CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

Life of modern men and women has become highly competitive and the struggle to compete each other is not merely limited to the social life but is witnessed more dynamically in the world of work. Today, life without work has no meaning, hence, work is life. The present era has witnessed working as an important element of one’s adult-life. It does not merely provide money to people but also ensures social status, prestige, etc., and this is the reason that even the richest men in the world work.

"Man has progressed from savagery to civilization largely by learning how to release, direct and control the energies of inorganic matter. Progress towards a better civilization now depends largely upon his achievements in releasing, directing; and controlling the energies of man himself. In no place is this more apparent than in man's daily task of producing and distributing those material goods upon which his civilization depends. The disregard of a worker's capacity to feel, think, and grow is a subtle but menacing danger in breaking down his social and spiritual morale. To increase productivity, heighten job satisfaction, and raise the level of employee morale, it is necessary to arouse the intelligent interest of the employee. It is urgent to enlist his feelings as well as his abilities in his work.
The failure to do so will, at best produce an ineffectiver worker. At worst, it will transform the worker into an industrial rebel" (Vitles, 1962, pp.10-11).

Men and women are the finest creatures of God on earth. God taught them the ways to fulfill needs and desires. The concept of human motivation can be traced back from the history of Greek mythological concept of 'hedonism' which means that behaviour is directed towards pleasure and away from pain, though, this phenomenon is very much existent right from the very beginning of existence of mankind on earth.

Initially, the desires of men and women were limited to food, shelter, clothing etc., but gradually with the pace of technological development and subsequently social change created numerous human desires and the time came when growing psycho-social needs were found difficult to be met adequately because of the non-availability and paucity of various kinds of items for the service of mankind. Such conditions highlighted the need for mass production that looked forward the way by engineering the greatest invention of motor-engine which became the key dynamic force for pushing the wheels to move and consequently the emergence of industrial revolution was witnessed. Industrial revolution gradually changed the entire system of working, i.e., from the small unit at home to the larger organizational units; from centralized
organizational power control and work activity to decentralization, etc. Industrialization not only changed the system of working but it greatly influenced the society too in terms of thinking, attitudes, beliefs, values of work and life, etc. The development of small and large sized industries as a consequence of the industrial revolution made the working systems more and more complex depending upon the size of organizations. The major problem faced by industrialists was the problem of coordination among the various work activities both at horizontal and vertical levels for meeting organizational objective which is usually referred to higher productive output of industrial organizations. Earlier, production-oriented (Taylor, 1901) managerial strategy was believed to be an effective technique for attaining desired objectives but later, the happenings in the industrial organizations shaken the efficacy of the above strategy and as a result of the work of Elton Mayo (1924) employee-oriented managerial strategy came into prominence. The work of Elton Mayo on physical working conditions and later on his individual effort combined with the efforts of Roethlisberger and Dickson gave rise to the movement called "human relation movement" which was at its peak during 1930's to 1950's. This movement changed the entire orientation in the history of industrial psychology from management oriented system (Taylorism, 1901), to employee oriented system. Since
then, the emphasis was being given on humanizing work culture and still it continues to be the point of attraction for management on which today's managerial strategies are generally based.

It is a matter of great concern that men association with industrial organization is not only limited to the work or task they are doing but their entire activities at work are highly influenced by off-the-job conditions too, especially the conditions at home. Both these conditions either independently or in conjunction with each other become instrumental for absenteeism behaviour.

Since the time immemorial the phenomenon of absenteeism is very much existed. In the olden days absenteeism behaviour occurred very informally. In the modern-era work became a major source of earning, it made the entire work more formalized and under the conditions of increased formalized interpersonal relationship men's behaviour and activities became more and more calculative, materialistic and egocentric in nature, hence, accounted for absenteeism behaviour. Nowadays, absenteeism is being considered very seriously as it is most likely to influence industrial productive efficiency adversely. It is pertinent to mention here that the phenomenon of absenteeism does not only exist in Indian industries but it is a global problem. In other words it can be said without any reservation that wherever
the men are engaged in working, the phenomenon of absenteeism will also persist because psycho-physical make-up of men personality is a complex system as they simultaneously possess attitudes, reactions, emotions, temperament and other traits and imbalances in these are most likely to generate conflict, anxiety, stress and frustrations which may cause for absence behaviour from work. The term absence means staying away from work irrespective of it being either authorized or unauthorized or it is a voluntary or involuntary behaviour of the employees. Whateover the reasons are, staying away from work and unwillingness to join the work in a particular time or period is a definite employees' behaviour causing for detrimental influence on organizational efficiency. Contrary to the afore-mentioned behaviour Vaid (1966) suggested the meaning of absenteeism as an unauthorized stay away from work. According to him unauthorized absence encompasses all cases related to work. He contended that the worker knows about his absence but he fails to report for duty and as a consequence the employer does not have prior information about the workers not reporting for work, hence, he considered this condition as absence. But in view of the present investigator this merely projects the behaviour of a chronic absentee.

