



ABSENTEEISM AMONG THE TEA ESTATE LABOURERS: A CASE STUDY ON THE RAM BAHADUR THAKUR (P) LTD, IDUKKI DIST, KERALA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Absenteeism is the term generally used to refer to unscheduled employee absences from the workplace. It is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation. Absenteeism is a big barrier for any kind of organization because its effect on organization growth. As we all know that human resource is an important part of organization and without them we can't imagine the organization. The information needed for the research has been gathered from primary and secondary data. The response given by the Laborers of the company is analyzed and interpreted using different types of statistical tools which are percentage analysis, Chi square. This article throws light to increase the productivity and increase growth of an organization. The sample size of the article is 120. The questionnaire method as survey is used as a tool for collecting the primary data. The questionnaire has been designed by the researcher according to the objective of the study. A good interpersonal relationship for the smooth functioning of the organizational activities should be maintained

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INTRODUCTION

The absenteeism generally means employees staying absent from work. It is the absence of an employee when he is scheduled to work. The word absenteeism for the first time was defined in a circular of the Labour Department, Government of India. It was issued to provincial governments. The circular defined absenteeism as "total man-shifts lost because of absence of a percentage of the total number of man-shifts scheduled."¹ The co-operation of the labourers and workers in an industry or an organization is very important for the better health and smooth running of that organization. Absenteeism is one of the vexing problems of almost all the organizations which not only adversely affect the management but also its working environment, its production schedule and finally the profit of that organization. In real terms absenteeism is the failure to report for work when a worker is scheduled to work. A worker is considered as a scheduled worker when the employer has works available for him and that worker is aware of it. It hurts the organization badly resulting in the loss of production, increased cost of hiring additional staff and low morale among the workers of that organization.

According to the Webster's Dictionary, "absenteeism is the practice or habit of being an 'absence', and an 'absenter' is one who regularly stays away."² The various definitions forwarded by different institutions regarding absenteeism are as follows: According to the Encyclopedia of social science absenteeism is "time lost in industrial establishments by the avoidable and un-avoidable absence of employees."³ Another definition on the report of the working party of the Cotton Textile Industries defines that "absenteeism is the average percentage of workers absent from work per day for any reason"⁴. The problem of absenteeism is not just a problem of the under-developed countries but has become a global phenomenon.

Review of Literature

Gethsi Beulah and Venkatrama Raju D(2014) the study found that The term absenteeism refers to the failure to attend to work. It is one of the major problems faced by BPO firm across the globe today. Unscheduled absenteeism badly hurts the progress of an organization resulting in loss of productivity, increased costs in hiring additional staff and low morale among the workers. This Article discusses workplace absenteeism, which is defined as unscheduled employee absences from the workplace. It describes the different types of absenteeism that exist and the problems that it causes, such as how it cuts into a company's efficiency, profitability and sometimes even workplace harmony and discusses some common factors across the influence of employee absence.

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Barkha Gupta (2013) in her research work is shows that the Absenteeism is the term generally used to refer to unscheduled employee absences from the workplace. It is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation. Absenteeism is a big barrier for any kind of organization because its effect on organization growth. As we all know that human resource is an important part of organization and without them we can't imagine the organization. Absenteeism means employee absent for the duty due to reason of sickness, social functions, death of relatives etc. absenteeism of employees is normal but when ratio increase that directly effect on organization performance and also increase the cost and workload in organization. Absence control can often be an important step in the process of reducing business costs. Because of competitive pressures, companies can no longer afford to carry unnecessary absence that they may have tolerated in the past. Therefore, many companies are focusing on the issue of eliminating, or at least reducing, unnecessary levels of absence. This research paper show the how absenteeism is a big barrier for retail sector organization and how its give the inverse effect on organization growth and development. Prabhu (2013), His study aims to identify factors that result in employees' absenteeism in an organization, which may help the company manager to develop and identify attitudes of employees for minimising absenteeism. Data was collected from 100 steel manufacturing firm organizations adopting random or chance sampling method. The data was subjected to simple percentage analysis, for demographic variables and chi square test for employee absenteeism. The results indicated the necessity feedback on employees performance. A good interpersonal relationship for the smooth functioning of the organizational activities should be maintained. The gap between absenteisms should be increased.

