PREVALENCE OF ABSENTEEISM AMONG CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM CONTRACTORS IN THE JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN AREA

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

Absenteeism among construction workers is a challenge and a concern for most small and medium contractors. To develop an in-depth understanding of the status quo, a study of the prevalence of absenteeism among construction workers was conducted, the aim being to enhance health and safety (H&S) performance knowledge in the construction industry. Enhanced H&S performance knowledge has the potential to decrease absenteeism among construction workers.

DESIGN / METHODOLOGY / APPROACH

A cross-sectional design was adopted to determine the prevalence of absenteeism. Research participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The sample size was determined using Epi InfoTM 7.2 statistical software for epidemiology. Data was analysed using the IBM SPSSTM Statistics version 26. The data was presented and analysed using data visualisation tools, frequency distributions, cross tabulations, and logistic regressions.

FINDINGS

A statistically significant correlation existed between absenteeism and sociodemographic factors: female workers - 0.46 (0.23, 0.94), and workers aged 20 – 30 years – AOR 4.04 (1.40, 11.66). A statistically significant correlation existed between absenteeism and country: Mozambicans – AOR 0.26 (0.12, 0.57), and South Africans - AOR 0.54 (0.31, 0.95). A statistically significant correlation existed between absenteeism and workers' educational level: college graduates - AOR 13.45 (3.75, 48.21); secondary school level - AOR 16.83 (5.25, 53.94), and primary school education - AOR 25.76 (6.92, 95.86). A significant correlation existed between absenteeism and workers' trades: carpenters - AOR 6.78 (1.83, 25.07), carpet installers - AOR 4.54 (1.41, 14.67), plasterer - AOR 3.52 (1.13, 11.01), and plumbers - AOR 3.92 (1.58, 9.74).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

These study findings are beneficial to contractors, the Construction Industry Development Board (cidb), policymakers, and other stakeholders in terms of the potential to influence the improvement of workers' wellbeing. It is from this backdrop that the researchers perceive that a study of this nature was necessary to create and promote a healthy and safe work environment including enhanced H&S consciousness among construction workers in small and medium contractors.

WHAT IS ORIGINAL / VALUE

The results are used to provide justification for increased focus on the circularity concepts and practices applicable to the built environment.

Keywords: *Absenteeism, Construction, Health and Safety, Workers*

INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism among construction workers remains a major workplace challenge and concern in the construction industry and can result in reduced productivity, loss of goodwill among workers and a negative effect on the bottom-line. Though the impact of absenteeism among construction workers is well known, it is unfortunate that limited studies have sought to understand the relationship between H&S factors and absenteeism among small and medium contractors in South Africa. Information detailing how H&S accounts for absenteeism among contractors is limited. Although there is a paucity of information regarding the current rates of construction absenteeism, there is evidence that approximately 4.5% of South African workers could be absent on any given day, with a possibility of absenteeism going up to 25%[1; 2]. It is from this backdrop that this study seeks to influence contractors to acknowledge the negative impact of absenteeism and implement measures to reduce this scourge.

THE CONCEPT OF ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is defined as lack of physical presence at a given setting and time where there is a social expectation for a worker to be there or the worker is missing scheduled work for a period equal to or greater than two consecutive hours[3]. Absenteeism is also defined as an unplanned, unjustifiable, and disruptive incident, characterised by a lack of physical presence of a worker in the workplace, such as scheduled, extended breaks, late arrival or leaving his / her workstation[4]. Several reasons cause workers to be absent from work, which include, illness, stress, fatigue, job dissatisfaction, poor working conditions, and remuneration. These causes of absenteeism in the construction industry can be categorised as individual, and organisational factors[5]. Individual factors include illness and disease, personal attitude, lifestyle, family responsibilities, and transport problems, while organisational factors may include work stress, work fatigue, job satisfaction, poor working conditions, low wages, and work-related injury.

CONSTRUCTION H&S STATUS QUO

The construction industry is a sector known to be hazardous and accident-prone. Unique and dynamic operations in this industry involve numerous uncertainties, multiple intricacies, and divergent environments, and exposes workers to various risks that could be linked to absenteeism[6]. Furthermore, due to the labour-intensive nature of its operations, identifying, and addressing H&S factors is a fundamental approach for enhancing H&S performance in the industry[7]. Therefore, having a good understanding of the underlying causes of absenteeism is critical in designing mitigating interventions[8].

