



The Reduction of Presenteeism in an Organization

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ABSTRACT

Presenteeism is one of the problems facing many Organizations in Nigeria which is reducing productivity in an Organization, though, many researches have been conducted on problems of productivity in an Organization, little researches were conducted on problems of presenteeism in an Organization, and therefore, this research was carried out in order to fill the gap. Thus this paper is to examine the problems of presenteeism in an Organization. The paper was purely conceptual past method of data collection was using on past literatures that discussed presenteeism. The findings reveal that presenteeism lower productivity, affecting organizational growth and development and killing the capacity of staff to be Innovative. The paper suggests ways of reducing presenteeism in an Organization.

Keywords: Innovation, Presenteeism, Productivity, Organizational Growth and Staff

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, studies have revealed a high incidence of presenteeism among employees (Aronsson et al., 2000; Elstad and Vabo, 2008; Hansen and Andersen, 2008). It has become a prevalent phenomenon among employers and employees in today's business world (Saarvala, 2006). This negatively affects output, quality of work-life and employee health (Lowe, 2002). Unlike absenteeism, presenteeism among employees is not always noticeable, as one cannot easily tell whether the productivity of the employee who turns up for work is affected by his or her health conditions (Hemp, 2004).

U.S.-based studies have reported that presenteeism costs U.S. companies over USD150 billion a year (Hemp 2004). Another study has shown that coming to work with migraine/headache and allergies, costs U.S. organizations USD12 and USD2.8 billion, respectively, through lost productivity (Burton et al., 2004). Some of the common health conditions that have been studied by these researchers are allergies, flu, asthma, diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, back and neck pain, migraine/headache and a few others. The reasons for coming to work despite being sick have been identified by the researchers as being 'ill prepared' to be absent due to sickness, fear of falling behind, reluctance to use sick leave and a misguided sense of duty. Most such studies have been conducted in Western contexts that may not accurately reflect the prevalence of presenteeism in other regions/countries in the world. In view of this, i undertook to carry out a series of empirical studies exploring different facets of presenteeism issues in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research question will be analysed:-

- a. What are the problems of presenteeism in an Organization?
- b. How does the problems constitute hinderance to Organizational Performance?
- c. What are the ways of reducing presenteeism in an Organization?

Research Objectives

The following Research Objectives will be analysed:-

- a. To examines the problems of presenteeism in an Organization?
- b. To analyze the nature of the problem and its hindrances to Organizational Performance?
- c. To suggest ways of reducing presenteeism in an Organization?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of Presenteeism

Various scholarly authorities have provided different but related definitions and descriptions of the concept of presenteeism. For instance, the Cambridge English Dictionary (2017) defines presenteeism as “the act of staying at work longer than usual to show that you work hard and are important to your employer”. In a Harvard Business Review (October 2004), Hemp described *presenteeism* as “the problem of workers’ being on the job but, because of illness or other medical conditions, not fully functioning”. Presenteeism, or sickness presence, is the act of showing up for work without being productive, generally because ill-health prevents it. According to McCurry (2016), “the CIPD’s most recent report on absent management found that a third of organizations have reported an increase in people coming to work while ill.”

According to Wikipedia (2017): Simpson claimed that presenteeism is the tendency to stay at work beyond the time needed for effective performance on the job. Aronsson, Gustafsson, and Dallner wrote that it means attending work even when one feels unhealthy. In a recent review of the literature, Johns highlighted that many of the definitions lack utility and that the term is most often defined as going to work while ill. He further noted that definitions of presenteeism, which are centered on attending work while sick, have received more evidence of constructive validity. In other words, when defined as coming to work while sick, presenteeism seems to relate more to logical outcome variables and correlates.

However, simply viewing presenteeism as a negative act that leads to productivity loss and decreased health may be restricting potential analysis of the construct. Unlike absenteeism, presenteeism is not always obvious. When an employee does not show up for work is known, but cannot tell when or how much illness or a medical condition has hindered the employee’s performance.

It is true that presenteeism or working while sick can cause productivity loss, poor health, exhaustion and workplace epidemics. While the contrasting subject of absenteeism has historically received extensive attention in the management sciences, presenteeism has only recently been studied.