Chandramouli and M.C.Sandhyarani (2012) in their study shows that the Absenteeism has always been one of the persistent problems in industry. Absenteeism is generally understood in different ways by different persons. It is commonly understood as an employee or a group of employees remaining absent from work either continuously for a long period or repeatedly for short periods. The study has been conducted to understand the causes for the absenteeism in the company among the employees. From the study, it is found that the low wages, work load, celebration of festivals, unaware of authorized leave etc. are the causes for remaining absent for the work. To conclude, the company has to make the employees to go with an authorized leave or else providing counseling services to the employees by making them aware of these leaves would bring down the absenteeism in the industry.

Employee absenteeism, being a serious financial burden for businesses which wish to continue their struggle in tough competitive conditions of today, has become a very important issue to be resolved (Senel & Senel, 2012). Absenteeism, low performance level, severance and distrustful behaviours are the behaviours that influence the productivity and efficiency of business enterprises (Orucu and Kaplan, 2001). Such behaviours bring high costs to companies and therefore are the issues that must be monitored and dealt with properly. Rosenblatt and Shriom (2004), have studied to predict absenteeism by personal background factors. Prior absenteeism, age, education and supervisory position were

found to be significant predictors of absenteeism frequency, accounting for about 50 percent of the variance in absence frequency. Age is one of the most studied demographic factors for absenteeism. Most studies report a negative relationship between age and absenteeism among employees in general. Older workers will exhibit a lower absence rate because of a higher job commitment and a better person-organization fit that emerges over time (Martocchio, 1989, Kristensen, 1991, Harrison and Martocchio, 1998)

Hackett (1990), found that the negative relationship between tenure and absenteeism. Lambert (2006) stated that tenured employees may feel secure in their job which may lead to a higher level of absenteeism, while she did not measure the impact of tenure it was observed that employees with a high level of tenure were more comfortable in their work environment. Keller (2008) found that there is a positive correlation between absenteeism and tenure. Those with greater tenure reported greater levels of absenteeism. In that study, it is implicated that this may be related to fact that tenured employees time off is not recorded or managed very closely, or given informal time off where as newer employees are managed

Objective of the study

1. To find out the rate of absenteeism among the labourers of the Estate.
2. To study the reasons behind absenteeism of the labourers.
3. To study about the steps taken by the Estate authority to reduce the problem of absenteeism in their Estate
4. To study about the workers attitude towards absenteeism.

METHODOLOGY

The study is containing both primary and secondary data. The sampling size of this study is 120. The data collected from the tea Estate labourers of the Ram Bahadur Thakur (P) Ltd Tea Estate situated in Idukki dist. descriptive research has been used for the study, because the characteristics of particular individual situation or group and to determine the frequency of occurrence of such events. The method of data collection used primary and secondary data. The statistical tools are employed to obtain findings and information in logical sequence from the data collected.

Data Analysis

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Management

The management is fully aware of the problem of absenteeism. The management is suffering a loss of 4000 Kg per day due to the absenteeism problem. Necessary steps are being taken by the authority to reduce the problem. A notice is being served to the labourer remaining absent from work without the prior information of the management which acts as a warning to him for his absence. He may also be suspended from work for three to four days. The annual bonus of 20 p.c. has been paid to the labourers during the festival season. Ration is provided to the labourers at a subsidized rate.

