

Leadership Styles and Employee Absenteeism in Namibia's Mining Sector: A Qualitative Case Study of Namdeb Diamond Corporation

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Abstract: Employee absenteeism remains an important organisational challenge, particularly in labour-intensive and safety-sensitive industries where continuous workforce availability is essential for operational efficiency and employee safety. Leadership represents an important organisational factor that may shape employee motivation, trust, morale, engagement, and attendance behaviour. This study examines the influence of leadership styles on employee absenteeism at Namdeb Diamond Corporation in Namibia. The article is extracted from a broader qualitative case study examining workplace management practices and employee absenteeism in the Namibian mining sector. An interpretivist philosophy and qualitative case study design were adopted, with data collected through semi-structured interviews involving 20 purposively selected participants comprising operational employees, supervisors, and managers. NVivo 15 was used to organise transcripts, manage the coding structure and store coded extracts, but the interpretation of themes remained the responsibility of the researcher. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns within participants' experiences and perceptions. The findings indicate that leadership has a substantial influence on employee attendance behaviour. Supportive leadership practices characterised by coaching, open communication, supervisor visibility, employee recognition, safety communication, and attention to employee welfare were associated with greater trust, morale, motivation, and willingness to attend work. Conversely, favouritism, poor communication, inaccessible supervisors, inconsistent leave administration, perceived bias, inadequate fatigue management, and prioritisation of production over employee welfare were associated with demotivation, mistrust, burnout, and absenteeism. The findings further demonstrate that leadership does not influence absenteeism in isolation but operates through organisational justice, social exchange, employee well-being, and perceptions of organisational support. The study concludes that leadership development should form an integral part of absenteeism management in mining organisations. Namdeb should strengthen empathic and transparent leadership, improve supervisory accountability, promote consistent treatment of employees, and equip supervisors with communication, emotional intelligence, conflict-resolution, and employee-well-being competencies.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Employee Absenteeism, Employee Attendance, Mining Sector, Organisational Justice, Supervisory Behaviour, Namibia

I. Introduction

Employee absenteeism is a significant human resource management concern because employees represent one of the most important resources through which organisations achieve productivity, competitiveness, and operational sustainability. When employees fail to report for scheduled work, organisations may experience disruptions in production, increased workloads for available employees, higher operational costs, and reduced organisational effectiveness. These consequences can be particularly serious in industries where production processes depend on continuous staffing and coordinated teamwork. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2021) identifies absenteeism as an important workplace management issue because persistent absence can affect productivity, workforce stability, and organisational performance.

The problem is particularly relevant to the mining industry because mining operations generally involve demanding physical environments, shift work, production targets, safety requirements, and strong dependence on supervisory coordination. Employees often work under conditions in which operational continuity and safety require workers to be present at designated times. Consequently, employee attendance is not simply an administrative concern but can have implications for production planning, occupational safety, workload distribution, and team performance. Previous research indicates that weak supervisory support, rigid management structures, and inadequate communication can contribute to employee withdrawal and absenteeism in industrial environments (Shikongo, 2020; Tarro et al., 2021).

Leadership is one of the workplace management factors that may influence whether employees remain committed to their organisations and attend work consistently. Leaders interact directly with employees, communicate organisational expectations, allocate tasks, approve leave, provide feedback, address workplace problems, and influence the general

social climate within work units. Leadership behaviour may therefore affect employees' perceptions of fairness, organisational support, trust, recognition, and belonging. Where supervisors are perceived as supportive and approachable, employees may develop stronger organisational attachment and motivation. Conversely, where employees experience favouritism, poor communication, inconsistent treatment, or a lack of managerial support, they may experience dissatisfaction and disengagement, which can contribute to withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism (Hassan & Jiang, 2022; Kim & Beehr, 2022).

The relationship between leadership and absenteeism, however, is not necessarily uniform. Different leadership styles may produce different outcomes depending on organisational culture, industry characteristics, employee expectations, and the nature of the work ((Mulwa & Asilaza, 2026). For example, transformational leadership has been associated with stronger organisational commitment and lower voluntary absenteeism in some contexts (Kim & Park, 2022). Similarly, supportive leadership has been associated with reduced withdrawal behaviour. However, studies conducted in mining environments suggest that leadership effectiveness may depend on the level of occupational risk, cultural expectations, and employees' perceptions of managerial authority (Osei & Ackah, 2022; Putra & Cho, 2022).

