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**ECONOMICAL ANALYSIS OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR  
DECREASING ABSENTEEISM AND PRESENTEEISM IN  
ORGANIZATIONS**

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**Abstract**

The article justifies the possibility to reduce the level of absenteeism and presenteeism by developing a catalogue of preventive measures, which helps classify the causes for employee absence from or presence at work when they are sick and take timely measures to prevent these phenomena from spreading. The study identifies causes for downtime related to ill health. It shows that presenteeism can be indirectly initiated by the government, as sickness benefit is often lower than the salary. The employer's influence can be direct or indirect and creates stress, providing a motive for voluntary activity that serves the interests of a company. The individual initiative of workers is often shaped by their civic duty and the fear of being considered unreliable, especially in times of crisis and a decline in production. Another reason for opportunism is working conditions triggering low job involvement and mobbing at the workplace resulting in psychological distress and the desire to change the job. To collect data, it is important to provide a clear definition of the parameters of such phenomenon as "sickness"; to create an organisational classifier of absenteeism variations due to medical reasons: sickness, a course of treatment, an accident with or without further payment; and to calculate absolute and relative indicators of absence from work. The article provides data on some absenteeism dependencies grouped by demographic and social features. It also describes the possible consequences of absenteeism and the structure and the content of a catalogue of preventive measures for decreasing absenteeism and presenteeism.

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*Keywords:* Causes of absenteeism, downtime frequency, presenteeism



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## **1. Introduction**

Absenteeism (employee absence from work during working hours) and presenteeism (employee presence at the workplace even though they are not fully healthy) is an urgent problem which concerns employers, employees, and the state as a whole. For the employer, a lack of employees, first of all, induces risks of an economic character. If the employer involves other employees in completing the work of the absent employee, they have to provide overtime pay. Moreover, there can be an inconsistency between the employee's qualifications and the job (position) requirements, which can lead to failures and induce risks of losing share on the market. Second, it is likely to deteriorate the working environment. Sick employees present at their workplace cannot work at their full capacity. They can also carry viruses which can be dangerous for other workers as we have seen from the experience of the coronavirus pandemic. A worker who has been absent for a long time feels less self-confident and motivated, among other things, to acquire new competencies. Absenteeism and presenteeism affect the GDP growth rate, which depends on performance. With an increase in the number of workers made redundant or on sick leave, the government has to allocate more funds for social security and to support healthcare workers.

## **2. Problem Statement**

This article is based on the results of scientific research, statistical information, and developed methodologies. The following tasks had to be solved to address the problem: first, we determined the frequency and duration of employee absence from work. Second, we detected sectoral differences in the duration of employee absence from work. Third, we put forward a hypotheses regarding the groups of workers with the most significant share of the total figure of absenteeism in the workplace. Fourth, we described the relevant causes of employee absenteeism in the workplace related to working conditions and the desire to change the job. Fifth, we classified medical issues related to presenteeism. Sixth, we identified the consequences of absenteeism.

## **3. Research Questions**

The study revealed that, firstly, due to the increasing competition, the organisation's management delegate their work assignments to their subordinates because they need time to assess the market situation and develop a corresponding strategy.

The assignments can be delegated to highly intellectual employees with high competence and involvement. Characteristics of situations when there is a lack of self-confidence or motivation or mobbing in the workplace or when employees want to seek a new job are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Relevant causes of absenteeism related to working conditions and the desire to change the job

