The previous chapter has dealt with the framework and designing of the research study consisting of the statement of problem, review of empirical research work, significance of the study, objectives of the study, hypothesis of the study, research methodology and limitation of the study. The present chapter deals with the conceptual review of absenteeism. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the menace of absenteeism, so that the practical implementation of the same could be examined.

2.1. Introduction

Absenteeism is an important factor determining the productivity of a given industry, and it depends upon worker's health, and also on other factors including personal and socioeconomic conditions of workers.\(^1\) Absenteeism is a common problem in many industrial units, small or big, private or Government. The high rate of absenteeism is at times due to lack of commitment to work. Absenteeism results in dislocation of work increase in labour costs, reduction in productivity and if unchecked, it causes an increase in indiscipline.\(^2\) An appropriate understanding of the problem of absenteeism should begin with a clarification of the concept itself. Absenteeism is one of the many terms lacking standardization as pointed out by the National Commission on Labour, 1961.\(^3\) Absenteeism or "lost time" includes absence for full days, absence for half days or more and absence for less than a half day, the most important item in this last class being time lost through tardiness. The percentage of absenteeism for any given period may be obtained by dividing the total number of hours lost by the total number of hours that would have been worked, had all employees worked full time. It is seldom possible, however, to measure absenteeism so accurately because most attendance records give only the days and half days lost, not the total time lost because of tardiness.\(^4\) There are many interpretations attached to the term. Firstly, as observed previously, there are those who consider all types of absence irrespective of their reasons as absenteeism. This is too simple an explanation. Again, there are those who reflect on all unauthorized absence as absenteeism. Still another group holds that only when absence affects production, it should be considered as absenteeism. Yet another group extended further to include those cases where even if a person is present, his contribution may fall

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short of the expected. In terms of expected output, this is equivalent to a person being absent while present at the site. Thus, we find different types of criteria for determining absenteeism.⁵

2.2. Concept of Absenteeism

Personnel Management as a definite scientific discipline has come to the forefront only during the last few decades and is still in the swaddling clothes. The role assigned to personnel management varies from just maintain industrial peace within the industry to more comprehensive function of developing the personality of the individual worker and satisfying his urge for self expression from a mere shock observer to a third force in the industry. But all of them emphasize one fundamental aspect viz. promoting human relationship in industry.⁶

Any organization establishment depends on the worker's regular and efficient services. If the efficiency of company goes high, it results in better productivity and better quality leading to better profitability. The necessary requirement to achieve the maximization in all the above requirements is the habit if attending to work regularly.⁷ Absenteeism in Indian industries is not a new phenomenon. It is the manifestation of a decision by employees not to present themselves at their place of work, at a time when it is planned by the management that they should be in attendance.⁸

2.3. Nature of Absenteeism

Indian managers consider absenteeism to be their most serious discipline problem. For this reason, companies should calculate the cost of absenteeism periodically. Rao⁹ estimated the rate of absenteeism in India was quite high in relation to Western countries. What the managers and the researchers observed of interest was not only the frequency but also the ease with which the Indian worker absented himself, making absenteeism an intentional act. To achieve the effective control and management of absenteeism in the workplace, it is

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therefore important to define the concept well and to distinguish between the different types of absenteeism. This also enables companies to effectively monitor and manage the direct and indirect cost impact associated with absenteeism. Direct costs refer to items such as lost wages, increase temporary worker expenses, embedded overstaffing, and increase use of overtime. The indirect costs refer to items such as lost revenue productivity, lower employee morale, reduced customer satisfaction, and increased benefit administration expenses, increased health care cost. Both these costs have a direct impact on the profitability of the employer.

2.4. Meaning of Absenteeism

The Law Lexicon defined absent literally as “etymologically” it means not present. Employees’ presence at the work place during the schedule time is highly essential for the smooth running of the production process in particular and the organization in general. Despite the significance of presence, employees sometime fail to report to the work place during the scheduled time, which is known as “Absenteeism”. According to Webster’s Dictionary, “absenteeism is the practice of habit of being an ‘absentee’ and an ‘absentee’ is one who habitually stays away.”

2.5. Definitions of Absenteeism

The various definition of absenteeism is summed up in the following table:

Table 2.1: Definitions of Absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Definition of Absenteeism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hackett</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>The temporary cessation of work, for not less than one whole working day, on the initiative of the worker, when his presence is expected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.E. Moore</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>The practice of workers failing to report for work on some slight excuse or none at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakely</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Absenteeism is the ratio of the number of production man-days or shifts lost to the total number of production scheduled to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankalikar</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>“Unauthorized absence of the worker from his/her job”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Institute of Mgt.</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Defined absenteeism as “that kind of absence which a reasonable person, having regard to all the existing circumstances of the employee concerned, may regard as avoidable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerr Clark</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>“Absenteeism is due to lack of “commitment on the part of the workforce”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Bureau of Shimla and ASI</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>“Absenteeism is the total man shifts lost because of absence as percentage of total number of man shifts scheduled to work”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watkin and Dodd</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>When an employee is absent from his routine work due to some or other reason, it is called absenteeism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron A. Grove</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Absenteeism is any absence of work, regardless of the reason, occurring during the regular scheduled hours of a regular five day week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PremChand and Ramprakash</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>“Absenteeism refers to the tendency on the part of a worker to remain away from his scheduled work”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martocchio and Harrison</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>“Lack of an individual physical presence at given location and time when there is a social expectation for him or her to be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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21 British Institute of Management, Absence from work-recording and Analysis, 1955.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IBEC(^{28})</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Absenteeism is defined as a “Lost days which disrupt the work process and hinder the productivity capacity of the organisation. Absenteeism is the unscheduled disruption of the work process due to days lost as a result of sickness or any other non-statutory leave.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DuPlessis, Visser and Fourie(^{29})</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Absenteeism in the workplace is receiving increasing attention and organizations are taking a closer look at the costs of absenteeism as well as issues such as employee loyalty and commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avey, Patera, and West.(^{30})</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Absenteeism relates to not attending work for all or part of a given time period and can occur for a number of different reasons including sick leave, vacation, family medical leave, elder and child care, maternal/paternal leave, and other related situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.B. Gupta(^{31})</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Absenteeism is unauthorized, avoidable and willful absence from duty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cascio and Boudreau(^{32})</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>“absenteeism can be seen as the failure to report for work as scheduled, regardless of the reason”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Author Constructed based on various books and research papers of National and International repute

2.6. Types of Absenteeism

2.6.1. Absenteeism—Authorized and Unauthorized

When a worker absent from his scheduled work, his absence may be authorized or unauthorized. If an employee absents himself form work by takings permission from his superior and applying for leave such absenteeism is called authorized absenteeism. If an


employee absents himself from work without informing or taking permission and without applying for leave, such absenteeism is called unauthorized absenteeism. In both the cases the worker fails to report from his work but in some cases his absence is permitted and he is allowed to keep off the work, while in the other he absents himself on his own accord. The former not be a case of absenteeism, since it has been authorized by the management but the later case in which, the worker has willingly abstained from his usual work, is a clear case of absenteeism. In other words, the authorized absence of worker is called ‘leave’ and the unauthorized one is termed as ‘absenteeism’.  