Table 1 Rate of absenteeism of the permanent labourers

Months	Total strength				Total present				Total absent				Abs.Rate (%)
	Male	Female	Adol	Total	Male	Female	Adol	Total	Male	Female	Adol	Total	
Jan	6492	7339	46	13877	5525	6673	2	11930	1237	666	44	1947	14.02
Feb	6729	7702	48	14479	2910	3233	6	6149	3819	4469	42	8330	57.53
Mar	7016	8041	50	15107	4673	6214	3	10890	2343	1827	47	4217	27.91
Apr	6768	7766	48	14582	5257	6457	47	11761	1511	1309	1	2821	19.34
May	7050	8100	50	15200	5194	5916	0	11110	1856	2184	50	4090	26.90
Jun	7325	8450	52	15827	5369	6330	0	11699	1956	2120	52	4128	26.08
Jul	7868	9076	56	17000	5381	6045	0	11426	2487	3031	56	5574	32.78
Aug	7025	8100	50	15175	5154	5997	0	11151	1871	2103	50	4024	26.52
Sept	6768	7752	48	14568	4669	5624	0	10293	2099	2128	50	4277	29.36
Oct	7337	8379	57	15773	5374	6162	5	11541	1963	2217	52	4232	26.83
Nov	7075	8025	75	15175	5319	6274	25	11618	1756	1751	50	3557	23.44
Dec	7330	8354	78	15762	5918	6994	35	12947	1412	1360	43	2815	17.85
Total	84783	97084	658	182525	60473	71719	121	132513	24310	25165	537	50012	27.40

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 Rate of absenteeism of the casual labourers

Months	Total strength				Total present				Total absent				Abs. Rate (%)
	Male	Female	Adol	Total	Male	Female	Adol	Total	Male	Female	Adol	Total	
May	1091	1972	1749	4812	743	1382	447	2572	348	590	1302	2240	46.55
Jun	1330	2820	1831	5981	963	2337	1030	4330	367	483	801	1651	27.60
Jul	1780	3537	1900	7217	1308	2548	1059	4915	472	989	841	2302	31.76
Aug	1700	3275	1899	6874	1053	2192	941	4186	647	1083	958	2688	39.10
Sept	1700	3275	1900	6875	894	1917	728	3539	806	1358	1172	3336	48.52
Oct	1753	3340	1976	7069	949	2157	677	3783	804	1183	1299	3286	46.48
Total	9354	18219	11255	38828	5910	11533	4882	22325	3444	6686	6373	16503	42.50

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 Age wise distribution of the labourers

S NO	Age groups (in years)	No. of samples	Percentage (%)
1	15 – 24	26	21.67
2	25 – 34	28	23.33
3	35 – 44	19	15.83
4	45 – 54	26	21.67
5	55 – 64	17	14.16
6	65 – 74	3	02.50
7	75 and above	1	00.83
TOTAL		120	100

Table 4 Distribution of respondents on the basis of their education

Education levels	No. of samples		Percentage		No. of female	Percentage (%)
	No.	%	male	(%)		
Illiterate	46	38.33	18	39.13	28	60.86
Class I – IV	37	30.38	23	62.16	14	37.84
Class V – VII	31	25.83	22	70.97	09	29.03
Class VIII – X	06	5.00	04	66.67	02	33.33
Above class X	00	0.00	00	00.00	00	00.00
TOTAL	120	100	67	55.83	53	44.17

Table 5 Sex wise distribution of the labourers

No. of males	Percentage (%)	No. of females	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
67	55.83	53	44.17	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 Distribution on the basis of marital status

Married	Percentage (%)	Unmarried	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
91	75.83	29	24.17	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 7 Distribution on the basis of number of children of the respondents

No. of children	No. of samples		Total no. of children	No. of boys		No. of girls	
	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
0	33	27.5	0	0	0		
1	7	5.83	7	5	71.43	2	28.57
2	23	19.17	46	27	58.69	19	41.31
3	20	16.67	60	35	58.33	25	41.67
4	22	18.33	88	46	52.27	43	47.73
5	10	8.33	50	20	40.00	30	60.00
6	4	3.33	24	12	50.00	12	50.00
7	1	0.83	7	3	42.86	4	57.14
TOTAL	120	100	282	148	52.48	134	47.52

Source: Primary Data

Table 8 Length of service in the Estate

S.NO	Length of service (in years)	No. of labourers	Percentage (%)
1	0 – 1 year	10	8.33
2	1 – 2 years	12	10.00
3	2 – 5 years	17	14.17
4	5 – 10 years	18	15.00
5	Above 10 years	63	52.50
TOTAL		120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 9 Monthly wages

S.NO	Monthly wages (in `.)	No. of samples	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 1000	0	
2	1001 – 2000	115	95.83
3	2001 – 3000	0	
4	3001 – 4000	05	4.17
5	4001 and above	0	
TOTAL		120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 10 Weekly presence in work

