

A Theoretical Study on Employee Absenteeism

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Abstract:

Absenteeism has been recognized as a vital issue affecting discipline and production in the organized industry today. This problem has received wide attention from industrial and researches during the last half century. Absenteeism is regularized to some extent by the enactment of various Factories and Labour acts and by standing orders of the concern. However the leave facilities provided by different acts are often missed by the employees and workers for staying away from frequently and for long periods thereby causing much inconvenience and loss to the industry.

Absenteeism is the problem of not only the Indian industry but also the problem of western industries. The absenteeism is higher in under developed countries like India. There have been many systematic studies of absenteeism in western industrialized countries. This article is an attempt to know about the absenteeism, its types, the main causes and how to overcome the issue of absenteeism.

Keywords — Absenteeism, measures, types, causes, productivity

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee’s presence at work place during scheduled time is highly essential for the smooth running of the production process in particular and the organization in general. Despite the significance of the employee presence, employees sometimes fail to report at work place during scheduled time, which is known as ”ABSENTEEISM”.

Absenteeism is not the problem of underdeveloped countries only but it is a universal phenomenon. It varies from 7% to 30%, but in extreme cases it goes up to even 40%. The degree of absenteeism may differ from place to place, occupation to occupation and industry to industry. It may be high in some occupations and industries as

compared to others. Even in a particular industry, the degree of absenteeism may vary in different departments.

According to WEBSTER’S DICTIONARY, “Absenteeism is the practice or habit of being an ‘absentee’ and an absentee is one who habitually stays away”.

According to the LABOUR BUREAU, SIMLA, “Absenteeism is the total man shifts lost at scheduled to work”. In other words, it signifies the absence of an employee from work when he is scheduled to be at work.

An employee is considered ‘scheduled to work’ when the employer has kept the work ready for him and the worker is aware of it but still not

reporting for duty. A leave taken by an employee is not absenteeism.

II. IMPORTANCE OF ABSENTEEISM:

In India or in any other countries, too many workers remain away from their work frequently and this disrupts productions. This tendency to remain absent is very high particularly in production units. This is not mainly a problem of discipline, nor a problem, which was cropped up recently. But it is a long standing problem. There are deeper sociological, economical and geographical factors behind it. It would not be proper to pass the judgment on the incidence of absenteeism observed in India industry without considering the background.

Absenteeism is often maintained as one of the acute problem. The global experience reveals the industrializations, improved stand of medical care, better working conditions and income levels are inversely related to absenteeism. In view of this fact. The frequency of absence from work should have gone down in the Indian industries, during the last two decades. However available statistics do not support this presumption.

Thus paradoxical situation gave to the present stuffy of sociological and socio psychological factors in the absence conduct of workers.

III. FEATURES OF ABSENTEEISM:

Absenteeism is a universal phenomenon and is not peculiar to Indian industries. But the rate of absenteeism has been relatively higher in India. The ROYAL COMMISSION OF LABOUR reported that “high absenteeism prevails among industrial labour mainly due to their rural orientation.” Since then, a number of individual researchers have investigated the problem and have pointed that absenteeism in our industry varies from 7% to 15%.

On the basis of the studies undertaken in different parts of the country certain observations have been made:

- Absenteeism is the lowest on the pay day and is highest immediately after the pay day and the day on which bonus is paid.

- The absenteeism is high among workers of less than 25 years and over 40 years. The reason of absenteeism amongst younger workers is due to careless attitude whereas old people may not be able to continue with strenuous work.
- The percentage of absenteeism is generally higher in high shifts than in dayshifts.
- In India, absenteeism is highest in April-May and September-October months due to harvesting and sowing reasons. Industrial workers temporarily shift to agricultural work during the few months.
- In coal and mica mining industry the absenteeism rate is high.
- The rate of absenteeism varies from department to department within a unit. As the size of group increases, the rate of absenteeism goes up.
- Absenteeism is generally higher in the departments where supervisors are work oriented and careless for employee welfare.
- The rate of absenteeism is likely to be higher in days before and after a holiday.
- Workers tend to be absent more frequently than supervisors and managers.