2.6.2. Absenteeism - Culpable and Innocent

The worker has control over voluntary or culpable absences, and consist of “those absences which occur when the worker is able to work but for some reason decides to miss work” Culpable Absenteeism according to University of Western Ontario refers to lateness or absence problems for which the employee should be held responsible because the problems are within the employee’s power to address and correct. This means it refers to employees who are absent without authorization for reason which are within their control. For example a worker who falls sick, and if it cannot be proven, then he/she is guilty of culpable absenteeism. In a labour relation context this means that progressive discipline can be applied. This type of absenteeism is addressed through progressive discipline, while involuntary or innocent absences are absences that the worker has little control over and consists primarily of illnesses and injury. This type of absenteeism is retrospectively sanctioned, where permission is not obtained beforehand, but the reason for absence is acceptable and condoned when employees return to work. This type of absenteeism includes late arrival, transportation problems and even personal problems. In a labour relations context this means that it cannot be remedied or treated by disciplinary measures.

33 Akkupalli Anjanaiah, *OpCit*, p. 87.
2.7. Measurement of Absenteeism

Absenteeism has been measured in many ways, partly because the reasons for absence from work are manifold. A worker may stay away from work with and without authorization. Also different investigators as we have reviewed earlier include or exclude certain forms of absence depending upon their varying objectives. The Labour Bureau, Shimla, which attempts at finding out the total time lost due to human factor, does not regard authorization vacation, privilege leave, strike, lock out, lay off or regularized overstay of absentees. On the other hand, Annual Survey of Industries considers all kinds of vacation and leave as period when the worker is scheduled to work and while measuring the intensity of absenteeism.

The following indices have been used to measures incidence of absenteeism. 41 42 43

2.7.1. Absenteeism Rate

The absenteeism rate indicates the total man-days lost due to unauthorized absence as a percentage of total man-days scheduled to work. Absenteeism rates on different months have been calculated from the data collected from the records maintained by the company using the following formula. 44 Thus for calculating the rate of absenteeism, the number of persons scheduled to work and the number actually present is required. A calculation of absenteeism rate can be made in terms of man days e.g.,

\[
\text{Absenteeism Rate} = \frac{\text{Total man-days lost due to unauthorized absence during a month.}}{\text{Total man-days scheduled to be worked.}} \times 100
\]

The absenteeism rate in a particular industry can be hypothetically explained as follows

Number of employees in an industry \( = \) 400

Total number of working days in a year (per worker) \( = \) 295*

Mandays lost in a year \( = \) 1,00,000.

Absenteeism Rate \( = \) \( \frac{1,00,000}{1,00,000 + 1,80,000 \times 100} \) \( = \) 84.74%

Here, Total man days schedule to work is calculated as total workers in an industry multiplied by total working days in a year (295 \( \times \) 400 \( = \) 1, 18,000)

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44 M.E. Hoque Ibid, pp.78-79.

*In order to calculate the total number of working days, a total of seventy days and have deducted as total number of holidays in a year. These holidays include weekly off days and national holidays assuming seven days working in the unit.
2.7.2. Absence Rate

The absence rate expresses the total time lost due to both authorized and unauthorized absence as a percentage of the total man-days scheduled to work. To measure absence rate the following formula has been used,

\[
\text{Absence Rate} = \frac{\text{Total man-days lost due to authorized + unauthorized absence during a month}}{\text{Total man-days scheduled to be worked}} \times 100
\]

2.7.3. Incidence Rate

The incidence rate measures the number of absences per 100 workers in any given period. Whether a worker is absent an hour, a full week, or longer is irrelevant to this measure. The formula calculates the proportion of workers who were absent during the stated period for any of the reasons designated and for any length of time.

\[
\text{Incidence Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Worker Absent}}{\text{Total no. of workers employed}} \times 100
\]

2.7.4. Frequency Rate

According to Bhatia\textsuperscript{45} frequency rate may be treated as inception rate (spells). It reflects the incidence of absence and is usually expressed as the number of separate absences in a given period, irrespective of the length of absence. The frequency rate represents the average number of absence (spells) per worker in a given period. In the present study, frequency rates were calculated by using the following formula:

\[
\text{Frequency Rate} = \frac{\text{Total no. of time or spells in which the leave was availed}}{\text{Total man-days scheduled during that period}} \times 100
\]

Higher frequency rate indicates that the employee absents himself very frequently and vice versa.

2.7.5. Severity Rate

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

\[
\text{Severity Rate} = \frac{\text{Total no. of man days absent during a period}}{\text{Total no. of times absent during that period}} \times 100
\]

Higher severity rate indicates that the employee is absent for longer duration each time.

2.7.6. Combined Rate

Combined rates have been sometimes calculated to know total absenteeism by multiplying frequency rate and severity rate.

\[
\text{Combined Rate} = \text{Frequency Rate} \times \text{Severity Rate}
\]

2.8. Absenteeism: A Managerial Problem

Absenteeism is necessarily a managerial problem. The attitude of the management towards absenteeism is of utmost importance. All too often, one senses an atmosphere of resigned despair which does nothing to improve matters. Such an attitude can contribute little towards dealing effectively with the problem of absenteeism. However, in many organizations this problem is viewed as an unavoidable evil to live with and thus to be ignored. Some management considers absenteeism in their organizations as not so high even though a closer look may reveal to the contrary. In fact, relatively very little attention is paid to understand the quantum and nature of the problem and not to talk of how to tackle the same. There hardly awareness of the problem and its ill effects. There is neither any resolution determination to tackle the same. Managements often create and support absenteeism culture in organizations if and when they feel that it suits them. They expect employees to take sick leave when they are not sick. Absenteeism is so common that organizations ignore it, make overtime payments for it and employ additional daily rated workers than they need. Institution of ‘Badli workers’ has been indirectly encouraged in this process. A positive attitude of concern for absenteeism and to tackle it with determination is required.  

2.9. Absenteeism: An Organization’s Cultural Problem

Every organization has a culture. It has its own cultural norms that constitute the expected, supported, and accepted ways of behaving. These norms are mostly unwritten and tell employees the ways things really are. They influence everyone’s perceptions of the business from the chief executive to the newest worker. All organizational members contribute to norms by accepting and supporting them. But management’s behaviour has a special impact because of its strong modeling influence. Absenteeism has its own sublet but complex norms. These norms are supported by the culture outside the workplace and are shaped by the work.

