employment as this stage usually constitutes the highest labor wastages rates. Until few years ago, a little empirical research had been conducted on the call center work environment (Holman, 2003). This study attempted to fill this gap by determining the strategic responses by mobile phone call centers in Kenya to absenteeism. This study would be relevant especially here in Kenya, a nation previously considered a call center minnow (The Guardian, 2008). Finally, it would add knowledge to the academic community and stimulate further research in the field of call center absenteeism in other sectors of the economy.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The researcher's main aim in this chapter was to look at the strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers in Kenya to absenteeism. The paper begins by expounding on the Mobile telephony industry in Kenya and then followed by the concept of absenteeism. An overview of the strategic responses is also discussed. The review of literature was guided by the two specific objectives in the study which were to identify the causes of absenteeism in the call center and to determine the strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers in Kenya to absenteeism. The chapter concludes with a summary of the relevant points discussed.

2.2 Mobile Telephony Industry in Kenya

Kenya's mobile market has grown significantly over the last few years. Competition has increased with the introduction of two additional Mobile Network Operators ("MNOs"), and this has contributed to a price drop of over 70% in the last four years. Mobile coverage has increased to 96% of the population, and there are now over 3,500 3G sites in the country. As a result, in Kenya, consumers, businesses and government continue to benefit from the positive developments in the mobile sector.

Kenya's mobile market has changed significantly over the last few years with the introduction of the third and fourth MNOs, Yu and Orange. MNOs' networks now cover 96% of the population, and intense price competition has seen prices fall by over 70% in the last four years, leading to a significant increase in usage levels. Another recent positive development was the government's policy on the partial reduction of mobile specific taxation. Recognizing that handset prices represented a barrier to development of the sector, the Kenyan government exempted mobile handsets from VAT as of June 2009.

Penetration levels have reached 70% in early 2011, a positive improvement from the 50% level only three years ago. Consumers are also increasingly benefiting from high value mobile service offerings such as M-banking, which have opened up opportunities for previously unbanked Kenyans.

The mobile industry is among the fastest growing industries in the Kenya. According to the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), by the end of 2010 there were 22 million registered mobile cell phone subscribers with a projected growth rate of 9.5% per annum. The penetration rate of mobile phones in Kenya is 63%. With all these statistics it is no wonder that it has generated a lot of attention from the public and private sectors. The industry has several players who contribute to its growth. There is mobile industry the regulatory body, the Communications Commission of Kenya , the mobile service providers- Safaricom, Airtel, Orange and Yu, the Value Added Services (VAS)

companies, the businesses using mobile commercial products and of course the customers.

2.3 Concept of absenteeism

Absenteeism means being absent from work. Employees may take a leave or not report to work for a variety of reasons. Some of these may be uncontrollable factors like sickness, emergency, accidents etc.

However, employees may also take leave when they are capable to attend work. This may result out of low motivation levels and dissatisfaction with one's work. Unscheduled leaves hurt a company the most. Absenteeism presents a huge cost to the company and thus should be monitored closely.

It is the responsibility of the Human Resource Department to communicate the attendance policy clearly to the employees. At the same time, it has to develop HR policies to raise the motivation levels of employees and decrease absenteeism due to culpable reasons. The company should take steps to engage the employees so that they enjoy their work and are absent only for genuine reasons.

Absenteeism refers to non-presence at work, a voluntary reduction by the individual of his or her working time, aimed at intentionally reducing the prescribed time of labor. It can be classified according to: measure (that is different degrees of gravity) absenteeism per employee (average length, index of frequency) or according to the motivations for the

absence (reducible, irreducible or without reason) and according to resulting costs (Gunchard, 1998).

As quoted in Sanders (2004), Allegro et al, (1990) classify absenteeism into 3 distinct types, white, grey, and black absenteeism. White absenteeism occurs when it is obvious that an employee is ill, for instance having a high fever or a broken leg. Grey absenteeism is psychological or psychosomatic illness such as a headache, stomachache or fatigue. In all these cases, it is hard to make a diagnosis. Black absenteeism occurs when someone who is not ill at all calls in sick; it is an illegal form of absenteeism. Frequent short-term absenteeism is the most valid indicator of black absenteeism. Absent employees often tend to be poor performers and often lack motivation for their jobs (Allegro et al, 1990). One indicator of employee health and well-being is recurrent absenteeism (Rosenblatt et al, 2004).

A study carried out by Howarth (2005) found out that employees are absent for a number of reasons: medical reasons, health solutions, stress-related reasons and the latter often arise because of poor management, domestic issues and unavoidable events beyond the employees' control. According to McHugh (2001), sickness and aspects of the work environment can cause individuals to absent themselves from their job.

Call centres are typically characterised as service factories where front-line workers expend considerable emotional labour on routine tasks and are regarded by management as substitutable commodities (Wallace et al, 1999). Call centres remain relatively unorganized by unions so dissatisfaction is more likely to be reflected in relatively high

levels of labour turnover, especially under tight labour market conditions, and high levels of absenteeism. Regarding absenteeism, a 2002-03 survey based on over 2000 call centre employees revealed that the average number of sick days per year per person was around 8.2 days, compared to an estimated average of 7.4 days for other industries. In addition, over 40 percent of surveyed call centre employees admitted that around 45 percent of their sick leave was taken for purposes other than illness (Hallis, 2003). A 2004 survey suggests a slight reduction in absenteeism. Nevertheless James Organ, author of the *Australian Call Centre Industry Benchmarking Report 2004*, claimed that "absenteeism costs the Australian Call Centre Industry just under AUD 2.5 million per annum," indicating that this is a problem requiring urgent attention (ACA Research,2004). Thus, absenteeism in call centres is a problem worth investigating; it is also an important indicator of employee commitment although its meaning and significance requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. Indeed, with pressure to be present at work, it would be foolhardy to assume that very low levels of absenteeism are ideal from either a management or employee point of view. In other words although high levels of absenteeism are undesirable, the optimal level of absenteeism is an empirical issue.