As a consequence of experience and close observation it has been found that employees differ in their behavioural
patterns related to absenteeism. In the light of such observations it is noticed that employees may be classified as chronic absentees and non-chronic absentees. Chronic absentees are habitual of staying away from work irrespective of the conditions of authorized and unauthorized absence. Chronic absenteeism is a state of behaviour in which an employee is prone to remain absent from work, hence, chronic absentees need special kind of counselling and treatment.

According to Vaid (1967) chronic absentees have been found to be engaged in several social and cultural activities for status, power, recognition, money, etc., and they are generally passive and do not realise their responsibilities. Vaid also emphasizes, the chronic absentees in some cases stay away from work for the reasons of ill health, weak constitution, and just old age. Yet they are compelled to hold on to work for economic reasons.

In the opinion of Chadwick, Brown, and Nicholson (1973) absenteeism raised two major problems from psychological point of view. One of the problems highlighted is that it is a voluntary behaviour whereas, the other dimension of the problem is determined from the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction. It is beyond doubt to say that absenteeism is one of the major problems of industries located in developing and underdeveloping
countries. It is likely to have inverse relationship with inefficiency and indiscipline. However, absence behaviour cannot be completely eradicated but absence management mechanism can reduce such a behavioural tendency upto a manageable extent.

On the basis of the review of literature Breaugh (1981) pointed out that the phenomenon of absenteeism is still neither well understood nor accurately predicted. In the light of the Breaugh’s contention as well as in the opinion of the present investigator the phenomenon of absenteeism seems to be a complex problem to be resolved and moreover, to decide that what criteria be evolved for understanding and measuring absenteeism. There is a controversy regarding absenteeism as Vaid (1967) has already advocated that only unauthorized staying away from work be considered as absenteeism but to the present investigator authorized absences should also be considered as absence. However, it is worth-mentioning here the criterion opted by Breaugh (1981) that plainly total number of days absent are to be taken as an index of absence rate. To the present investigator, Breaugh’s criterion regarding the determination of absenteeism is highly convincing Vaid’s distinction between absence and absenteeism seems to be only true for distinguish between general absentee and chronic absentee.
Coming back to the contention that staying away behaviour from work irrespective of authorized or unauthorized conditions is a clear cut state of absence behaviour though, it is a common belief that permissible leaves under rules can be claimed as a matter of right which cannot be put under the category of absenteeism as for example, casual leave, earned leave, medical leave, etc. We have a strong reservation against the above belief and consider absence always an absence either it is occurred within the legitimate or illegitimate frame of work rules. This contention has a rational basis which gets its explanation in different theories of job motivation and satisfaction. Vroom's (1964) instrumental theory best explains to the processes involved in deciding the course of action. Vroom's theory states that perceived expectancy of the outcome/outcomes of an action and its related valence become instrumental for human motivation. Higher perceived expectancy of an action outcome and outcome bearing high positive valence is likely to enhance job motivation and job involvement but contrary to it, low perceived expectancy of an action outcome and outcome bearing no or low attraction (valence) is a condition which may lead to dissatisfaction, low motivation, low job involvement, stress, frustration, etc. This latter condition is most likely to be a condition causing absence behaviour and in the worst case employees
turnover. It is to say in a more precised words that any anticipated outcome of an action likely to be attained up to desired level will produce higher valence or attraction for job incumbents and subsequently would lead employees to remain on the job but the picture of the other side of the coin is that lesser the valence greater the absenteeism is likely to occur.

Similarly, Adam's equity theory refers human motivation and satisfaction in terms of input/outcome ratio. The theory explains that an individual does not only consider his own input/outcome ratio for experiencing satisfaction-dissatisfaction but he also compares his own ratio with the other comparable individuals and groups. When input/output ratio is perceived lesser compare to other similar individual or group then inequity is created that may lead to tension, frustration, anxiety, etc. and these sometime become instrumental for absence behaviour.