There is tremendous scope for reducing absenteeism through union leadership within an organization.

IV. CALCULATION OF ABSENTEEISM:

A worker is considered present even if a worker reports for part of shift. A worker enjoying sanctioned holidays is not counted in the persons expected to be present.

i) Parameters Used For Calculations:

The following 2 factors are taken into consideration for calculating the rate of absenteeism

- Number of persons scheduled to work.
- The number of person’s actually present.

ii) Absenteeism Rate:

Absenteeism rate is the ratio of days lost to the total number of days for which employment is available.

For calculating absenteeism rate, the number of persons expected to report for duty and the actual number of those who are present should be known.

U.S Department of Labor has recommended following formula for calculating absenteeism rate.

$$\text{Absence Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of man days lost} \times 100}{\text{Number of man days scheduled at work}}$$

Frequency Rate:

The frequency rate reflects the absence and is usually expressed as the number of separate absence in a given period, irrespective of length of absences. The frequency rate represents the average number of absences per worker in a given period.

$$\text{Frequency Rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of times in which leave was availed} \times 100}{\text{Total number of man days scheduled at work}}$$

Severity Rate:

Severity rate is the average length of time lost per absence and is calculated by using the following formula.

$$\text{Severity Rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of days absent during a period} \times 100}{\text{Total number of times absent during that period}}$$

V. TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM:

- **Authorized Absenteeism:** If an employee absents himself from the work by taking permission from his superior and from his superior and applying for leave such absenteeism is called Authorized absenteeism.
- **Unauthorized Absenteeism:** If an employee absents himself from the work without informing or taking permission and without applying for leave such absenteeism is called unauthorized absenteeism.
- **Absenteeism Caused by Circumstances Beyond One's Control:** If an employee absents himself from duty owing to the circumstances beyond his control like

involvement in accidents or sudden sickness such absenteeism is called Absenteeism caused by circumstances beyond one's control.

VI. TYPES OF ABSENTEES:

- **Legitimate Absentees:** Legitimate absentees include those who cannot attend due to accident, hospitalization, illness and leave, and absent for any reason accepted by company rules.
- **Escapist Absentees:** Escapist absentee has a much greater interest in other enjoyable pursuit such as hobbies sports and entertainments, than in the job. Work is done for economic reasons and is eliminated, at least briefly, to do something much more attractive.
- **Immature Absentees:** Immature absentees tend to be young but may be old. Immaturity is here referred to as attitudes and ideas. Tolerance of absenteeism by the management is viewed as extra fringe benefits.
- **Abusive Absentees:** Abusive absentees are often unhappy people who feel other are taking advantages of them or they believe that fair treatment is obtained only if aggressive action is taken. The abusive may intentionally, stay away from work, hoping that their absence causes inconvenience.
- **Moonlight Absentees:** They are employees who hold more than one job and are tired to come to work.
- **Chronic Absentees:** Chronic absentees have habits of staying away from work due to minor inconveniences or discomforts that most people ignore. From their view point, the difficulty is too much cope with, their availability for work is reduced by bad habits.

Dr. K.N. Vaid classifies chronic absentees into 5 categories.

- a) **Entrepreneurs:** The Characteristics of this people are:
 - They consider their job is too small in respect to their skills, interest and abilities.
 - Their desire to make quick money, high

status and more power.

