

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the scope of Chapter 7, the research findings of this particular study were identified and clearly discussed by means of various statistical methods and techniques. This chapter therefore, focuses on the conclusions and recommendations, as well as on some limitations and future research that could be undertaken.

During the literature review relevant subject literature were investigated and explored in order to establish and identify what the nature, scope and impact of HIV/AIDS are in South Africa and in particular the threat it poses to the business sectors, especially also to the private sector. The next step was to identify and discuss one of the most important long-term aspects related to the subject under investigation, namely: to investigate and analyse various structures, action programmes, policies and strategies (if any), as well as some relevant case studies to establish whether organisations are doing enough or not, to effectively manage and control the impact of HIV/AIDS within the workplace of organisations. With this primary objective in mind, it left the researcher at the point where further empirical research was needed in order to establish and determine what the actual impact of HIV/AIDS are within the workplace.

8.2 LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE STUDY UNDERTAKEN

Currently HIV/AIDS are prevalent occurrences amongst the young, targeting people at the peak in life. This method of attack will have a serious effect on the country's economy, robbing it of its most precious asset – its people. The future may see the demise of working generations, leaving behind AIDS orphans and the aged. The South African workforce, from labourers to professionals, is under threat and action

is, therefore, needed to curb and minimise the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS, especially within the workplace.

AIDS is already costing businesses a great deal of money. These costs will continue to rise if organisations do not respond rapidly. AIDS increases health, pension and welfare costs. Pension funds are being hollowed out by premature death, since payments into the fund are cut off early just as payments-out increase. Insurance premiums are also increasing as well as secondary costs that include the following.

- Absenteeism, including funeral leave and leave to care for dependants with AIDS.
- Reduced productivity due to sickness and loss of motivation and concentration.
- Management resources such as time to develop response strategies and policy development and problem solving.

Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that comprehensive programmes and appropriate HIV/AIDS policies must be established within the workplace for a small portion of the total cost that would otherwise be incurred because of AIDS-related illness and death.

There are four major ways in which HIV/AIDS could affect organisations

- There will be a limited selection of employees – many talented people will succumb to the disease, some may be uneducated, as salaries are spent on medical fees, rather than on schools and tertiary institutions, and others will be left to care for the sick.
- There will be an increase in the cost of risk benefits, absenteeism, and costs related to the recruitment and training of new staff.
- There will be a reduction in overall productivity.
- The cumulative effect will cripple the country's economy.

The aim and importance of this particular study is, therefore, to determine and investigate whether or not the organisations under investigation have suitable and

sustainable structures, action programmes or policies in place in order to address the above issues (impacts) effectively.

In Chapter 1, research problems were defined and the purpose and objectives for the study were stated. A distinction was also made between various concepts such as: HIV/AIDS, strategy and action planning so as to make understanding of these concepts more understandable within the scope and nature of the described literature.

In Chapter 2, the theoretical aspect and impact of HIV/AIDS in Southern and South Africa, as well as globally, was investigated and analysed. Attention is also given to the background, epidemiological nature, socio-economic implications, as well as the impact on South Africa's population structure and future impacts of the disease. This was done in order to clearly comprehend how the disease is functioning and affecting the country's economy and its resources, especially with reference to South Africa's unique situation.

The following Chapter narrowed the focus of the study to the specific impact of HIV/AIDS on the South African business sectors, especially the private sector. The literature study is again supported by various statistical data as in the case of Chapter 2. Emphasis is placed on the direct and indirect costs of managing HIV/AIDS within the workplace and the legal implications (framework) on how to deal with the disease legally and legitimately within the workplace. Attention is once again given to various current structures in operation within South Africa in respect to addressing and reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS.

The corporate responses to HIV/AIDS have been identified and discussed in Chapter 4 especially with reference to various case studies. This was done to get a clear understanding of what type of strategy, action programme or policy could be applied or introduced with reference to specific conditions, needs and circumstances evident within specific organisations. Another important issue also addressed, included guidelines for the effective management and proper control of HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

In the last chapter on literature, (Chapter 5) the aim was to identify a specific strategy for the implementation by both the public and private sectors. The need and purpose for such a broad strategic plan, were then identified and discussed and included various important priority areas that needed to be addressed properly and effectively. One of the major issues within the scope of this particular research study, was to identify the possibility and to consider the evaluation and analysis of a broad national strategic plan based on the availability of human, financial and institutional resources within organisations in order to effectively manage and control the impacts of both HIV/AIDS especially in the workplace. As mentioned already, these priority areas needs to be effectively addressed and properly managed in order to reduce the impacts of HIV/AIDS. Various principles for the effective implementation of such a HIV/AIDS and STD plan, were also identified and clearly discussed.

