



ABSENTEEISM AS A THREAT TO THE FINAL QUALITY OF GOODS

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Abstract: Absenteeism is of a fundamental importance to all employers. It predominantly appears to most directly affect industry-related entrepreneurs, as the costs of production, as well as lost productivity affect them, but also - the entire economy and society, both directly and indirectly. Absenteeism of employees not only leads to the poor utilization of resources, but also affects the quality of work and quality of final goods produced, especially while considering absenteeism among the workers of manufacturing sites. One of the most common reasons of absenteeism is poor or very limited motivation to work. The impact of low morale and low motivation on productivity and competitiveness is significant. Absenteeism among manual workers results in delayed production, lower product quality, the disruption of work flow, low morale, and general dissatisfaction.

Keywords: absenteeism, final goods, motivation, quality

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Introduction

An extensive economic development characteristic for the 20th century, resulting from the development of science and technology, caused an exponential growth of goods production and service provision, but also - exponential problems strictly related to employee and human resource management, capacity, negative cash flow etc. One of the most important problems having a remarkable impact on the whole company and all its key performance indicators is absenteeism (Gołasa et al. 2014, p. 13). However, it should be emphasized that absenteeism is a problem that is notably more complex than it may seem to be. Workplace attendance and absenteeism are of fundamental importance to industrialized societies. Primarily, they affect industries in the form of increased production costs primarily, but the lost productivity also affects the whole economy and society, both directly and indirectly. They add to overall costs or may reduce the quality of both public and private goods and services.

The increase of absenteeism rate in any global or local company is a problem that has a strong impact on all logistic processes, whether one considers supply, production, or distribution-specific logistics. All of these processes are affected by a notably lower quality of work, mainly due to the fact that an insufficient number of employees must be replaced by senior employees such as experts or group leaders to secure and maintain smooth production.

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The predominant goal of this article is to indicate the importance of absenteeism, which can be perceived as a threat to the proper functioning of an entire company and its all processes.

Root cause of absenteeism

Access to information on human resources managed by an organization is currently defined as a major problem for both practitioners and human resource management-oriented researchers. Absenteeism is a phenomenon that is relatively easy to measure and - at the same time - causes a great public interest. It is mainly the result of the fact that absenteeism generates costs at both macroeconomic and microeconomic levels for employers and employees (Striker 2013b, p. 99). In many Polish companies, absenteeism management is governed by legal regulations in a given area and manager's approach, with the latter being mainly connected with controlling absenteeism and disciplining all employees (Kozioł, Muszyński, Kozioł 2016, p. 59). Recent years have shown that the approach of companies to the care about and condition of employees, as well as to commitment and job satisfaction have not been perceived as an obligation, but rather - as an opportunity (Kukowska 2011, p. 10).

Employee absenteeism is one of concepts defining and measuring of which are relatively easy and are not connected with remarkable controversies. Difficulties arise, however, when it comes to the indication of actual, formal reasons for work absence and determining what actions and at what intervals should be taken by the employer to lower its level. Employee absenteeism is any unplanned failure to report for work, regardless of reasons (Striker 2013a, p. 143).

Absenteeism at work, being an important determinant of productivity and competitiveness of a company, should be managed just like other productive factors and areas of activity. In this context, it should not be surprising that the interest in employee satisfaction (or lack thereof) among practitioners and human resource management-oriented theoreticians has been increasing.

The measurement of absence frequency conducted by the representatives of management-related scientific fields is predominantly oriented towards processing verifiable quantitative and qualitative data collected on the individual organizational unit/department level, by means of using standard questionnaires and work time supervision system, which is present in all companies. HR department records employees absenteeism. Afterwards, such data are transferred to the finance department for salary calculation-related purposes. Absences are specified in work schedules or in working hours (if only few working hours were missed) (Gajdzik 2015, p. 42).