- They desire satisfaction from recognition the social achievements and activities.
- Dissatisfied with the present job.

b) **Status seekers:** The Characteristics of this people are:

- Dislike change. Initiative responsibility, discipline, physical comfort.
- Have desire for money, status power unwilling to work to achieve them.
- Work is frustrating experience and seeks to avoid it.
- Therefore absent from the work.

c) **Epicureans:** The Characteristics of this people are:

- Enjoy higher described social status and keen on maintaining it.
- Don't consider the job achievement as significant.
- Different between desire and achieved status in the organization result in deviant work behaviour.
- Derive satisfaction form need oriented social groups
- They make up the loss of status in the organization in outside social organization of group

d) **Family oriented:** The Characteristics of this people are:

- More involved in family activities.
- Absent from job to attend family work
- The sick and the old ill health, weak consultation, chronic desire or old age.

VII. GENERAL CAUSES FOR ABSENTEEISM:

- **Maladjustment with the Working Conditions of the Organization:** If the working conditions of company are poor, the workers cannot adjust themselves with the company's working conditions. Then they prefer to stay away from the company.
- **Social and Religious Ceremonies:** Social and religious functions divert the workers attention from the work to social activities. In a large number of cases the proportion of absenteeism due to sickness, accident or

maternity is not as high as it due to other cases, including social and religious causes.

- **Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions:** The workers who come to towns usually find that they are not wanted and they swell the number of unemployed and casual workers because of housing and health conditions they frequently visit to their village homes to get relief of from such sanitary and unhealthy surroundings.
- **Industrial Fatigue:** The industrial fatigue compels the workers to remain outside the work place. Low wages compel a worker to seek some part time job to earn some side income. But this often results in constant fatigue, compels him to remain absent for the next day; and if fatigue affects him seriously his absence may continue for quite some time.
- **Unhealthy Working Conditions:** The poor and intolerable working conditions in the factories irritate the workers. Heat and moisture (which rapidly exhaust the worker), noise and vibrations in the factory (which affect his hearing), bad lighting conditions (which cause eye strain) dust, fumes, poor ventilation smoke etc., All these effect the health of the workers, causing him to remain absent for a long time.
- **Poor Welfare Facilities:** Though a number of legislations concerning welfare facilities are enhanced, many organizations fail to provide welfare facilities. This is either due to the poor financial positions of the companies or due to the exploitative attitude of the employer. The poor welfare facilities include poor sanitations, washing, bathing, first aid appliances, ambulance, rest rooms, drinking water canteen, shelter, crèches, etc. The dissatisfied workers with these facilities prefer to be away from the workplace.
- **Alcoholism:** Workers mostly, prefer to spend money on the consumption of liquor and enjoyment after getting the wage. Therefore, the rate of absenteeism is more during the first week of every month.

- **Indebtedness:** The low- level wages and unplanned expenditure of the workers force them to borrow heavily. The research studies indicate that workers borrow more than 10 times of their net pay. Consequently, workers fail to repay the money. Then try to escape from the place in order to avoid the money lenders. This leads to absenteeism.
- **Maladjustments with Job Demands:** The fast changing technology demands higher level skills from the workers fail to meet these demands due to their lower level education and absence of training.

VIII. EFFECTS OF ABSENTEESIM:

Excessive absenteeism is harmful to both employees and workers in the following ways:

- ✓ Regular flow of work in the factory or office is disturbed.
- ✓ Production schedules are delayed, so the orders cannot be executed in time.
- ✓ Overall production declines.
- ✓ Quality of work suffers because the casual workers employed to maintain work schedules are not properly trained.
- ✓ Work pressure on available and present employees' increases.
- ✓ Overall production declines.
- ✓ Repairs and maintenance cost increases due to frequent breakdown of machinery by inefficient workers.
- ✓ Workers lose wages for unauthorized absence from duty.
- ✓ Reduction in earnings increases indebtedness of workers which is further a cause of absenteeism.
- ✓ Workers who are habitually absent may be removed from services causing hardships to them and their family members.

IX. MEASURES FOR CONTROL OF ABSENTEEISM:

Absenteeism is a serious problem for a management because it involves heavy additional expenses. The management is generally uncertain about the probable duration of an employee's absence and can't be an effective one in controlling

absenteeism, but a skillful combination of various measures would definitely lead to the desired results.