During the past decade there has been a growing interest among scholars and practitioners in understanding the determinants of work absenteeism. This growing interest in the causes of absenteeism is rooted in the high cost of absenteeism to both employers and employees (Fried, 2002).High absenteeism at call centres has spurred researchers to explore the issue. Years of such studies have indicated that high

absenteeism stems from a combination of the physical as well as the mental demands on the customer care representatives (Bowers, 2005). A study of employee's reactions to frustrations at work, found that when employees perceived their work environment as frustrating, they were more likely to absent themselves from work. These are called "withdrawal behaviors", because they allow employees to withdraw physically and emotionally from the organization (Everton et al, 2007).

According to Anton (2000), call center representatives are generally associated with high levels of absenteeism because their work is fairly low skilled, they also claim that there is sociological research evidence showing that low-skilled work does not result in motivation. Absenteeism is influenced by both internal and external environmental factors. The call Centre work is that employees work in isolation, they have to manage customer interactions constantly and their day is driven by targets which are monitored electronically .Each of these realities contributes to employee stress, potential decrease in commitment and hence increases absenteeism.A study on call centre work environment and absenteeism in China, found absenteeism to be greatly affected by the call center representatives's working environment. Call center representatives's who were not satisfied with their working environment called in absent more than those who were satisfied (Gong, 2002).

Absenteeism greatly affects the efficiency in the call center. Efficiency of the call center is determined by the quality of service provided to the customers. The quality dimensions for the operation of call centres can be identified as easy accessibility to users which is

the promptness where the turnaround time of calls is short. Reliability at the call centre is the ability to provide the right solutions to the customer on first contact it also includes provision of variety of services to cater for customers' requirements and administrative support. Efficiency can be achieved through an effective information system that shares and locates pertinent information, such as warranties, inventory, product record, customer history, company policy, operational processes and generating reports and provision of professional and personalized services to all users (Chang et al, 2000).

Professional call center specialists know that while some call centers create very fulfilling workplaces for agent, there are others that still today provide a less than ideal environment. And where the workers are stuck in an unfriendly environment, apart from the problem of unacceptable staff turnover rates, absenteeism is likely to be too high.

While staff turnover rates may be on the way down for some centers, many commentators are suggesting that sick leave is increasing across the call center industry.

Telecommunication is a high pressure and time sensitive environment, which makes absenteeism a threat to the bottom line of your call center. Telecommunication managers know all too well the challenges presented to them by absenteeism. Due to the stressful nature of the work, absenteeism is far higher than in other sorts of workplaces and turnover is high because of the almost inevitable burnout. Workers compensation and disability claims from call centers include carpal tunnel, back and shoulder pain and stress related conditions; all of which are very common to call center employees. In call centres, turnover averages around 40%. Since there is an increasing cost associated with

recruiting and training new employees, managers have to find ways to reduce absenteeism and turn over.

Gunchard (1988) defines absenteeism as non-presence at work, a voluntary reduction by the individual of his or her working time, aimed at intentionally reducing the prescribed time of labour. Absenteeism in call centres is increasingly being linked to the work environment (Chang et al, 2000). Although typically treated as adaptations to conventional offices, call centers are unique because there are additional considerations related to technology, ergonomics and continuous availability of call center representative's to customers; these include shift work, ergonomics, incoming call volume and hot-desking.

Call centres are typically characterised as service factories where front-line workers expend considerable emotional labour on routine tasks and are regarded by management as substitutable commodities (Wallace et al, 2000). Call centers are typically characterized by tension between efficiency and service. Tension comes about as staff deal with complaining and irate customers. In a study, (Wallace et al,2000) found out that these have negative consequences such as exhaustion, stress, absenteeism and turnover, which cause deep concern to management as they reduce productivity. In a study on causes of absenteeism in call centers, (Holman, 2002) found out that job organization and design, team leader support and human resource practices rank at the top. He concedes that there are other causes of stress leading to absenteeism in call centers, for instance the physical

environment and ergonomics but no studies have been found to focus on these areas in relation to call center employee wellbeing.

According to (Wallace et al, 2000), there are high levels of emotional burnout; stress and high staff turnover in call centers studied. Agents stated that while they seek socio-emotional support from their peers, the structure of the task limited this interaction. During busy times Mondays or after holidays the gap between calls might be seconds. Call Centers are typically characterized as service factories where front line workers expend considerable emotional labor on routine tasks and are regarded by management as substitutable commodities(Wallace et al,2000).Call centers remain relative unorganized by unions so dissatisfaction is more likely to be reflected in relatively high levels of labor market conditions, and high levels of absenteeism .Regarding absenteeism a 2002-03 survey based on over 2000 call center employees revealed that an average number of sick days per person was around 8.2 days ,compared to an estimate average of 7.4 days for other industries.

2.4 Mobile telephony call centers

The Call Centre Association defines a call centre as “a physical or virtual operation within an organization in which a managed group of people spend most of their time doing business by telephone, usually working in a computer-automated environment” (Marr & Neely, 2004). The word ‘call centre’ is sometimes used synonymously with ‘contact centre’ and ‘helpdesk’.