This issue is particularly significant in mining because leadership must balance production requirements with employee welfare and safety. A leadership approach that emphasises strict production control may support operational discipline, but excessive managerial control may reduce employee autonomy, morale, and trust. Conversely, highly participative or empowering leadership may strengthen employee engagement in some settings but may create uncertainty where work requires strict coordination and safety compliance (Putra & Cho, 2022).

Although considerable international research has examined leadership and employee absenteeism, there is comparatively limited empirical evidence from Southern African mining organisations.

This article therefore focuses specifically on the first objective of the broader study: to assess the influence of leadership styles on employee absenteeism at Namdeb Diamond Corporation. The article seeks to contribute context-specific evidence concerning how leadership behaviour is experienced by employees and how such experiences shape attendance behaviour within a demanding mining environment.

II. Objective of the Study

To assess the influence of leadership styles on employee absenteeism at Namdeb Diamond Corporation.

III. Research Question

How does leadership style influence employee absenteeism at Namdeb Diamond Corporation?

IV. Literature Review

Employee Absenteeism

Employee absenteeism has been conceptualised in different ways within organisational research. Johns (2022) describes absenteeism broadly as the failure of employees to attend scheduled work when attendance is expected, excluding officially sanctioned periods of absence. The distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence is important because not every instance of absence represents employee withdrawal. Employees may be absent because of legitimate illness, family responsibilities, occupational injuries, or other approved reasons.

The literature also distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary absenteeism. Voluntary absenteeism may involve discretionary decisions to remain away from work, whereas involuntary absence may result from circumstances beyond the employee's control. Karanika-Murray and Biron (2022) argue that absenteeism should be considered alongside related workplace behaviours such as presenteeism, because efforts to reduce absence through punitive mechanisms may sometimes encourage employees to attend work despite being ill or exhausted.

This distinction is particularly relevant in mining. Employees working in physically demanding and safety-sensitive environments may create serious risks when they report to work while sick, fatigued, or psychologically exhausted. Lohaus and Habermann (2020) describe absenteeism and presenteeism as related forms of workplace behaviour, while Lohaus et al. (2021) demonstrate that workplace conditions can influence both forms of employee withdrawal.

Consequently, effective absenteeism management requires more than monitoring whether employees report for duty. Organisations must also understand the workplace conditions that influence employees' attendance decisions. Johns (2022) emphasises the multidimensional nature of absenteeism, while Harrison and Lee (2022) situate absenteeism within broader organisational withdrawal behaviour.

Leadership as a Workplace Management Practice

Leadership constitutes an important dimension of workplace management because leaders influence employee experiences through their behaviour, communication, decision-making, supervision, and treatment of subordinates. Armstrong and Taylor (2022) emphasise the importance of effective management practices in creating conditions that support employee motivation and organisational performance.

Leadership can influence attendance through several mechanisms. Supportive leaders may provide employees with guidance, recognition, feedback, and opportunities to communicate workplace concerns. Such behaviours can increase organisational support and strengthen employees' commitment. Conversely, leaders who are inaccessible, inconsistent, or perceived as unfair may undermine trust and increase dissatisfaction.

Kim and Beehr (2022) argue that empowering leadership can improve employee outcomes by strengthening organisational trust. However, the effects of empowerment may vary according to the nature of the work and

organisational context. In high-risk environments, employees may require clear direction and coordination rather than complete managerial autonomy.

The mining environment therefore presents a particularly interesting context for examining leadership. Supervisors must simultaneously maintain production, ensure safety, manage employee performance, allocate work, respond to operational problems, and protect employee welfare. Leadership effectiveness may consequently depend on the ability to balance operational control with interpersonal support.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Transformational and transactional leadership have received substantial attention in the literature on employee behaviour. Transformational leaders seek to motivate employees by establishing a shared vision, encouraging commitment, supporting development, and stimulating employees beyond immediate transactional rewards. Transactional leadership, by contrast, relies more heavily on clearly defined expectations, performance requirements, rewards, and corrective mechanisms.