S.N	No. of days present	No. of labourers	Percentage (%)
1	Everyday	61	50.83
2	5 – 6 days a week	38	31.67
3	3 – 4 days a week	20	16.67
4	Less than 3 days a week	1	0.83
TOTAL		120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 11 Health conditions of the labourers

S.NO	Health conditions	No. of labourers	Percentage
1	Good	64	53.33
2	Starting to affect	13	10.83
3	Deteriorated to some extend	26	21.67
4	Severe	17	14.17
TOTAL		120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 12(A) Absence in work due to health problems:
No. of workers

S.NO	Unable to go to work on health ground	No. of workers		
		Male	Female	Total
1	Absent	20	13	33
		(60.61)	(39.39)	(27.5)
2	Present	47	40	87
		(54.02)	(45.98)	(72.5)
Total		67	53	120
		(55.83)	(44.17)	(100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 12 (B) Absence in work due to health problems:
No. of days

No. of days remaining absent in a week											
Last one week (in days)					Last one month:(in days)						
0	1	2	3	>3	total	0	1-2	2-4	4-6	>6	total
98	6	12	1	3	120	78	11	13	7	11	120
(81.67)	(5)	(10)	(.83)	(2.5)	(100)	(65)	(9.17)	(10.83)	(5.83)	(9.17)	(100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 13(A) Absence in work due to health problems of family concern

Unable to go to work: Sample No.	Reasons for not being able to go to work			No. of reasons stated by the samples for not being able to go to work.
	Parents' bad health	Husband's / wife's bad health	Children's bad health	
TOTAL	43 (55.13)	19 (24.36)	36 (46.16)	98

Source: Primary Data

Table No 14 Days of Absence in work due do health problems of family concern

Causes	Parents' health problems					Health problems of husband / wife					Health problem of children				
	0	1	2	>2	Total	0	1	2	>2	Total	0	1	2	>2	Total
Absent Last-Week (no. of days)	0	1	2	>2	Total	0	1	2	>2	Total	0	1	2	>2	Total
No. of labourers	110	6	3	1	120	116	2	2	0	120	110	4	4	2	120
	(91.67)	(5)	(2.5)	(.83)	(100)	(96.66)	(1.67)	(1.67)	0	(100)	(91.67)	(3.33)	(3.33)	(1.67)	(100)
Absent Last-Month (no. of days)	0	1-2	2-4	>4	Total	0	1-2	2-4	>4	Total	0	1-2	2-4	>4	Total
No. of labourers	77	21	16	6	120	100	7	8	5	120	79	13	11	17	120
	(64.17)	(17.5)	(13.33)	(5)	(100)	(83.33)	(5.83)	(6.67)	(4.17)	(100)	(65.83)	(10.83)	(9.17)	(14.17)	(100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 15 Provision of adequate medical facility

S.NO	Provision of proper medical facilities by the management	No. of workers	Percentage
1	Yes	15	12.5
2	No	105	87.5
3	Total	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Moreover other facilities are also provided such as

- ✓ Free quarter facilities.
- ✓ Clean drinking water.
- ✓ Canteen facility.
- ✓ Shelter for taking rest during work.
- ✓ Medical facilities.
- ✓ Lavatories.
- ✓ Umbrellas and Raincoats.
- ✓ Blankets etc.

The problems which arise between the labourers and management of the Estate are looked into by the management and the grievances are brought to an amicable solution through discussion between the management and the labour unions. In case of any accidents in the Estate or factory, immediate first aid is provided by the authority. There is also the facility of the Estate Hospital. The management is not at all satisfied with the high rate of absenteeism among the labourers in the Estate The management of the Estate has chalked out some measures for controlling the absenteeism problem like serving notice to the absent workers, conducting a domestic enquiry by the management committee and dismissal from work in the case of finding guilty of being absent for false reasons.

Labourers

The highest proportion of the labourers working in the Ram Bahadur Thakur (P) Ltd Tea Estate is within the age group of 25 - 34 years. The majority of the employees are illiterate, regarding marital status it has been found that more than three-fourth of the workers are married. The reasons for the absence in work for the labourers due to the health reason of their family concern and it is found that a majority of the employees remain absent in work due to the ill health of their parents. The bad health of their old parents as well as their children's is found as the most important reason. The provision of medical facilities provided by the Estate authority is not good and not adequate it is surprising to find that of the labourers go outside the Estate for doing various types of works though they are employed in the Estate as permanent or casual labourers. The facilities provided by the Estate authority such as free ration at a subsidized rate are provided to cent percent of the labourers working in the Estate.