Certain occupations such as welfare and teaching are more prone to presenteeism. Doctors may attend work while sick due to feelings of being irreplaceable. Jobs with large workloads are associated with presenteeism. People whose self-esteem is based on performance, as well as workaholics, typically have high levels of presenteeism. Findings show that presenteeism is more common in companies where long working hours are seen as the norm, and where operational demands take precedence over employee wellbeing.

Presenteeism may have many motives. An employee may come to work because they simply need the money and cannot afford to take time off due to illness. Additionally, one could go to work due to a love and devotion to the job. In this case, presenteeism could be considered an act of organizational citizenship and inspire admiration from colleagues.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame work of this paper is based on theory of Deb and Trivedi who proposed that the causes of presenteeism are based on the following Assumptions:-

1. Health status: Self-rated health status, longterm conditions, chronic illnesses.
2. Socio-demographics (age, sex, occupation)
3. Attitudinal variables: important to come to work, attitude towards presenteeism and sickness absence etc.
4. Type of job and characteristics of the job (managerial position, commitment to job, team-related, possibility to plan one’s own work, helping hand from colleagues if absent, physically or mentally demanding
5. Type of company and company policies: public-private, number of employees, absence policy and sickness absence interviews, company attitude towards presence/presenteeism, economic consequences of absence/presenteeism

Model of Presenteeism

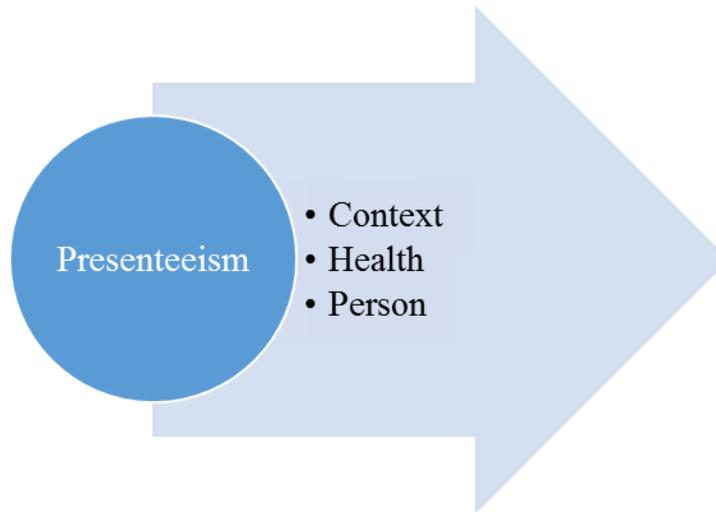


Figure 1 Presenteeism Model

Table 2. Model concept

Context	Job demands
	Job Security
	Reward system
	Absence policy
	Team work
	Ease of replacement
Health	Adjustment attitude
	Acute
	Episode
Person	Chronic
	Work attitudes
	Personality
	Perceived justice
	Stress
	Perceived absence legitimacy
	Proclivity for sick role
	Health locus control
Gender	

1.4.3 What drives presenteeism?

Presenteeism is a complex problem (Baker-McCleary et al 2010), that is continually shaped by individual and organisational factors including deadlines, peak periods, pressure from colleagues, managers and family members, and their own motivations. Initiatives by organisations to drive down absenteeism can have

the unintended consequence of increasing presenteeism, as individuals do not recover at home and therefore remain in the workforce sick.

The drivers of presenteeism are diverse and vary between individuals and organisations, however, according to Hansen and Andersen (2008), work-related factors have a slightly greater effect. Such factors include the needs of others professionally such as in the care, welfare or educational sectors; concerns for colleagues' workload; manager and supervisor behaviour; working cultures; and portrayal of a work ethic or organisational commitment. Organisational policies and economic climate can also be impacting factors; fixed term contracts, job insecurity, absence policies, sickness benefit, bonuses/incentives, and working-time arrangements, are factors which organisations have a degree of control over and have the potential to be worked on with driving down presenteeism in mind. Personal factors such as financial worries about a loss of income, problems at home, and personal pressure are harder for organisations to control.

