

Work absenteeism and its impact on productivity in the administrative area

Absentismo laboral y su impacto en la productividad del área administrativa

Betty Acosta*

ABSTRACT

The article examines in detail how absenteeism affects the administrative area of an organization. To address this issue, a literature review was conducted, incorporating previous studies and case analyses. The findings consistently reveal that absenteeism generates adverse consequences on the efficiency of administrative operations, with potential repercussions on job quality and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, contributing factors to absenteeism were identified, such as workplace climate, compensation, and interpersonal relationships, which are crucial in the work environment, as tensions and conflicts can arise due to absenteeism. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying absenteeism in the administrative area. Based on these results, strategies to mitigate absenteeism and enhance productivity in the administrative sphere are explored. Approaches focused on promoting a positive work climate, equitable salary reviews, and the implementation of programs that foster healthy interpersonal relationships are discussed. These strategies aim to reduce absenteeism, strengthen the resilience and commitment of administrative staff.

Keywords: Work environment, Quality of work, Efficiency, Work environment, Remuneration, Interpersonal relationships.

*Mgtr. – Docente Investigador Instituto Tecnológico Superior Corporativo Edwards Deming b.acosta@deming.edu.ec , <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5493-5416>

REVISTA TECNOLÓGICA
ciencia y educación
Edwards Deming

ISSN: 2600-5867

Atribución/Reconocimiento-NoComercial- CompartirIgual 4.0 Licencia Pública Internacional — CC

BY-NC-SA 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/legalcode.es>

Edited by: Tecnológico Superior Corporativo Edwards Deming

January - March Vol. 9 - I - 2025

<https://revista-edwardsdeming.com/index.php/es>
e-ISSN: 2576-0971

Received: June 03, 2024

Approved: October 09, 2024

Page 28-35

RESUMEN

El artículo examina detalladamente cómo el absentismo laboral incide en el área administrativa de una organización. Para abordarlo, se llevó a cabo una revisión bibliográfica que incorpora estudios previos y análisis de casos. Los hallazgos revelan de manera consistente que el ausentismo laboral genera consecuencias adversas en la eficiencia de las operaciones administrativas, con posibles repercusiones en la calidad del trabajo y en la satisfacción del cliente. Dentro de los factores identificados como contribuyentes al fenómeno del absentismo, se destacan elementos como el clima laboral, la remuneración y las relaciones interpersonales en el entorno de trabajo. Estos factores son cruciales, porque las tensiones y conflictos presentes en el ambiente laboral pueden influir en la propensión de los empleados a ausentarse. Este análisis ofrece una comprensión más profunda de los mecanismos que subyacen al ausentismo laboral en el área administrativa. A partir de estos resultados, se exploran estrategias para mitigar el ausentismo y mejorar la productividad en el ámbito administrativo. Se discuten enfoques centrados en la promoción de un clima laboral positivo, revisiones salariales equitativas y la implementación de programas que fomenten relaciones interpersonales saludables. Estas estrategias apuntan a reducir el ausentismo, fortalecer la resiliencia y el compromiso del personal administrativo.

Palabras clave: Entorno de trabajo, Calidad del trabajo, Eficiencia, Clima laboral, Remuneración, Relaciones interpersonales.

INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism is a widespread concern that affects many companies and organizations globally, Molinera Mateos (2006) defines absenteeism as “Any absence from work, whether justified or not, computable by the chronological difference between the contracted work time and the time actually performed” (p. 19). Tatamuez-Tarapues et al. (2019) have defined it as the “non-attendance at work for a period of one or more working days, considered as a health problem with a growing interest due to its impact on quality of life, mental health of the worker, economy and organizational competitiveness”. The authors, referring to the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), indicate that absences

due to vacations, strikes, pregnancy and deprivation of liberty are not considered absenteeism, and that another form of absenteeism occurs when the employee does not perform his or her duties despite attending work. Thus, absenteeism considers when the employee has inactivity or absence in their designated work schedule, which has no justification or has been made repeatedly and affects the performance of the company.