The other facilities such as firewood, umbrellas and raincoats and blankets etc are provided to the permanent labourers only. They have stated that they remain absent in work due to over drinking. It has been also found that the workers are aware on the evil effects of absenteeism and the labourers are conscious

Table 15 Working outside the Estate

S.NO	Going to work outside the Estate	No. of labourers	Percentage
1	Often	10	8.33
2	Sometimes	43	35.83
3	No	67	55.83
	TOTAL	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 16 Ways of managing livelihood during absence

Sample No.	Ways of managing livelihood during absence from work			TOTAL
	Borrowing Loans	Alternative source of income	No Income	
TOTAL	56 (46.67)	53 (44.17)	11 (9.17)	120 (100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 17 Facilities provided

Free ration			Firewood			Umbrellas and raincoat			Blankets		
Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
120	0	120	90	30	120	90	30	120	90	30	120

Source: Primary Data

Table 18 Absence after social ceremonies and festivals

S.NO	No. of days absent after social ceremonies and festivals	No. of labourers	Percentage
1	0	49	40.83
2	1 – 2	39	32.5
3	2 – 3	27	22.5
4	3 – 4	4	3.33
5	>4	1	0.83
	TOTAL	120	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 19 Different aspects of alcohol consumption

Necessity of Alcohol consumption			Prepared at home			Purchased from outside			Considerable part of wage spent on alcohol			Remaining absent due to over drinking		
Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
103	17	120	96	24	120	70	50	120	58	62	120	43	77	120
(85.83)	(14.17)	(100)	(80)	(20)	(100)	(58.33)	(41.66)	(100)	(48.33)	(51.67)	(100)	(35.83)	(64.17)	(100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 20 Workers awareness of the evil effects of absenteeism

Sample No.	Awareness among the workers			No. of evil effects of absenteeism, the sample is aware of	
	Wage loss	Decrease production	Affect morale	Affects quality	
TOTAL	120 (100%)	46 (38.33%)	36 (30%)	66 (55%)	268

Source: Primary Data

Table 21 Absence for no reason

S.NO	Absent for no reason	No. of workers	
		No.	Percentage
1	Yes	37	30.83
2	No	83	69.17
	TOTAL	120	100

Source: Primary Data

about their wage loss due to absenteeism. More than half of the labourers are aware about the declination in the quality of the product due to absenteeism.

Recommendations

- The Estate management should take adequate steps to increase the literacy rate among the labourers of the Estate so that they can understand the evil effects of absenteeism properly.
- The management should provide a satisfactory level of wage and allowance based on the financial position of the Estate for improving the economic conditions of the labourers working in the Estate.
- The standard of medical facilities in the Estate should be improved and regular health check-ups of the family members of the labourers should be initiated.
- Awareness should be created among the labourers regarding the evil effects of absenteeism by the management and the labour union.
- At present, the workers in the Estate do not have the right in any decision making process of the management. So, steps should be initiated to introduce participatory management system in the Estate management which will enable them to understand the present market situation and that in turn will make them aware of the evil effects of absenteeism on the overall economic condition of the Estate. This realization will go a long way in motivating them to reduce the rate of absenteeism.

In this study, the main observation is that the management does not practice modern management methods and theories in this century old tea industry in India. They still follow colonial, out dated ways and means of managing the Estate. Hence, the management should implement the recent methods for uplifting the living and social standards, finding solutions for the problems faced by the Labourers, motivation methods and introduction of modern workforce management theories to estates. By motivation we could improve the attendance for work regularly and to perform better by giving a higher output tea plantation targets. It is mainly, by way of managing the Laborers effectively and efficiently, identifying and utilizing the laborers in the most viable manner and attending to their needs and wants in a human manner, that you could find solutions for the absenteeism of Laborers and related problems in the Tea Estate. . So reduction in absenteeism will helpful in improving the productivity.

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