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culture itself. They are often symptoms of larger organizational problems. Norms in the following areas influence employees either to work or stay home, thus helping create the absenteeism culture.

(a) Leadership Commitment
Managerial commitment to attendance goals and its views towards absenteeism do have an important impact on attendance. In one manufacturing company a top manager who demonstrated little commitment to sound attendance practices had one of the highest absenteeism rates in his organization.

(b) Leadership Modeling
What leaders say about absenteeism is often less important than the way their behaviour is viewed by other members of the organization. For example, top managers try to exhaust casual leave during the month of December of each year so that it does not lapse.

(c) Recognition and Compensation System
Employees frequently remark that there is no advantage in coming for work everyday because no one seems to care. An executive reduced absenteeism by 40% when letters were written to conscientious employees with copies sent to personal files at the end of each six-month period of perfect attendance.

(d) Supervisory Interpretation and Implementation of Polices
The personal link between employees and supervisors can be used in shaping a programme. One supervisor tried a positive approach to absenteeism by starting a follow-up of absent employees, expressing concern for the cause of their absence and offering help to them.

(e) Recruitment and Selection
Managers do not ask for information about attendance at the time of selection. Persons who have a high absence record in their academic life may continue to be absence prone in their working life. There may be a definite correlation in such cases. Thus care is not exercised in selection of new workers.

(f) Employee Orientation and Training
Attendance norms are normally established during the initial period in service. In a company with low absenteeism, the importance of good attendance and exposure to high-attendance employees were stressed during orientations for new employees.

(g) Performance Appraisal
It is observed that performance appraisal procedures can boost good attendance practices. If attendance rates make a difference in promotions, and appraisal of performance and if
employees are aware that this information is a part of ongoing performance appraisals, attendance patterns are affected.

(h) Health Factors
The connection between health and absenteeism is often looked with little attention being paid to alcoholism, and other stress-related factors. A supervisor checking on the absenteeism of one employee found it was caused by a drinking problem, and helped that person enter a counseling programme for problem drinkers.

(i) Job Satisfaction
Boredom on the job is frequently ignored; little attention is paid to making the job more interesting or explaining its importance within the organization framework. A group of employees with a high absenteeism record improved attendance when the supervisors paid attention to job enrichment by explaining the importance of the job in the company’s programme. As such, several negative norms are found in our absenteeism culture.

2.10. Causational Models of Absenteeism
According to Steers, Porter and Bigley\textsuperscript{47} absenteeism theories can be categorized into three types of explanatory models: pain-avoidance models, in which absence behaviour is viewed as a flight from negative work experiences; adjustment-to-work models, in which absence is seen as resulting largely from employee responses to changes in job conditions leading to a renegotiation of the psychological contract; and decision models, in which absence behaviour is viewed primarily as a rational decision to attain valued outcomes. In addition, a final category called ‘integrated models’ can be identified that attempt to go beyond narrow sets of parameters and offer a more complex view of the causes of absenteeism.

2.10.1. Pain Avoidance Models
The underlying assumption of the pain-avoidance models is that job dissatisfaction (or negative job attitudes in general) represents the primary cause of absenteeism. The opinion was ventured that dissatisfied workers would be absent more if their work dissatisfaction was symptomatic of being in a punishing situation. Several meta-analyses of the absence-job satisfaction relationship tend to support the conclusions that the pain avoidance model is overly simplistic.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{48} R.M. Steers ibid, p.408.
2.10.2. Adjustment to Work Models

In adjustment-to-work models absence from work is viewed as a consequence of organisational socialization and other adaptive processes in response to job demands. According to a theory developed by Hill and Trist in 1953, absence is the withdrawal from the stress of work situations. Thus, individuals experiencing conflicts of satisfactions and obligations tend to express them through labour turnover, accidents, and unsanctioned absences (absences without formal permission). The model also focuses on the notion of social exchange rather than individual motivations. Moreover, the amount of absences taken is influenced by the prevailing absence culture. Variations in absence cultures across organisations or groups are predicted to arise from the degree of salience of the culture and the level of trust inherent in the psychological contract. The salience of the culture refers to the degree of distinctiveness of beliefs about absence, assumptions underlying employment, and views toward self-control (the degree to which all members of a group share similar or divergent beliefs about absenteeism). The level of trust refers to whether the tasks surrounding one’s job are high or low in discretion (the amount of discretion provided employees by their management). The four types of absence cultures are described in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: A Typology of Organizational Absence Cultures
Cultural salience (Horizontal Integration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Trust</th>
<th>Low Salience</th>
<th>High Salience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>Type 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Morally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deviant</td>
<td>Constructive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>absence</td>
<td>absence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Trust</th>
<th>Low Salience</th>
<th>High Salience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td>Type 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fragmented</td>
<td>Conflictual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calculative</td>
<td>Defiant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>absence</td>
<td>absence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Steers, Porter and Bigley, (1996)

An absence cultures can influence attendance motivation and subsequent attendance in at least three ways. First, where specific norms exist regarding the appropriate level of absence,
an individual's attendance motivation level often reflect these norms. Secondly, in the case where no specific norms exist, an individual's behaviour can be influenced by his or her observations of the absence behaviour of others and the consequences of such behaviour. Finally, absence cultures can moderate the relationship between individual values and attitudes and subsequent attendance motivation.\(^{51}\)

### 2.10.3. Decision Models

Two primary streams of influence have contributed to the development of decision models of absence. These are the rational decision models provided by economists and sociologists and the expectancy-valuation framework posited by organizational psychologists. What these groups have in common is that they view absence behaviour as largely rational in nature and determined by the individual's subjective evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with absence and its

*Figure 2.2: A Process Model of Major Influences on Employee Attendance*

Source: Steers and Rhodes, (1978)

alternative. The model of Steers and Rhodes attempts to examine in a systematic and comprehensive fashion the various influences on employee attendance behaviour; see figure 2.2. The basic premise of this model is that an employee’s attendance is largely a function of two important variables:

- an employee’s motivation to attend and
- an employee’s ability to attend.

The theory of reasoned action postulates that intentions to be absent are the most immediate prediction of absence occurrences. This theory supports the first variable of the Steers and Rhodes model relating to an employee’s motivation to attend.

The Job Situation itself is the first influence on attendance to be discussed. The job situation consists of those variables that characterize the nature of the job and the surrounding work environment. These influences are similar to those known as organizational factors which include amongst others the size of the workgroup and organisation, shift work and the nature or supervision. Job satisfaction is seen as an attitudinal factor impacting on absenteeism. The second factor influencing employee attendance is the employee’s values and job expectations.