No.	Causes of absence from work	Specific description of the cause
1.	Low involvement with work	Involvement with work can decrease due to the conditions in production that cause emotional and moral burnout and stress. As a result, employees lack motivation and confidence in the performance of their work (Tourigny et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2016).
2.	Mobbing in the workplace	First of all, cases of bossing, when an employee is bullied by their manager, can be found in the working environment. Managers undermine the competence of lower managers or their subordinates, criticise their appearance or age, discredit their relatives, pay too much attention to their background, and shift the responsibility for emerging problems with suppliers, clients, etc. Second, there are cases of staffing (mobbing “from below”) which prevent a manager from performing their direct responsibilities and discredit their activity (including provocative behaviour of employees, sabotage, rumours, intrigues, etc.). Third, there are cases of bullying when one employee or a group of employees are intentionally bullied by a certain person through ill-intentioned punishment and humiliating actions. If an employee is not provided with the required materials and tools to perform their job, if they are placed in an open plan office, isolated from information, distracted from important matters, and threatened with unemployment, etc., it also causes absenteeism.
3.	Looking for a job	The period of an employee’s presence in an organisation prior to their dismissal can hardly be called productive. Such physical presence can be considered as absenteeism. Without revealing their intentions, an employee spends their working time talking on the phone with their future employers or acquaintances who might know about some job offers, sending out their CV, or checking their e-mail for responses. The employee also becomes less disciplined in some aspects, for example, spends too much time on lunch breaks or going for a smoke.

Source: authors.

Second, employees who tend to be absent from work can be categorised by the *frequency and duration of their absence from work*. Most modern scholars base their research on the classification by Stopp (1993). According to Stopp (1993), frequent and short-term absences from work are typical for young employees with little work experience, married women with children, untrained unskilled workers, and skilled workers without specialised qualifications. This group includes employees from big cities; employees who often change their job; employees who consider their working conditions insufficient; employees who are not satisfied with their boss; and employees with a negative opinion of the enterprise and low solidarity. Rare but long-term absences from work are characteristic of older employees with long-term work experience; employees from small towns; employees with no family or children; qualified workers and specialists; employees who rarely or never change their job and well-motivated employees who are happy with their working conditions; responsible workers with a high level of solidarity; employees applying for a pension; disabled and equal-status persons.

Modern studies show that there are sectoral differences in the duration of absence of employees from work. For example, short-term absences from work in the public sector of Norway are more typical for women than for men, and the rate of absences decreases with the growing level of education. An ineffective choice of applicants for available job positions is also a significant cause of absenteeism. However, this factor is of low importance in the case of long-term absenteeism caused mainly by poor work motivation.

Third, an informational basis for the analysis of the situation of absence from work in an organisation can be developed by following these eight steps:

Step 1. First of all, providing a clear definition of the parameters of such phenomenon as “sickness”. Second, creating an organisational classifier of absenteeism variations due to medical reasons: sickness, a course of treatment, accident with or without further payment. Third, calculating absolute and relative indicators of absence from work (as a percentage of working days a month, without days off).

Step 2. Determining the dynamics of the level of sickness (in average annual figures) for the past 5 years. Distribution of the average sickness figures by months for the past 5 years. Identification of typical seasonal fluctuations without any sensible medical explanation (flu epidemic, coronavirus pandemic, emergency job, etc.).

Step 3. Calculating average annual sickness figures by departments and groups for the past 3 years (in the case of pandemics this can be calculated monthly). Identification of critical production areas and determination of the essence and specific features of working processes within them.

Step 4. Distribution of the cases of sickness by days of the week, taking into account the normal situation that means theoretically the distribution must be even.

Step 5. Study of the causes of situations in order to identify the sicknesses (a list of diseases: virus diseases (in the current situation, a coronavirus can be listed as a separate item), cold-related diseases, vascular diseases, musculoskeletal diseases, ENT diseases, ophthalmic diseases, mental illnesses, etc.) which lead to the highest sickness rates. In collaboration with social insurance agencies defining the specific character of the situation in an organisation related to this issue.

Step 6. Determining the amount of payment for the missed time in terms of the absolute amount for the past several years, roubles (the period is defined by the organisation); calculating the sum of money that could have been saved in case of a lower sickness rate, per percentage point.