It is amply clear from the explanations given in the preceding paragraphs that how employees develop their attitudes toward work and the type of attitude enforce them either to remain on the job or to remain absent from work. It is, indeed, irrational to say that man does not have to perform any other activity except work in his day to day life. People may have some personal or unofficial work to be carried out on working days and as a consequence may seek
sanction of leave/leaves but it has always been important for the employees to decide whether situation compelling for leave can be avoided or unavoidable might seem to be largely dependent upon the values employees give to their job. Higher the value attached to work, lesser the absence is likely to occur. Theories and approaches of job motivation explaining motivational behaviour at work directly or indirectly hit on the idea that the process of motivation only starts when there is any organismic deficiency or urge. The phenomenon of motivation is a goal directed activity hence, adequate feeling of need fulfilment strengthen the course of action to be taken in future but in case the goals are thwarted, unattended or inadequately fulfilled are most likely to have detrimental effects like tension, frustration, dissatisfaction etc., sometimes these alone or in some instances these in conjunction with each other may become instrumental for absence from work behaviour. The above few lines engineered the idea that healthy and enriched quality of work life (QWL) helps the employees to feel the job or work activity enjoyable but poor working conditions and broadly speaking, poor QWL keep men to experience pain, frustration and tension which men by nature like to avoid by way of keeping themselves absent from work.

Having given a detailed explanation about the nature of absenteeism and its consequences in a theoretical framework,
it is now needed to present a description of relevant survey of literature regarding absenteeism studies in relation to personal characteristics and organizational variables. But before going into the details of the available researches it is well in time at this juncture to point out the objectives of the present study which has been carried out on production line workers. The aim of the study is to investigate organizational variables and personal characteristics as correlates of absenteeism. Therefore, the effort of the present investigator will be concentrated over to give the details of the survey of literature especially with regard to these two variables if any, and other absenteeism studies which have already been done in relation to other variables in general.

To start with, it is significantly important to mention here one of the articles of Chadwick, Brown and Nicholson (1973) who have pointed out in the light of an extensive survey of literature over the periods of last twenty years before 1973, that more than hundred publications have indicated the relationship between absenteeism and number of other factors like personality variables, supervisory styles, the size of the work group and the length of work hours. The present investigator has also made a detailed survey of available researches conducted so far on absenteeism specially after (1973) till date and found the researches
almost on the same line but recently, some studies have undertaken new approaches for studying absenteeism which seem to widen the sphere of knowledge in this area.

It is emphasized, time and again that the present endeavour was made to study organizational variables and personal characteristics in relation to absenteeism which clearly emphasise that the exposition of the studies regarding organizational variables to be considered first and then the studies related to personal characteristics. It is, indeed, important to note here that organizational variables are important to effect human behaviour at work. The emphasis of the modern management is to create such an organizational and working conditions which may compel to the employees to get motivated towards work rather the management to evolve coercive methods for forcing the employees to work effectively. Hence, organizational variables which are totally under the control of management play a very significant role for enhancing all round interest and motivation among job incumbents for productive efficiency. The importance of organizational variables will be amply clear from the studies conducted so far in relation to absenteeism.

Baum, Blood, and Stuart (1975) conducted a study on impact of organizational control policy on absenteeism. They
obtained that a control policy based on legal compliances significantly improved attendance and performance and did not alter satisfaction levels. The study conducted by Singhal (1976) studying the relationship of need fulfilment with absenteeism has reported that high absentees were less satisfied with autonomy and self actualizing needs. Singhal further reported high absentees as showing the sign of high anxiety and negative correlation with interpersonal perception, interpersonal communication, and group cohesiveness.

In the study conducted by Dittrich and Carrel (1979) on organization equity perception, employee job satisfaction, departmental absence and turnover rates and according to them employees perception of equitable treatment were found to be stronger predictors of absence and turnover than job satisfaction variables.

Cheloha and Farr (1980) studied absenteeism, job involvement and job satisfaction in an organizational setting and they on the basis of their findings stated, "it appears that the variance in the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction can be explained by the mediating influence of job-involvement".

Hammer, Landan and Stern (1981) on the basis of their obtained results noted that absenteeism is affected primarily
by organizational and financial commitment and moreover they stressed that job-satisfaction is not a predictor of absenteeism.