The third factor affecting absence is pressure to attend and covers the following areas:

- economic and market conditions
- incentive or reward systems
- work groups norms
- personal work ethic
- organizational commitment

The study of Steers and Rhodes’s model suggests that more effective results may be achieved through more positive reward systems than through punishment. The next factor to consider is the employee’s ability to attend. Three unavoidable situations or limitations on employees’ attendance are identified:

- illness and accidents
- family responsibilities
- transportation problems

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52 R. M. Steers ibid, p.413.
Personal characteristics may also be relevant as a factor which influences absence patterns. Issues such as education level, tenure, age, sex and family size should be considered. These characteristics are supported by considerable research and are also known as personal factors. The model is of a cyclical nature and is a dynamic one, with employee attendance or absenteeism often leading to changes in the job situation that in turn influence subsequent attendance motivation. The Steers and Rhodes model has proved to be difficult, if not impossible, to test in its entirety although it has generated substantial research interest.

2.10.4. Integrated Model of Attendance

The following developments from recent literature and in an effort to delineate more clearly the major factors influencing absenteeism, a new integrated model of employee attendance was built. The proposed model is designed to be integrative in that it incorporates new empirical and theoretical developments, and because it includes both preventable and unavoidable absence. Although this model is similar to the original formulation by Steers and Rhodes in focusing on the individual employee’s decision to attend, it differs in its increased attention to absence culture, organizational practices, societal context, and perceived ability to attend.

The integrated model of employee attendance can be described in three parts:

- major influences on attendance motivation
- major influences on perceived ability to attend and actual attendance; and
- the role of societal context and reciprocal relationships.

2.11. Magnitude of Absenteeism

Absenteeism is a universal problem in industry. It becomes a problem when it exceeds 10% as it disturbs the production schedules and creates many problems. Personnel researchers have found that generally a small percentage of employees (15%) account for a large percentage of absenteeism (70%). Such employees are likely to have low interest in their tasks and to be physically below par.  

In some occupations, it has touched to the abnormal level of 40% owing to some specific reasons. The extent of absenteeism may differ from industry to industry, place to place and occupation to occupation. It may also differ according to the make-up of the workforce. Absenteeism may be extensive in a particular department of an industry or a concern.

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According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) absence survey, Employee Absence 2004: a survey of management policy and practice, absence levels are higher than ever being noted, much of it is short-term, stress is rampant and General Practitioners are increasingly over eager to sign off malingerers.\textsuperscript{\textcopyright 57} The effects of excessive absenteeism of all types are not limited to a single work group or division. In a still turbulent business environment where management is charged to do more with less, the potential effects of excessive employee absence on operational performance are dramatic. There have been many systematic studies of absenteeism in western industrialized countries. In some of these studies it has been found that absenteeism among the younger workmen is extensive on Mondays i.e., after the week end, particularly among unmarried men who, after a late night stay on Sunday, perhaps with girlfriends, find it difficult to get up and come on time and concentrate on work; and it is the lowest on pay day. In the USA, it has been observed that curiously enough, the extent of absenteeism is greater among youngsters than among the older employees, greater among women than men. Young men are generally found to absent for a variety of reasons, including restlessness and a sense of irresponsibility. Consider these recent absence-related statistics of Corporate America.\textsuperscript{\textcopyright 58}

- Employers spent an average of 15\% of payroll on absence in 2002, up from 14.3\% in 2000.
- For a 5000 employee company with average base pay of $40,000, absence costs $30 million a year.
- Every day, 3-6\% of any given workforce is absent due to unscheduled issues or disability claims.
- To compensate for these unanticipated, unscheduled absences, companies commonly overstaff by 10-20 percent.
- Employers set aside 4.4\% of their total budget to pay for absenteeism.
- Companies with poor/fair morale set aside an even higher figure to pay for absenteeism, 5.3\% of their total budget.

\section*{2.12. Causes of Absenteeism}

Identification of the factors associated with absenteeism can help in guiding the management’s policy in controlling and preventing absenteeism. It is generally not to easy to


list out the specific or more precisely the real causative factors contributing to absence behaviour of workers. This is due to the fact that absenteeism is really not an isolated phenomenon. Absentee behaviour is only a symptom of rather complex disease caused by external environmental, organizational, attitudinal and personal factors. The causes differ in different circumstances.

The inquest for causes of absenteeism can be at two levels. First, one can examine it at the macro level i.e., country or national basis. Secondly its causes can usefully be studied at the micro level i.e., in any one organisation (plant) or industry. By studying absenteeism at different levels, e.g. at the plant level and the national level, it may be possible to identify the different sets of causes that contribute to it under different conditions.

A model for causative factors of absenteeism at macro and micro levels has been developed. This model is shown in following Table 2.2. Generally the following reasons are accountable for absenteeism at work.

(a) Lack of ‘commitment’ of workers: Various researchers have mentioned the transition from rural to urban life as painful, and this affects the commitment of the worker. They argue that industrial workers in India are ‘either not commuted’ or only ‘partly committed’ to industrial work. Workers have not fully severed their connections with land and their rural background. However, this hypothesis is not favored by others. Most of the recent studies have revealed that this is not true and workers’ immediate background is generally urban. The new traditional generation of workers largely has an urban background with only a few sentimental ties with the village. Worker regards his urban job as a permanent one. The Indian worker is committed, in the sense that his attitude towards his urban job as a positive one and he does not think of it as a mere stop-gap.

(b) Calculation by employee of economic consequences of absence: A worker basically and normally takes up a job to work and be able to earn livelihood for himself and his family. There is thus a selfish interest he is producing something for his employer. Logically, therefore, it can be seen that as long as this ‘self interest’ remains alive in him, he shall normally avoid absenting himself from work. And the moment he loses his ‘self-interest’, he is bound to be disinterested in his job and as a result he would start being absent.

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60 S.K. Bhatia, _OpCIt_, p. 33.
Table 2.2: Model for Causative factors of Absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MACRO LEVEL</th>
<th>MICRO LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Lack of “Commitment”</td>
<td>Organizational Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Calculation by employee of economic</td>
<td>(a) Managerial Style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consequences of absence.</td>
<td>(b) Technological Environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Rural bias and lack of adjustment to</td>
<td>Personal Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industrial way of life.</td>
<td>(a) Individual Attitudes, Factual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Behaviour pattern of workers affected by</td>
<td>circumstances and compulsion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social, cultural and economic background.</td>
<td>(b) External Factors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(c) Rural bias and non-adjustment to industrial way of life: It has generally been argued that as a major part of the industrial labour comes from the rural areas, they are not able to adjust to the industrial way of working and life in urban areas.

(d) Nature of work: When work is tough and monotonous in nature, the workers get tired physically and mentally. So they frequently remain absent without informing to the employer.

(e) Poor working conditions: Poor working conditions generally affect the ‘workers’ health adversely. They are thus tired of working-environment and often remain away from work without any notice to employer.

(f) Absence of requisite leave arrangement: Every worker requires at least fifteen to twenty days leave in a year for his personal work. The employer should provide for such leave for all workers. However, in many factories workers are not given leave as and when required. Workers therefore under compulsion remain absent without any intimation to the employer. Thus, absence of requisite leave arrangement leads to labour absenteeism.