Step 7. Identification of critical groups: age, sex, marital status, parental status, multishift work (Frick et al., 2020), type of activity, nationality, residential status (migrants count), frequent business trips, etc.

Step 8. Determination of the group (in quantitative terms) of employees with a zero rate of absence from work during working time for the past year, two years, and three years (without known cases of presenteeism). Determination of a real list of token (without any significant costs for the organisation) rewards for these employees (a season ticket to an entertainment or a sports institution, a bunch of flowers, a meeting with one of the top managers at their workplace, etc.).

A hypothesis is often formed during the analysis of absences from work in an organisation. If it is confirmed, it allows paying more attention to the measures for the reduction of absenteeism. The content of the hypothesis: a rather small group (older employees, generation Z employees, women with children, addicted employees) makes up a significant share of the total figure of absenteeism in the workplace. For example, 75% (or 60%, according to another study) of all absences come from 12% of the employees. The frequency and the duration of absence of these employees from work must be studied in detail.

Organisations use different calculations and formulas for the analysis depending on whether absences are measured more globally or individually. If absences are analysed regarding the whole

organisation or its structural subdivision, the calculations are performed according to formula 1. The term “subdivision” can be interpreted as a workshop, a department, or a working group.

$$\text{Group indicator of absences from work} = \frac{\text{All cases of absence for a certain period, days}}{\text{Total number of working days in a period}} \times 100$$

Formula 1. Group value of absences from work

*The numerator of the formula.* It is rather hard to define the number of the days of absence from work (in an organisation on the whole, in a subdivision, or a group).

As for western European enterprises, this value is calculated by the HR department. A specialist from this department has to add up all the days of absence of the subdivision’s employees and present the information about the quantitative value of this figure. Depending on the goal and the subject matter of the analysis, it can be conducted by the level of education, by professional groups, by the job and civil (resident/migrant) status of the employee, as well as by sociodemographic characteristics, such as sex, age, nationality, or marital status.

The calculations can be performed in several forms: the figures of absences due to sickness, due to accidents, due to training leave, or breaks for breastfeeding mothers, etc. Sometimes the calculations can be incorrect as some people do not clearly understand what absenteeism really means. The question of the values in the numerator (whether to count all absences of employees or only those due to sickness or accidents) remains under discussion. The questions of addictions, or absences from work due to alcohol, drug or other addiction, should also be clarified.

*The denominator of the formula* is the total number of working days in a period. This value is calculated as the sum of all working days of all employees of a subdivision. Different periods of time, such as a quarter, a month, or a week, can be used as periods. In Germany, while performing this analysis, they recalled a popular wisdom about a “Blue Monday”, a day of idleness and absence from work after the weekend. The value of absence from work on this day is higher as compared to other days. In Russia, it is also true about the working days after long holidays. To monitor the situation, it is reasonable to analyse it through the comparison of the figures for various periods of equal duration (by groups).

Although the formula (1) is really simple, it must be taken into account that the smaller the studied groups are, the less indicative this value is. For example, two out of four employees were sick in one of the periods. As for the whole enterprise, this figure does not arouse concern, but if calculated by the formula, it gives a value of 50%. Consequently, it is advisable for such subdivisions to calculate the absences as an absolute expression for a certain period of time (formula 2).

Group indicator of absences from work = Number of absences of a group from work within the period

Formula 2. Group value of absences from work

The value of absences of an individual employee from work is calculated by formula 3.

$$\text{Individual value of} \quad \text{All absences of an employee for the period, days}$$

$$\frac{\text{absences from work}}{\text{Expected working time of an employee within the period, days}} \times 100$$

Formula 3. Individual value of absences from work

Each enterprise can have its own interpretation of absences of their employees from work as well as of the duration of the analysed period. It is important for the analysis to avoid the effect of “comparing apples and oranges,” that is comparing incomparable values.

The calculation of absolute values also makes sense if we are talking about a season worker with a flexible working time, or an employer is interested in the expenses caused by the hours or days of absence of an employee from work. In this case, formulas 4 and 5 are used for the calculation.