Bhatia and Valecha (1981) in the light of the review of their research findings on absenteeism indicated that workers' absenteeism is related with personal factors such as family size, travel distance to workplace, anxiety, and accident frequency. They also witnessed from the survey of their research findings that in most studies absenteeism has been found inversely related to job satisfaction, perception related to working conditions and lower perceptions about job status. These studies also revealed that larger work units are related to increased worker absenteeism probably, due to lower group cohesiveness, higher task specialization and poor communication. Chronic absentee's in the review of research findings were found to be tending to show lesser inclination towards mobility within the organization and a higher rate of turnover. They suggested in the light of the various research findings that employees participation in decision making and behaviour modification programmes are the best ways for reducing absenteeism successfully.

Trivedi and Srivastava (1981) found support to their hypothesis that job anxiety is positively related to absenteeism and that high job anxiety leads to high absenteeism and low-job anxiety to low-absenteeism.
In 1982 Markham, Danserean, and Alutto conducted a study and reported that the evidence could not be found in support of the relationship between the size of different groups with their absenteeism rates.

In one of the studies conducted by Ugur (1982) for investigating the relationship between job-satisfaction and absenteeism on the sample of both blue-collar and white-collar workers, it has been reported that inadequate or unsatisfactory promotional opportunities as well as job insecurity are likely to be the important attributes of high absenteeism among white-collar subjects. On the other hand, low pay, inefficient supervision and selfishness among co-workers have been found to be the significant sources of absenteeism for blue-collar subjects.

A study of Moshe and Nechama (1983) on the influence of flexible working time on satisfaction and absenteeism rates and absenteeism rates, were found significantly lower under the flexible than the rigid work schedule and moreover, they pointed out that married women and mothers had the lowest rates of absenteeism under flexible work schedule.

A very interesting study has been conducted by Miller (1984) on the effects of employer-sponsored child-care programme on employee absenteeism and the obtained result
suggested that employer sponsored child care reduces workers' absenteeism and tardiness. Such facility also enhances workers productivity although, job satisfaction is not supported by the present peace of research.

In the light of the Miller's (1984) findings that employer sponsored child care programme reduces absenteeism also give support to the findings of Moshe and Nechama (1983) who pointed out the importance of flexible work time which reduces absenteeism compared to rigid work schedule. Moreover, under flexible work-schedule married women and mothers had the lowest rates of absenteeism. Both the above studies encompass the notion of married working women who have the responsibility of home affairs specially of the child care if they have. It seems to be highly beneficial for married working women if sponsored child-care programme is being run by any organization, otherwise flexible work schedule will seem to be necessarily significant for striking the balance between the affairs of on-the-job and off-the-job conditions.

In one of the studies done by McGuire and Joseph (1987) that was conducted on the similar problem as have been studied by Moshe and Nechama (1983) but McGuire and Joseph obtained contradictory result and they found no reduction in absenteeism among the true flexible group then the group
working under staggered with a fixed time and showed lower rates of absenteeism.

William and Stephen (1987) on the basis of their results advocated that organizational commitment and stressful life events are more likely to have greater impact on the rates of absenteeism behaviour.

An investigation undertaken by Brook and Price (1989) studying the determinants of employee absenteeism and they reported significant positive direct influences of kingship responsibility, organizational permissiveness, role ambiguity and involvement and moreover, they reported negative direct influences of centralization, pay, and job satisfaction on absenteeism.

Recently, Mathieu and Kohaler (1990) made an investigation on cross level examination of group absence influences on individual absence and they concluded that there is a group level absence effects on the individual absence time-lost metric although, not for the frequency metric.

Having given a comprehensive description of available survey of literature with regard to the organizational variables it is necessarily important to give the description of the studies related to personal variables as these also
may account for absenteeism and moreover personal characteristics have been of major concern in this study.

Scores of studies have tried to investigate the effect of personal factors on absenteeism. Inconsistent results of the effect of age, experience, number of dependents, and income on absenteeism behaviour have been witnessed (Sinha & Singh, 1961; Butani, 1970; Sharma, 1970; Koshal & Koshal, 1973; Indane & Khisty, 1974; Sinha & Gupta, 1974; Singh, 1976; Bhatia & Valecha, 1978; Pais, 1981; Ails, 1986). From amongst the above studies, a study conducted by Sharma (1970) revealed that absenteeism increased with the increasing number of children. According to one study conducted by Pais (1981) a very unusual result has been obtained that increasing income determines high absenteeism rate. The finding of Pais definitely seems to be unusual but may not be beyond logic. In the opinion of the present investigator inflated or surplus income may keep some of the employees engaged in social and political activities and for some it may lead to higher involvement and commitment with the job and with the organization at large, hence the former may account for increasing trend in absenteeism rate.