8.3 ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES

Within the scope of Chapter 1 specific objectives were identified. Having examined various aspects related to the research topic under investigation, it is now possible to determine whether these objectives were met or not.

8.3.1 Primary objective

For organisations to effectively manage and control HIV/AIDS within the workplace, a sound and reactive approach is needed by means of well-formulated action programmes, policies, plans and a cost effective strategy or strategic plans of action. It was the intention of the study to determine if organisations do have measures (structures) in place to effectively manage and control HIV/AIDS within the workplace.

Although organisations clearly indicated that there are measures in place to manage and control the disease, other organisations clearly indicated that these co-called measures (action plans and programmes) are insufficient and do not properly address the situation adequately. Also important was the viewpoint held by organisations, which responded that there are a lack of support and ignorance towards management's

involvement towards the proper management and control of the disease within the workplace.

From the empirical findings it is however clear and evident that although organisations indicated that there are some structures in place to manage and control the disease, many organisations indicated that these structures are not sufficient and clear enough and that alternative measures (action plans and programmes) are needed to curb the spreading of the disease within the workplace of organisation.

8.3.2 Secondary objective

The various secondary objectives of the study that were identified as supportive towards the primary objectives were also met.

- The literature study has provided a fair amount of information concerning the impacts of HIV/AIDS within the workplace.
- Various structures and action plans were clearly identified and discussed towards the effective management and control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic within the business environment.
- The role of management and other stakeholders were clearly identified and discussed in order to combat the disease.
- Various existing action programmes and policies were identified and discussed. Attention was also given to the implementation of a sound national strategic plan to be implemented by both the public and private sector businesses as well as the need, purpose and advantage of such a strategy for the organisation.
- The empirical part of the study was clearly aimed at measuring the success rate of these action programmes, policies, plans and strategies for the organisation (if possible).

From the above, it is clear that the secondary objectives of the study as outlined within the scope of Chapter 1, were met, where possible.

8.4 CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following were identified as the most important conclusions and research findings within the specific scope and nature of this research study and were also derived and supported by the empirical research conducted within Chapters 6 and 7.

8.4.1 General information

It is important to take note of the fact, that although the information within this particular section does not directly contribute to the above objectives, it was still necessary to include this type of information within the broad scope and limitations of the particular study so as to make some important comparisons and interpretations.

It is interesting to note, that the majority of respondents responding include HR-managers (30,19 per cent) and HR-officers (28,30 per cent). This means, that HR-managers and HR-officers are still evaluated as important instruments for the formulation, implementation and maintenance of sufficient action programmes, policies and structures/strategies within the organisations under investigation, while the highest number of respondents (organisations) were representative of the manufacturing sector (43,39 per cent). It is, therefore, a very good indication that this particular sector is adequately represented within the area of study. It also proves the trend of the majority of economic activities conducted within the manufacturing sector, although the other sectors are also representative within the area under investigation.

Another important aspect, was the total number of permanent employees represented by the various organisations under investigation. As expected, the majority of respondents (43,40 per cent) represented a permanent number of employees between 500 and 1 000, which were more or less in line with the minimum requirement for the study, as already mentioned in Chapter 6. Interestingly enough, almost eight per cent (7,55 per cent) of the total number of respondents, indicated that they represent 3 000 employees or more, which indicates that some large organisations are representative and thus included within the scope of this study. The purpose of the study was to

include as large as possible organisations, in order to include as many as possible employees, so that these organisations (respondents) represent the majority of workers within the area under investigation. This was done in order to determine what the effects and implications of HIV/AIDS will be within the workplace, and especially on organisational resources.

The location of the various organisations was also an important factor within the scope and nature of this particular study. According to the information received, most organisations (respondents) under investigation, were more or less equally representative within the area of study, which included the majority of heavily industrialised (centralised) towns. These towns include Vereeniging (22,64 per cent), Vanderbijlpark (28,30 per cent) and Sasolburg (30,19 per cent). As already mentioned, the above information is also a good indication that industries (organisations) are relatively equally distributed within the area of study, which makes responses relatively representative and reliable.

8.4.2 Specific issues

As mentioned in Chapter 7, various specific issues related to the impact of HIV/AIDS within the workplace, need to be addressed and discussed in-depth. The following research findings and conclusions were identified as contributing towards the objectives identified within the scope of Chapter 1.

