

## Absenteeism: A Theoretical Analysis

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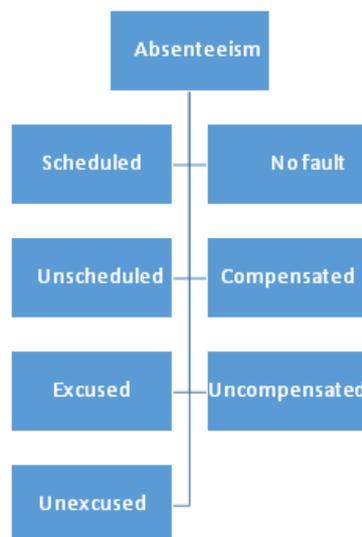
### 1. INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism in employment law is the state of being not present at work that occurs when an employee is absent or not present during a normally scheduled work period.(1)

It is well said “There’s going to be immediate recognition” (though in negative sense) for the employee who is consistently absent.

### 2. REASON FOR ABSENTEEISM

Many causes of absenteeism are legitimate like family activities, funerals but there are other factors also like poor work environment or workers who lack commitment to their jobs. If such absences become excessive, they can adversely impact the operations and, ultimately, the profitability of business. Absenteeism can be of different types, they are



According to Vander Merowe the reasons for absenteeism can further be divided in three main categories namely (2)

- ❖ **Personal factors** which may fall into schedule or unscheduled category like vacation, medical appointments, family activities, funerals, jury duty, parenting responsibilities, alcoholism, newly wed, female workers having small children, that may or may not be scheduled outside working hours. These absences may be excused (discussed in advance) or unexcused (which are not discussed in advance).
- ❖ **Organisational factors** includes the work environment, the degree of job stress, employer employee relations, union coverage, work schedules, inequitable treatment, poor leadership, supervision etc.
- ❖ **Attitudinal factors** includes personal experiences (type of job acceptable to the person), comfortable with certain group, race, sex, role models, peer groups, seniority, resistance to change, shift in power and most importantly “**use it or lose it policy**”-where the employees have mentality to see sick leave as use or lose benefits.

Excessive absenteeism is one of the indicators to monitor and evaluate various employees' welfare programmes and labour policies.

### 3. MAGNITUDE OF ABSENTEEISM

#### Absenteeism in Sectors by States (3)

With this aim in view, statistics on absenteeism amongst the directly employed regular workers are collected as a part of the Annual Survey of Indian Industries. Absenteeism rate among workers in an industry or a state is worked out as percentages of man-days lost due to absence to the man-days scheduled to work in the respective industry or state.

State-wise and Sector-wise data regarding absenteeism rates amongst directly employed regular workers during the year 2000 are presented in the table given below. It is observed that amongst sectors, the highest rate of absenteeism was observed in Joint Sector (9.55 percent) followed by Private Sector (9.51 percent) and Public Sector (8.09 percent).

In Public Sector, the highest and the lowest rates of absenteeism were observed in Chandigarh (11.92 percent) and Punjab (3.24 percent), respectively. In Joint Sector, the highest rate of absenteeism was observed in Karnataka (14.84 percent), whereas, the lowest rate of absenteeism was observed in Andhra Pradesh (3.81 percent). In Private Sector, the highest absenteeism rate was observed in Delhi (14.24 percent) and the lowest rate was reported in Dadra & Nagar Haveli (5.34 percent).

**Table 2.1.3: Absenteeism Rates amongst Directly Employed Regular Workers in States by Sectors during the Year 2000**

Sl. State No.		Percentage of Absenteeism by Sectors			
		Public Sector	Joint Sector	Private Sector	Overall
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Jammu & Kashmir	6.89	-	10.92	10.64
2	Himachal Pradesh	7.46	10.10	12.41	12.04
3	Punjab	3.24	8.61	10.48	10.47
4	Chandigarh	11.92	7.76	10.64	10.64
5	Uttaranchal	6.98	10.68	8.37	8.33
6	Haryana	8.26	14.74	11.00	10.97
7	Delhi	-	9.38	14.24	14.23
8	Rajasthan	10.59	8.39	8.77	8.83
9	Uttar Pradesh	11.29	8.21	10.03	10.03
10	Bihar	3.69	8.78	11.41	11.07
11	Assam	7.58	4.72	6.80	6.79
12	West Bengal	7.86	7.98	9.87	9.85
13	Jharkhand	5.62	8.61	7.52	7.42
14	Orissa	6.06	6.10	9.21	8.92
15	Chhattisgarh	9.13	-	6.13	6.19
16	Madhya Pradesh	7.39	6.89	8.20	8.16
17	Gujarat	6.29	6.35	8.92	8.91
18	Daman & Diu	-	-	8.69	8.69
19	D & Nagar Haveli	-	6.26	5.34	5.39
20	Maharashtra	10.62	9.53	12.16	12.09
21	Andhra Pradesh	4.46	3.81	5.82	5.79
22	Karnataka	10.40	14.84	9.25	9.31
23	Goa	-	8.63	11.85	11.81
24	Kerala	8.77	11.97	12.91	12.70
25	Tamil Nadu	6.98	10.47	7.41	7.42
26	Pondicherry	3.74	12.70	7.02	7.03
All India		8.09	9.55	9.51	9.50