Taylor and Bain (1999) cited in Dean (2002) define call centers in terms of three components. Firstly, the call centre is a dedicated operation where the central focus of call centre representatives, is on customer service. Secondly, these representatives make use of the telephones and computers simultaneously. And thirdly, “the calls are processed and controlled by an automatic distribution system” (Dean, 2002). Kleemann and Matuschek (2002) mention that call centres can either be in-house call centres or external call centres. In-house call centres refers to a specialized department of a large organization whereas external call centres refers to an independent firm contracting for other companies. Kleemann and Matuschek (2002) suggest that working conditions in in-house call centres are notably better than that in external call centres. While the core focus of in-house call centres is to improve customer service for their products, external call centres focus more on providing uncomplicated services at affordable rates to a large clientele (Kleemann & Matuschek, 2002). Generally the tasks in in-house call centres are more complex than those in external call centres. Irrespective of whether call centres are in-house or external, more and more companies are accepting the idea.

Call centers have provided an alternative means of doing business by striving to provide fast and efficient services to customers and serves as an integral part in many organizations. The call center industry in Kenya is still a fairly new industry and it's expected to grow tremendously due to the completion of the fibre optic cable in July 2009 and an increasing interest in the county to take part in Business Process Outsourcing. As a result there will be an increasing number of call center agents who will be absorbed into the job market and will be given the responsibility of providing quality

customer service. The success of any call center is greatly influenced by the call center agents as they represent the image of the company to the customers. This paper will look at the strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers in Kenya to absenteeism.

The call center industry in Kenya is expected to grow tremendously due to the completion of the Fibre Optic Cable which is anticipated to be completed by July 2009. This will translate to high quality data and internet services at much more affordable rates. Kenya is making strides to partake a piece of the cake in Business Process Outsourcing. It's expected that there will be more call centers established in Kenya due to improved telecommunication infrastructure resulting to job creation for call center agents.

Telkom Kenya was the first company to establish a call centre in Kenya though it was referred as a switch centre. Safaricom established its call centre in 2000 with the current model of call centers. Other companies with call centers are Zain limited, Keringet Ltd, Kencall Africa, Galileo Kenya, Air Kenya and cooperative bank of Kenya. Kenya is also making great strides towards becoming an outsourcing giant in Africa. This is because of the following factors; Kenya's strategic location in Eastern part of Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia and it's a hub to the rest of Africa and the world.

Jones (2003) provides several insightful factors that are critical in selecting call center locations locally or internationally. He says that an investor has to consider the

availability and cost of modern telecommunications, the availability, cost, skill attainment and reliability of local labor, whether the site to build the call center is accessible by public transport as this is linked to labor availability. An investor also needs to look at the cost and availability of existing properties or sites, the availability of local business support network as well as the State, provincial and local government incentives. Finally an investors needs to consider incentives and subsidies currently available in that state.

2.5 Strategic Responses

Strategy is a term that is widely used by senior and middle managers. But the term seems to have multiple of meanings. There is no commonly accepted and universal meaning of strategy according to Quinn (1980). Due to this fact the definition of strategy has been the subject of extensive research since the 1960s. It has been described as the process of determining the long-term goals and objectives of an organization, by adopting a specific course of action and by allocating sufficient resources (Chandler, 1962).

Chaos theorists argue that the world appears to be so chaotic and turbulent that it is not possible to predict what will happen or when. Traditional approaches to strategic management are then not appropriate. According to Pearce and Robinson (1988), strategic responses area set of decisions and actions that result into formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a firm's objectives. For continued survival, management has to come up with a game plan in response to environmental changes. Strategic responses are the strategies that firms take that are triggered by environmental

changes. The firm's game plan in response to environmental changes constitutes its strategic response. For organizations to be effective and hence successful, they should respond appropriately to changes that occur in their respective environment. Therefore they need strategies to focus on their customers and deal with the emerging environmental challenges.

Strategy is the sustained pattern of resource allocation by which companies align themselves effectively to their external environment. For any organization to live and survive, it is important that it responds positively to its environment and the changes in it. The strategic responses of an organization to its environment are as follows:

2.5.1 Least Resistance

Least resistance is a type of response in which an organization simply follows the demands of the environment as it is, without any aggression or strategy formulation. It just manages to survive by way of coping with its changing external environments. Such an organization is not ambitious and confident and is therefore called a goal-maintaining unit. Some organizations are very passive in their behavior and are solely guided by the signals of the external environment. Such response is chosen because it is a simple path to maintaining basic goals.

2.5.2 Proceed with Caution

It is a reactive type of response where organizations take intelligent steps to adapt with the changing external environment. These organizations monitor the changes in that

environment, analyze their impact on their own goals and activities and translate their assessment in terms of specific strategies for survival, stability and strength.

2.5.3 Dynamic Response

It is a proactive type of response where businesses regard the external environmental forces as partially manageable and controllable by their actions.

Not only do they recognize and ward off threats, they convert threats into opportunities.

They are highly confident of their strengths and conscious of their weaknesses.

Every industry has unique characteristics that influence behavior and strategy adopted. Strategic management is however context sensitive. The responsiveness of a firm's organizational capability must be matched to the environmental turbulence (Ansoff, 1987). Therefore various types of strategic responses have been explained in the paragraphs below. First and foremost, Wallace and Eagleson (2000) argued that there was a divergence between managers and subordinates in their perception of management style. Wallace further argued that most supervisors are more of task focused than being relations focused. He advocated for a balance between task focused and relations focused supervisors and stated that a supervisor should be both relations and task focused. Therefore a situation where the employees are able to express themselves freely to their supervisors and that the supervisors provide timely feedback and communication to issues affecting their work reduces chances of absenteeism. The supervisors or team leaders could delegate work to call center agents hence giving the agents an opportunity to acquire more skills and knowledge outside the calls they handle every day.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzed the research design, data collection instruments and data analysis procedure that were used in the study.