8.4.2.1 Objective 1: *To measure the impact of HIV/AIDS in the workplace*

According to the HIV-status of employees within the total number of respondents (organisations) responding more than two-thirds (73,08 per cent) indicated, that they do know of or may know someone (employees) who are infected with AIDS. This is quite a significant response and clearly indicated the proportion (impact) of the disease within the workplace of the various organisations under investigation. To cast further light on the matter these objective respondents were asked to indicate by means of percentages how many employees were infected or may be infected with AIDS. The response was that just over 78,00 per cent of the total number of

respondents responding, indicated that the infection rate of employees within the various organisations represented 20,00 per cent or less, which is again an important response to the particular question. From the above information, the conclusion can be made that most employees infected within the various organisations under investigation also represent 20,00 per cent of the total number of respondents (organisations) employees respectively. This is an important fact and once again poses the questions: “Are organisations fully aware of the impact that HIV/AIDS have on the organisation?” and, “are both the organisation and especially management reluctant towards the impact that HIV/AIDS have on the organisation and its resources?”

Other negative impacts related to HIV/AIDS within the workplace, include -

- an increase in absenteeism and labour turnover, as well as
- an increase in direct health care costs.

It is important to understand that the various aspects mentioned above could have a profound effect and impact on the organisation and its resources, if not properly managed and controlled. Equally important to the impact of HIV/AIDS, are discriminating practices and human rights violations evident within organisations. Almost 60,00 per cent (58,80 per cent) clearly stated that they were not aware themselves of having done anything wrong in this respect. Once again, the conclusion can be made, that almost 60,00 per cent of the total respondents responding do not see themselves as being discriminatory towards employees who are HIV-positive and therefore, do not impinge on the human rights of infected employees. However, there is some evidence to suggest that organisations can do more to prevent more negative influences within the workplace. Some discriminating practices still evident, include the following.

- The disclosure of a person’s (employee) HIV-status within the workplace.
- Unwillingness to associate with a person (employee) who is HIV-positive.
- Limited contact (interaction) with a person (employee) who is HIV-positive.

8.4.2.2 *Objective 2: To measure the effective management of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the business environment*

To support the above objective respondents were asked to indicate if they did have any adequate measures (formal or informal action programmes, policies or strategies) in place to effectively manage the AIDS epidemic within the workplace. As expected almost two-thirds of the total number of respondents indicated, that they did have some formal measure in place in order for them to manage and control HIV/AIDS. Although the response rate is in favour (62,26 per cent) of formal measures being used, it is still worrying that the rest of the total number of respondents indicated, that they did not have some form of informal or no measure in place in order to manage and control HIV/AIDS (37,74 per cent) at present. The conclusion that can be drawn from the above information is that although more than 60,00 per cent of respondents (organisations) may feel that they are adequately prepared, almost 40,00 per cent indicated that it might not be the case. Once again, the primary aim of this study is being addressed. Do organisations have sufficient and adequate action programmes, policies and structures in place to manage and control HIV/AIDS within the workplace?

8.4.2.3 *Objective 3: To measure the role of management in order to combat the disease*

In order to achieve the above objective, it was important to determine what active role management is playing to effectively manage and control HIV/AIDS within the workplace.

These included aspects such as the following.

- HIV/AIDS as part of the overall business strategy or policies concerning life-threatening diseases.
- Organisational benefits that make provision for employees who are HIV-positive.

The following conclusions were drawn from research on the various aspects mentioned above. With reference to the first aspect, most of the respondents (organisations) responding, felt that HIV/AIDS must be included as part of a larger policy concerning life threatening diseases (65,38 per cent) as opposed to merely dealing with it on a separate basis (30,77 per cent). This point of view by the total number of respondents (organisations) responding, provide an important insight into what ways management is dealing with the disease and what management feels how HIV/AIDS should be addressed and managed within the workplace. With regard to the second issue, most respondents indicated, that training (63,22 per cent) must form an integrated part and must be included within organisational benefits that make provision for employees who are infected, as well as provision for primary health care (60,00 per cent). The opposite, however was evident as pension and disability (52,17 per cent) were not included as part of organisational benefits that made provision for employees who are HIV-positive.