Workers are exposed to H&S hazards daily, of which some lead to loss of lives[9]. During a study conducted by Mwanaumo and Thwala[10], researchers found that exposure to H&S risks while working on construction projects accounted for a significant proportion of the disease burden. In spite of these studies resulting in comprehensive recommendations with respect to construction H&S, overall, construction H&S in South Africa has not improved commensurately in both small and medium enterprises[11]. It was from this backdrop that an in-depth understanding of absenteeism, its causes, and factors needed to be identified, classified, and explored[9].

Hard physical labour, working from a static position, climatic influences, noise, and dust are some considerable burdens for construction workers[12]. It is also common knowledge that workers in the construction industry often lift manually or handle heavy loads which makes them adopt dangerous postures, leading to increased vulnerability to skeletal injuries. As a measure to mitigate that, H&S policy standards were suggested and emphasised as the solution[13].

PREVALENCE OF WORKPLACE INJURIES AMONG WORKERS

During research conducted in the United Kingdom, researchers discovered that accidents leading to absenteeism were caused by problems arising from workers or work teams (70%), workplace issues (49%), shortcomings with equipment, including PPEs (56%), problems with suitability and condition of materials (27%), and deficiencies with risk management (84%)[14]. During another study conducted on large-scale industrial construction projects in Alberta, Canada, high levels of absenteeism were observed in the construction industry, namely 8.6% in 2006, 9.3% in 2007, and 8.5% in 2008[3].

According to a statement by the South African Department of Labour, there were at least 1.5 to 2.5 fatalities per week in the construction sector during 2016[15]. During an H&S culture-related study conducted on small residential construction sites in Midrand, South Africa, the major worker non-compliance with H&S rules, and procedures was identified[9]. During another study conducted in the Gauteng province, it was also discovered that consultants and contractors were aware of construction H&S regulations, but compliance was low[13].

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is a worker's intentional or habitual absence from work, that can be analysed through individual and contractor characteristics which include gender, age, education, health status, nationality, nature of employment, degree of protection, contractor size, and or type of job[16]. The construction industry is not spared from this human resources management problem.

ABSENTEEISM BY GENDER

Absence from work can be caused by an individual's gender. Research on the relationship between gender and absenteeism in Skudai, Malaysia indicated that women were absent more often from work when compared to men, due to their traditional responsibilities for taking care of parental and household responsibilities[17; 4]. Conversely, during a study conducted in Denmark, researchers determined that males recorded more absenteeism than their female counterparts[18]. To the authors' knowledge, no study has been conducted in South Africa, comparing absenteeism in terms of gender, especially in the construction industry, which is currently a male dominated sector.

ABSENTEEISM BY AGE

Contractors employ people of different age groups with different attitudes towards work. During a study pertaining to critical absenteeism in the workplace, the researcher found that younger workers were more inclined to take unauthorised leave than their older counterparts and tend to have higher absence rates, but as workers approached middle age, the absenteeism rate decreased[19]. Those observations reflected that either occupational or non-occupational health factors kept construction workers away from work. A link between absenteeism and the culture of utilising alcohol and drugs perceived as relaxants due to highly pressurised and or stressful working conditions are some of the non-occupational health factors in the construction industry[20]. During another study, it was observed that absenteeism is generally high among workers below 25 years of age and those above 40 years of age[17]. Younger workers are not regular and punctual, presumably because of the employment of many newcomers among the younger age groups, while the older people are no longer able to withstand the strenuous nature of the construction work environment, due to their physical and physiological recovery times that are much longer.

ABSENTEEISM OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Studies pertaining to the relationship between educational levels and absenteeism, have found that the higher the educational level, the lower the absenteeism rate of workers, implying that the level of education closely correlates to job responsibility and organisational status[4]. During a study pertaining to awareness of occupational diseases in the Botswanan construction industry, researchers found that the level of consciousness for occupational diseases related to the construction industry was low, and recommended the need for related-education within the industry to improve such awareness and understanding of occupational-related health problems[10]. The study was short of explaining whether the eductional level of construction workers had a bearing on low consciousness and understanding of H&S.