(g) Accidents: Industrial accidents and occupational diseases bring about absenteeism depending upon the nature of the process and machinery used. Accidents make the workers incapable of work for some days. They also create mental problem.

(h) Irregular transport facilities: Many factories are located away from the city limits. Naturally, workers have to travel long distances. In case of any disturbance in the transport

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system, workers are unable to reach their place of work at the proper time and they have to remain absent. Thus transport difficulties lead to absenteeism.

(i) Alcoholism and gambling habits: A number of workers in factories are used to drinking and gambling and other habits. Such workers are unable to attend duties regularly due to such habits. This leads to absenteeism particularly among the male workers.

(j) Lack of interest: Lack of interest and lack of feeling of responsibility and being worthwhile are also fundamental causes of absenteeism. Attitudes of mind caused by environmental and sociological factors may condition some to develop a feeling of irresponsibility about going to work.

(k) Poor production and material control: Poor production and material control can also result in absenteeism. Unless the flow of work between departments is balanced and continuous, workers may stay away from their jobs because they lose their interest in their work and also lose the feeling of the importance of being dependable.

(l) Attention towards better paid jobs: Workers often being not satisfied with wage they get in the factories they are currently employed in are potentially acted to engage themselves, quite now and then, in some such jobs which may better paid elsewhere.

(m) Women in industry: Generally, women have an almost uniformly higher rate of absenteeism than men. This is caused not only by their greater susceptibility to illness but also by the pressure of home ties which often compel them to be absent from or tardy at their work. This is, of course, especially true of married women.

(n) Behaviour pattern of workers affected by social, cultural and economic background: It has been emphasized that the real cause of absenteeism is the behaviour manifestation of the workforce which is affected by their thoughts and feelings originated from rural way of life. Social festivals and religious ceremonies contribute to absenteeism family practices, relationships and value system of the workers add to absenteeism. This approach holds that behavioral pattern of the workers are the root cause rather than industrialization. Several empirical studies on micro level in India have been undertaken to find out the causes which have contributed to a high percentage of absenteeism. Based on these studies a model for causative factors of absenteeism at plant level is shown in table 2.3.
Table 2.3: Model for Causative factors of Absenteeism at Micro Level

(a) Managerial Style
- Quality and Style of Supervision
- Selection, Induction and Placement
- Recognition, Communication and Morale.
- Job Satisfaction and Challenges
- Wages and Incentives
- Overtime
- Leave Rules and Procedures
- Role of Unions

(b) Technological Factors
- Condition of Work and Hours of Work
- Accidents
- Occupational disease and Medical care.
- Recreational Facilities
- Work Group

(c) Personal Factors
- Marital Harmony
- Family Size and Responsibilities
- Work Orientation, Leisure Orientation
- Bad Habits
- Emotional Health
- Community Obligations
- Educational Level
- Standard of Living
- Transport
- Housing
- Indebtness

(d) External Factors
- Level of Unemployment.
- Social, Religious and Cultural Aspects.
- Time of the year and Day of the work.
- Climatic and related conditions.
- Recreational facilities(local)
- Transport facilities(local)
- Housing


According to Dr. K.N. Vaid chronic absentees can be divided into five categories.\(^{64}\)

- Entrepreneurs
- Status-seekers
- Epicureans
- Family-oriented
- Sick and the old

The entrepreneurs are those absentees who consider their jobs to be very small for their total interests. They are simultaneously engaged in several economic and social activities. The motive force behind all such activities is the desire for more money, status, power, and the satisfaction arising out of achievement and social recognition. Dissatisfied with the status quo, and gifted with an energetic spirit and originality of thoughts, they are ever ready to assume risks, undertake the task of management and co-ordination of processes that are necessary for the improvement of the existing conditions.

The status-seeking absentees are those who enjoy or perceive a higher ascribed social status and are keen on maintaining it. The shop floor status achieved by them is much lower than the one they enjoy outside. The discrepancy between the ascribed and the achieved status is the primary cause of deviant work behavior. Attitudinally, they draw satisfaction from their identification with need-oriented social groups. Their goal is to remain or to become and appear as men of status. They make up for the loss of status arising from working in a mill by intensifying activities which help them to regain it. Work, job and money are no doubt important for them; but they are significant only to the extent to which they help them to achieve their goal.

The epicureans are disinclined to undertake activities which call for initiative, responsibility, discipline and physical discomfort. They desire money, status and power but are unwilling to work for their achievement. The discrepancy between their aspirations and their concomitant abilities invariably result in belly-aches, withdrawal or make believe. Their intrinsic dislike of work and the pressure of meeting their pecuniary needs make for an ambivalent attitude towards their jobs. They strive to organize their pecuniary activities and social roles in a manner which brings them unavoidable trouble. Work is frustrating experience and they seek to avoid it to the maximum possible extent.

The family-oriented become chronic absentees because of their over-identification with family affairs. The lack of balance between family involvement and job responsibility is the principal cause of their deviant work behavior. Chronic illness of one or other family member, litigation, delinquency, working wife etc., impel them to be absent from work.

The sick and the old type remain absent from work by reasons of ill health, weak constitution, chronic disease(s) or old age.
The workers remain absent for various reasons of which some may be genuine but others are not so. Moreover, the Labour Investigation Committee (1946) pointed out the following causes of absenteeism:

(i) **Sickness and low vitality**: The committee pointed out that sickness is responsible for a considerable part of absenteeism at most places. Epidemics too sometimes are responsible for absenteeism. The low vitality of the Indian workers makes them an easy prey to such epidemics and bad housing and poor sanitary conditions of living aggravate the trouble. The sickness rate is also affected by the age and sex of the workers. It has been noticed that the rate of absenteeism among the female workers is higher than their male counterparts. Absenteeism is also higher in tough and cumbersome jobs as compared to light and simple jobs.

(ii) **Social and religious functions**: It has been noticed that workers become absent from their duty on occasions of social and religious functions. Since workers like to join their relatives on such occasions; hence, they go to their places and often do not come back timely.

(iii) **After pay day**: The Labour Investigation Committee also noted that, the level of absenteeism is comparatively high immediately after the pay day, when the workers either feel like having a ‘good time’, or in some cases spend their time to make purchases for their family.