8.4.2.4 *Objective 4: To measure existing action programmes, policies and strategies for the successful implementation within the workplace*

According to the distribution of action programmes, policies and structures currently in operation within the workplace of organisations, the following important conclusions were drawn. A relatively large number of respondents indicated, that they are distributing information materials on the subject by means of pamphlets, newsletters, brochures and billboards (91,49 per cent), while 80,00 per cent indicated, that they (organisations) are making use of various educational programmes in order to educate and inform employees, followed by well-structured EAP programmes (75,00 per cent). It seems that these methods are currently the most popular and effective ways used by the various organisations under investigation to effectively manage and control the disease within the workplace.

Equally important, was that the majority of respondents (organisations) clearly indicated, that there is a greater need for improved teamwork (60,97 per cent) among all parties involved, as well as effective group workshops (65,11 per cent) for employees on all levels of management.

Once again, the emphasis is on everybody (management and employees) to see to it that effective and sufficient programmes, policies and structures are in place, so that adequate steps could be taken to minimise the threat and impact of AIDS within the workplace.

8.4.2.5 Objective 5: To measure the success rate of these action programmes, policies and strategies for business (if possible)

As mentioned, if specific action programmes, policies and strategies are correctly used and implemented, certain specific positive outcomes will be realised. The aim of this particular objective is to determine just that. The following positive outcomes were achieved by the various organisations responding.

- Effective education programmes.
- Effective distribution of condoms.
- EAP programmes and proper support.
- Better counselling services.

The above outcomes must not be seen as the only viable methods to effectively manage and minimise the impact of HIV/AIDS, but must be seen as part of the total options available to all parties (management and employees) involved in the fight against AIDS. However, some outcomes also represented negative aspects that clearly need to be addressed by management.

These include -

- no or limited AIDS training and awareness programmes,
- the lack of overall strategy and policies,
- management reluctance towards the epidemic, and
- lack of commitment and adequate funding.

8.5 STATEMENTS/FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE OR MIGHT HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON ACTION PROGRAMMES, POLICY AND STRUCTURE FORMULATION OR IMPLEMENTATION

One of the main focuses of the study relating to Objective 2, namely to measure the effective management of the HIV/AIDS epidemics within the workplace, will now receive attention. The following statements/factors were identified as the most important according to the viewpoint of the total number of respondents (organisations) responding within the scope of this particular research study. These particular viewpoints were clearly identified after the mean (average) for each item, together with the variance, standard deviation and item scale correlation had been calculated and include the following.

- Absenteeism will impact negatively (statement no. 3).
- Increased vulnerability as more employees are infected (statement no. 1).
- Reduced performance due to HIV/AIDS sickness on the job (statement no. 4).
- Employee benefit structures will be affected with an increase of HIV/AIDS cases (statement no. 7).
- Well-designed programmes to reduce infection that leads to an increased awareness among employees, will have a positive impact on the management of HIV/AIDS in the workplace (statement no. 24).
- Methods should be created to encourage openness (statement no. 26).
- An increase in direct costs (statement no. 8).
- Training and recruitment of employees will be severely affected (statement no. 5).
- Reduction in the average skills level, performance, institutional memory and experience of workforce (statement no. 16).
- Illness and death of key employees may prove disastrous for the organisation (statement no. 6).
- Average age and experience of employees will be affected (statement no. 10).
- An increase of organisational downtime due to AIDS-related absences (statement no. 14).

- All persons with HIV/AIDS have the legal right to privacy in the workplace (statement no. 25).
- Employees who are HIV/AIDS infected and who die or retire on medical ground do have to be replaced (statement no. 18).

All the factors/statements were seen from the viewpoint as their being equally important and very significant within the formulation and implementation of policies, action programmes and structures, as well as the evaluation thereof. After all the factors/statements were compressed into a smaller number of significant categories the following important factors/statements were identified as being important towards investigating and analysing specific structures (strategies), action programmes and policies in order to effectively manage and control AIDS within the workplace.

- Construct 1: Vulnerability and absenteeism towards HIV/AIDS within the workplace: statement no. 1, 3, 7, 14, 18 and 19.
- Construct 2: Management and control of HIV/AIDS within the workplace: statement no. 5, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 26 and 30.
- Construct 3: Discriminating practices and human rights violations on the ground of HIV-status: statement no. 15, 25 and 29.
- Construct 4: Specific programmes and structures to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS within the workplace: statement no. 21, 24, 27, 28, 31.
- Construct 5: Production and organisational resources effected or not effected: statement no. 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 16, 22 and 23.

8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to include specific actions and recommendations as part of this particular chapter so as to make a contribution towards the specific literature study on the relevant subject under investigation. Recommendations and more clearly, specific actions, are needed in order to establish and determine in what way future action programmes, policies and strategies could be utilised and implemented in order to reduce the impact of AIDS within the workplace and effectively manage and control.