Those who are most vulnerable to presenteeism cut across the whole organisation in terms of seniority and job role, including:

- Managers who feel they should set an example.
- People with high sickness absence who are under pressure to reduce this.
- People with financial problems.
- Workaholics.
- Insomniacs. Additionally, work-induced fatigue is worth special attention due to the mutually reinforcing impact of presenteeism and fatigue.
- High-skilled white collar workers, compared to the other occupational classes.
- Those who are childless are more likely to come to work when sick compared to those who are recently married or have children.
- Older workers.
- People with unhealthy lifestyle choices including smoking, those with unhealthy diets and who don't exercise very much.
- People with poor psychological wellbeing, including depression, which is worthy of particular attention due to its prevalence and lack of visibility.
- Some professions and industries have higher rates of presenteeism; doctors in particular have been identified as at risk (Rosvold and Bjertness, 2001)

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was purely conceptual, it was based on secondary data such as text books, and articles from as newspapers, journals, magazines were used.

1.6 FINDINGS

From the analysis, the researcher discovered the following as causes of Presenteesm:-

Lower productivity of employees

The economic loss associated with presenteeism, i.e. lower productivity of employees, embedded in the theory of economic evaluation and the cost- of-illness literature, and 2. Labor supply and demand issues as viewed from the perspective of employees and employer respectively. While absence reduces labor supply, presenteeism on the other hand maintains the level of supply, but possibly at a lower level of effort. Indirect costs in economic evaluation and cost of illness studies,

Research shows that the direct cost of absenteeism for the U.K. economy has been going up since the mid-1980s. For example, £6 billion per year in the 1980s (Brown and Sessions, 1996) to £11.6 billion in 2003 (Barham and Begum, 2005) to £17 billion in 2009 (CIPD). In the past, researchers focused on the job contract that could impact on cost of absence, such as basic wage and sick pay replacement rate, but they did not examine the impact on absence rates of performance-related pay schemes. In a study on the subject, Pouliakas and Theodoropoulos (2012) reported that firms that employ performance-related pay (PRP) schemes tied to the assessment of individual merit and performance have significantly lower absence rates. This negative relation becomes stronger in firms that offer PRP to a greater proportion of their non-managerial workforce and in those firms in which the share of workers' earnings subject to variable pay is greater.

Wage level, relative wage and job position and absenteeism

Pfeifer (2010) examined the impact of wages and job levels on worker absenteeism behaviour. The author examined the extent to which absolute wage levels, relative wages compared with colleagues, and the position in a firm's hierarchy affected workers' absenteeism behaviour. The analysis of monthly wages and monthly absenteeism of employees in a German company provided evidence that workers are less absent if they enjoy a higher absolute wage, a higher relative wage and are employed at a higher hierarchical level.

Substitution of absenteeism by presenteeism

Mac Gregor, Cunningham and Caverley (2008) point out that according to previous research presenteeism might be on the rise because the employees are substituting sickness presence for sickness absence. They argue that if the total number of sick days is defined.

National culture and presenteeism

Parboteeah, Addae and Kullen (2005) examined the effect of national culture on organizational performance caused by presenteeism, using a large sample from 24 countries. Based on the Hofstede cultural dimensions, postulated that uncertainty avoidance, power distance, individualism and masculinity will be negatively related to effect of presenteeism. Similarly, based on the GLOBE 1 cultural dimension also positive relationships between societal collectivism and assertiveness and presenteeism. In summary, this study has demonstrated that some of the national cultural dimensions have either positive or negative relationships with absences. This means that the managers need to note that employee presenteeism behaviour will vary among national cultures.

Obesity and presenteeism

Obesity has a significant effect on presenteeism positive association with absence from work. In the Belgian workforce, for example, body fat distribution has been found to be associated with high annual sick leave incidences and long spells of absence. Further, in a financial institution, workers with high BMI showed additional health risks, short-term absences because of disability and illness, and higher health-care costs than workers who were not overweight. Obese workers were found to be 1.7 times more likely to experience a high level of presenteeism (Schulte et al., 2007). Obesity has serious consequences on human health, including increased risk for depression, non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, hypertension and heart disease (Gates et al., 2008).