Kim and Park (2022) found that transformational leadership was associated with lower voluntary absenteeism in South Korean manufacturing organisations. Their explanation was that transformational leadership strengthens organisational commitment, which reduces withdrawal behaviour. Similarly, supportive leadership has been associated with lower absenteeism in industrial settings (Hassan & Jiang, 2022).

However, evidence from mining environments complicates the assumption that transformational leadership is universally superior. Osei and Ackah (2022), in research involving Ghanaian mines, found that the relationship between leadership style and absenteeism depended partly on employees' cultural orientations. Workers with stronger preferences for hierarchical relationships responded differently to leadership approaches than workers with lower power-distance orientations.

This finding has important implications for Namibia because leadership practices cannot simply be imported from other contexts without considering organisational culture and industry characteristics. Mining organisations often operate through hierarchical structures because production and safety require clear lines of authority. Leadership therefore needs to combine clarity and accountability with fairness, communication, and employee support.

Laissez-Faire Leadership and Absenteeism

Laissez-faire leadership represents a contrasting leadership approach characterised by limited intervention, weak supervision, and a high degree of managerial passivity. Although employee autonomy can be beneficial in some contexts, excessive managerial absence may create ambiguity regarding expectations and reduce organisational support (Faulks et al., 2021).

Hassan and Jiang (2022) found that laissez-faire leadership was associated with higher absenteeism in studies involving employees from mining, manufacturing, and construction environments. Employees working under passive leadership reported unclear expectations, inadequate support, and weaker organisational connections. These conditions can increase disengagement and withdrawal.

The relevance of laissez-faire leadership in mining is significant because employees operating in complex and hazardous environments require appropriate supervision. Lack of supervisory visibility may create uncertainty about priorities, safety requirements, and operational responsibilities. Karimbil (2023) similarly identifies leadership and organisational conditions as important dimensions of absenteeism.

The evidence suggests that effective leadership in mining does not necessarily mean controlling every aspect of employee behaviour. Rather, it involves providing sufficient structure, support, communication, and accountability while recognising employee needs and maintaining a safe working environment.

Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership gives employees greater autonomy and involvement in decisions affecting their work. Kim and Beehr (2022) associate empowering leadership with stronger organisational trust and improved employee outcomes. Where employees have greater control over their work, they may experience stronger ownership and reduced stress.

However, the effect of empowerment is context-dependent. Putra and Cho (2022) found that empowering leadership produced different outcomes in different mining environments. In some underground mining settings, excessive autonomy was associated with increased absenteeism because employees required clearer direction in hazardous working conditions. Similar contextual differences have been reported in African mining environments (Osei & Ackah, 2022).

This suggests that mining organisations require a balanced leadership model. Employees should be given opportunities to participate and express their views, but leaders must also provide clear direction where safety and production requirements demand it.

Organisational Justice and Leadership

Organisational Justice Theory provides an important explanation of how leadership can influence employee absenteeism. The theory proposes that employees assess the fairness of organisational outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and information provided by management (Alrawadieh et al., 2022).

Distributive justice concerns whether employees perceive outcomes such as rewards, leave, workloads, and opportunities to be fairly distributed. Procedural justice concerns whether decisions are made through fair and consistent processes.

Interactional justice concerns the quality of interpersonal treatment received from supervisors, while informational justice concerns whether employees receive adequate and truthful explanations for organisational decisions (Karimbil, 2023).

Leadership is particularly relevant to interactional and procedural justice because supervisors often make decisions that directly affect employees. When workers believe that supervisors favour particular employees, allocate leave inconsistently, or fail to explain decisions, they may perceive the workplace as unjust.

Hassan and Jiang (2022) found that perceptions of organisational justice can mediate the relationship between supervisory behaviour and employee withdrawal. Similarly, Harrison and Lee (2022) report evidence that procedural and interactional justice are associated with lower absenteeism.

This theoretical perspective is particularly useful for interpreting leadership behaviour at Namdeb because the empirical findings reveal concerns about favouritism, inconsistent leave administration, and unequal treatment.