In fact, there can be many more causes of absence. A worker may remain absent because another person offered him temporary work on attractive remuneration where the advantages out-weighed the disadvantages. It has been noticed that the cooks and waiters of the hotels sometimes are tipped handsome remunerations for working in the private parties and functions. A worker may also like to remain absent on account of the fear of his superior or when he is misfit for the assignment offered/given to him. Some employers maintain distance between themselves and the workers. Such attitude of maintaining distance often creates more problems than what can be imagined. It also leads to lack of understanding of workers’ abilities, competence and their expectations which are often ignored by the employers. The unfair treatment of workers, favoritism and indiscreet use of their own power can immensely impair the industrial relations besides creating frustration in them and such attitude on the part of an employer may result in absenteeism of workers. The real motive behind the absenteeism is, therefore, discontentment among the workers due to insecurity of service,

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inadequate wages and meager chances of earning more and more wages. Vague and
indecisive promotion policy of the employers also results in absenteeism of workers.
A good number of senior workers often remain punctual, obedient, and loyal and try to render
better service with a hope that their Kiths and Kins, especially son(s) have been absorbed in
the organization on a respectable post. When their (such) dreams do not come true some of
them in some cases start turning absent at least for sometime.66
In order to identify the causes and extent of absenteeism, proper record should be kept in
every department for various causes of absenteeism by such categorizations as age, sex, days
of the week and classes of jobs.67 It should be noted that it is almost impossible to give a list
of exact reasons and percentage. The evaluator(s) of the personnel programme should classify
the data relating to absenteeism and try to analyze the various causes of absenteeism.

2.13. Consequences of Absenteeism

While there are probably hundreds of studies examining the determinants of absenteeism,
there several studies that directly examine the consequences of absenteeism on other criteria
such as productivity, safety and so on.

The rationale for studying the consequences of absenteeism should be obvious. First, there
are very few empirical studies tracing the effect of absenteeism on other criterion variables,
yet there are beliefs often articulated by managers on the dysfunctional effect of absenteeism
on productivity and costs. Does absenteeism really reduce productivity, and if so, under what
conditions? Secondly, the literature in organizational psychology has a tendency to look into
certain single-directional relationships, such as effect-behaviour (for example job
satisfaction- absenteeism) and not explore reciprocal effects, such as behaviour-affect or
behaviour- behaviour relationships. Thirdly, it is probably fair to say that most studies on
absenteeism imply that it is something bad that should be reduced. These analyses of the
consequences of absenteeism highlighted the positive benefits and thus ensure a more
balanced cost-benefit analysis of absenteeism. Increasing rate of absenteeism adds
considerably to the cost of industry. The problem of absenteeism is intimately linked to the
question of production and dislocation of work it causes. Besides the losses of capital,
absenteeism also adversely affects production, productivity, profits, investments and above

all absentee workers and their union. The losses caused by absenteeism can be put briefly as

2.13.1. Increased Cost to the Industry

Absenteeism has many cost-implications. It results in loss of man-power a day lost as a resource lost. Labour cost is increased by employing additional labour and providing of leave reserve etc.

Overtime payment may become necessary for the worker who is doing the job for the missing worker. There is likelihood of damage to be caused to machinery and equipment by badli workers, and resultant sub-standard production. As machines remain idle in highly capital intensive industries, it results in low degree of capital utilization. Absenteeism also results in increase in direct overheads such as training of employees in other trades, clerical efforts in recording absences, increased cost of administration in finding substitutes etc. Man-power planning is rendered impossible by an uncertain work force. It causes an additional strain on those who are present.

The absenteeism calls for more help from supervisors, peers and increased inspection costs. The loss in terms of difference between potential and actual profits may be considerable.

2.13.2. Losses to Workers

Absenteeism also results in losses to workers e.g. financial loss in terms of reduced wages, bonus, lesser incentive payment and consequent hardship to the families of employees, loss in skill and efficiency of the absenteeism worker. To habitual absentees, it causes general moral degeneration. Stability of work performance at high pace is affected. Absenteeism breeds further absenteeism, instability and frittering away of energy. The effect of habitual absentees on the average attendance and general discipline is very bad.

In general, any absence weakens the company's goals and productivity. The loss due to absenteeism is two-fold. To start with there is a distinct loss to workers because the irregularity in attendance reduces their income when no work no pay is the general rule. On the other hand, the loss to the employers is still greater as both discipline and efficiency suffer and production goes down. Moreover, either one additional complement has to be maintained through the year to meet the emergency or the industries have to depend solely on workers who present themselves at the gates and who are generally not up to mark. The maintenance of extra complement of workers leads to serious complications and evils. Hence, absenteeism is an evil both for the employers and the workers as well.
2.13.3. Losses in Production/Productivity

There are few studies on the impact of absenteeism on productivity. We have identified four studies,\textsuperscript{68} Katz, Kochan, and Weber, and Katz. Kotz,\textsuperscript{69} Kochan and Gobeille, have developed data sets on manufacturing plants that include a variety of working life indicators, and organizational effectiveness indicators over a 10 years period. Measures of quality and direct labour efficiency are available and can be considered productivity measures. The absence measure is calculated as a rate per year at the plant level. It includes days absent, excluding contract days off, over scheduled working days.

Two different data sets are used in their research program, both drawn from the same company. They differ in number of plants and measures that are available. In their first data set, regression analysis were run on the influence of variables such as total hours worked, grievance rate, absenteeism rate, quality of working life rating, and plant dummies, on quality and efficiency. A positive significant co-efficient appeared for absenteeism in respect to quality, and a non-significant relationship appeared for direct labour efficiency. In the second data set, absenteeism was significantly positively related to quality and negatively related to labour efficiency. The researcher explain the positive relationship between absenteeism and quality by noting (1) there was a general increase in both variables over the time of the study, and (2) Cross-sectionally for any given year, the correlation between absenteeism and quality was negative but not significant.

Moch and Fitzgibbons\textsuperscript{70} also investigated the absenteeism, quality and quantity relationships. Their research is directly focused on the consequences of absenteeism on production. Their basic hypothesis is that absenteeism and plant-level efficiency are negatively associated when (1) production processes are not highly automated, (2) those who are absent are central to the production process, and (3) absences cannot be anticipated. Data for this study were gathered from a manufacturing plant and cover two years period.

Results from this study are not completely clear. However, there is some evidence that absenteeism of more central people (For example, maintenance personnel) has negative impacts on productivity and that has automated production is more vulnerable to the negative

\textsuperscript{68} H.C.Katz, et al., 'Assessing the Effects of Industrial Relations and Quality of Working Life Efforts on Organizational Effectiveness', Unpublished paper, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1982.


\textsuperscript{70} M.K. Moch and D.E. Fitzgibbons, 'Automation, employee centrality in the production process, the extent to which absence can be anticipated, and the relationship between absenteeism and operating efficiency: An empirical assessment', University of Texas, Dallas, 1982.
effects of absenteeism. A study of Carneigie and Mellon\textsuperscript{71} in a coal project also examined the impact of absenteeism on production. Staw and Oldha\textsuperscript{72} suggest that the absenteeism-performance relationship may be positive and negative, very low attendance rates may be technically dysfunctional and reduce job performance. Absenteeism, on the other hand may serve as a maintenance function and help the worker deal with with job stress, in turn increasing job performance. They test this dual effect of absenteeism by examining between absenteeism and performance for those people likely to be experiencing stress on the job and for those that were not. For those people who are low in growth satisfaction and probably experiencing more stress at work, the relationship between total absenteeism and real performance was positive. No relationship between absenteeism and performance appeared for those high in growth satisfaction. While this finding appears contrary to the results of other studies, it should be noted that the other studies used record data (vs. self-report data on production) and used more detailed analytical procedures to separate out the consequences of absenteeism vs. other variables.

