CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
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Review of literature represents the major portion of exploratory studies. This aspect is also important even for other kinds of research. Generally, researchers have a tendency to report as many studies as possible conducted in the respective areas of interest and abruptly state their problem. This type of review of literature only amounts to summarising different studies at one place. This kind of exercise does not serve the purpose of the researcher. The review of literature should serve the following purposes:

(a) To acquire knowledge from different areas covered by various studies in the field of investigation, in which the investigator is interested.

(b) To know the different meanings given to certain concepts in various studies and to arrive at appropriate meanings of different concepts used in the present study.

(c) To look into different merits and demerits of the research designs followed in different studies with
a purpose to retain the merits of different studies and overcome loopholes while designing a plan of research for the present study.

(d) To identify areas where little research has been carried out to give less importance to the areas which have been already thoroughly investigated.

(e) Lastly to verify findings in the present study with findings in the previous studies in order to examine the validity of the present study.

With a acceleration of industrialization in India, certain ancillary problems have emerged. The most important task is to enhance productivity at reduced cost. This problem is multi-faceted. It has been examined at micro levels to allow a threadbare analysis of the causes underlying it, before any remedies can be suggested. In his book, Management of absenteeism, S.K. Bhatia has made sincere efforts to design the problem of productivity in industry. One of the major factors identified by him is the increase in productivity associated with decrease in absenteeism in industry.
The highlights of the study are rigorous analysis of the problem. The empirical studies which have yielded valuable result oriented techniques. With the aid of these techniques he has made sincere efforts to find out the remedies from this point of view. The book is valuable addition to the field of management studies.

Another note worthy feature of the book is that it almost covers the problem right from the basic concepts, causes rigorous methodology for analysis to remedial measures etc. It is as an integrated approach it serves as a practical guide to managing absenteeism at the micro and macro levels. He has explored new approach to the analysis and suggested certain important remedial measures to reduce absenteeism.

In the first place the author has undertaken three comprehensive empirical studies to analyse the different facts of absenteeism. He has tried to answer the following basic questions: What is the nature of the problem? What is the magnitude of the problem? Where absenteeism is common? How many workers are involved? What factors lead to absenteeism?
Then he has adopted three methodologies for systematic analysis: (i) Condition centred (ii) to person-centered and (iii) identification of other factors responsible for high absenteeism. Furthermore, he examines in detail the personal and external factors associated with absenteeism and highlights their impact.

In the second place, a separate section evaluates the research findings on absenteeism in India and abroad. The most important aspect of this separate section is the attempt on the part of the author to formulate general laws about workers who are highly susceptible to absenteeism. These general laws, which are based on empirical findings, would be of immense value to reduce the rate of absenteeism.

In the third place, the author mentions that to reduce absenteeism, a result-oriented approach is essential. Four chapters deal with vital aspects of remedial measures. One of the chapters is exclusively devoted to tackling absence as an indiscipline. "Specific cures" and "alleviative cures" have been thoroughly discussed with their res-
pective merits and demerits. In order to tackle the problem of absenteeism in an organisation, the author places special emphasis on action-oriented approach which consist of four steps:

(a) Divising a strategy for control and prevention of absenteeism;

(b) A suitable programme to involve supervisory and executive personnel in order to create awareness of the problem at all levels;

(c) Setting specific targets for reduction of absenteeism on a year to year basis and

(d) Formulation of an action plan for implementation.

According to author habitual absenteeism is mainly due to personal factors and as such a person-centered approach is essential for rehabilitating the chronic absent. The author has failed to relate personal factors to environmental factors in the family. However Shri. S.K.Bhatia's book is a good contribution in the management of organisation and industry.

S.K. Bhatia has attempted to identify the factors associated with absenteeism in large public undertakings. This micro study is confined to Tiruchi unit of Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited. The author observes "that to identify causes of non-attendance will not prove to be useful analytical device by which to attack the problem of absenteeism". According to him the stated causes of absenteeism may not represent the true causes. Any policy matters based on stated causes may be misleading from the point of view of decision making process.