The study of absenteeism is not a new research topic, early studies such as Harrison and Martocchio (1998), focused on the causes of absenteeism, a topic that can also be analyzed from its effects. The authors established three periods for interpretation, for which they used 20 years of information, short term (1 day-3 months), medium term (4-12 months) and long term (> 12 months), focusing on the study of the medium term. The International Labor Organization (ILO) indicated that on average 5% of the workforce is absent from work daily, ranging from 2 to 10% depending on the activity and management culture (ILO/ILO, 2003).

For his part, Velarde (2022), in his work carried out in Spain, indicates that, in the period analyzed, the public sectors led the ranking of absenteeism. Of these, the main ones were health and social services activities, followed by public administration and defense and social security.

According to Tatamuez-Tarapues et al. (2019) “this problem has been catalogued as a phenomenon that generates direct and indirect negative consequences in organizations, in terms of costs, productivity, administrative and human resource attrition”. Indicating that the absenteeism of employees to their workplace, is detrimental in different components of companies, generating a synergistic impact that translates into costs. In this context, absenteeism has a direct impact on the productivity of organizations, since the lack of employees can cause delays in projects and tasks. In addition to the tangible impact on productivity, absenteeism can also have intangible but significant consequences on the work environment. Employee morale can be negatively affected when the frequent absence of colleagues places an additional burden on those present. This imbalance can contribute to a decrease in staff commitment and motivation, which, in turn, affects the overall work climate. A demotivating work environment can generate a cascade of negative effects, from a deterioration in the quality of working relationships to increased employee turnover (Borda et al., 2017). Several factors contribute to the phenomenon of absenteeism and it is essential to identify them in order to effectively address the problem. Among these factors are work climate, interpersonal relationships, and illness. A positive work climate can act as a buffer against absenteeism, fostering an environment where employees feel valued and motivated. Fair pay also plays a crucial role, as dissatisfaction with wages can drive employees to miss work to attend job interviews in search of better opportunities (Berón et al., 2021).

For their part, Tatamuez-Tarapues et al. (2019), in their work on absenteeism in Latin America, indicate that it is essential to recognize the employee as an essential part of

the organization, valuing their contributions in business decision making. In addition, it is important to foster their motivation and enthusiasm, promoting the development of their professional skills. Creating a sense of belonging to the organization, improving the work environment and interpersonal relationships, which in turn will ensure employee retention and the proper performance of their duties.

As the aforementioned authors state, absenteeism covers a broad spectrum, and it is necessary that not only individuals but also companies become aware of the important losses caused by absenteeism, not only from an economic point of view, but also that they look beyond it, visualizing the causes both at a social and mental level that can affect the productivity of an organization. The employee will produce more if the environment around him motivates and recognizes his effort. The review seeks to understand the effects of absenteeism on the administrative processes of an organization, particularly its productivity, while observing the causes of absenteeism; for this purpose, a methodology has been developed, as described below.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this descriptive review study, with an inductive qualitative approach, a literature review of studies on the topic of absenteeism was carried out. In the selection process, keywords were used in databases such as PubMed, Scielo and Google Scholar, in order to identify relevant articles. The inclusion criteria for the studies were: 1) To be written in English or Spanish; 2) To have been published mainly in the last 5 years; and, 3) To contain relevant information on absenteeism and its impact on productivity in the administrative area.

However, an exceptional selection of a longer period of years was justified by the need for a comprehensive and detailed view of the evolution of the topic over time, thus allowing a better contextualization and understanding of the trends and changes in this field.

The findings were systematized in a frequency table of recurrent themes in the literature and media reviewed, which presented a general idea of those themes of greatest relevance.

RESULTS

The detailed results of the literature review shed light on the significant impact of absenteeism on productivity in the administrative area of organizations.

