

Curbing Presenteeism to Promote Effectiveness among Tertiary Administrative Staff

Ebenezer Kingsley Armoh¹ & Emmanuel Aboagye²

¹Sports and Recreation Directorate, University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana

²Sports and Recreation Directorate, University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana

Corresponding email: ebenezer.armoh@uenr.edu.gh

Abstract

Going to work just to be ineffective is a decade canker in our workplaces and it is very difficult to measure, especially in a typical Ghanaian community. This situation needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency. Being at the workplace and failing to function due to illness or stress can be very devastating for an institution or a company. The purpose of this paper is to draw University managers' attention to an enemy of production in our workplaces which has been tagged 'bureaucracy'. The researcher looked at what happens at the workplace every day, look at what the existing literature says about the phenomenon, and came out with the challenges and suggestions for possible eradication. The researcher believes that having a second look at the institution's Welfare program to make sure administrative staff's wellness is considered by making physical exercise a key to unlocking workers' health will be a step in the right direction in reducing workplace presenteeism

Key words: presenteeism, administrative staff, public university

Introduction

Several research studies have shown that regular physical activity is a means of preventing daily diseases, as it has a consequential effect on an individual's health. Although there are benefits to taking part in regular physical activity, a lot of individuals are still suspected of leading a physically inactive lifestyle in our workplaces especially, among administrative staff.

Workplace Presenteeism

Going to work without effective functioning is a decade canker in our workplaces and very difficult to measure, especially in typical Ghanaian workplaces. This phenomenon needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Being absent from work for some time and also being at the workplace and failing to function due to illness or stress can be very devastating for an institution or a company. However, we are not saying one cannot be absent or ineffective sometimes but only reduce the effect of ineffectiveness below a certain threshold. The required threshold should depend on the working situation of the institution, and the support available for the workers in that very institution. One will be tempted to agree with the researcher that, a quick intervention to reduce this menace to the barest minimum the better. Any

attempt to successfully manage or reduce workplace presenteeism, with emphasis on workers' health problems will go a long way to increasing productivity and reducing bureaucracy in our public workplaces.

Evidence of Presenteeism

Bureaucracy is one of the challenges facing many institutions in Ghanaian workplaces. Although presenteeism exists in almost all our workforce, little research study has been done among workers in the Ghanaian public workforce especially the administrative workers in our tertiary institutions. Therefore, this paper is to create awareness of the phenomenon for those concerned to use it as a wake-up call to save a decade canker. Observing the problems of presenteeism in our tertiary institutions with a focus on the administrators one will be tempted to say that the earlier arrested the better it will be for production. Our observation and careful studies have revealed that presenteeism account for the documents or letters that get delayed on administrators' tables for a day, weeks before, or months with the hope of working on them (bureaucratic process), which tend to lower productivity. This negative behaviour, tend to affect institutional progress and tend to negatively advertise that particular institution.

Supporting Concepts

The concept of presenteeism has existed in various ways. Presenteeism is mentioned in the Cambridge English Dictionary (2017) as an art of remaining at work longer than usual to show that you are a hard worker and therefore be treated essentially by your employer. In other jurisdictions, it is said to be a situation where people stay on the job but do not fully perform as expected because of illness or other medical challenges.

The term presenteeism, which is sometimes called sickness presence, is the act of going to work but will not be productive, due to stress or illness. Sometimes one can observe an increase in workers coming to work with challenges McCurry (2016). Another meaning of presenteeism can be an inclination to stay at the workplace longer than is required for effective performance. Looking at the definitions, it is clear that many of our workers are ineffective, and that the phrase is most commonly characterized as going to work while sick but focusing on individuals going to work with any form of challenges that can hinder the very functioning of his work. It is worth noting that, presenteeism, unlike absenteeism, for absenteeism it is known when an employee fails to show up for work, but with presenteeism, it is unknown when or how much illness or medical challenges has hindered the worker's performance. Working when sick also referred to as presenteeism, can result in a great loss of productivity in an institution, stress, and can even create workplace epidemics. Presenteeism is, therefore, very common in most Ghanaian public institutions.