Social Exchange Theory and Leadership

Social Exchange Theory provides a complementary explanation. The theory proposes that employment relationships involve reciprocal exchanges between employees and organisations. Employees provide effort, loyalty, commitment, and attendance, while organisations provide compensation, support, respect, and favourable working conditions.

Where employees perceive that management treats them positively, they may reciprocate through greater commitment and regular attendance. Conversely, negative managerial treatment may weaken the desire to reciprocate, increasing withdrawal behaviours (Kim & Beehr, 2022).

Harrison and Lee (2022) argue that employee withdrawal can emerge when organisational relationships become negative. Hassan and Jiang (2022) similarly connect supervisory treatment with employee withdrawal through perceptions of organisational support and justice.

Social Exchange Theory therefore complements Organisational Justice Theory by explaining why supportive leadership may generate positive attendance behaviour. Employees who feel respected, recognised, listened to, and supported may be more willing to reciprocate through commitment and attendance.

V. Empirical Literature on Leadership and Absenteeism

Empirical evidence generally suggests that leadership is associated with employee absenteeism, but the magnitude and direction of the relationship vary across contexts. Kim and Park (2022) reported lower voluntary absenteeism among employees exposed to transformational leadership, while Hassan and Jiang (2022) identified positive associations between supportive leadership and attendance.

Evidence from mining environments indicates that leadership effects are more complicated. Osei and Ackah (2022) found that the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and absenteeism varied according to cultural orientation. Putra and Cho (2022) similarly found that leadership effects depended on the physical riskiness of mining work.

The evidence concerning laissez-faire leadership is more consistent. Hassan and Jiang (2022) found that teams under passive leadership exhibited higher absenteeism, with employees reporting weak role clarity and inadequate support. Karimbil (2023) found similar patterns in the Indonesian mining context.

The literature also indicates that leadership may influence absenteeism indirectly. Organisational justice, organisational trust, employee engagement, fatigue, and perceived support may operate as mechanisms linking leadership behaviour to attendance. Harrison and Lee (2022) demonstrate that organisational withdrawal is influenced by broader workplace experiences rather than individual decisions alone.

The literature therefore supports a contextual approach to leadership and absenteeism. There is no single leadership style that can be assumed to produce the same attendance outcome across all organisations. Instead, the relationship depends on the nature of work, organisational culture, managerial practices, employee expectations, and the fairness of workplace decisions.

Importantly, the research identified a gap in this literature. Existing research is heavily quantitative, while relatively little qualitative evidence captures how employees themselves interpret leadership behaviour and connect it to absenteeism in Southern African mining organisations. This study addresses that gap through qualitative evidence from Namdeb Diamond Corporation.

VI. Theoretical Framework

Organisational Justice Theory

Organisational Justice Theory constitutes the principal theoretical framework for the article. The theory is appropriate because the findings focus substantially on employees' perceptions of fairness in leadership behaviour.

Employees do not simply respond to managerial decisions based on their objective outcomes. They also assess whether decisions were reached fairly, whether they were treated respectfully, and whether adequate explanations were provided. Alrawadieh et al. (2022) distinguish between distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice.

In the context of leadership, procedural justice is relevant to decisions concerning leave, work allocation, discipline, and employee participation. Interactional justice concerns the way supervisors communicate and interact with employees. Informational justice relates to explanations provided for managerial decisions.

The theory predicts that perceived injustice can lead to negative employee outcomes, including disengagement and absenteeism. Harrison and Lee (2022) provide empirical support for the relationship between organisational justice and employee withdrawal, while Hassan and Jiang (2022) demonstrate the importance of supervisory treatment.

The theory is therefore useful in interpreting the Namdeb findings concerning favouritism, unequal leave administration, poor communication, and perceived managerial bias.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory provides a complementary theoretical lens. It emphasises reciprocity within the employment relationship. Employees are more likely to reciprocate favourable treatment with positive workplace behaviours, while negative experiences may weaken their willingness to contribute beyond minimum requirements.

In the context of leadership, supportive behaviour can create feelings of obligation, trust, and organisational attachment. Employees may respond through greater commitment and attendance. Conversely, poor treatment may produce withdrawal.