From the perspective of the effects of absenteeism, the consistency in the studies reviewed reveals that the negative consequences of absenteeism are not only limited to lost time, but also extend to the quality of work and the work environment. The frequent absence of employees in the administrative area can generate interruptions in

the continuity of operations, potentially affecting the delivery of services and products with the desired standards.

In the analysis of the articles on absenteeism, there was a recurrent frequency in the appearance of several thematic areas. Among the most prominent was “impact on productivity”, discussed in 5 studies, followed by contributing factors, addressed in 3 studies. The other items presented lower frequencies. These findings give an insight into the relevant topics of absenteeism in the academic literature reviewed.

DISCUSSION

The literature review highlighted the importance of understanding the underlying factors that contribute to or relate to absenteeism in the management context. Each theme is analyzed according to its frequency of occurrence in the review. The discussion of absenteeism and its impact on productivity in the administrative area is fundamental to understanding the complex dynamics that affect organizational functioning. Impact on productivity. Work absenteeism, defined as the unscheduled absence of employees during working hours, can have significant consequences on the creation and efficiency of a company. It is a problem that affects organizations, including its administrative area. Borda et al. (2017), argue that absenteeism is a social, economic and labor problem that has a great impact on the worker who is absent, but also on the company that sees its procurement affected, which in the end results in a slowdown of economic and social growth in different sectors of society.

According to Borda et al. (2017), absenteeism can generate a decrease in manufacturing due to the interruption of operations and the additional workload for the employees present.

In addition, the impact of absenteeism in the administrative area can be even more pronounced. Unplanned absences in administrative staff can lead to delays in reporting, medical leave tracking, and adjustments in human resource planning, which directly affects operational efficiency and the company's ability to maintain a smooth operation.

Contributing Factors

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been concerned with analyzing the issue from the causal by diseases, indicating that initiatives from organizations can contribute to reduce it by approximately 27%, while the reduction of medical costs by companies, would be in the order of 26% (WHO, 2017).

According to Sesame HR (2024), among the causes of absenteeism, there are: Personal problems, Motivation and satisfaction, Unreported health problems and Poor time management.

Mitigation strategies

It is crucial that organizations implement effective absenteeism management strategies to mitigate these impacts and ensure an efficient and profitable operation in the administrative area.

The literature reviewed highlights the relevance of interpersonal relationships in attendance decision-making. Tensions and conflicts between colleagues can create a tense work environment, encouraging employees to be absent to avoid uncomfortable or stressful situations. Identifying and addressing these interpersonal issues proves to be a crucial component in managing absenteeism.

Sesame HR (2022) proposes several strategies to prevent or mitigate absenteeism, including:

- i. Favorable work environment: Generate work motivation, taking care of work spaces, integrating departments, promoting meeting days, etc.
- ii. Corporate culture: planning by incorporating the option of teleworking. Recognizing achievements, maintaining fluid communication, generating links between managers and their teams.
- iii. Feedback: that workers offer and receive feedback based on communication and follow-up strategies.
- iv. Training: Training plan to promote the career plans of each worker.
- v. Performance evaluation: to recognize the effort and work of an employee.
- vi. Digital disconnection: respect disconnection times.

Work climate

From the point of view of causes, according to Baptista et al. (2016) the negative environment can act as a catalyst for absenteeism, as employees may feel demotivated or disengaged from their work environment. Interpersonal relationships were identified as key elements that influence the frequency of absenteeism, because the discomfort of those who assumed other people's tasks will be evident in the work coexistence. On the other hand, in terms of the effects, the absent colleague may suffer because his tasks are delegated to his colleagues or because his internal clients are unable to continue with their work or finish it in full due to his absence.

Economic effects

Absenteeism presents significant challenges to productivity in the administrative area, affecting both the operational efficiency and the financial resources of a company. In this

regard, Sesame HR (2022) mentions that absenteeism generates a great impact on the maintenance of the organization's wealth and causes negative results. In addition, it increases personnel costs and increases the workload, generating a bad working environment.