The following actions and recommendations were identified as the most important within the scope and nature of this research study.

8.6.1 Greater management involvement and commitment

For any HIV- or AIDS-policy, action programmes or strategies leading to effective management involvement and commitment are essential. The way, in which management respond to and manage the HIV/AIDS threat within the workplace, will have a profound and significant effect on how the rest of the organisation will respond to such challenges. Management can achieve this goal only by implementing the following guidelines.

- By conducting an actuarial impact analysis.
- Designing a specific strategic response based on the above analysis.
- Developing policies for implementation and training purposes.

The way in which management respond and react to the impact of AIDS within the workplace, will ultimately determine success or failure.

8.6.2 A more effective HIV/AIDS strategy

The following recommendation is seen as constituting a very important and vital aspect within the scope of this particular study. Without an effective strategy, many organisations will ultimately fail and lose the fight against AIDS within the workplace. Any effective strategy, however, requires a holistic approach on how to properly manage the impact of AIDS on organisational resources. This holistic approach includes the redesigning of risk benefits in order to ensure long-term viability and survival. In the end, it is in the best interest of employers (organisations) to keep employees healthy and productive for as long as possible. By investing in the health of employees, management could ensure positive outcomes for all employees, namely -

- reducing absenteeism,
- increasing productivity levels,
- reducing employee benefit costs,
- ensuring a competitive advantage over other organisations that do not manage and control the AIDS epidemic effectively.

Once again, the emphasis is placed on the need for a well-formulated and structured AIDS strategy that can be implemented to the benefit of the organisation and its employees (Chapter 4) as a whole.

8.6.3 More effective education and training programmes

It is absolutely imperative that organisations should seek new and innovative ways to effectively educate and train employees on various issues related to HIV/AIDS. The key still is education with a capital “E”. Some of the programmes that could be implemented to educate employees, include the following.

- The vital consequences if the disease continues to spread at its current rate.
- Social responsibility projects (programmes) within communities in which employees live.
- Reaching as many people as possible for purposes of personal care and family support.

There is an ever-increasing need and demand, that education programmes and training methods used, must become more effective, especially in the way messages are conveyed and communicated across to various target audiences. Implementing the so-called KAP survey, can enhance the design of training programmes. The (KAP) survey assesses the following in respect of both employees and management respectively.

- Knowledge: Insight into HIV/AIDS, how it is transmitted and how it can be prevented.
- Attitudes: Perceptions of personnel risks towards the disease.

- Practices: Sexual behaviour in the community, as well as discriminatory behaviour (<http://www.accountancysa.org.za>).

The KAP programme, therefore, plays an important role and is also seen as the most important stage towards the development of an effective AIDS-training strategy.

8.6.4 A better and more improved recruitment policy

The recruitment of employees already infected with HIV/AIDS, will become an ever-increasingly possibility for organisations. In order to keep abreast, organisations must apply recruitment policies that make provision and address the issue fairly. This means, that a recruitment policy must be in place to cover the situation adequately from the moment a person applies for a job, till the day he or she leaves the organisation. This means, that the following specific actions must be implemented by the organisation.

8.6.4.1 *Pre-employment medical examination*

Many factors are taken into account in the selection of suitable applicants. The medical criterion for employment, is fitness to fulfil the job requirements. The selection process may include a medical examination designed to screen applicants. Applicants with signs of advanced HIV disease or AIDS, will be submitted for a full medical assessment and their fitness for work should be assessed by the medical practitioners involved.

Pre-employment HIV-screening will not succeed in keeping the workforce free of HIV infections, as many employees will become infected whilst they are employed. For this and other reasons, HIV-screening will not be sufficient enough (refer Chapter 3).

There are no rational grounds for testing employees for HIV-infection as the infection does not normally pose any threat to co-workers and it is recognised that HIV is not spread only casually. For this reason, mandatory HIV-testing

will not be conducted and fitness for work must, therefore, be the criterion for continued employment.

8.6.4.2 *Retention in employment*

An employee with HIV/AIDS is entitled to continue working as long as he/she is able to adequately fulfil his/her job requirements and as long as his/her work does not pose a threat to himself/herself or his/her colleagues. Termination of employment as a result of HIV/AIDS will be considered only if and when an employee is unable to carry out his/her normal work function, or should the employee be unable to attend the required number of working days, provided all sick leave and other appropriate leave have been fully utilised. Incapacity to do the job will be the major criterion for boarding employees or for dismissal. An independent medical assessment may also be called for, to assist in the assessment of the employee and may be utilised to determine:

- the employee's ability to perform his/her work, and
- the possible threat posed to himself/herself or his/her colleagues.