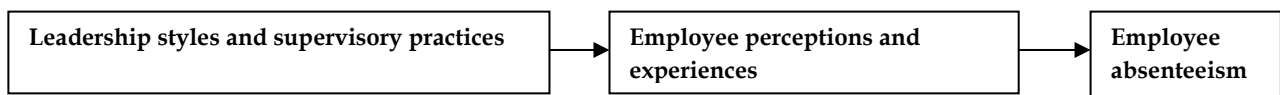
Kim and Beehr (2022) emphasise the importance of organisational trust in leadership relationships, while Harrison and Lee (2022) associate organisational relationships with withdrawal behaviour.

The use of both theories is therefore appropriate because leadership can influence absenteeism through two related but distinct mechanisms: employees may withdraw because they perceive management as unfair, or because they perceive the employment relationship as unsupportive and lacking reciprocity.

VII. Conceptual Framework

The article conceptualizes leadership style as the principal explanatory factor and employee absenteeism as the outcome. Leadership behaviours include supportive supervision, communication, coaching, visibility, employee recognition, fairness, accessibility, and concern for employee welfare. Negative leadership behaviours include favouritism, inconsistent treatment, poor communication, lack of empathy, inadequate leave administration, and excessive production orientation. These leadership behaviours influence intermediate employee experiences such as trust, morale, perceived fairness, organisational support, motivation, stress, and fatigue. These experiences may subsequently influence attendance behaviour.

The conceptual relationship can therefore be represented as:



This conceptualisation is consistent with the broader framework, which links workplace management practices to absenteeism through fairness, organisational support, workload pressure, fatigue, and work-life balance.

VIII. Methodology

Research Philosophy

The study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy. Interpretivism assumes that social reality is constructed through human interaction, experience, and interpretation rather than existing as a single objective reality independent of human perceptions (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

This philosophical position was appropriate because the study sought to understand how employees interpret leadership behaviour and how those interpretations influence their attendance experiences. The same leadership behaviour may be interpreted differently by different employees depending on their previous experiences, relationships with supervisors, departmental culture, and perceptions of fairness.

The research therefore adopted an interpretivist position because absenteeism was treated not simply as a numerical phenomenon but as a workplace behaviour shaped by perceptions of fairness, recognition, communication, and organisational support.

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed. Qualitative research is appropriate where the purpose is to understand experiences, meanings, perceptions, and interpretations rather than simply quantify relationships between variables (Creswell & Poth, 2020).

The approach was particularly suitable because the article examines employees' experiences of leadership and how they interpret the connection between supervisory behaviour and attendance. The research identified that much previous research on absenteeism in industrial settings has relied on quantitative surveys, creating limited understanding of how employees themselves explain their behaviour.

Research Design

A single case study design was used, with Namdeb Diamond Corporation serving as the bounded organisational case. Case study research allows researchers to examine contemporary phenomena within their real-world context (Ridder, 2022).

The design was appropriate because leadership and absenteeism at Namdeb cannot be fully separated from the organisation's mining environment, operational structure, shift arrangements, safety requirements, production pressures, and hierarchical supervisory system.

The objective was not statistical generalisation across all mining organisations but rather the development of rich contextual insights that may be analytically transferable to organisations operating under similar conditions.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised approximately 700 employees of Namdeb Diamond Corporation. The population included operational employees, supervisors, and managers working across different organisational functions.

Stratified purposive sampling was used. Employees were drawn from Underground Mining, Processing, and Technical Services because these areas operate under different managerial, production, scheduling, and safety conditions. Participants were required to have at least two years of organisational experience and direct exposure to workplace management systems.

The final sample consisted of 20 participants, including 15 operational employees and five supervisors or managers. The sample was considered appropriate for qualitative inquiry because the emphasis was on informational adequacy and thematic saturation rather than statistical representativeness.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This method enabled the researcher to maintain a consistent focus on leadership and absenteeism while allowing participants to describe their experiences in their own words. The interview guide included questions concerning participants' perceptions of their immediate supervisors' leadership styles and the ways in which managerial behaviour affected employees' likelihood of attending work. Interviews were conducted confidentially and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. Field notes were also prepared after interviews to capture observations and issues requiring further consideration during analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase approach was followed, beginning with familiarisation with the interview data, followed by coding, theme development, review, definition, and interpretation. Both deductive and inductive coding were employed. Deductive codes were derived from the research objective and conceptual framework, while inductive codes emerged from participants' accounts. NVivo 15 was used to organise transcripts, manage codes, and store coded extracts. However, interpretation of the themes remained the responsibility of the researcher.