3.2 Research Design

This was a survey and it was to establish strategic responses to absenteeism by mobile phone call centers within Nairobi. This occurs when data is collected from many or several study units. If data is collected from all members of the population the study is a census survey. If on the other hand data is collected from a portion of the population of interest the study is a sample survey.

In the census, data is collected at a specified time from the entire population; in contrast to other surveys, in which information is collected from only a small part of the residents, and from that conclusions are reached regarding the general population.

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) in their study argued that this is an appropriate form of research especially when the objective of the research is to gain insights into the ideas, which is applicable in this case. A census study will be the most appropriate form of research in a study where population is small. In this case we have four companies in the

industry. A survey study data is usually quantitative and bears characteristics of qualitative studies.

The main aim of the researcher was to establish the strategic responses to absenteeism by mobile telephony call centres within Nairobi. In order to make the research more conclusive, the researcher employed a mixed research design of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. After the data was collected and analyzed the data was presented using tables, frequencies and percentages.

From the target population identified in the study, a small sample was drawn from the entire population. With the use of questionnaires which were self-administered, data was collected analyzed using SPSS package. The questions were standardized so as to enhance consistency and accuracy from the respondents.

3.3 Data collection

The study was done on call center agents and middle level management from four mobile telephony companies i.e. Safaricom, Zain, Orange and Yu. The telecommunications call center industry has over 1200 employees. The target was any customer care representative and middle level manager who have been working in the call center for more than six months. Stratified sampling technique was used to ensure that gender equity in the sample selection process as they are more females than males working in the call Centre.

The researcher used a questionnaire which was the main instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire was tailored to directly respond to the variables raised in the research question task and management policies. It sought primarily to bring out the views of staff on current absenteeism policies and its effects. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and pretested. According to Cooper et al (2002), pretesting is conducted to detect weakness in the design. It should therefore draw subjects from the target population and simulate the procedures and protocols that have been designated for data collection. This pretest was to help identify and change confusing or awkward questions. It was to ensure that the questionnaire is reliable and valid. The refined questionnaire was then distributed after completion of pretest. To ensure a high rate of response, the researcher had focal points in each mobile telephony call center.

3.4 Data Analysis

The descriptive method was used to analyze the data. According to Denscombe (1998), this method is the process of transforming a mass of raw data into table, charts, with frequent distributions and percentages and that is a vital part of making sense of the data. This helped in ensuring that data entry is less prone to errors and the analysis was done in an efficient manner. Since some of the questions in the questionnaire were closed questions, the questionnaire was pre-coded after the pretest. The results were entered in the SPSS coding sheet for statistical analysis. As stipulated by Obure (2002), the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) incorporates all the most popular analytical procedures for use in social sciences, financial investment analysis and

business research, health sciences and even physical sciences. It was appropriate for this study as the data from the survey will generate statistics

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study which were analyzed, interpreted and discussed under thematic and sub thematic areas in line with study objectives. The thematic areas were demographic characteristics; the key strategic responses to absenteeism by mobile telephony call centres within Nairobi. The results are summarized in the following sub sections.

4.2 Response Return Rate

Out of the intended 90 respondents, only 65 returned fully completed questioners giving a response return rate of 72.2%. This return rate is acceptable according to the recommendations by Amin (2005).

Table 4.1: Response return rate

Name of mobile company	Sample Size	Percentage %
Orange	11	17%
Airtel	17	26%
Safaricom	32	49%
Yu	5	8%
TOTAL	65	100%

Source Author 2014

4.3 Demographic Information

This section discusses the findings, analysis, interpretation, and the respondents demographics data presentation. The data is presented as below depending on how the respondents are categorized.

4.3.1 Response by gender

The study shows the total number of males and females who responded. The females who responded were 63% while males who responded were 37%. From the table it can be concluded that there were more female respondents than male. Thus gender biasness was avoided since views of both males and females were incorporated into the study.

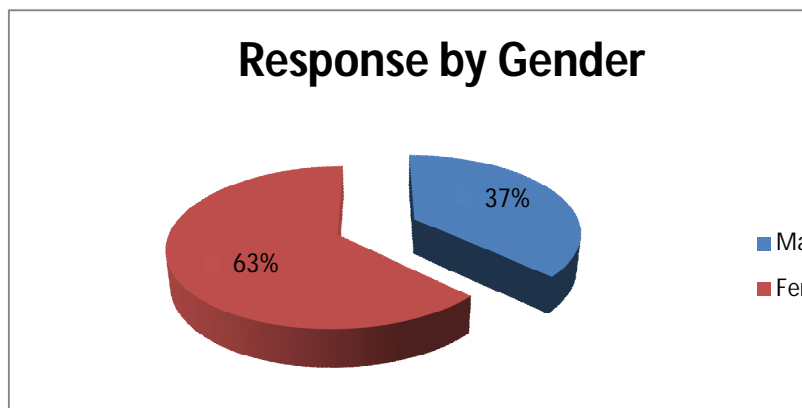


Figure 4.1: Response by gender

4.3.2 Response by Age group

This part sought to establish the Age of the respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate their Age. The results were presented in the figures below. The response on Age was as follows:

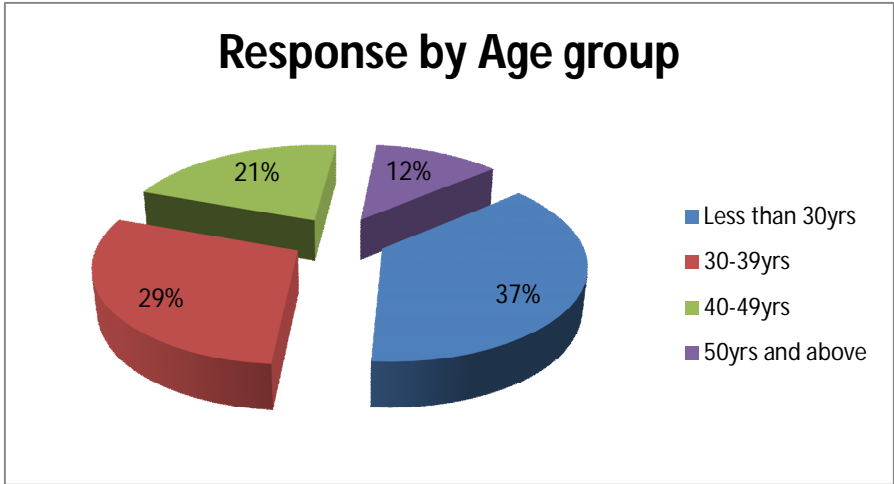


Figure 4.2: Response by Age group

From the above figure, the study found that most respondents are youths with 37% being below 30 years of age, another 29% at between 30-39years and another group being at 40-49years which is 21% of the respondents. The last group comprising of 12% only are respondents who are at 50 years and above.

4.3.3 Preferred shift

Majority of the respondents at 43% were from Morning shift, 32% Afternoon shift and 25% night shift. As shown by the figure below.

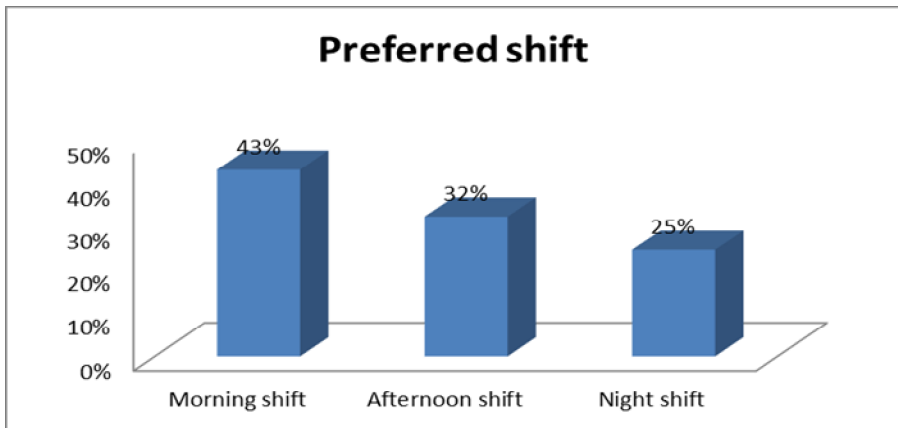


Figure 4.3: Preferred shift

4.3.4 Highest education

The study sought to establish the education level of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were university graduates which comprised of the 34% of the respondents. The study further established that other respondents were diploma at 28%, higher national diploma at 25% and post graduate at 14%. This is an indicator that majority of respondents are elites as represented by the respondents percentages below.

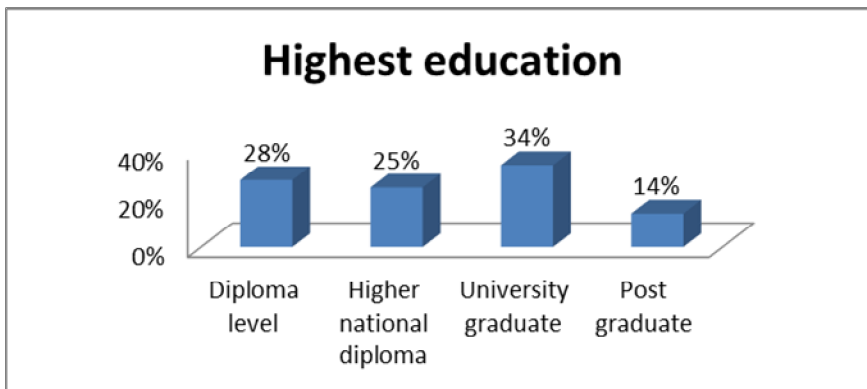


Figure 4.4: Highest education

4.3.5 Length of Service

The respondents were asked to indicate their length of service at their respective companies. The results are summarized in figure below.

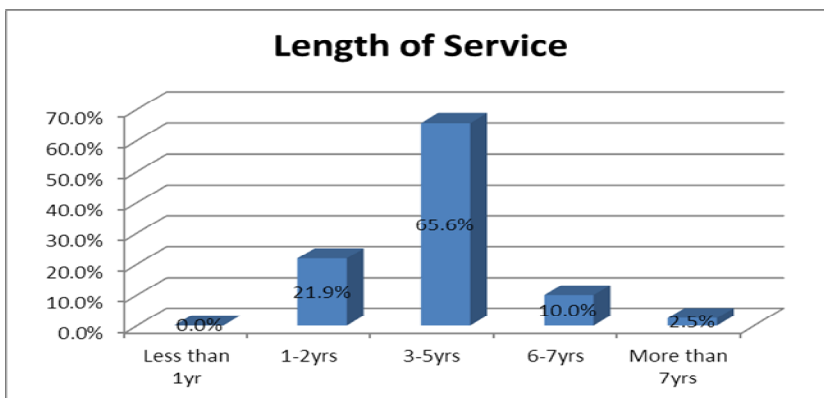


Figure 4.5: Length of Service

The results in the figure above show the length of service of the respondents. From the figure, the study found that most respondents at 65.6% have worked between 3 to 5 years, 21.9% have worked between 1 to 2 years, 10% have worked between 6 to 7 years and finally 2.5% of the respondents have worked more than 7 years. There were no respondents who had worked less than an year.