Many researchers in their studies have investigated the relationship of absenteeism with job satisfaction, job involvement, work commitment, organizational commitment, job anxiety, and stress, etc. Nicholson and Brown (1966) have
pointed out their doubt on the basis of empirical findings about job dissatisfaction as a major source of absenteeism, hence, popular belief that job dissatisfaction is a major cause gets shaken. Nicholson and Brown concluded that job dissatisfaction and absence from work are independent to each other.

Cheloha and Farr (1980) have reported that absence has been found to be related with job involvement but highly unrelated to job satisfaction. Hackett and Guion (1985) on the basis of factor analysis of inter-correlation among absence measures provided tentative support for voluntary-involuntary absenteeism distinction. They reported absenteeism unrelated to satisfaction. This finding is in consonance with the finding of Cheloha and Farr (1980) who too reported absenteeism having no relationship with job-satisfaction.

Taylor (1985), contrary to the findings of Cheloha and Farr (1980) and Hackett and Guion (1985), obtained stronger relationship between job-satisfaction and absenteeism. A micro analysis of the data of Taylor's study revealed the strongest associations between (1) employee absenteeism and satisfaction with the work itself, (2) absence frequency and satisfaction with co-workers, and (3) absence frequency and overall job satisfaction.
Laldas (1984) made an extensive study for identifying the factors affecting absenteeism. The factors taken include job attitudes, company satisfaction and interpersonal relations. While concluding the results Laldas noted that unfavourable attitudes towards work lead to chronic absenteeism. Company satisfaction in his study was also found to be related to absenteeism. Similarly, Trivedi and Srivastava (1981) studying the relationship between job anxiety and occupational stress found their results supporting the hypothesis that job anxiety is positively related to absenteeism and that high job anxiety leads to high absenteeism and low job anxiety to low absence behaviour. Robert and Janet (1985) studied the relationship between absenteeism and occupational stress and found almost similar result as mentioned above.

Nicholson, Brown, and Chadwick (1977) investigated work absenteeism in relation to biographical variables on one thousand twenty-two blue-collar production workers. They found age, and length of service inversely related to absenteeism. It was further observed by them that inverse relationship was more stable and reliable for age then job tenure.

On the basis of the study, Steers and Rhode's (1984) have emphasized the dominant influence of age and tenure on absenteeism.
Like other studies Hackett (1990) obtained age and a modest relationship with avoidable absences whereas age and tenure were found to be unassociated with unavoidable absences but sex was identified as a moderator.

Recently, on the basis of a longitudinal examination by Leonard, Dolan, and Are (1990) it was found that peak absence frequencies were recorded during the winter season, the lowest frequencies occurred in summer. These trends were found less prominent with the time-lost measure, only the seasonal differences remained sufficient.

Having given a brief survey of available literature, it is now inevitably important to mention the relevance of the present investigation in the light of the studies conducted so far in the area of work absence behaviour. Stating the significance it is to say here with quite rationality that today job life of modern men and women has emerged as a necessary way of life style. Therefore, when people are coming together along with their emotions, temperaments, attitudes, reactions and other personality traits for fulfilling a single organizational objectives then they sometimes experience dissatisfaction, maladjustment, etc. in the course of their interpersonal perceptions and relations which enforce people to stay-away from work and occurrence of
its greater frequency become detrimental for organizational productive efficiency.

In the light of the above contentions work absence studies have always been a necessary task for the organization to reduce or eliminate the conditions causing absence behaviour. The present study was taken-up as a challenge for investigating simultaneously both organizational variables and personal characteristics as sources of absenteeism in a large public sector. The study has been unique in the sense that at a time both organizational variables and personal characteristics have never been studied at least in the Indian context. Similarly, the other significant aspect of this study is that it has taken the sample which has not been covered earlier as the employees working in Kashmir valley are definitely different in their psycho-social make-up and geographical conditions as well.

The above contentions are now to be concluded by saying that the present investigation will definitely fill the void of knowledge in this area which may pave the way for exploring further research in this area in future.