The organisation is to understand the effect of absenteeism on other variables. There is a need to determine or organize the consequences of absenteeism in a systematic manner. Strategy is to borrow the constituency approach from the organizational effectiveness literature and organize the possible consequences of absenteeism by constituency. The possible constituency includes the individual who is absent, Individual co-workers, the work group, the organization, the union, other social organizations, such as the family, and aggregate social units, such as the community and society.\textsuperscript{73} To each of these constituencies, absenteeism may generate positive or negative consequences. The importance of this shows that: (1) there are many consequences of absenteeism; (2) these consequences are both positive and negative; and (3) what may be a positive consequence to one constituency may be a negative to another. This section borrows and extends a listing of consequences developed by Goodman and Atkin.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} B.M. Staw, and G.R. Oldha, 'Reconsidering in dependent variables: A critique and empirical study', \textit{Academy of Journal}, vol.21, no.4, 1978, pp.539-599.
Table 2.4: Consequences of Absenteeism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>• Reduction of job related stress.</td>
<td>• Loss of pay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting of non-work-role obligations.</td>
<td>• Discipline, formal and informal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Benefit from compensatory non work activities</td>
<td>• Increased accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Compliance with norms to be absent</td>
<td>• Altered job perception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Worker</td>
<td>• Job variety.</td>
<td>• Increased work load.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skill development</td>
<td>• Undesired overtime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Overtime pay.</td>
<td>• Increased accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Conflict with absent worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work group</td>
<td>• Crew knowledge of multiple jobs.</td>
<td>• Increased coordination problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater crew flexibility in responding to absenteeism and to production problems.</td>
<td>• Decreased productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>• Greater job knowledge base in work force.</td>
<td>• Increased accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>• Greater labor-force flexibility.</td>
<td>• Decreased productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• More grievances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased accidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Officers</td>
<td>• Articulated and strengthened power position.</td>
<td>• Weakened power position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased solidarity among members.</td>
<td>• Increased costs in processing grievances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>• Opportunity to deal with health or illness problems.</td>
<td>• Fewer earnings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Opportunity to manage marital problems.</td>
<td>• Decline in work reputation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Opportunity to manage child problems.</td>
<td>• Aggravated marriage and child problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintenance of spouse’s earnings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal</td>
<td>• Reduction of job stress and mental health problems.</td>
<td>• Loss Productivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reduction of marital-related problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participation in community political processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 lists positive and negative consequences of absenteeism by constituency. The list is meant to be representative, not comprehensive. The different outcomes listed in this table may or may not be relevant to any given situation. The relevance of any of these outcomes would depend upon individual characteristics, the structure of the job, and the organization of work. The table acknowledges that there may be a jagged effect between absence and its variables. For example, the effect of absence on productivity may occur on the day of the absence or several days later.

The positive consequences of absenteeism, from the individual viewpoint, seem relatively straightforward and come from a variety of sources. There is some research that indirectly indicates that absenteeism is a form of withdrawal from job-stress situations (Staw and Oldham). If absence from work reduces stress, then it can be functional for the individual. In addition, much of our life is concerned with fulfilling such central non work-related roles, as the parent role (when taking care of a sick child) or the marital role (when reducing marital stress). The valence and utility for performing many of these non work-role activities is likely to be strong (Naylor, Pritchard, and Ilgen). Completing activities, which may require being absent from work, leads to positive benefits for the individual. Not all non work activities can be described easily in role terms. Some non work activities are inherently rewarding (for example, a hobby, fishing) and at times be elected over work activities. In most organizations, norms exist that govern absenteeism behaviour. In some organizations, in formal norms exist that legitimate certain days of absence although these are scheduled workdays (for example, beginning of deer season). Taking these days off may be a way to avoid social sanctions; thus, absence may lead to a beneficial consequence.

The negative consequences of absenteeism to the individual are fairly straightforward. They may include loss of pay and disciplinary action for the individual. Accidents may occur to the individual when he or she returns to a less familiar work situation. A less job obvious negative consequence, which has been suggested by Johns and Nicholson and Mowday, Porter, and Steers, concerns the process of altered job perceptions. When confronted with an absence, even the employee may develop a justification for explaining the absence. The reason given may or may not correspond to why the employee was absent. If, over time, the justification or reason is rehearsed over other absence events and not controverted by any

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other information, it would expect that justification to become a permanent part of the individual’s belief system. In the case of absenteeism, it would be expect that, people attribute the cause more to problems in their environment, such as a bad job, bad supervisor, and so on. So, to the extent that absenteeism leads to negative beliefs about the job or job environment that are not based on the reality of the situation, it would say that absenteeism indirectly creates negative consequences for the individual.

Positive and negative consequences fall to the co-worker. The absence of a worker may give co-workers a new opportunity to work on a different job, which would enhance job variety and skill development. In addition, if the work area is understaffed, there may be opportunities for overtime pay.

On the negative side, the co-worker may have to do additional work, which is perceived as a burden, not a benefit. Overtime may be viewed as negative when it interferes with non work responsibilities. Accidents can occur when the co-worker is confronted with an unfamiliar machine or set of job activities. If any of the above negative consequences occur, they are likely to lead to conflict with the absent worker on his/her return. In addition, if the co-worker observes high absenteeism in the work group, an inferential process may be evoked to explain this absenteeism. If, as discussed earlier, the attributions are made about negative environmental conditions, the co-worker might develop negative beliefs about the work environment although he/she is not absent.

Some of the positive and negative consequences for the work group are the same consequences as for the co-worker. Absenteeism is likely to create job switching within the group, which leads to a broader knowledge base among the work group. This knowledge base facilitates a more effective response to future absenteeism and day-to-day production problems. If job switching leads to a more flexible and productive group (Goodman79 and absenteeism facilitates job switching; absenteeism may have positive benefits for the work group.

On the negative side, replacing the absent worker, from either within or outside of the group, leads to increased coordination problems. Productivity may decline in the short run, if the replacement worker is less skilled than the absent worker. In the area of productivity, there are some conflicting claims about consequences, which can be reconciled by noting the timing of their impact. If a less skilled worker replaces the absent worker, productivity should immediately decrease. If absenteeism increases the job knowledge of group members and,

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hence, their flexibility, in the long run we expect this type of group to be more productive than the crew where each member can perform only his/her job. If absenteeism leads to a replacement that is unfamiliar with the job, an accident is more likely in an interdependent group. As group members become more familiar with other jobs, the effects of absenteeism on accidents have been less pronounced.