Absenteeism understood as the failure of an employee to attend scheduled work can be differentiated from absenteeism that is scheduled in advance, e.g. annual leave. Many organizations perceive absenteeism in two categories, namely - voluntary absenteeism and involuntary absenteeism (Birmingham 2013, p. 4). Voluntary absenteeism includes reasons such as deviance and holiday leaves. Involuntary absenteeism is understood to be caused by reasons being out of

employee's control. The author focuses on reasons that are unplanned, i.e. that have the greatest impact on ensuring a proper productivity of the whole cycle and may negatively affect the quality of the process. Among them there are the following:

- Health and safety training – employer cannot allow an employee to work without valid health and safety tests completed.
- Disease – obvious reason of absence.
- Blood donation – absence caused by blood donation, for which full salary is granted.
- Examinations during pregnancy period – employer should also pardon absences when a pregnant worker has to undergo medical examinations. It should, however, apply only to cases where undergoing them outside working hours has proved to be impossible.
- Medical check-ups – employer cannot allow a worker to perform work at a given position if they do not have a valid medical checkup certificate stating the lack of contraindications.
- Childbirth or the death of a relative – employee who works on the basis of an employment contract may take advantage of a paid special leave in the case of the occurrence of important events, such as the birth of a child or the death of a relative.
- Subpoena – employees, as well employers should be aware of employee's right to obtain dismissal on the day, on which he or she has received a subpoena to attend in courthouse as a witness. It is obligatory to attend in courthouse, while being requested to act as a witness. Unjustified absence of a witnesses is connected with various sanctions, depending on the specificity of proceedings he or she should have taken part in.
- Sudden necessity to take care of a child – resulting from the prior unannounced closure of a nursery.
- Seeking a new job during the notice period.

However, the most important reasons of absenteeism are those which do not stem directly from legal regulations. One of the most common reasons for absenteeism not mentioned above is poor or very limited motivation to work. Often, it is caused by poor earnings offered by the company (Abu-Jarour 2014, p. 217). Unmotivated workers take a sick leave when they are not really sick and are just unwilling to work. Low motivation means that an employee is not satisfied with his or her job and is not provided with an adequate or effective motivation to perform his or her job. As a result, he or she prefers not to attend work. Such a phenomenon is a straightforward signal that there is the need for the proper implementation of leave policy in the company. Work environment has to be encouraging for the employee to get enough motivation to work and restrain him or her from being absent unnecessarily (Gupta, Subramanian 2014, p. 59). Unless a management attendance program identifies and addresses the causes of employee absenteeism, it will be ineffective and unfair (Nath Gangai, Agrawal, Gupta 2015, p. 1778).

Absenteeism is increasingly becoming an area of concern for all employers. In these economically challenging times, when employers are focusing on cost-cutting across their businesses, absenteeism in an area that is being highlighted as an issue in need of

addressing (Durand 1985, p. 1). Because of competitiveness, companies can no longer afford to accept the level of absenteeism that they might have tolerated in the past.

Table 1. Sickness-related absences in days between 2012 and 2017

Specification	Number of days of sick-related absence in thousands					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total	246 363,8	254 094,3	252 821,0	266 000,7	276 332,1	281 267,1
Including insured in:						
SSI	206 776,3	213 392,7	212 616,7	226 717,9	238 659,8	245 568,6
ASIF	35 985,1	37 059,7	36 625,7	35 686,5	33 316,2	30 702,4
Other in Poland	3 127,3	2 958,4	2 664,8	2 550,0	2 633,4	2 625,3
Other countries	464,2	667,2	890,6	1 218,3	1 694,6	2 346,2
Unidentified	10,9	16,3	23,2	28,0	28,0	24,6

Source: Author's elaboration

In recent years, the number of sick leave days is systematically increasing. Such a state of affairs is illustrated by the data presented above. In 2017, after comparing it to 2012, the number of sick leaves increased by 14.17% and compared to 2016 – by 1.79%. The data above indicate that the largest number of sick leave days has been identified for people insured in the SSI, which is obvious due to fact that it is the largest group of insured individuals. The health condition of employees is the main, but not the only, determinant of temporary incapacity to work. Sickness-related absences are largely conditioned by working conditions. The share of psychosocial factors in the general set of causes of absence is growing.