The author has classified the factors generally associated with absenteeism into three categories-organisational factors, Personal factors and external factors. The degree of strain/heaviness of work, procedures and rules in granting
leave, quality and style of supervision working conditions. Job satisfaction and challenges, recruitment policy, induction and replacement, housing and transport fall into the first category. Personal factors include age, length of journey to work, length of service, marital status, family responsibility and size personal habits and marital harmony. Level of unemployment participation in religious ceremony and festivals come under external factors. The author has generalised that the organisational factors come under the direct control of management of individual production unit. Personal factors and external factors on generally outside the control wholly or largely of the individual industrial organisation.

He has identified two groups of employees viz habitual absentees and the average employees in respect of absenteeism. Some of the factors which have significant relationship with high level of absenteeism are as follows.

(a) Organisational factors

(i) His analysis indicates that chronic absentees show
a tendency for lesser mobility. They do not like to be transferred from their present place of working. This may be due to convenience they find in the present working environment, enabling them to go on frequent leave, and their lack of confidence in handling different assignments.

(ii) It is found that average absentees to less time to reach their work place than their chronic counterparts.

(iii) The chronics are more in semi-skilled and unskilled work force as compared to the average group.

(iv) The employees using their own conveyance are found to be less absent prone them those dependent on public transport.

(v) Given a choice only a few chronic absentees were willing to take job in another industry.

**Personal factors**

(i) The chronic absentees are more in the higher age bracket.
(ii) The chronic absentees are more in higher experienced group. It may be due to the fact that one finds justification in seeking relaxation for having done so much to the organisation and also a sense of over-security.

(iii) The chronic absentees are found more in the higher grades and service than in the lower grades.

(iv) The chronic absentees have a tendency to live beyond their means. The author has pointed out that workers in this category took large amount of loans ranging from Rs.5,000 and above while average group below this amount.

(v) The chronic absentees are found mostly in illiterate group.

(vi) The chronic absentees are more in married class as they have more personal commitment to the family.

(vii) The frequency of sickness was higher in the chronic group as compared to average group.
(viii) The average group normally lives nearer to the factory whereas chronic absentees lived in far off places.

(ix) The study reveals that the nature of indebtedness varies between average and chronic groups. The average group borrowed loans for specific commitments such as marriage, purchase of land and house etc., whereas chronics borrowed loans to meet their day today family expenses.

(x) Very few habitual absentees sent money to their families as compared to average group.

In conclusion the study highlights certain significant factors for absenteeism. They are as follows:

(i) Absence of awareness among employees of having taken excess leave.

(ii) Mode of conveyance used by the employees to reach the place of work.

(iii) Need for changes in placement of employees

(iv) Indebtedness
(v) Frequent visit to home town

(vi) Illhealth.

The author believes that the above factors identify for absenteeism can help in guiding the management in formulating future policies. The study reveals that more personal factors are dominant in causing absenteeism. According to the author initiative for improvement should come from within. Hence he feels that organisation can do very little to improve them. It has been observed that rapid industrialisation creates social strains and tensions. These workers also require counselling by experts. The author suggests that provision of professional counselling facilities by organisation will certainly help the absent prones in self direction, responsible action and adjustment.

There is no doubt that this empirical study at the micro level with rigorous methodology is a useful contribution to the literature on absenteeism. However the most important limitation of this study is lack of in depth analysis of the
various factors which are responsible for absenteeism. His

treatment of the factors responsible for absenteeism
throughout the study appear to be more descriptive than
analytical.
In this article author focuses attention on counselling. The main concern is to find out whether or not counselling by industry is effective in controlling absenteeism among chronic absentees. The counselling was undertaken for habitual absentees in a large engineering industry employing work force of Nineteen thousand. It is observed that the ninety percent of causes of habitual absentees were due to personal factors such as the absentee's family, personality, emotional, marital and social rituals. In the first stage, habitual absentees were identified with the various sections of the industry. According to the findings of the author habitual absentees had atleast twice or even higher rate of absenteeism compared to the average absence rate in the factory. There were six hundred and twenty one habitual absentees.
These findings have some useful implications. In the first place habitual absentees constituted only a small segment of the work force. Hence, the author thought that it may not be very difficult to handle them and bring down the rate of absence to a reasonable level and thereby achieve a considerable reduction in the overall rate of absenteeism. Secondly, the findings strongly imply that personal absenteeism is partly due to personal centered problem. Hence, the most effective way of dealing with this problem is to know the individual. The underlying causes for frequent absence and to counsel the individual with a view to help him to overcome these causes. Under this person-centered approach it is possible to reduce absenteeism by rehabilitating these absentees through positive majors and the maintenance of proper follow-up system.