Gravity of Presenteeism

Up to date, institutions find it difficult to deal with a challenge that is slowly hampering production in our public institutions. It is believed that currently, there is no universal and appropriate method for scaling or quantifying presenteeism in

our workplaces. It is only measured in terms of costs accompanied by reduced work output, delays errors on the job, or failure to meet institutions' deadlines, and production requirements. It is also very difficult to cost presenteeism as much attention has not been paid to this canker and its remedy.

In some public institutions, some attempts have been made by management to deal with such a phenomenon across various types of jobs and organizations.

Why must Institutional Worry

All of us will agree with the writer that our medical doctors can go to work while sick and it can be permissible because of the state of being irreplaceable. In other jurisdictions, some jobs with great workloads are likely to be associated with ineffectiveness (presenteeism). It is also observed in certain dimensions that, persons whose self-esteem is relied on their performance, as well as being workaholics, will possibly have high levels of being ineffective (presenteeism). Going to work being stressed or with mild illness also known as presenteeism is more common in public institutions where long working hours are practiced, and operational requirements are seen as very important to the worker's wellbeing. Sometimes a worker comes to work just because he or she simply needs money and cannot afford to take some time off due to illness or stress. In other breath, one can go to work because of the love and devotion to the job but will only show up and occupy the seat without being productive. In the case of presenteeism could be considered an act of accepted norm that inspires admiration from colleagues' workers.

I am sure a school of thought with different views will also argue that workers going to work while experiencing financial, and health stress can be a part of the human race. Some may even say that such an employee will be demonstrating a certain level of dedication, which in the end will reduce the levels of absence. The truth of the matter is that a sick worker who is stressed up or ill is likely to be ineffective at the workplace, which could well lead to errors in his judgments that can be an enemy to time and cost money to be fixed by the institution. It is assumed that a worker having personal challenges while carrying it to the workplace will be enough evidence to deceive management that the portion of work that will be lost for being absent will be smaller as compared to the productivity lost to be ineffective at the workplace (presenteeism)

Tackle Presenteeism in our Workforce

Management of our institutions should agree that it is how they handle workers' welfare that matter most.

As has been discussed earlier, presenteeism is more seen in institutions where working long hours are part of their condition of service, and where the work of the institution takes precedence over employee welfare.

- **Role of Institutions on Workers' input and output**
Management of Institutions must be careful of seeing workers, who go to work when stressed up or ill as trusted individuals. The only implication is that going to work when one is ill or has a health challenge will only reduce the worker's intrinsic motivation to work, which can adversely impact his or her mental and physical wellbeing. There must be a statement in the institutional policy to encourage sick employees to stay home and recover with strict monitoring so that the privilege will not be abused by some individuals.
- **Need for a policy review**
If policymakers lose sight of policies on sick leave it will only show that the institutions are oaky with productivity losses. The most significant role of the policymakers is to come out with strict and monitored sick leave policies, which can deter workers from taking leave when they are not sick.
- **Understanding the relationship between absence and presenteeism**
It is expected that Management could make sure their supervisors understand the meaning and the nature of not going to work at all and going to work with stress and illness just to be ineffective. When this happens policymakers can adopt more flexible methods to deal with absenteeism and can also provide support for workers who get sick but still want to go to work.
- **Understand of causes of presenteeism**
Employees who have a high workload at hand let them take some time off when they need it. Supervisors should find supportive ways of dealing with workers' workloads and try to communicate and support them to reduce most work-related stress.
- **Recognize the symptoms**
Supervisors including welfare officers should entreat workers with health challenges and discuss them for support. There is the need for supervisors to be educated on how to notice the signs of workers in a state of stress or health issues, for supportive solutions.

Why physical activity/Exercise be Paramount for Administrative staff?