8.6.5 *The effective distribution of information materials*

The success rate in how the impact of HIV/AIDS will be controlled and reduced (if possible) within the workplace, will ultimately determine if organisations are capable to cope with the disease in the long-term or not. For this very reason, it is important that various resources be identified to ensure that sufficient studies and monitoring systems provide improved and up-to-date information on the impact of AIDS within the workplace of organisations.

As respondents (organisations) already indicated within the scope of this particular study, more effective distribution of information materials are needed to curb the spreading of the disease among employees (Appendix D). The following recommendations could be implemented for the effective distribution of information materials.

- Information about the nature of the illness and programmes available to combat AIDS and to support infected employees must, be disseminated effectively, in user-friendly communication format, such as:
 - posters,
 - pamphlets,
 - newsletters,
 - billboards,
 - T-shirts, coffee mugs, and
 - Fact cards.

- Information about AIDS fluctuates almost daily, therefore, the organisation must stay abreast of new developments and disseminate up-to-date information, as and when it becomes available.

- Continuous education is the best weapon for combating employee fears related to AIDS.

8.6.6 Better and more effective communication

The evaluating process for any policy, action programme or strategy, lies in the question as to whether management, especially task force members, have sufficient knowledge about all aspects of the disease within the workplace and very importantly, the ability of those concerned, to effectively communicate the knowledge to employees and their families. The following recommendations could be regarded as vital aspects within a well-formulated and structured communication programme.

- Managers and supervisors should be made aware of employees' concerns and the importance of confidentiality should be carefully addressed.
- The evaluation of a well-formulated and structured communication programme should be examined thoroughly in order to determine whether the general workforce understand the important facts and issues regarding AIDS and related company policies.
- Do employees know how AIDS is (is not) transmitted.

- Do employees understand the so-called “in-house” AIDS-related communication programme and channels available?

Many organisations may believe that in order to develop an effective AIDS communication programme, would be costly and difficult to implement. However, dealing with this issue responsibly, effectively and pro-actively will in the long run, benefit both the organisation and its employees when also assisted by well-formulated AIDS policies and comprehensive action programmes and structures in order for the organisation to cope effectively with AIDS in the workplace.

8.6.7 The availability of adequate resources to better manage and control the impact of HIV/AIDS

The availability of sufficient and adequate resources to manage and control AIDS within the workplace, is one of the major issues that could hamper the successful control of the disease. The organisation, therefore, needs to conduct a meaningful and intense impact assessment study in order to effectively determine what could be done and what the actual impact of HIV/AIDS comprises on organisational resources. The following areas were identified as being vital, if organisations are to succeed in improving their available resources to fight and control the disease effectively.

- Improved medical aid schemes and disability funds that make provision for infected employees as well as pension funds.
- Improving recruitment policies that make provision for infected applicants.
- Increasing awareness and improving training and education programmes.
- Allocating financial resources towards countering the impact of HIV/AIDS – the cost of managing the disease more effectively.
- Measures to calculate the supply and cost of labour affected by the impact of AIDS.
- Provision for socio-economic prosperity and workers’ morale.
- The integration of workplace policy and programmes that are fully inter-sectoral by nature.

- Adequate provision made by the organisation with regard to positively steer the impact on the individual (worker), family, community and society.

8.6.8 Targeting youth and commercial sex workers

All recommendations discussed until this point, was more or less workplace-orientated. The following recommendations are not the responsibility of only and exclusively business, but that of local government as well. In order to be effective, a partnership is, therefore, needed between the private and public sectors of business, especially in educating the youth and commercial sex workers.

Health education for young people has the potential to reduce the unwanted outcomes of coital activity. Given the complex and multi-determined nature of sexual behaviour, it is realistic for health educators to expect young people to modify their practices after formal education. The answer once again lies in the effective communication of a number of successful programmes aimed at delaying the initiation of intercourse, reductions in unwanted pregnancies, birth and abortion rates, as well as increased use of contraception and condoms. These success programmes are more vital when it comes to changing attitudes and increasing levels of factual knowledge than in merely modifying actual sexual practices.