Individual value of absences = All absences of an employee from work within the period

Formula 4. Individual value of absences from work

Expenses by days of absences from work per person = Days of absences from work x costs per day of absence

Formula 5. Costs of absence of an employee from work

The next value calculated at an enterprise can be the value of an average period of time between the absences of an employee from work. It allows calculating the time that passes before the employee is absent again. The shorter this period is, the more expenses the enterprise bears (formula 6).

$$\frac{\text{Average period between the days of absence from work}}{\frac{\text{All days between the absences from work}}{\text{Number of periods of presence.}}} \times 100$$

Formula 6. Average period between the absences from work

$$\frac{\text{Average cost of a sick leave = day}}{\frac{\text{Employee's salary+ Average employer costs}}{\text{Working days}}}$$

Formula 7. Average cost of a sick leave day (absence from work)

Fourth, the analysis of the dependence and consequences related to employee absence from work is completed to provide a better understanding of the absenteeism situation in an organisation, to identify risk groups, and, accordingly, to manage the problem in a targeted way.

The following parameters can be used to classify dependencies related to employee absence from work: first, age (younger employees are absent from work more often than older employees; the duration

of absence of older employees is longer as compared to younger employees), secondly, gender (as for the number of days, women are absent from work more often than men) (Bierla et al., 2013; Melsom & Mastekaasa, 2018); third, type of activity (public sector employees decide against work more often than employees in the private sector) (Mastekaasa, 2020); fourth, qualification (the higher the qualification is, the lower the value of absence from work is); fifth, responsibility (as for the resolution of production tasks, employees with low responsibility are absent from work more often than those with high personal responsibility for their functional duties); sixth, job compensation (production workers working on an hourly rate are absent from work more often than office workers receiving a fixed salary); seventh, nationality (foreign employees are absent from work more often than native employees); eighth, group size (a relatively small number of employees are responsible for a bigger share of absences from work); ninth, days of the week (Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are relatively “quite”, whereas on Mondays and Fridays, the periods of absence from work increase. The situation is the same on working days that fall on holidays, before them, between them, or after them). A detailed representation of the possible consequences of absence from work forms a real picture of the problems that are often not considered to be significant by a manager and lead to a risk of making a complicated decision when they emerge. Possible consequences of absences from work are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Possible consequences of absences from work

No.	Consequences of absence from work for the organisation
	Group 1. Consequences for staff
1.	Additional workload on colleagues
2.	Denial of leave for an employee
3.	Deterioration of the organisational environment
4.	Professional degradation of employees
	Group 2. Consequences for management
5.	Complications in planning work
6.	Replacement of absent employees
7.	Adaptation of an employee who is temporarily standing in for an absent employee
8.	Coordination of staff movement
9.	Organisational activities, including payment for overtime work
	Group 3. Marketing consequences
10.	Loss of image
11.	Unsatisfied clients
	Group 4. Financial consequences
12.	Coordination expenses
13.	Costly (social) service
	Group 5. Production consequences
14.	Production fault
15.	Loss of quality
16.	Decrease in turnover
17.	Decrease in work performance
18.	Possible damage of unfamiliar machines and equipment by employees replacing those who are absent from work

Source: authors.

Fifth, a customised classifier for the causes of absenteeism and presenteeism for each organisation can be used to create a catalogue of preventive measures for decreasing the frequency of downtime in an organisation due to the absence of employees (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Preventive measures for the reduction of downtime frequency due to the absence of sick employees from work