4.4 Causes of absenteeism in the call center

The study sort to determine the extent to which the respondents agree with the following statements regarding causes of absenteeism in the call center, result are shown below.

Table 4.2: Causes of absenteeism in the call center

	Mean	Standard deviation
Absenteeism in call centres is increasingly being linked to the work environment	2.56	1.37
Absenteeism is non-presence at work, a voluntary reduction by the individual of his or her working time, aimed at intentionally reducing the prescribed time of labour	2.59	1.29
White absenteeism occurs when it is obvious that an employee is ill, for instance having a high fever or a broken leg.	3.69	1.18

Absent employees often tend to be poor performers and often lack motivation for their jobs	3.69	1.40
Black absenteeism occurs when someone who is not ill at all calls in sick	2.13	1.10
When employees perceive their work environment as frustrating, they are more likely to absent themselves from work	3.22	1.48

From the findings the respondents agree to large extent that white absenteeism occurs when it is obvious that an employee is ill, for instance having a high fever or a broken leg and absent employees often tend to be poor performers and often lack motivation for their jobs as shown by the mean of 3.69. The respondents agree to a fair extent that absenteeism in call centres is increasingly being linked to the work environment, absenteeism is non-presence at work, a voluntary reduction by the individual of his or her working time, aimed at intentionally reducing the prescribed time of labour and when employees perceive their work environment as frustrating, they are more likely to absent themselves from work as shown by the mean of 2.56, 2.59 and 3.22 respectively. All the same, the respondents agree to a small extent that black absenteeism occurs when someone who is not ill at all calls in sick as shown by the mean of 2.13.

The study also sort to determine the extent to which the respondents agree with the following statements regarding causes of absenteeism in the call center.

Table 4.3: causes of absenteeism in the call center

	Mean	Standard deviation
Lack of motivation	2.34	1.15
Management/supervision style	2.72	1.08
Nature of job	2.56	1.27
Customer appreciation(or lack of)	3.16	1.39
Work target	2.81	1.35
Shift work	2.44	1.19
Task characteristics	2.66	1.12

From the findings the respondents agree to a fairly extent that absenteeism is a result of management/supervision style, nature of job, customer appreciation (or lack of), work target and task characteristics as shown by the means of 2.72, 2.56, 3.16, 2.81, 2.66 respectively. The respondents also agree to a small extent that lack of motivation and shift work as shown by the means of 2.34 and 2.44 respectively.

4.5 Strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers to absenteeism

The study sort to determine the extent to which the respondents agree with the following statements regarding strategic responses by mobile telephony call centres to absenteeism.

Table 4.4: Strategic responses by mobile telephony call centers to absenteeism

	Mean	Standard deviation
Every industry has unique characteristics that influence behavior and strategy adopted to deal with absentees	3.91	1.30
The responsiveness in absentees of a firm's organizational capability must be matched to the environmental turbulence	4.34	0.94
When employees are able to express themselves freely to their supervisors and that the supervisors provide timely feedback and communication to issues affecting their work therefore, reduces chances of absenteeism	4.34	0.94
The supervisors or team leaders' delegates work to call center agents hence giving the agents an opportunity to acquire more skills and knowledge outside the calls they handle every day.	3.97	1.12
Policies that address absenteeism should include defined parameters for gaining assistance to employees as well as protecting the organization from abuse of benefits	4.31	0.78
Motivated employees provide customers with better service than unmotivated employees	4.81	0.59
Some of the most effective techniques for reducing absenteeism are nothing more than good management	4.03	0.93

From the findings the respondents agree to a large extent with all the statements above because their means is above 3.5.

4.6 Discussion of findings

This chapter highlighted the findings of the study and summarized the major findings of the study. Most respondents indicated that absenteeism in the call center mostly happens when one is unwell and that customer care representatives do not just absent themselves from work. It's also clear that non-performers at work tend to be absent than good performers.

Most respondents also indicated that most of the call center work is highly monotonous and in addition most call centers have not adopted job rotation to make the work more interesting therefore increased incidences of absenteeism. The trend was also seen on the performance targets being unrealistic. However, respondent's agreed that monitoring was done in order to provide them with performance related feedback.

On Shift Work, there was a majority agreement on adjustment to shift work and the job schedule allowing the customer care representatives to enjoy other aspects of their lives. Customer care representatives indicated a preference for maintaining temporary shifts that changed monthly as opposed to permanent shifts. The respondents were comfortable with their physical work environment except for the space around their work areas which they considered squeezed.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter shows the summary, conclusion, recommendations, limitations of the study and suggestion of further research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study set out to identify the causes of absenteeism in the call center and the strategic responses adopted by mobile telephony call centers to absenteeism in Kenya. The study made use of primary data. Primary data was collected through use of questionnaires.

The major findings in the study were that customer care representatives did not have ample control of the tasks they performed in their jobs, majority did not agree that they could make work related decisions in their jobs. Similarly, majority considered their performance targets and workload unrealistic but agreed that monitoring was done in order to provide them with performance related feedback. There was general consensus that information required to do the job was available. Analysis of task characteristics and absenteeism variables indicated there was no task control and this increased chances of absenteeism.