The positive and negative consequences for the organization are parallel as those for the work group. Some of the differences at this level include the costs of absenteeism. Hiring, training, and paying additional workers and maintaining records for, administering, and enforcing an absenteeism program all represent costs to management of the organization. A variety of different arrangements or implicit policies develop with different classes of workers. The existence of absenteeism and any forms of absenteeism control policy are likely to generate grievances. Grievances, at least for the management, represent an additional cost of doing business.

Absenteism can have consequences for the union and its officers. Absenteeism can be a tool for strengthening the power of the union with respect to management. Encouraging absenteeism (for example, ‘blue flu’) can be used to increase management’s costs and to extract gains for the union leadership and/or members. To the extent to which the union leadership is successful, it is expected to increased solidarity among the members. In this specific example absenteeism does not cause increased solidarity. Rather, it creates a condition that may facilitate the development of solidarity.

A related scenario is one where an increase in absences is likely to create more grievances. To the extent to which the union wins the grievances, leader power is enhanced, and member solidarity may increase.

Absenteism also has negative consequences for the union. To the extent to which absences lead to grievances (Katz, Kochan, and Weber)\textsuperscript{80} (Katz, Kochan, and Gobeille),\textsuperscript{81} costs in processing these grievances represent a negative consequence for the union. Also, if the union is unsuccessful in processing absence-related grievances, the power of the leadership is likely to decrease, as may the solidarity among members.

The constituencies related to absenteeism should not be solely work related. The family is another unit of social analysis that is affected by absenteeism. Absenteeism may be functional for the family in dealing with health, marital, or child-related problems. If incomes are rising, absenteeism may represent a way to consume positive leisure activities together. In the case

of dual wage earners, absenteeism by one of the partners may be necessary to ensure the other spouse's job and earnings.

On the negative side, absenteeism can lower earnings. Also, frequent absenteeism could lead to a poor work reputation, which may negatively reflect on family members. In some cases, absenteeism could aggravate marital and other family relations. If the absent worker interferes with the daily household routine, conflict may result.

The most common reference to the societal-level analysis is the cost of absenteeism (Steers and Rhodes). Typically, one figure out an average cost per absence and multiplies this by the number of days lost per year. The problem with this analysis is that it really is drawn from the organizational perspective, not the national or societal perspective.

For example, if absenteeism reduces job stress and mental-health problems, then there are certain cost savings to society in the sense of needing fewer mental health facilities. If absenteeism helps in minimizing marital problems, then it has certain benefits to society. While we do not have any evidence to show that increasing absenteeism reduces the societal costs for dealing with divorces, it is important in the total cost benefit analysis to reflect these savings and not to think about costs solely from the management perspective. Similarly, absenteeism may reduce unemployment, which would affect the societal-level calculation of the costs and benefits of absenteeism. It is also pointed out in Table 2.4 that absenteeism, particularly for workers on shift work, may provide a means for participating in community and political processes—a less quantifiable benefit to society. Following conclusions are drawn in respect with the consequences of absenteeism.

- There are many possible consequences of absenteeism.
- The consequences are both positive and negative.
- Positive consequences come from many sources - avoidance of stress, fulfillment of role obligation, rewards from work and non work activity, greater skills and flexibility, more power, and so on.
- Negative consequences come from many sources - losses of rewards, disciplinary action, accidents, greater work stress, lower productivity, greater costs, and so on.
- Both negative and positive consequences may exist simultaneously.
- Consequences to any of the constituencies may vary over time.

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• Benefits to one constituency may represent negative consequences to another constituency.
• A constituency member may be unaware of the costs and benefits of absenteeism for other constituency members.

The above studies seem to be inconclusive on this aspect. First it is amazing that there are so few studies about this relationship. Secondly, the findings tend to support a negative relationship, but there are a lot of non-findings (i.e., hypotheses not supported). Thirdly, the idea of positive impact of absenteeism on production is intriguing.

There is a need to look at daily absenteeism and production, controlling for other variables. Paul S. Goodman and Atkin opine that stress would develop overtime leading to a decline in performance. An absence event should reduce tension, and performance should be high on subsequent days, declining again over time, unless one can test this cycle of events, it has been difficult to support the positive effect of absenteeism on production.

2.14. Managing Absenteeism in General

Seligman observes, “Absenteeism is a serious problem in enterprise because it involves heavy expenses. Either worker must be held in reserve to take the place of the absentee or the overhead cost of idle equipment must be faced. Industrial employees do not usually ask leave to be absent beforehand or even give notice during an absence as to its expected length, so that the management is generally left uncertain as to the probable duration of any employee’s absence and cannot take appropriate measures to fill the gap.”

In order to control absenteeism or to eliminate it, the following steps should be taken

➤ Gather the facts - the frequency, the length, the pattern of absenteeism, the department where it occurs, the time when it occurs, who are absent, etc.
➤ Analyze the leading cause of absences, and absence records for each department;
➤ Communicate to the employee the level of absence that is acceptable and inform him about the company’s attendance policy and disciplinary procedures;
➤ Determine the accountability for absenteeism;
➤ Delegate responsibility for absentee control;
➤ Have proper and consistent implementation of the policy by all time managers and supervisors.

Take specific measures for curing absenteeism through short-term and long-term programmes.

It may be noted that there is no one method which may be regarded as totally effective in reducing absenteeism; absenteeism nor can the same techniques of absence control be guaranteed to be effective in different circumstances and conditions of work. Success can be achieved only when sustained efforts are made to control the disease. For prevention and control of absenteeism various agencies should be involved viz., the supervisor, the personnel manager, the departmental head, medical personnel, top-level managers, industrial engineers and technicians, persons in-charge of training programmes and the training department, trade unions and individuals concerned. Bhatia has given a model solution for tackling absenteeism problems, which may be reproduced here with profit.85

Remember ‘ASALPCR’

A - Attitude (develop awareness, concern and communication)
S - Statistics (gather/generate data and its feedback)
A - Analysis (of leading causes)
L - Leave procedure (lacunae to be rectified)
P - Plan of Action (Prepare programmes)
C - Coordinate (the works of different agencies)
R - Review and follow-up of the result.

2.15. Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed in detail the theoretical framework related to the research topic in the unorganized sector. It also defined the nature and key concepts around which the study is built. Different authors defined absenteeism differently. Absenteeism in the workplace is a world-wide problem that affects organization negatively. Besides, general causes and consequence of absenteeism, various causational models are discussed in this chapter. Moreover, this chapter discuss in detail different types of absenteeism, measurement and magnitude of absenteeism and how to manage absenteeism in general.