No.	Preventive measures
<i>Group 1. Causes of a medical nature</i>	
1.	Identification and elimination of the causes of accidents
2.	Improvement of work on the formation of workplaces for those job positions that are defined as being critical due to a high rate of sickness and for certain reasons (folding tables, replacing a concrete floor with a wooden floor, or eliminating draughts, etc.)
3.	Health maintenance programmes in collaboration with social insurance (back therapy training, movement school, nutrition, or autogenic training, etc.)
4.	Consensus with trade unions on the degree of privacy protection for employees and a deeper examination of the nature of a sickness
5.	Enhancement of organisational sports (exercise machines, renting swimming pool lanes, morning occupational gymnastics, online recommendations for working on a computer, or family sports competitions, etc.) When hiring, special attention must be paid to an employee's critical features, such as red eyes or problems with their back if the position is in a subdivision with sedentary activity. Identify employees with addictions (to alcohol, drugs, shopping, or gambling, etc.)
6.	Collaboration with social insurance agencies and the enterprise's medical unit in questionable cases
7.	Identification of the cases of depersonalisation due to emotional burnout
8.	Sequential control of the situation and taking responsibility for such activities as informing and confirming the cases of an employee's sickness (an employee must provide a witnessed document confirming the reasons of their absence from work)
9.	Keeping in touch with an absent employee (by phone, e-mail, or in person)
10.	Conducting a talk with an employee who has returned to work after a sickness (including preventive talks)
11.	Standardised documentation for the talk upon the return of an employee
<i>Group 2. Organisational and administrative causes</i>	
12.	Keeping in touch with doctors who often give sick leave without any objections
13.	When hiring, special attention must be paid to an employee's critical features, such as red eyes or problems with their back if the position is in a subdivision with sedentary activity. Identify employees with addictions (to alcohol, drugs, shopping, or gambling, etc.)
14.	Intensified care of the staff on the part of the management
15.	Make the consequences for absences from work and downtime visible
16.	Informing employees about absences from work and their consequences (systematised statistical data which is useful in the process of a discussion)
17.	Disciplinary actions (suspension of payments for time missed, including the deduction of payments in case of questionable behaviour during a sickness, official confirmation from the first day of sickness, etc.)
18.	Deactivation of e-mail and providing a fixed period of time (half an hour at the beginning and at the end of a working day) for personal communications in order to reduce "mixing" work and private life during the working day Cameras monitoring employee behaviour outside their workplaces (smoking, communication, or talking on the phone in the hall, etc.)
19.	Dissolution of employment (signing an employment termination agreement by mutual consent of the enterprise and employee or dismissal) in case of a highly expressed absence from work being recorded for a long period of time with negligible chances of improvement)
<i>Group 3. Working conditions</i>	
17.	Equipping existing workplaces in order to reduce the thresholds of obstacles that an employee may encounter after a long absence
18.	Moving to other workplaces