Absenteeism of employees not only influences the poor utilization of resources, but also the quality of work and the quality of final goods (while considering absenteeism among the representatives of manufacturing sites). Everything is connected in a standard structure of production companies and thus, there is an increased focus on such positions as:

- Group leaders – job purpose: appropriate management of his or her area of responsibility, managing the work of all subordinate employees on his or her shift in accordance with company standards and procedures.
- Experts – job purpose: responsible for managing the work of a smaller group of subordinate employees (as a part of duty delegation) on their shift – mainly to assure the proper quality of work of all employees in a given department.
- Operator – job purpose: performing basic works.

In a situation where the absenteeism of operators can be observed experts have to replace the missing operators. What is more, employees from the next shift have to come to work sooner to fill in for the absent ones. This is a very dangerous situation, in the case of which the supervision over work and the quality of work is reduced, because supervisors (in this case – experts) are not able to provide an adequate level of control over the entire process. The admission of temporary employees also does not bring remarkable benefits and does not solve many problems, because new employees must be trained and even despite the training,

they may pose a threat to the entire process, because their experience is highly limited. It all boils down to poor employee motivation systems, poor working conditions, etc.

Behind every successful business, there are strong employees. It is crucial for such employees to be highly motivated in order for a given organization to prosper (Osabiya 2015, p. 62). Hence, the importance of employee motivation is rapidly increasing day by day within all organizations because it formalizes the difference between success and failure (Wetherall, Lippell 2016, p. 28).

An appropriate leadership style introduced within the framework of a given organization plays a crucial role when it comes to the motivation of subordinates at a workplace (Czarnecka 2011, p. 59). Unfortunately, managers can motivate employees to a limited extent only, due to the lack of power, autonomy, and the lack of knowledge about basic motives behind the absence of subordinates (Shaban et al. 2017, p. 2). An effective employee motivation system can inspire employee morale, improve employee productivity, enhance product quality, and ensure the cohesion of the company. People are the most valuable asset of an organization, but they also the most difficult resource to manage (Łukasik 2011, p. 70). Unlike physical assets, people have their own individual needs which must be met and habits which must be managed if they are to contribute to organizational growth and development.

Conclusions

Employee absenteeism is an expensive management-related problem that can be very concerning for employers. Employee's understanding of absenteeism is very limited, which is a very problematic issue. It has also been discovered that stress and low motivation are contributing factors when it comes to workplace absenteeism. Unsatisfied employees produce unsatisfactory results. Therefore, it is vital for top management to take care of their employees to ensure that they are satisfied with their jobs. Managers having right information about absences at work is one of main factors of effective employee absenteeism-related problem solving.

One of keys that may lead to eliminating causes of sickness-related absenteeism and reducing its negative effects is proper shaping of relations and conditions at work, as well as an effective management of sickness absence within the organization. Every organization should be concerned about what should be done to achieve a sustainable high levels of performance of its employees. This means strongly focusing on how individuals can be efficiently motivated by such means as incentives, rewards, leadership etc. Management and leadership are often thought to be the same thing. Although it is true that the most effective manager is almost certainly an effective leader and that leading is an essential function of managers, there is more to managing than just leading.

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ABSENCJA JAKO ZAGROŻENIE JAKOŚCI WYROBÓW GOTOWYCH

Streszczenie: Absencja ma fundamentalne znaczenie dla wszystkich pracodawców. Wydaje się, że problem ten bezpośrednio dotyka jako koszt produkcji przemysł, jednak utracona wydajność wpływa również bezpośrednio i pośrednio na całą gospodarkę i społeczeństwo. Nieobecność pracowników w zakładach produkcyjnych przyczynia się nie tylko do słabego wykorzystania zasobów, ale rzutuje także na jakość pracy i wyrobów końcowych. Jednym z najczęstszych powodów absencji jest osłabiona lub bardzo mała motywacja do pracy. Niskie morale i obniżona motywacja odbija się na produktywności i konkurencyjności, a wpływ ten jest znaczący. Absencja wśród pracowników fizycznych powoduje opóźnienia produkcji, obniżenie poziomu jakości, zakłócenie przepływu pracy, niskie morale i niezadowolenie.

Słowa kluczowe: absencja, jakość, motywacja, wyroby gotowe