Before undertaking counselling service, persistent efforts were made to persuade the chronic absentees to improve their attendance through a circular by the management. This step taken by the management had no effect on habitual absentees.
Then counselling sessions for habitual absentees started in May 1989. Over a period of 8 months six hundred and twenty one employees were covered counselling was conducted on two patterns for some of the habitual absentees. One-to one counselling was carried out, the sessions lasting twenty to thirty minutes with each absentee. For the remaining habitual absentees, the process of group counselling was carried out, -session lasting for two to three days. A follow-up of these absentees who were counselled was carried out. The management experience difficulty to get trained personnel to counsel the employees. A few outside specialists were engaged in addition to the internal team which was trained.

According to the researcher the purpose of sampling was;

(i) to provide an opportunity to the habitual absentees to understand their problems themselves;
(ii) to motivate them to develop their overall personality
(iii) to realise their responsibility towards their work and families.
The most important feature of counselling was to build up trust so that absentees could trust themselves and others. Hence, emphasis was placed on communication through exercises in listening, responding and self discloser. These exercises greatly helped participants to interact with one another to open blocked channels of communication. And to enhance their level of trust. In addition, emphasis was laid on the purpose and meaning of life show that they could self explore and evaluate their values, attitudes and belief towards themselves and their word. Efforts were also made to help the habitual absentees to evaluate their respective stroking patterns, thereby fulfilling their basic emotional needs. The achievement of motivation process through stroke resulted in enhancing the level of their respective trusts and also in building self confidence.

The next phase was followed through the process of personality development so that the absentees could understand themselves and relate to others in a more meaningful manner. This helps them to increase their self-confidence, self-
control and self-understanding. They realised their respon-
sibility towards their work and family. Finally the whole
process was followed by an actual, one-to-one, counselling
of members in the group, in order to deal with individual
concrete problems and issues of conflicts. The break-up
of habitual absentees counselled is as under:

One-to-one counselling : 68
Group counselling : 553

The author has given the following table and results
obtained before and after counselling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Counselling</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
The attendance of habitual absentees during the first three months in 1981 was compared with a corresponding three months in 1980. Data relating to analysis is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The following results were obtained from the analysis of the data.

(i) In the first place there was a considerable improvement took place in respect of fifty percent of habitual absentees in their attendance. Further more some of them even earned appreciation from the supervisors for their good conduct.

(ii) On account of counselling the employees reduced the duration of absence and the number of spells of absence.
(iii) The improvement in the case of employee counselled one-to-one is almost similar to that of employees, covered through group counselling on percentage basis.

(iv) There was twenty percent of overall absenteeism rate of the plant during 1979. When the counselling sessions were carried out with habitual absentees from May, 1980, this rate came down to nineteen percent during 1980. It is evident that one percent of overall absenteeism in the plant could be reduced by tackling only habitual absentees.

(v) Those workers who developed favourable attitudes towards counselling realised that a counsellor has taken a keen personal interest in them and their problems. Hence, they were obliged to the counsellor and created a personal rapport with him. They were more than willing to heed his suggestions and thereby reduce their absence.
According to the author following advantages resulted on account of counselling sessions.

(a) In the initial stages the workers were somewhat afraid and suspicious about the counselling programmes. Some of them even considered counselling as some sort of a stigma. The real purpose of the counselling was realised at a later stage they were convinced that counselling was absolutely essential to overcome certain problems causing excessive absence.

(b) Counselling programme gave an opportunity for the employees to express their difficulties and worries to a counsellor. Counselling service considerably reduced their mental depression and made them cheerful. As certain worries were the main causes for absence a lessening of these worries lead to reduction in absence. Hence, counselling prove to be a useful aid in discovering sources of dissatisfaction within the work environment and in helping to rectify them by suitable and timely action.
(c) In some cases workers were mentally depressed due to domestic problems such as strained relations with a spouse, dispute over property, friction within the joint family etc. In such cases a satisfactory solution was not possible counselling in such instances convinced the workers that since these problems could not be solved, it was futile to persist in worrying about them.