#### **4. MEASURING ABSENTEEISM**

Unscheduled absences are costly to business. According to the U.S. Department of Labour, companies lose approximately 2.8 million workdays a year because of employee injuries and illnesses. The inability to plan for these unexpected absences means that companies hire last minute temporary workers, or pay overtime to their regular workers, to cover labour shortfalls; they may also maintain a higher staffing level regularly in anticipation of absences. Though there is no standard formula to calculate absenteeism but it can be calculated by

Cost of absenteeism-Absenteeism rate multiplied by basic earnings will provide management with the direct cost of absenteeism.(4)

#### **5. MEASURES AGAINST ABSENTEEISM**

*The SOHO Guidebook*, "a formal, detailed policy that addresses absences, tardiness, failure to call in, and leaving early can serve to prevent misconceptions about acceptable behaviour, inconsistent discipline, and complaints of favouritism, morale problems, and charges of illegal discrimination. General statements that excessive absenteeism will be a cause for discipline may be insufficient and may lead to problems."(5)

Some of the measures to prevent absenteeism are

- Counselling
- Communication
- Incentive
- Discipline
- Improved working conditions
- Supervisory training
- Accurate rewards
- No fault point system
- Bonus for unused sick leave
- Effective training and development programme
- Developing an effective absence policy
- Use of flexible schedule{flexitime}
- Work from home
- Telecommuting
- Professional and personal life balance(work life balance)

No fault point system –Reward good attendance and eliminate people with poor attendance. There's no excused or unexcused absences.

*Navneet Agarwal, the CEO of Action Ispat Power Ltd believes in respecting his employees and is good at motivating himself and those around him. There are many other companies who carry out sports activities like playing cricket, holding family events on New Year etc to motivate and relax employees.(6)*

Constructive discipline or positive discipline approach developed by Eric L. Harvey can be used for dealing with employees who fail to meet performance goals or who violate organisational rules. This approach follows three steps: (7)

1. Warn the employee orally.
2. Warn the employee in writing
3. If steps 1 and 2 fail to resolve the problem, give the employee a day off with pay which is a decision making leave to decide whether he or she wishes to remain in the organisation

For the employer it is very difficult to accommodate unpredictable or sporadic absenteeism, which have devastating effect on business. In that case traditional absence policies can be used, where the employee is subject to disciplinary action.

- 1) Counselling and warning which lead to disciplinary action
- 2) Written counselling session and warning that will lead to termination
- 3) Termination

## **6. CONCLUSION**

It can be concluded that excessive absenteeism leads to decreased overall productivity of the firm, upset and delays work schedules, produce negative effect on morale of other workers, decrease customer satisfaction, increase cost burden on employer as overtime wages to be given to other workers to be filled in.

In this age where loyalty is dead, job hopping has become frequent, to control employees taking unauthorised, unscheduled absences, practising five R's may motivate workers to not abuse the system and achieve new level of performance which are (8)

Responsibility

Respect,

Relationships,

Recognition,

Rewards

As suggested by R. Brayton Bowen (9)

Attitudinal change can be made by helping people overcome their limitations to become more successful at work, which is the very heart of effective management

Feedback and timely response from the employees through different questionnaires about how they feel about their jobs, work groups, supervisors and the organisations may help in knowing about employee's attitude and immediate action can be taken. Clear defined policies, surveys, check on excessive absenteeism is important for the department, organisation and the employees and also it is very important to give employees a breather and not to expect the same level of effort every day, month after month otherwise their energy will fail and the company's performance will suffer. (10,11)

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