Job satisfaction, Stress and presenteeism

Abdullah and Lee (2012) report the relationships between employees who had attended a wellness programme and those who had not with employees' job satisfaction, stress and presenteeism. Findings revealed that higher satisfaction of those attended wellness programmes than those who did not attend. The findings also showed that less stress on employee who had attended the well-ness programme than those who did not attend. Similarly, lower employee presenteeism among those who had attended the programme than those who did not.

Time pressure Sickness presenteeism

The above finding is consistent with that reported by Caverly et al. (2007) in his popular work, who argue that the main cause of presenteeism is the fact that employees are not able to find and secure additional resources that could assist them on a given work assignment or project while absent and as such higher levels of presenteeism will be exhibited with a lack of replacement and they need to meet deadlines, presenteeism flourishes.

Employment conditions

Review of absence from work showed that a lack of external demand in job-market conditions reduces absence from work. Job insecurity is considered to be the most plausible explanation for sudden drops in sickness presenteeism rates during periods of lay-offs (Luz and Green, 1997). In a study Patton (2012) reported that during economic downturns one-third of workers are more likely to go to work ill. About half of those who were willing to go to work sick indicated that the most important reason for their decision was job security.

Psychological issues

Psychological reasons also found to be symptoms of a larger issue of presenteeism prevalent in almost every workplace. Some employees may feel guilty for missing work, which may be attributed to their strong commitment to their jobs, which in turn increases the likelihood of sickness presenteeism (Hansen and Andersen, 2008).

Love for money

Evidence from other empirical studies Milano (2005) reports that nearly half of all American employees admit being at work at least one to four days per year when they are too ill or stressed to be productive. A survey by CIGNA Corporation revealed that 25 per cent of the respondents came to work sick because they needed money

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendation is made, having got the causes and drivers of presenteeism in an organization so as to reduce presenteeism. As provided by McCurry (2016), here are five ways to help to reduce sickness presence in the organization.

- 1. Don't Ignore Output in Favor of Input:** Make it clear that your company expects sick employees to stay home and recover.
- 2. Policy Overhaul:** Ensure that line managers understand the relationship between absenteeism and presenteeism, that they are supported to adopt a more flexible approach to absence, and that they provide support to employees making a return to work after a period of illness.
- 3. Be Aware of Causes:** It is crucial managers are aware of organisational and managerial causes of work-related stress and ill health and have the soft skills to promote positive working practice and wellbeing.
- 4. Recognize the Symptoms :** Workplace training and awareness raising of common mental and physical health issues will help reduce stigma and provide people with a better understanding of workplace wellbeing.
- 5. Examine the Organisation's Wellbeing Programme:** If presenteeism isn't already on your radar, it should be. Making appropriate changes to line manager training and addressing problematic aspects of workplace culture will help ensure your workforce is healthier and more motivated in the long term

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have discussed the concept of 'presenteeism' and findings clearly indicate that presenteeism is an invisible loss of productivity to employers. Studies in the United States have revealed that the annual cost of presenteeism is at least USD150 billion (Goetzel et al., 2004). It also noted that the cost to employers through presenteeism for health conditions. In the studies it's also reveal that, in Singapore average an employee lost 3.88 per cent of his or her annual eligible work time. Studies conducted in the United States and other countries also revealed that cost of sickness presenteeism is prevalent, and proper management of such employee behaviour can be rewarding for both the employers as well as the employees. Studies have demonstrated that comprehensive and integrated health-management strategies can lower health risks; improve labour. On the other hand, productivity and lower health-related costs. Therefore, it is logical for employers to pursue strategies that can help ensure productive lifestyles of employees and reduce future health-care costs. The purpose of this paper is to help raise awareness of both employees and employers about the hidden costs of presenteeism and the need for an integrated approach to reduce such and managing such employee behaviour.

Lastly, it seen that, Effective management or reduction of presenteeism does not only save the organisation's money in the short and longer term, it very much contributes to employees' engagement and productivity. Given the prominence and costs of presenteeism, scholars have suggested a variety of courses of action for employers and organisations' managements. Organisations should implement wellness programmes for their employees aimed at increasing health and productivity. These organizations, however, must be aware that the effects of these programs may have an immediate impact on presenteeism as opposed to simply absenteeism. Firms must be cognizant of this fact when evaluating

the effectiveness of their programmes. Employers need to consider the health of workers who are low risk along with those who have high-risk health conditions.

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