(d) In the case of employees who were victims of social evils such as drinking, indebtedness etc, counselling created an awareness in them as to what was happening to them and how they themselves were responsible for such bad habits which also lead to habitual absenteeism. Through the process of introspection and encouragement by the counsellor, they were able to work out their solution.

(e) Most of the workers considered their supervisory staff as non-co-operative and unfriendly. They felt that supervisors completely ignored them while per-
forming the duties. They also felt that they were unwanted employees. In this process they lost their working habits. This is a viewpoint of habitual absentees and needs further research to solve this problem.

On account of counselling programmes habitual absentees established good rapport amongst themselves as a group. This rapport could be utilised as a base for further recreation of healthier climate and more amicable relationship in the organisation. In addition counselling service rendered in the houses of absentee employees created in awareness amongst the families in the neighbourhood regarding the good effects of counselling sessions.

So the author has rightly concluded that counselling is an effective device in controlling habitual absentees. Here it may be pointed out that most of the studies dealing with absenteeism have concentrated on the causes and effects of absenteeism.
and have given least attention to counselling which is a valuable and effective tool in reducing absenteeism. From this point of view the author's contribution in tackling the problem of absenteeism through counselling is laudable.
ABSENTEEISM - A PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH

Dr. K.G. Desai, Indian Journal of Social work,

The author observes that the confusion emerging from different definitions of absenteeism used in various seminars, symposia, books, research papers and monographs is largely responsible for the failure to tackle the problem of absenteeism. He points out that many organisations consider an employee as absent only when he exhausts all his permissible leave (casual leave, sick leave etc) and then abstain from work. He also sites certain cases when an employee has some leave in his credit he is automatically given leave if he stays away from work without prior information. According to him "Observation such as this makes one wonder whether absenteeism is a serious problem at all inner organisation. The author has attempted to find out ways and means of systematically touching this problem. According to Dr. Desai, failure on the part of the worker to attend to work when he expected to attend has been regarded
as absent. In other words, when a worker abstain from work and fails to communicate to the management about his intention of staying away, he would be regarded as absent. In such cases, he passes the problem for the management; author feels that this definition has an advantage in enabling the management to identify the problem. Hence, casual leave or earned leave or sick leave taken by the employee without prior permission would be regarded as absent. But many organisations do not regard this as absence. After specifying the above definition the author has tried to identify the reasons for absenteeism; he classifies these reasons under the following categories:

(i) Socio-Cultural background of the employees;
(ii) The job related factors and
(iii) Personal difficulties.

He has discussed in detail, the reasons for absenteeism under these categories.
THE SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE EMPLOYEES

This paper refers to the typical pattern of behaviour amongst workers employed in cotton textile mills at Bombay. Many of these workers generally come from coastal districts of Maharashtra and have their family members (as well as cultivable land) at their native villages. Most of the workers stay alone and send regular money orders to their family members. These workers visit their native places whenever their family members face any difficulty. According to the author, there are also a large number of workers who hail from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who are in similar situation. These workers come to Bombay to seek employment with a dream to accumulate enough fortune and return to their native places. Such workers often visit their native places throughout the year. During the Ganapati festival and Holi festival they have a tendency to over-stay their leave when such leave is sanctioned. The author considers this kind of leave as absence according to his definition. This typical background of some of the employees can be an
important reason to absenteeism.

THE JOB RELATED FACTORS

According to Dr. Desai absenteeism may be due to his aversion to his job. Such aversion may be due to inadequate salary, lack of prospects and challenge in his work, frequent shift in duties, and harassment of the employer. The above factors tend to curb motivation of the worker to improve his skills and capability. Such workers may remain physically present, but their contribution to productivity may be insignificant. He observes....."given a choice such employees prefer to stay away from the work situation for them any excuse to stay away from work situation is welcome, even when they have a slight headache they would remain absent".

Then the author examines the influence of job related factors on employees who get higher salaries. According to him these highly paid employees remain absent as they are not afraid of starvation. To such employees sickness bene-
fit scheme of ESI (Employees State Insurance) can be very handy. They may approach their ESI Doctors and get a sickness certificate. Many managements believe that absenteeism amongst the workers has increased because of the ESI scheme. The author does not agree with this view. He opines that even in the absence of ESI scheme these employees would go to some other doctors and get a sickness certificate. These organisations should probe deeper into the problem rather than blaming the ESI scheme for absenteeism amongst their employees.

PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES

Next the author deals with the personal difficulties which have a direct bearing on absenteeism. As an employee spends more of his time outside the organisation, his family and social life is quite important to him. Hence the difficulties he faces in his family and social life may have adverse effect on his attitude to work. There may be number of difficulties in the family life of the workers which may force them to remain absent from the work. Author has cited
some of these difficulties one such difficulty, according to
the author is sickness of employee himself and/or his family
members. Such a difficulty is more or less unpredictable.
Even the most sincere employee may have to remain absent
occasionally because of this difficulty. Dr. Desai observed
"Married women employees are likely to experience to this
difficulty more often as compared to men employees. Women
employees are forced to stay away when their husbands/children/or they themselves are sick. Men employees are a bit
more fortunate in this respect.

Another problem faced by many employees is the shortage
of essential commodities. The workers have to spend long
hours in various queues to secure ration, vegetable oil,
kerosene, cooking gas and so on. Author has pointed out
that difficulties experienced by the worker in securing essen-
tial commodities and many hours spent for this purpose may
lead to absenteeism.
But Dr. Desai emphasises the importance of social/family obligations that an employee is expected to fulfil. Deaths in the neighbourhood or amongst his relatives and friends has been cited as one such obligation. Other obligations cited by the author are marriages of the family members/friends, relatives etc; such social/family obligations may lead to absenteeism.

In addition to the family and social obligations the author has pointed out some personal problems such as addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling etc. According to him high level of indebtedness amongst the employees is due to these vices. Indebtedness and absenteeism are sometime highly associated; such employees tend to become chronic absentees (those who remain absent for too often are regarded as chronic absentees). Further more the author has pointed out that other difficulties in family and social life may contribute to the absenteeism amongst the employees.
ANALYSIS OF ATTENDANCE RECORDS

The author points out the importance of attendance records maintained by organisations. It enables the management to find out the extent of absenteeism prevailing in different departments. In some departments the magnitude of absenteeism may be more than other departments. Management should try to find out the factors responsible for high degree of absenteeism. In those departments inadequate supervision, uninteresting work (as viewed by the employees), hazardous operations may be the causes of high degree of absenteeism. The management would be able to take suitable measures to reduce absenteeism.

Analysis of records at least for a period of three years would be quite adequate for this purpose. A rigorous analysis of attendance records can provide as vital information about the employees who remain absent. Some of the information can be used for reducing absenteeism in the organisation.
If high degree of absenteeism is found in few departments only, then management will have to carry out a further investigation into the job related factors operating in this departments.

THE SAMPLE SURVEY

The author has pointed out the following purposes of the sample survey.

(i) To secure information about the living conditions of our employees such as their place of residence, type of accommodation, time required to commute back and forth, number of dependents etc.

(ii) To secure information about satisfactions and dissatisfactions about the work, salary and service conditions, supervision, working conditions etc.

(iii) To secure information regarding views on leave facilities reasons for remaining absent and views on consequences of remaining absent.
(iv) To secure information from supervisors regarding reasons as to why their subordinates remain absent.

(v) To secure information from some executives regarding the leave policy and its implementation.

CASE STUDIES OF CHRONIC ABSENTEES

In some studies on absenteeism we come across the category of employees labelled as chronic absentees. In some cases they have genuine problems with which the workers cannot cope. Hence, they need help and guidance to overcome these problems. The author cites examples of persons suffering from mental ailments, chronic alcoholics, persons addicted to gambling, persons having chronic illness (the employees or their family members); persons heavily indebted and so on and so forth. Some of these can be helped. Collective measures can be taken to help them to overcome their problems. Another example is in respect of employees who have other commitments which they consider are more important than their
jobs. Under this category he includes persons working for some political party and persons having some part-time business. Then he cites the example of the persons who are denied certain expected benefits. In such cases they remain absent out of resentment.

Author concludes that absenteeism cannot be totally eradicated. He rightly points out that it can be minimised by persistent efforts by management. A most important finding of this study is that factors responsible for absenteeism in one organisation may not be responsible in another organisation. This study is very useful contribution to understand nature and type of absenteeism prevailing in different types of organisations. It provides valuable guidance to the researchers to select those factors which are relevant to their field of study.