On the other hand, in relation to shift work, majority of the respondents considered the allocation of breaks inefficient indicating that despite shift flexibility, shift schedules did

not allow them to enjoy other aspects of their lives. Preference was given to a monthly scheduling system. Customer care representatives who participated in the study indicated comfort with their physical work environment except for the space around their work areas which was considered too squeezed. In the study, absence management policies were found to be well understood and supportive of the business goals especially in deterring absenteeism but majority stated that they were not applied consistently across the board.

5.3 Conclusion

This study found that task characteristics most significantly impact absenteeism in the call centre. These were identified as lack of job control, a low decision making latitude, frequently changing performance targets that the customer care representatives did not consider realistic and a heavy workload common especially on the customer care representatives set. In summary, task characteristics had the greatest effect on absenteeism. This supports the findings of researchers that lack of job autonomy, a low or non-existent decision making latitude.

The study also found that the effects of monitoring systems in call centres and the use of quantitative statistics to measure performance on the customer care representatives greatly increased stress levels. The call length is measured in seconds and compliance to precise operating procedures limit customer care representative's creativity in delivery of quality calls thus resulting in high stress levels. The performance targets were unrealistic and there was a heavy workload which significantly contributed to absenteeism in a call centre.

On the other hand shift work system is not well managed hence contributes to absenteeism. A significant number of customer care representatives had not adjusted well to shift work and considered the shift schedule system as not allowing them to enjoy other aspects of their lives. This then leads to customer care representatives calling in absent whenever they needed to attend to other personal aspects or when they felt overwhelmed by the demands of shift work. Considering these findings, one can safely conclude that shift work significantly contributes to absenteeism. Whereas shift work as a variable has an effect on absenteeism, it is comparatively lower than the effect of task characteristics on absenteeism.

In regards to physical work environment, it was mainly considered conducive and the existing issue of work stations being too close together affected absenteeism in a very weak way. Within the period the researcher was undertaking this study; major renovations were done in the call center physical work environment including the opening of a leisure break- out room equipped with entertainment and recreational facilities and renovation of call centers to ensure more room in each call center as well as increasing the capacity and storage space for customer care representatives in the call centers. This could be a significant contributor to the outcome of no significant correlation between the physical work environment and absenteeism in Safaricom Limited.

The findings of this study suggest that absence management policies ably deter absenteeism. Regarding the application of the same consistently across the board, one can argue that these are not required in other work settings in the magnitude that they are

required in the call centre because the call centre work is such that when a customer care representative is absent, their workload is automatically shared by other customer care representatives, a situation that does not frequently occur for other job types.

Given the prevalence of absenteeism in call centres and its negative consequences, this study contributes to better understanding of the factors associated with a decrease or increase in absenteeism in call centre environment. These results show that in the mobile telephony call centres within Nairobi, absenteeism is affected significantly by three factors of the work environment namely task characteristics, work targets and shift work. The physical work environment and absence management policies when conducive as was the case in this study have a positive effect on absenteeism, they deter it.

5.4 Recommendations

This study shows that in the mobile telephony industry, three factors of the call centre work environment namely task characteristics, work targets and shift work affect absenteeism by contributing to its increase. The physical work environment and absence management policies deter absenteeism. In this regards customer care representatives recommended different ways of reducing absenteeism in the call centre that management can incorporate. These are discussed below according to the objectives of the study.

First and foremost, customer care representatives would want to have freedom to make decisions while delivering services to the customers, less frequent changes to the performance targets for example in view of the large call volume allow wrap up times

where customer care representatives take a break after a call. Other recommendations included being given responsibility to manage and control the job they do.

More so, customer care representative also felt that work targets can be improved if the evaluations are more objective based criteria .The team leaders can also have a hands on experience on handling calls to enable them understand what the customer care representatives under go. Recommendations to improve the shift work schedule in order to curb absenteeism were flexibility of allocation of breaks, off days, and annual leave so that these can be taken at the customer care representatives convenience while considering business needs; introduction of duvet days which are an allowance of a number of days when the customer care representative can rest when feeling fatigued; flexible working hours where the organization pprovides that a customer care representative only has to work 22days in a month and they get to choose how to do it and that shift patterns should have a human face and not be too mechanical but should take into account the different preferences, students, marital status, special requirements and occasions.

In addition, there was there was a general consensus that efforts have been put in to ensure a conducive physical work environment. Additional recommendations were that the workstations have a shield in order to reduce the interference from the customer care representative sitting at the next workstation assisting a different customer, increase working space in the call centers affected and provision of some relaxing soft music to ease the pressure the customer care representatives feel when they are on call. Footrests at the workstations were considered important.

The absence management policies were found to effectively deter absenteeism but for reasons cited previously, were not consistently applied across the board. Recommendations included flexibility in dealing with reasons which cause absenteeism to allow for dealing with each situation on a case by case basis and not rigidly following the policy. Also medical specialists need to be advised to only give off days for genuine cases which can be identified through a more thorough check up of employees visiting the doctors. In summary, based on the findings the study recommends that there is need mobile telephony call centres to come up with strategies to minimize absenteeism. The employees being an important element in offering the human resources should be accorded top priority during strategic responses formulation.

5.5 Limitation of the study

Absenteeism is a sensitive topic in many call centres and most customer care representatives were not willing to take part in the study due to fear of victimization; however the representatives were assured of full anonymity to avoid fear of victimization. The call center management feared disclosing the call centre's weaknesses, which would be used negatively by competitors. The management was assured that the results of the research were purely for academic purposes and full anonymity was practiced in the study. The results provided a useful insight on how to tackle the problem of absenteeism in the call centre.