Staff ill health can have adverse cost implications on the institution by way of bureaucracy, which will eventually affect turnover, mortality, and early retirement. Setting aside some munities, half a day or a day for physical activity to be performed by various departments or units in a week can help reduce the risk of health challenges and stress and prevent some of the leading causes of illness and death that occur mysteriously in some workplaces in Ghana.

Tertiary administrative workers will not deny the fact that back and waist pain are some of the common challenges of sickness faced at their workplaces. It is believed

that engaging in regular physical exercise will go a long way to reducing if not eliminating a person's risk of suffering from pain and also enhance quick recovery from many musculoskeletal conditions. It is also acknowledged that most work-related stress which forms the most common reasons for workers to either absent themselves from work or go to work while experiencing mild sickness or stress can cost the employers huge sums, both monetary and time every year. It is believed, therefore, that the workplace is made a comfortable if not ideal setting to be enjoyed by the greater working population where pressure from work accounts for the most common barriers to participating in daily physical activity.

It is, therefore, suggested that policies to promote physical exercise and prevention of illnesses be encouraged to improve productivity. Management can increase the break session by thirty (30) minutes purposely for an individual to take part in a variety of exercises and stretches. A staff wellness center should be constructed to take care of workers' physical exercise needs.

When worker's exercise needs are catered for the following benefits will be accrued:

- Most workers may have less illness and quickly recover if fall ill.
- There will be less absenteeism in the workplace
- Low staff turnover
- There will be a dramatic increase in productivity as workers have less stress
- The workplace will be a full joy
- The workplace will have a positive corporate image.
- The industry will begin to see an active workforce

Therefore, Administrative staff must try to;

- show interest in physical exercise themselves
- Plan regular exercises for their association
- Demand for days from University Management to organize retreats and fun games.

Suggestions to Promote University Administrator's Physical Activity

The following are proposed ways to encourage the administrative staff to be more physically active:-

- An arrangement of corporate challenges with prizes or incentives at stake to motivate workers' involvement in a planned physical exercise session. Encouraging them to compete in teams to adjudge the winner will go a long way to witness mass participation. Meanwhile, the winning should not be important but rather the participation.
- Encouraging administrative staff to walk, use bicycles or jog to work. This can be encouraged by offering secure bicycle parking spaces, as well as planning and promoting local walking and bicycle competitions.
- Encourage members to work around to accommodate a physical activity, during lunch breaks.

- Encouraging administrative staff to join a fitness club of their choice outside the workplace.
- When Unions are advised on the need to participate in some organized events such as cycling, walks, and selected games will improve the basic health needs of our administrative workers.
- There is a need for a regular update on the benefits of physical exercise as well as making available a variety of interesting programs for them to select from.

Conclusion

The researcher believes that having a second look at the institution's Welfare program to make sure administrative staff's wellness is considered will be a step in the right direction in reducing workplace presenteeism

Studies have shown that most stress and health challenges not reported by workers account for a huge reduction in institutional productivity in Africa. We need to find out if our institution's welfare policies consider the stresses the workers may face in and out of the workplace. We believe, there should be a policy that can take care of workers' physical, social, financial, and mental stressors, in addition to the provision of the needed support in reducing the impact of presenteeism in the workplace.

One can boldly say from the literature that the punishment paid by management for the cost of workers being ineffective at the workplace or bureaucratic system can account for much more than the cost of workers on leave of absence. One can also argue that going to work with low motivation and not being ready to work can be equated to higher levels of employee leave of absence for a longer period. The writer believes that carefully managing presenteeism at workplaces will not only save institutions money in the short and longer-term, but will greatly contribute to employee engagement, reduce conflict, reduce bureaucratic instances, and an acceptable level of productivity.

To achieve the desired change policymakers can start from the individual level, where each staff will be made to understand the value of physical exercise for his or her health and well-being sake and try to make a lifetime commitment to a life that can change a lifestyle.

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