ABSENTEEISM OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The construction industry relies on a permanent, casual, and transient workforce with unpredictable rates of absenteeism. The growth of construction markets globally has attracted a migrant labour force who are most likely to be vulnerable to employer abuse, and a disproportionately higher risk of workplace injuries and fatalities, which in turn is linked to absenteeism in the industry[21]. There is limited availability of reliable statistics relative to the H&S status for migrant workers in most countries, including South Africa. Existing data suggest a higher accident rate for migrant workers in Slovenia, where there were 25 accidents at work among European Union nationals, 422 among other nationals, and 51 among foreign workers of unknown citizenships[22]. To the authors' knowledge, no studies have been conducted in South Africa with respect to H&S factors among migrant construction workers. However, reports compiled by Buckley et al[21] in Europe, and Rogerson[23] in Southern Africa provide an account of exploitation of migrant workers by their employers.

H&S IN SMALL AND MEDIUM CONTRACTORS

Large contractors have demonstrated good H&S performance due to availability of resources to develop and implement robust H&S management systems, however, small, and medium contractors are still far behind their larger counterparts[24]. The status quo indicates that H&S is still not a priority for reduced occupational injuries and diseases in the construction industry, especially among small and medium contractors[25]. An assumption could be made that a lack of H&S compliance among small contractors is an act of omission rather than of commisssion. It is therefore important to focus on efforts to improve H&S performance among small and medium size contractors for an overall advancement of H&S performance in this industry[24].

IMPACT OF CONSTRUCTION H&S ON CONTRACTORS

The construction sector employs approximately 473 000 workers in South Africa, contributing significantly to the gross domestic product (GDP). The sector is associated with a high level of risks for workers, notwithstanding its importance in the social and economic development of a country[26; 9]. During a study conducted in Australia, key barriers facing small contractors in implementing H&S practices included a lack of commitment to H&S from construction clients, ineffective H&S regulation enforcement by inspectors, and linking H&S performance to insurance premiums, a licensing system, and subsidising H&S training for small contractors[24]. Therefore, a systematic improvement of H&S performance among small and medium contractors should be prioritised.

RESEARCH METHOD

A random sample of workers from small and medium contractors undertaking projects in the Johannesburg metropolitan area and registered with the cidb constituted the population. The sample size was calculated using Epi InfoTM 7.2. The confidence interval was set at 95%, and the power set at 80% with the cluster sample size of 400. Considering a 25% contingency for multiple comparisons and missing data, the final sample size was 500 from an estimated population of 2,030 construction workers, populated on the Epi InfoTM 7.2 statistical software.

Convenience sampling was used to identify contractors undertaking projects in the Johannesburg metropolitan area. A simple random sampling technique was used to choose respondents, to give each construction worker an equal opportunity to be chosen as a research participant, to minimise biased representation of the population. A pilot study was conducted before the collection of data for the main study, to test if the research instrument measured what it purported to measure. The questionnaire and the informed consent were translated orally into their home language for semi-literate construction workers.

RESULTS

ABSENTEEISM AMONG CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Table 1 presents the -demographic characteristics of construction workers relative to the prevalence of absenteeism and non-absenteeism.

Table 1: Absenteeism and non-absenteeism relative to the demographic characteristics of construction workers

	Total		Absenteeism		Non-absenteeism	
Characteristic	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Gender						
Female	52	10.4	32	61.5	20	38.5
Male	448	89.6	328	73.2	120	26.8
Age						
20 – 30 years	216	43.2	160	74.1	56	25.9
31– 40 years	173	34.6	119	68.8	54	31.2
41 - 50 years	77	15.4	56	72.7	21	27.3
51 – 60 years	34	6.8	25	73.5	9	26.5
Country of birth						
Lesotho	17	3.4	11	64.7	6	35.3
Malawi	14	2.8	11	78.6	3	21.4
Mozambique	60	12	36	60	24	40
South Africa	244	48.8	163	67	81	33.2
Zimbabwe	165	33	139	84.2	26	15.8
Education						
College	85	17	57	67.1	28	32.9
Secondary school	341	68	252	73.9	89	26.1
Primary school	61	12	46	75.4	15	24.6
No formal schooling	13	3	5	38.5	8	61.5
Total	500	100	360	72	140	28

COMPARISON OF ABSENTEEISM TO NON-ABSENTEEISM BY GENDER

There were 448 male and 52 female participants aged between 20 and 60 years. Men were likely to be more absent from work than their female counterparts. It was evident that 73.2% of male respondents reported being absent compared to 61.5% of female respondents.