5.6 Areas for further research

The present study focused on strategic responses to absenteeism by mobile telephony call centres in the local telecom sector as its foundation, and thus the study was specific to the telecom operators in Kenya, and thus the study has therefore primarily laid a foundation for further studies on strategic responses on absenteeism, perhaps on a large scale. Further research therefore needs to be done on other sectors of the economy. This is because different sectors have unique characteristics and diverse contextual realities that might cause absenteeism. This would bring out a comprehensive empirical results and findings on the determination of strategic responses to absenteeism.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i: letter of introduction

Grace Wanja Nyaga

C/O (MBA office)

University of Nairobi

Po Box 32498, Nairobi.

July, 2014

Dear Respondent,

RE: Research Project Questionnaire

I am a student at the University of Nairobi pursuing a *Master of Business Administration degree in Strategic Management*. As a requirement in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of this degree, I wish to carry out a study on “**Strategic responses to absenteeism by Mobile Telephony Call Centers within Nairobi**”.

I have chosen your company since it is one of the firms in the telecommunications industry and thus is of strategic importance in achieving the study's objectives. I therefore ask for assistance by assisting me in filling the online questionnaire.

The information obtained through interview guides shall be treated as confidential and academics and used purely for the purpose of this research.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated. Thank you in anticipation.

Kind regards,

Grace Wanja Nyaga

Appendix ii: Letter from University



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
MBA PROGRAMME**

Telephone: 020-2059162
Telegrams: "Varsity", Nairobi
Telex: 22095 Varsity

P.O. Box 30197
Nairobi, Kenya

DATE 3rd Dec 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The bearer of this letter GRACE WANJA NYAGA

Registration No. DEI/70947/2008

is a bona fide continuing student in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree program in this University.

He/she is required to submit as part of his/her coursework assessment a research project report on a management problem. We would like the students to do their projects on real problems affecting firms in Kenya. We would, therefore, appreciate your assistance to enable him/her collect data in your organization.

The results of the report will be used solely for academic purposes and a copy of the same will be availed to the interviewed organizations on request.

Thank you.


**PATRICK NYABUTO
MBA ADMINISTRATOR
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**



Appendix iii: Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

I am carrying out a study that aims to investigate the *strategic responses to absenteeism by mobile telephony call Centers within Nairobi*. Your institution has been selected as the respondent and as one of the respondents, your opinions are very important to this study. This is an academic research and the information provided is purely for academic purpose and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

The researcher requests you to spend a few minutes of your time and answer the questions that are in this questionnaire. Your co-operation is highly appreciated.

Thank you very much for your co-operation and time in advance.

PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1) Gender of the respondent: Male Female

2) Age of respondent:

Less than 30 years 30 to 39 years 40 to 49 years 50 years and above

3) Preferred shift

Morning shift Afternoon shift Night shift

4) Your highest education:

Diploma level Higher national diploma University graduate Post graduate

5) Length of Service: Less than 1 yr. 1-2 yrs 3-5 yrs 6-7 yrs More than 7 yrs.

PART B: CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM IN THE CALL CENTER

1) Kindly rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding causes of absenteeism in the call center

1 - Not at all; 2 - Small extent; 3 - Fair extent; 4 - Large extent; 5 - Very large extent

	Not at all	Small extent	Fair extent	Large extent	Very large extent
Absenteeism in call centres is increasingly being linked to the work environment.					
Absenteeism as non-presence at work, a voluntary reduction by the individual of his or her working time, aimed at intentionally reducing the prescribed time of labour.					
Call centers are unique because there are additional considerations related to technology, ergonomics and continuous availability of customer care representatives to customers.					
White absenteeism occurs when it is obvious that an employee is ill, for instance having a high fever or a broken leg.					
Absent employees often tend to be poor performers and often					

lack motivation for their jobs					
Black absenteeism occurs when someone who is not ill at all calls in sick.					
When employees perceive their work environment as frustrating, they are more likely to absent themselves from work.					

2) What are the *work environment issues* that cause absenteeism in the call center?

3) Kindly rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding causes of absenteeism in the call centre.

1 - Not at all; 2 - Small extent; 3 - Fair extent; 4 - Large extent; 5 - Very large extent

	Strongly agree	Agree	Moderate	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Lack of motivation					
Management /supervision style					
Nature of job					
Customer appreciation(or lack of)					
Work targets					
Shift work					
Task characteristics					

4) What are the *other issues not mentioned above cause absenteeism* in the call center?

PART C: STRATEGIC RESPONSES BY MOBILE TELEPHONY CALL CENTERS TO ABSENTEEISM

1) Kindly rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding strategic responses by mobile telephony call centres to absenteeism.

1 - Not at all; 2 - Small extent; 3 - Fair extent; 4 - Large extent; 5 - Very large extent

	Not at all	Small extent	Fair extent	Large extent	Very large extent
Every industry has unique characteristics that influence behavior and strategy adopted.					
The responsiveness of a firm's organizational capability must be matched to the environmental turbulence. Employers should attempt to find out what the problems are that reduce the productivity of employees.					
When employees are able to express themselves freely to their supervisors and that the supervisors provide timely feedback and communication to issues affecting their work.					
The supervisors or team leaders' delegates work to call center agents hence giving the agents an opportunity to acquire more skills and knowledge outside the calls they handle every day.					
Policies that address absenteeism should include defined parameters for granting assistance to employees as well as protecting the organisation from abuse of benefits.					

Motivated employees provide customers with better service than unmotivated employees.					
Some of the most effective techniques for reducing absenteeism are nothing more than good management					

2) Which *changes do you feel management can use to reduce absenteeism* in the call centre?

Thank you!