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19. Identification and elimination of management problems
  20. Conducting research on the topic “Labour satisfaction/production environment” (as one of the measures for reducing downtime)
  21. Regular discussions regarding absence from work with individual groups of employees  
*Group 4. Management (including management style)*
  22. Appreciating employees who are rarely absent from work (including, for example, different kinds of rewards such as lump payments for going to work and back home by bicycle)
  23. Developing an anti-mobbing strategy and informing employees of what they should do in case of bullying, undermining of authority, or bossing
  24. Supporting managers due to the fact that the topic of downtime is harder to discuss if an employee is close to them (the algorithm of a discussion, legal dependences, what can and cannot be done, useful criticism, etc.)
  25. Supporting employees with children (an agreement with kindergartens, partial payment for a babysitter, “mum for hour/day” programmes), consultations in the organisation with visiting psychologists and teachers, flexible work schedule, providing a list of websites with addresses of childcare agencies/specialists, playrooms with a nursery teacher in the organisation.
  26. Organising a programme involving taking care of elderly relatives and care for children. The idea of the programme is to help employees take care of the elderly at home with the help of a nurse (with partial reduced charge), provide a shortened working day with the possibility to perform some tasks from home, raise the spirits of employees through educational and informational support, and conduct talks with colleagues and manager
  24. Regularly keeping managers up-to-date (as a suggestion: useful and actionable information, or discussion on the topic)
  25. Step-by-step adaptation (elimination of the threshold of obstacles) of an employee after a long absence supported by social insurance (sickness benefit fund)
  26. Formation of an “attendance culture” (Ruhle & Süß, 2020).
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Source: authors.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The goal of the study was to develop preventive measures for decreasing absenteeism and presenteeism in organisations. The goal is specific as it is aimed at the development of a catalogue of preventive measures. The goal is measurable as all measurements are based on the provided calculation models. The goal is achievable as it is based on the experience accumulated by international and national researchers. Collected statistical information allows conducting an analysis with regard to states, types of activity, groups of workers. The results of the study are important as they contribute to the promotion of the idea that absenteeism and presenteeism have destructive effects. They also help to justify the proposed systematisation of the phenomena and preventive measures based on the four major groups of causes.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Empirical scientific methods were used during all stages of the research. First, the method of observation was used to form an array of primary information, which enabled showing the phenomena of absenteeism and presenteeism as social and widespread phenomena. That is why the scope of the study goes beyond the units of observation. Second, the method of comparing allowed us to identify similarities and differences in the causes and consequences for different categories of employees. Third, the data were classified by cases of absenteeism and presenteeism in organizations. Classification parameters were selected. These parameters were used to classify the data. Statistical tables were built to show quantitative and qualitative indicators of absenteeism and presenteeism by groups. Empirical methods of data analysis were used to study the problem on the theoretical level and to draw valid conclusions.

## 6. Findings

Firstly, the phenomena of absenteeism and presenteeism are influenced by factors originating with the employer, state policy, and the employees themselves. The phenomena tend to expand, which threatens the competitiveness of the economic entity on the market of goods and services and the labour market. Employees also lose their competitive edge due to emotional burnout, lack of innovative competences, and commitment to work. Second, among the relevant causes of employee absenteeism related to working conditions and the desire to change the job are the low involvement with work, (i.e. lack of self-confidence or motivation), mobbing in the workplace, and employees' desire to seek a new job. Third, the analysis of the phenomena of absenteeism and presenteeism in a company can be started with the development of a customised classification of employees who are prone to frequent and short-term absences from work and a rare and very long-term absences in the workplace. The information used to analyse the situation of absenteeism in the workplace should be presented by means of a step-by-step procedure which involves identifying the parameters of sickness; creating an organisational classifier of absenteeism variations due to medical reasons (disease, treatment, accident with or without further payment) and calculating absolute and relative indicators of absence from work. Fourth, the developed four-element catalogue of preventive measures for decreasing the frequency of downtime in an organisation due to the absence of employees, which includes such groups as "health", "organisation and administrative work", "working conditions", and "management", will allow employers to shape their diagnostic policy in cooperation with medical institutions and HR departments, and to take preventive measures to reduce absenteeism and presenteeism rates in the organization.

## 7. Conclusion

Absenteeism and presenteeism are factors contributing to team destabilisation and tarnishing the image of the organization in the labour market. They also have an economic impact. The attempt to use a scientific approach to the diagnosis and the prevention of these phenomena can be justified by the fact that causes of absence from work and the presence of sick employees in the workplace tend to transform. This happens, in particular, due to a change of values (Ruhle & Süß, 2020), rapid changes in job and position requirements, and lack of qualified specialists and managers. Changing forms of employment represent a new segment for research. Remote work, which used to be a rare event and has become a widespread phenomenon during the lockdown, have given way to new issues related to work discipline and employee health and allowing or preventing employees from completing their tasks. In case of the coronavirus, infected employees accomplish their work distantly from home using their computer, and give lectures, using digital platforms. At the same time, they are on a sick leave. A failure to communicate on time can be due to issues with network connection. Therefore, absenteeism and presenteeism are acquiring new characteristics, which can become an object for further research.

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