Regarding the importance of work results, it is important to note that absenteeism can negatively affect the quality of work and productivity. If workers are frequently absent, it is possible that the rhythm of work is lost and tasks have to be repeated, which can lead to an increase in prices and a decrease in the quality of work. In financial terms, absenteeism can also represent a significant financial burden for companies. The direct cost of absenteeism in terms of lost hours and disability payments can represent up to 4% of a company's total payroll, underscoring the importance of proactively addressing this problem.

Relationship to employee well-being

According to Baptista et al. (2016) dissatisfaction with pay can drive employees to seek more attractive opportunities or avoid investing more time in tasks, contributing to mediocre results and increasing the rate of absenteeism. To manage absenteeism, organizations can implement wellness policies and occupational health programs, as well as promote a positive and flexible work environment (Cascio, 2021).

REFERENCES

- Baptista, D., Méndez, S., & Zunino, N. (2016). Ausentismo laboral. Universidad de la República, 6(8).
- Berón, E. A., Mejía, D., & Castrillón, O. D. (2021). Principales causas de ausentismo laboral: una aplicación desde la minería de datos. *Información tecnológica*, 32(2), 11-18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07642021000200011>
- Borda, M. C., Rolón, E., Díaz-Piraquive, F. N., & González, J. (2017). Ausentismo laboral: impacto en la productividad y estrategias de control desde los programas de salud empresarial. Universidad del Rosario. https://doi.org/10.48713/10336_13583
- Borda, M., Rolón, E., & Javier, G. (2017). Ausentismo laboral: Impacto en la productividad y estrategias de control desde los programas de salud empresarial. https://doi.org/10.48713/10336_13583
- Cascio, W. F. (2021). *Managing Human Resources: : Productivity, Quality of Work Life, Profits.* (12th Edition). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Harrison, D. A., & Martocchio, J. J. (1998). Time for Absenteeism: A 20-Year Review of Origins, Offshoots, and Outcomes. *Journal of Management*, 24(3), 305-350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639802400303>

- Molinera Mateos, J. F. (2006). *Absentismo laboral. Causas. Control y análisis. Nuevas formas técnicas para su reducción.* (2da ed.). FC Editorial.
- OIT/ILO. (2003, junio 1). OIT: El trabajo peligroso mata a millones y cuesta billones | International Labour Organization. <https://www.ilo.org/es/publications/oit-el-trabajo-peligroso-mata-millones-y-cuesta-billones>
- OMS. (2017, noviembre 30). Protección de la salud de los trabajadores. Organización Mundial de la Salud. <https://www.who.int/es/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/protecting-workers'-health>
- Sesame HR. (2022, abril 19). *Absentismo laboral: ¿qué es y cómo evitarlo en la empresa?* Sesame HR. <https://www.sesamehr.es/blog/que-es-el-absentismo-laboral-y-como-evitarlo-en-la-empresa/>
- Sesame HR. (2024, junio 17). *Gestionar las faltas al trabajo | ¿Cómo hacerlo desde RRHH?* Sesame HR. <https://www.sesamehr.es/blog/faltar-trabajo-sin-avisar/>
- Tatamuez-Tarapues, R. A., Domínguez, A. M., & Matabanchoy-Tulcán, S. M. (2019). Revisión sistemática: Factores asociados al ausentismo laboral en países de América Latina. *Universidad y Salud*, 21(1), 100-112. <https://doi.org/10.22267/rus.192101.143>
- Velarde, G. D. (2022, abril 27). *El absentismo laboral se duplica en la Administración Pública y le cuesta 6.000 millones de euros al Estado.* Diario ABC. https://www.abc.es/economia/abci-absentismo-laboral-duplica-administracion-publica-y-cuesta-6000-millones-euros-estado-202204271407_noticia.html