With regard to commercial sex workers, different types of education programmes are needed in order to curb and further prevent infections from spreading (if possible). One of the methods identified as being effective, is to hire specialists to train “peer-educators” – prostitutes who teach other prostitutes about safe sex and the risks associated with these practices.

However, the concern about the limited success of interventions in changing sexual behaviour in the direction of greater contraceptive and/or common use and reduced coital activity, has led to the use and identification of those features of programmes which have been associated with change. The following criteria have been identified as contributing towards the achievement of the increased use of contraceptives and condoms, as well as the reduction in coital activity.

- Basing the programmes on behaviour-change theories.
- Time aspect and implications attached to programmes.
- The involvement of various interactive activities, such as:
 - role play,
 - skills rehearsal,
 - discussions, and,
 - strategy development.

Furthermore, education programmes appear to have a greater success should it be part of behaviour that is pro-active, rather than modifying pre-existing practices.

8.6.9 Specific actions required

The following actions were also identified as important to the nature and scope of this particular research study although these actions and recommendations are only marginally representative of the overall response rate. It is believed that the following actions get a clear view and understanding of the various needs and expectations within the various organisations under investigation. Due to the scope and nature of this chapter, these specific actions and recommendations will only be identified and not discussed.

These include the following.

- More frequent testing of employees (if possible).
- More AIDS-awareness campaigns.
- More openly and frequent group discussions on HIV/AIDS.
- More freely and open distribution of condoms.
- Adequate EAP programmes for infected employees.
- More effective training of counsellors
- The implementation of separate AIDS committees and forums.
- Creating a climate of openness towards HIV/AIDS.

- Provision for family support structures.
- Better and more cost-effective prevention programmes.
- Creating an “open door” policy in order to accommodate employees who are or might be infected.
- Peer-educator programmes driven by medical staff.
- Change in attitudes and morals towards HIV/AIDS.
- More effective leadership by management.
- Regular audit reports on costs and productivity regarding HIV/AIDS.
- Regular updates on absenteeism and medical registrations.
- Allocation of a separate HIV/AIDS budget (if possible).
- Voluntary and anonymous surveillance towards HIV/AIDS within the workplace.
- Better training methods and techniques to minimise the impact of HIV/AIDS.
- Involving trade unions and others in the fight against AIDS.
- Multi-skilled training of employees, in order to ensure that replacements are on hand should trained workers die.

8.6.10 Other actions identified

The following additional recommendations were identified as being supportive towards the objectives within this research study and those will be briefly discussed.

8.6.10.1 *Accelerate socio-economic development*

Poverty, inequality and structural factors, which disrupt a stable family and community life, will continue to make people susceptible to HIV-infection. Poverty and inequality also increase the possible impact of HIV/AIDS. Adequate income, housing, water supply and sanitation, are critical to households' abilities to cope with HIV-related illness, and to maintain the dignity of people with a late-stage illness. Reducing unemployment and improving living standards in general, are thus critically important towards combating the cycle of poverty, which will sustain the epidemic and worsen its impact.

8.6.10.2 *Improve prevention programmes within the workplace*

Prevention programmes are a particularly urgent priority in organisations where HIV prevalence is still not as high as in other cases, but that remains prevalent even in organisations with a high prevalence rate, as a large number of new infections continue to occur daily. Particular attention should be paid to reaching those employees who are most susceptible to infection and who are most likely to spread it further. Legislation, regulations and attitudes which hinder prevention among employees with STD's most at risk, must be challenged.

Programme messages should aim at reducing the stigma of HIV/AIDS and provide information, which helps organisations to manage the impact of HIV/AIDS. All prevention programmes must actively strive to help employees to address the personal, social and economic circumstances, causing them to resort to less safe sexual practices.

8.6.10.3 *Establish inter-sectoral co-ordination*

An effective response to HIV/AIDS, requires an inter-sectoral approach. All sectors have an interest in reducing the impact of the epidemic and incorporating it into their planning. The issue cannot simply be seen as only being the responsibility of the public or health sectors alone. The following demand close attention.

- Sectors need to collaborate in order to build capacity for appropriate responses to HIV among their employees.
- Many of the priority needs of people with HIV/AIDS will be, to develop capacity for care, which meets HIV/AIDS needs in an affordable and cost-effective way. Health workers at all levels must be given the skills and knowledge to care effectively for people with HIV/AIDS.