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were used to enhance trustworthiness. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, whereby preliminary interpretations were shared with six participants from different departments. Dependability was supported through an audit trail documenting methodological decisions, participant selection, interview procedures, coding, and theme development. Confirmability was supported through reflexive journaling, while transferability was strengthened through detailed descriptions of the organisational context and participant characteristics.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Namibia University of Science and Technology Research Ethics Committee, and organisational permission was obtained from Namdeb Diamond Corporation. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and identifying information was removed from transcripts and reporting. Audio recordings and research documents were securely stored.

IX. Findings and Discussion

The findings revealed generally positive perceptions of leadership among several participants, although significant differences existed in how employees experienced their immediate supervisors. Some participants described their supervisors as positive, supportive, and motivating. Employees associated positive leadership with cooperation, respect, engagement, and productivity. Other participants, however, reported that some managers lacked effective leadership skills and failed to motivate or inspire employees.

This variation is important because it suggests that leadership quality was not experienced uniformly throughout the organisation. The research findings indicate that some employees perceived their supervisors positively, while others described their leadership as inadequate or demotivating.

The finding supports Kwon and Kim (2022), who associate supportive leadership with reduced withdrawal behaviour. It also complements Kim and Park (2022), who found that leadership can influence absenteeism through organisational commitment.

However, the Namdeb evidence provides a more nuanced picture than studies that treat leadership as a single organisational variable. The same organisation contained both supportive and unsupportive supervisory experiences. This suggests that the implementation of leadership practices may vary between departments and supervisors. A strong theme emerging from the findings was the positive influence of supportive leadership on employee attendance. Participants identified coaching, visibility, open communication, employee engagement, safety communication, and recognition as important leadership behaviours.

Supervisors who were accessible and willing to listen were perceived as creating safer and more supportive environments. Employees who felt that their concerns were heard were more likely to experience trust and motivation (Waiganjo et al., 2020).

The findings showed that supervisors who coached employees, communicated with them regularly, and provided support when employees encountered difficulties contributed to positive morale and attendance. These findings are consistent with Social Exchange Theory because supportive managerial behaviour can create reciprocal relationships between employees and supervisors. When employees perceive that management values their welfare, they may respond with stronger organisational commitment and attendance (Kim & Beehr, 2022).

The findings also support Organisational Justice Theory. Employees who experience respectful interpersonal treatment are more likely to perceive the workplace as fair, whereas poor treatment can create perceptions of interactional injustice (Alrawadieh et al., 2022). Communication emerged as an important mechanism through which leadership affected employee attendance. Participants valued supervisors who maintained open-door policies, engaged with employees, communicated safety expectations, and remained visible within the workplace. Poor communication had the opposite effect. Employees who felt that supervisors were inaccessible or unwilling to listen described themselves as unsupported and demotivated.

The findings indicate that communication is not simply an administrative function but an important leadership behaviour through which supervisors establish trust and organisational support. This finding is consistent with Armstrong and Taylor (2022), who emphasise communication and employee involvement as important elements of effective human resource management. It also supports Kim and Beehr (2022), who associate effective leadership with organisational trust. The Namdeb findings further suggest that communication can influence absenteeism indirectly. When employees cannot communicate concerns about fatigue, leave, workload, or personal circumstances, problems may remain unresolved until they manifest as absence. Favouritism emerged as one of the most important negative leadership practices associated with absenteeism. Participants reported concerns about supervisors favouring particular employees, including perceived preferential treatment in leave administration and protection of certain employees who were absent. Such practices created perceptions that workplace rules were not applied consistently. The resulting sense of injustice undermined trust between employees and supervisors.