COMPARISON OF ABSENTEEISM TO NON-ABSENTEEISM BY AGE

Absenteeism among construction workers varied according to age. Construction workers in the age group 20–30 years recorded 74.1% absenteeism, compared to construction workers in the age group 31–40 years who recorded 68.8% absenteeism. Construction workers in the age group 51–60 years recorded 73.5% absenteeism, similar to the absenteeism rate for the age group 20–30 years.

COMPARISON OF ABSENTEEISM TO NON-ABSENTEEISM BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH

The construction workers represented five Southern African Development Community (SADC) region countries. 17 construction workers were from Lesotho, 14 from Malawi, 60 from Mozambique, 244 from South Africa, and 165 from Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe predominated in terms of absenteeism recording 84.2%, followed by Malawi (78.6%), and South Africa (67%).

COMPARISON OF ABSENTEEISM TO NON-ABSENTEEISM BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The construction workers were categorised into four 4 levels of education. 341 had secondary school education, 85 had college education, 61 had a primary school education, and 13 had non-formal schooling. Workers with primary education recorded the highest level of absenteeism, namely 75.4%, followed by 73.9% for workers with a secondary level of education.

ODDS RATIOS RELATIVE TO THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Binary logistic regression was used to assess if there was an association between the dependable variable (absenteeism) and the independent variables (demographic characteristics), gender, age, country of birth, and level of education of construction workers.

Table 2: Odds ratios relative to the demographic characteristics of construction workers

Characteristic	Crude Odds Ratio	95% Confidence interval	Adjusted Odds Ratio	95% Confidence interval
Gender				
Female	0.59	(0.32, 1.06)	0.46	(0.23, 0.94)
Male	1.59	(0.43, 1.09)	1.6	(0.93 - 1. 25)
Age				
20 – 30 years	1.03	(0.45, 2.33)	4.04	(1.40, 11.66)
31 – 40 years	1.30	(0.83, 2.02)	2.36	(0.86, 6.46)
41 - 50 years	0.96	(0.39, 2.39)	2.32	(0.77, 7.04)
51 – 60 years	0.43	(0.22, 1.31)	0.39	(0.18, 1.29)
Country of birth				
Lesotho	0.34	(0.12, 1.01)	0.29	(0.08, 1.08)
Malawi	0.69	(0.18, 2.63)	0.55	(0.13, 2.36)
Mozambique	0.28	(0.14, 0.55)	0.26	(0.12, 0.57)
South Africa	0.38	(0.23, 0.62)	0.54	(0.31, 0.95)
Zimbabwe	0.28	(0.13, 0.52)	0.44	(0.21, 0.85)
Education				
College	3.26	(0.98, 10.87)	13.45	(3.75, 48.21)
Secondary school	0.72	(0.43, 1.20)	16.83	(5.25, 53.94)
Primary school	0.66	(0.32, 1.39)	25.76	(6.92, 95.86)
No formal schooling	0.33	(0.12, 1.21)	0.29	(0.08, 1.19)

Table 2 presents the AOR relative to the demographic characteristics of construction workers among small and medium contractors. Odds ratios defined the association between gender, age, country of birth, and educational level of construction workers, and the reported absenteeism. The AOR indicated that females were less likely to be absent from work than their male counterparts with an AOR of 0.46 (0.23, 0.94). Further, an AOR of 4.04 (1.40, 11.66) indicated that workers in the age group between ages 20 and 30 years old were more likely to be absent than other age groups.

A negative correlation existed between absenteeism and country of birth. An AOR of 0.26 (0.12, 0.57) and an AOR 0.54 (0.31, 0.95) which reflected a statistically significant negative association between absenteeism and workers from Mozambique and South Africa, respectively. A positive association also existed between absenteeism and the educational level of construction workers, with an AOR of 13.45 (3.75, 48.21) for workers with a college-level education, an AOR of 16.83 (5.25, 53.94) for workers with a secondary school educational level, an AOR of 25.76 (5.25, 53.94) for workers with a primary school education level.

ODDS RATIOS RELATIVE TO CONTRACTOR AND WORKER CHARACTERISTICS

Binary logistic regression was used to assess an association between absenteeism and the following independent variables of contractor size, type of contracted sites, workers' trades, workers' job levels or types, nature of workers job contracts, number of years in employed by a contractor, and number of years in a position.