8.6.10.4 *Reduce the HIV/AIDS stigma within the workplace*

The key to effective medical intervention, is the early diagnosis of HIV-infection. In addition, early knowledge of infection is central to the ability of infected people, their families and employers, to plan and to reduce the impact of the disease. It also makes possible the control of the further spread of HIV. In the light of these factors, it is essential that the current stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS be reduced. People (employees) with the disease, need to be confident in the sense that knowing and revealing their status, will not expose them to prejudice, or financial and other penalties, especially within the workplace.

8.6.10.5 *Support affected people and orphans*

Efficient, affordable ways to provide financial and other support to people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, must be identified as a matter of urgency. Experience in other countries indicates that interventions, which reinforce existing community and family support systems, will invariably be the most cost-effective. Institutional care for orphans, the elderly, or people with HIV/AIDS, is often more expensive than grants or other mechanisms to support community-based care, and has only limited ability to meet their priority needs. Organisations must, therefore, be prepared what implications the above impact will have on workers' morale and especially on family life.

AIDS orphans represent one of the most enduring and damaging effects of the epidemic. Focused research and planning are urgently needed in order to ensure that the effect on children and society at large, is adequately managed.

8.6.10.6 *Improve information on the epidemic and its impact within the workplace*

Resources must be identified so as to ensure that proper studies and monitoring systems provide improved information on the impact of HIV/AIDS, especially within the workplace.

8.6.10.7 *Recommendations towards the adoption of an AIDS strategy for organisations*

A strategy to cope with AIDS in the workplace, should ideally be developed before the first case has been diagnosed and should include the following six basic recommendations for the management of organisations (if possible):

- Stay well-informed.
- Formulate and practise organisational policies.
- Enter into discussions and negotiations with the organisation's health insurance carrier.
- Provide employees with opportunities to attend organisational-sponsored AIDS education seminars.
- Explore the option of joining a Multi-employer trust for insurance coverage.
- Stay abreast of current, as well as new legislation.

8.7 FINAL COMMENTS

Although the AIDS epidemic is increasing in intensity across South Africa, it seems unlikely that government had any or little impact in managing the disease effectively. This fact can be due to present governmental legislation that prevent employees from disclosing their HIV-status within the workplace, as well as the prevention of employers to make use of any methods to test employees (Act 108, 1996 – refer Chapter 3). However, many organisations have already learned, that through aggressive strategic actions, several specific issues related to the impacts of HIV/AIDS within the workplace, can be effectively addressed and properly managed.

These issues include the following.

- HIV-prevalence rate across different sectors of the business.
- Corporate strategic issues.
- Cost implications for retirement benefits.

- Cost implications for group insurance benefits.
- Cost implications for medical benefits.
- Impact on manpower and productivity.
- Evaluation of Human Resource and Industrial Relations policies and procedures.

Based on the above issues, a tailored strategic response designed to save the organisation money and time, can be developed.

An effective response to HIV/AIDS in the workplace, must include the development of a formal organisational policy on AIDS. The policy must address the organisation's legal obligations and must provide a framework in respect of how management and employees will be expected to deal with AIDS-related issues within the workplace.

Following any policy development, a thorough response would include the development and implementation of a cost-effective training programme.

Effective AIDS training programmes are two-fold. All employees, including management, should take part in a programme designed to prevent infection, teach people living with HIV or caring for someone with HIV how to stay healthy, and teaching them about the issues that arise when co-workers are living with HIV. The second part of the training programme, shall be designed to educate management on the business impacts of AIDS and to ensure that they are prepared to deal with these issues in accordance with company policy and legislation.

Without effective and proper AIDS programmes, policies and strategies, organisations will be doomed because of the way they are managing and controlling the disease. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance, that organisations will react in a way that will minimise the impact and risk on organisational resources, so that organisations can still be effective in the way they are conducting business.

8.8 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The study has certain limitations namely –

- The sample frame that were used within the scope and nature of this study, included only the greater Lekoa Vaal Metropolitan area, and it is, therefore, important that any reference made to this study, should be interpreted as such and not as representative of the total South African population.
- The sample consisted of 53 respondents, which is relatively low. This could be due to the specific criteria related to the particular study, namely that only heavily industrialised organisations that represented 500 employees and more were included, which exclusive of all other forms of industries within the area of study.

The following opportunities for future research were identified in the course of this study.

- A comparative study in other metropolitan industrialised areas within South Africa to investigate any similarities and trends.
- A comparative study, with the emphasis on small –sized or medium-sized organisations within the relative area of study.
- A comparative study between the major industrialised regions within the country in order to investigate any similarities or trends.
- Investigating the probability for an “AIDS strategy for business” as a long-term result and outcome of this particular study.