The research findings indicate that favouritism and inconsistent supervisory practices contributed to organisational mistrust and fatigue, while unequal treatment of leave requests created circumstances in which employees sometimes resorted to sick leave when legitimate leave was denied. This finding provides strong support for Organisational Justice Theory. Where employees believe that procedures are inconsistently applied, their perception of organisational fairness is weakened. Hassan and Jiang (2022) similarly demonstrate the importance of organisational justice in the relationship between supervisory behaviour and employee withdrawal.

The finding also extends the existing literature by showing how perceived favouritism can interact with leave administration to create an absenteeism cycle. Rather than absenteeism being simply an employee decision, it may sometimes emerge from tensions created by managerial practices. Leave administration represented another important leadership issue. Participants reported situations in which leave requests were allegedly denied because production requirements were prioritised over employee welfare. When employees could not obtain legitimate time away from work for personal responsibilities, they sometimes used sick leave as an alternative. This practice created mistrust between employees and supervisors because managers subsequently questioned the legitimacy of sickness claims. The resulting relationship could become self-reinforcing. Supervisors' suspicion could lead to stricter control, while employees' perception of unfairness could encourage further withdrawal.

The research findings specifically identified improper leave management, denied leave, mistrust concerning leave claims, and poor fatigue management as leadership-related contributors to absenteeism.

This finding expands the conventional understanding of absenteeism because it demonstrates how administrative decisions can contribute to attendance problems. Rather than merely disciplining employees who are absent, managers need to examine whether workplace systems themselves are producing incentives for employees to use absence as a coping mechanism. Another important theme concerned the tension between production objectives and employee well-being. Mining organisations must maintain production and safety, but excessive emphasis on production can lead supervisors to overlook employee fatigue and personal needs.

Participants reported that supervisors sometimes prioritised production over employee welfare. This contributed to denied leave, fatigue, burnout, and ultimately absence. The finding is particularly significant because mining environments are inherently demanding. Employees may already experience physical and psychological pressures associated with long hours, shift work, and operational requirements. If leadership fails to recognise these pressures, the likelihood of burnout may increase.

Kwon and Kim (2022) similarly associate workload and job stress with absenteeism, while Karanika-Murray and Biron (2022) demonstrate the relationship between work demands, health, absenteeism, and presenteeism. The Namdeb findings suggest that leadership is important because supervisors can either intensify or mitigate these pressures.

Supportive leadership may enable employees to access appropriate support before fatigue develops into serious absence. Fatigue management emerged as an important leadership responsibility (Waiganjo, 2016). Participants indicated that inadequate management of fatigue contributed to burnout, reduced productivity, and sickness absence.

This finding is important because fatigue is not simply an individual physiological condition. In a mining organisation, leadership decisions concerning workload, leave, overtime, scheduling, and rest periods can influence employees' exposure to fatigue. The findings indicate that supervisors who recognised fatigue and referred employees to wellness services contributed positively to employee well-being. Conversely, supervisors who failed to recognise fatigue contributed to situations in which employees eventually required time away from work. This finding reinforces the need to understand leadership within the broader organisational context. Leadership cannot be separated from work scheduling, workload, safety, and employee support.

Trust was a recurring concept in participants' accounts. Supportive supervisors were associated with trust and positive relationships, while favouritism, inaccessible supervisors, and inconsistent decision-making were associated with mistrust.

This finding strongly supports Social Exchange Theory. Employees' willingness to contribute to organisational objectives is influenced by the quality of the relationship they experience with management (Kim & Beehr, 2022). Where employees believe that managers care about their welfare, they may reciprocate through stronger engagement. Conversely, where management is perceived as unfair or indifferent, employees may reduce their psychological attachment to the organisation. Harrison and Lee (2022) similarly argue that employee withdrawal should be understood in the context of organisational relationships and workplace experiences. Leadership also affected employee motivation. Participants described coaching, recognition, communication, and employee involvement as behaviours that encouraged them to attend work.

Recognition is particularly important because it communicates that employees' contributions are valued. Employees who feel ignored or undervalued may become psychologically detached from their work. Armstrong and Taylor (2022) emphasise recognition, communication, and employee development as important human resource practices. Kim and Beehr (2022) similarly associate empowering and supportive leadership with positive employee outcomes. The findings suggest that motivation is not simply produced by financial incentives. Employees also respond to interpersonal treatment, recognition, communication, and managerial support.