Table 3: Crude and adjusted odds ratios relative to the employment characteristics of construction workers

Characteristic	Crude Odds Ratio	95% Confidence interval	Adjusted Odds Ratio	95% Confidence interval
Contractor size				
Small	0.55	(0.37, 0.81)	0.34	(0.20, 0.58)
Medium	0.48	(0.31, 0.73)	0.40	(1.04, 1.67)
Type of contracted site				
Independent site	0.48	(0.31, 0.73)	0.40	(0.24, 0.67)
Subcontracted	0.84	(0.13, 0.37)	0.40	(0.42, 0.76)
Trade				
Bricklayer	0.92	(0.47, 1.77)	1.62	(0.65, 4.03)
Carpenter	4.05	(1.34, 12.28)	6.78	(1.83, 25.07)
Carpet Installer	2.79	(1.08, 7.21)	4.54	(1.41, 14.67)
Dry wall installer	0.68	(0.26, 1.74)	1.57	(0.52, 4.77)
Electrician	2.03	(0.87, 5.07)	2.85	(0.92, 8.80)
Painter	0.78	(0.36, 1.65)	1.05	(0.37, 2.97)
Plasterer	2.95	(1.15, 7.62)	3.52	(1.13, 11.01)
Plumber	1.38	(0.74, 2.57)	3.92	(1.58, 9.74)
Tiler	0.91	(0.38, 2.16)	1.71	(0.57, 5.11)
General worker	0.29	(0.74, 1.88)	1.26	(0.56, 4.33)
Job level or type				
Skilled worker	0.68	(0.37, 1.24)	0.88	(0.40, 1.94)
Semi-skilled worker	1.00	(0.65, 1.55)	1.21	(0.65, 2.25)
General worker	0.72	(0.67, 1.84)	1.26	(0.45, 4.69)
Nature of job contract				
Permanent	0.82	(0.50, 1.34)	0.65	(0.33, 1.27)
Long-term contract	0.53	(0.34, 0.84)	0.43	(0.23, 0.82)
Short-term contract	0.38	(0.60, 1.45)	0.75	(0.43, 1.36)
No. of years with a contractor				
0 - 10 years	0.14	(0.05, 0.39)	0.07	(0.02, 0.29)
11 - 20 years	0.36	(0.11, 1.15)	0.17	(0.04, 0.71)
21 - 30 years	1.63	(0.21, 1.34)	1.19	(0.24, 1.82)
No. of years in a position				
0 - 10 years	0.43	(0.19, 1.00)	2.38	(0.62, 9.13)
11 - 20 years	0.92	(0.36, 2.36)	2.30	(0.62, 8.53)
21 - 30 years	0.29	(0.72, 2.44)	3.50	(0.86, 9.463)

Table 3 above presents the AORs relative to the employment characteristics of the construction workers that participated in the study. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between absenteeism and small contractors' workers, with an AOR of 0.34 (0.20, 0.58). An AOR of 0.40 (0.24, 0.67) showed a statistically significant negative association between absenteeism and workers working on independent construction sites. Table 3 also shows that carpenters, carpet installers, plasters, and plumbers are likely to be absent more than workers from other trades in small and medium contractors, with AORs of 6.78 (1.83, 25.07), 4.54 (1.41, 14.67), 3.52 (1.13, 11.01) and 3.92 (1.58, 9.74) respectively.

The likelihood of a construction worker being absent is 0.43 (0.23, 0.82). There was also a negative correlation between absenteeism and the number of years a construction worker was in one position. The AOR for construction workers who had been in one position for 0 - 10 years was 0.07 (0.02, 0.29) and 0.17 (0.04, 0.71) for construction workers who had been in one position for 11 - 20 years.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to quantify the frequency of absenteeism among workers employed by small and medium contractors and to assess the association between absenteeism and demographic factors (gender, age, education, and country of birth) among these workers. An exploration of such relationships was imperative, to influence contractors to be proactive in terms of identifying interventions and strategies to address H&S in the construction industry[9].