- **Motivation of Workers by Welfare and social measures:** The management should recognize the needs of workers and offer them adequate and cheap housing facilities, free or subsidized food, free medical and transportation facilities to and from their residence, free educational facilities for their children, and other monetary and non-monetary benefits. Their genuine difficulties for example, they are in need of money at the time of marriage, death, family illness and disablement should be recognized by the management, and it should try to help them in this regard. As for social security measures such as the provision of provident fund, E.S.I facilities, gratuity and person concerned, all these need to be improved, so that workers may have a sense of belonging.

- **Provision of Health and Working Conditions:** In India, where the climate is warm and moist and the work involves manual labor, it is essential that workers should be provided with proper and healthy working conditions. The facilities of drinking water, canteens, lavatories, rest rooms, lighting and ventilation, need to be improved where any one of these facilities is not available, it should be provided. All these help in keeping the employee cheerful and increase productivity and the efficiency of operations throughout the plant.

- **Improved Communication and Prompt Redressal of Grievances:** Since a majority of the workers are illiterate, written notice, journals and booklets are not understood by them. Therefore timely illustration and instruction meetings and counselling are called for. Written communication becomes meaningful only when workers can read and understand. As regards notice boards, too many notices should not be put on the board, notice board should be placed near the entrance, inside the canteen and in areas which are frequently visited.

- **Liberal Grant and Leave:** The management is having strict attitude towards granting leave and holidays. Even the need for them is genuine, tempts workers to go on E.S.I leave, under this scheme,

they can have 56 days in a year on half pay. An effective way of dealing with absenteeism is to liberalize leave rules.

□ **Safety and Accident Prevention:** Safety at work can be maintained and accidents can be prevented if the management tries to eliminate such personal factors as negligence, over confidence, carelessness, vanity, etc., and such material factors as unguarded machinery and explosives, defective equipment and hand tools. In addition to consistent and timely safety instructions, written instruction (manuals) in the regional languages of the area should be given to the work force. These manuals should contain such safety slogans as “Think-safe”, “Plan-safe”, “Be alert”, “Don’t get hurt”, “Be safe” etc.,

□ **Develop an Attendance Policy:** Every company should have an attendance policy. An attendance policy allows a manager to intervene with an employee, who is frequently absent, besides stress as a primary reason for employee absenteeism, other causes related to alcoholism domestic violence, and family problems. If you confront an employee about his/ her frequent absenteeism, and they inform you it is due to personal problems, consider referring the employee to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

□ **Cordial Relations at Work:** The strained relations between supervisors and workers may also prompt absenteeism. The supervisors should have cooperative attitude towards workers. They should motivate workers for improving their performance and should not indulge in frequent criticism.

□ **Maintain Discipline:** There should be well defined rules and regulations for work. The

Employees should not be allowed to violate various regulations. There should be well laid leave rules and these should be properly followed. If some workers are in habit of coming late or frequently absent from duty then strict action should be taken against them. In the absence of such action other employees may be encouraged to violate such rules and regulations.

➤ **Incentives:** Special bonus, cash prizes and preference in promotion to regular employees encourage employees to be regular in attendance.

X. CONCLUSION:

Absenteeism is a universal phenomenon. For the good health of the organization there must be proper cooperation from all the employees of the organization. Employees presence at the work place during scheduled time are highly essential for the smooth running of the business. Absenteeism affects the discipline and production in an organized industry. The liberal attitude leads to more and more absenteeism like a contagious disease. On the other hand strict discipline leads to strained relations between the man and union

The reduction in absenteeism also improves the cordial relationship of the management and workers by implementing the best ways. The cooperation of workers is essential for the good health of an organization. Sometimes labour turnover and absenteeism become a major problem for the management. The exit of workers or their absence from work disrupts production schedules.