The findings identified several negative leadership practices associated with absenteeism. These included favouritism, poor communication, inaccessible supervisors, lack of empathy, inconsistent leave management, insufficient attention to fatigue, and prioritisation of production over employee welfare. Participants associated these behaviours with demotivation, mistrust, burnout, and reduced willingness to attend work. This finding is consistent with Hassan and Jiang (2022), who identify supervisory behaviour and organisational justice as important determinants of withdrawal. It also supports the broader conceptualisation of absenteeism as an organisational rather than purely individual phenomenon (Johns, 2022).

The finding is particularly significant because it challenges approaches that focus primarily on monitoring and punishing absence. If leadership practices contribute to the underlying causes of absenteeism, disciplinary measures alone may not solve the problem. One of the most important findings was the inconsistency in leadership experiences across participants. Some employees described their supervisors as supportive, accessible, and motivating, whereas others reported poor leadership and inadequate communication. This suggests that leadership should not be assessed only at the organisational level. Leadership practices may differ considerably between departments, supervisors, and work teams.

The finding also has implications for organisational policy. Even when an organisation has appropriate leadership policies, employees may experience those policies differently depending on the behaviour of individual supervisors. This finding is consistent with Nguyen and Malik (2022), who emphasise that management practices may produce different employee outcomes depending on how they are implemented.

X. Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate that leadership is an important influence on employee absenteeism at Namdeb Diamond Corporation. However, the relationship is multidimensional rather than linear. Leadership affects attendance through a combination of trust, fairness, communication, motivation, employee welfare, and fatigue management.

The positive experiences reported by participants demonstrate that supportive leadership can strengthen attendance. Coaching, visibility, recognition, communication, and employee engagement create conditions in which employees feel valued and supported.

These findings support the organisational justice perspective. Employees evaluate leadership behaviour not only according to the outcome of decisions but also according to how decisions are made and how employees are treated. Favouritism and inconsistent leave administration therefore become particularly damaging because they signal that organisational rules may not apply equally.

The findings also support Social Exchange Theory. Employees appear to reciprocate supportive treatment through greater motivation and willingness to attend. Conversely, poor treatment can weaken the employment relationship and contribute to withdrawal.

An important contribution of the findings is the identification of a relationship between leadership and fatigue. Much of the absenteeism literature focuses on workload, job demands, and individual health factors. The Namdeb findings suggest that leadership behaviour can influence whether fatigue is recognised, managed, and addressed.

The findings also demonstrate that leadership operates within a broader organisational system. Supervisors work under production pressures and operational requirements, meaning that leadership decisions may reflect wider organisational priorities. Consequently, improving leadership requires more than instructing supervisors to behave differently. The organisation must also create conditions that enable supervisors to balance production requirements with employee welfare.

XI. Conclusion

This article examined the influence of leadership styles on employee absenteeism at Namdeb Diamond Corporation using qualitative evidence from employees, supervisors, and managers.

The findings demonstrate that leadership is important factor shaping employee attendance behaviour. Supportive leadership characterised by coaching, visibility, communication, recognition, employee involvement, and concern for welfare was associated with positive morale, trust, motivation, and attendance. Conversely, favouritism, poor communication, inaccessible supervisors, inconsistent leave management, perceived unfairness, and inadequate fatigue management were associated with mistrust, demotivation, burnout, and absenteeism.

The findings indicate that leadership influences absenteeism through multiple mechanisms. Organisational justice helps explain why employees respond negatively to favouritism and inconsistent managerial decisions, while Social Exchange Theory explains why supportive relationships may encourage employees to reciprocate through commitment and regular attendance.

An important conclusion is that absenteeism should not be treated exclusively as an individual employee problem. At Namdeb, participants described absenteeism as partly reflecting wider organisational conditions, including leadership behaviour, production pressure, fatigue, communication, recognition, and employee welfare. The study therefore concludes that effective absenteeism management requires a shift from predominantly compliance-oriented approaches towards preventive and employee-centred management. Leadership development, fairness, communication, employee support, and fatigue management should form integral components of organisational strategies for improving attendance.

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