PREVALENCE OF ABSENTEEISM BY GENDER

The research findings showed that small and medium contractors in the Johannesburg metro were male dominated and the prevalence of absenteeism was higher among the male workers. A 'Constructing Masculinity in the United Kingdom' study determined that men constituted over 99% of the construction workers in the building trades[26]. Perceived susceptibility and the seriousness of unsafe conditions according to males and females could be the cause of the observed differences as articulated by the Health Belief Model tenet. This implies that interventions for occupational health exposures among contractors need to be contextualised to suit male-related issues.

PREVALENCE OF ABSENTEEISM BY AGE

Absenteeism in both small and medium contractors was more prevalent among workers in the 20 – 30 years age group. Both non-occupational and occupational H&S factors, illness, workplace injury, stress, and fatigue were linked to this status quo. Wee et al observed that the younger generation cohort of construction workers recorded a higher prevalence of absenteeism due to a combination of socio-economic, physical, and mental health factors[26].

Young workers who are new entrants in the job market and the construction industry, lacked experience, commitment, responsibility, and patience, which exposed them to workplace injuries associated with absenteeism. Furthermore, alcohol abuse and unhealthy lifestyles among young construction workers contributes to the prevalenc of absenteeism[20]. The social environment triggers carelessness, which leads to an unsafe act or workplace injury causing conditions associated with absenteeism as articulated in the Basic Domino model[29].

LINK BETWEEN ABSENTEEISM AND COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Construction workers from seven SADC countries participated in the study. Zimbabweans had the highest prevalence of absenteeism followed by Mozambicans, and South Africans respectively. Workplace injuries, illness, and personal responsibilities were cited as the reasons for absence from work. Notably, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between absenteeism and nationality of respondents (Mozambique and South Africa). It is possible that absconding from work as in the case of South Africans was an indication of discontentment, and or a sign of disgruntled workers communicating their dissatisfaction with management by absenting themselves[19].

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ABSENTEEISM AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION

There was a statistically significant correlation between absenteeism and construction workers with college, secondary, and primary education, with higher precision for construction workers with a higher level of education. This observation was compatible with the perception that a low educational level had an impact on H&S awareness linked to absenteeism in the construction industry. During a study pertaining to enhanced competitiveness among construction workers in Indonesia, research participants with a higher level of education had a high level of H&S awareness and H&S practice compliance as compared to their counterparts with low levels of education[30]. A higher level of education corresponds to a lower rate of absence, though crude data does not provide a clear ceteris paribus relation between absenteeism and educational level[31]. Self-efficacy and cues of actions were viewed as key in terms of influencing the likelihood of engaging in a positive health promotion behaviour for workers with a higher level of education.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ABSENTEEISM AND CONTRACTOR SIZE

There was a strong positive probability of being absent if a worker was working for a medium as opposed to a small contractor. This was contrary to observations by Mercy et al[32] who determined that workers employed by small contractors were exposed to higher H&S risks than workers in the employ of large contractors, leading to a high level of absenteeism among them. Loyalty and close personal relationships between owners and workers of small contractors might have influenced these results.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABSENTEEISM AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' TRADES

The AOR for the carpenter, carpet installer, plasterer, and plumber activities respectively reflected a positive correlation between the independent variables and absenteeism. The results show that these construction workers were likely to be absent from work in the construction industry, with low precision. These findings are similar to those of Omari et al who compared absenteeism among workers by nature of assignments, workload, and working conditions[33]. Factors associated with the nature of work and the working conditions predicted absenteeism and presenteeism among the construction workers.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN ABSENTEEISM AND TENURE IN A JOB

There was an association between absenteeism and tenure in a job. There was a negative correlation with high precision for workers in long-term employment and those who had been employed for less than 10 years. During a study pertaining to understanding construction workforce absenteeism in industrial construction, Sichani et al determined that 'years in trade' is positively correlated with 'notification time before absence', implying that workers with long tenure planned their absenteeism, while unscheduled absenteeism was a norm for workers with less tenure in a job[3] . Therefore, it is imperative for small and medium contractors to adopt strategies for effective management of absenteeism.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the prevalence of worker absenteeism among contractors. The findings confirm that worker absenteeism is an issue of concern in terms of current employment in construction, which if left unchecked could severely impact several aspects of the operations of contractors even threatening their long-term sustainability. Therefore, it is recommended that such contractors incorporate H&S management systems into their operational practices to enhance H&S performance, which has the potential to decrease absenteeism.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no potential conflict of interest to report on relative to this research.

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