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**DEVELOPING A CLASSIFIER OF RELEVANT CAUSES OF
ABSENTEEISM IN AN ORGANISATION**

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Abstract

The article attempts to prove the possibility to reduce absenteeism rates through the formation of a relevant information database in an organisation that allows registering the cases of employees' absence from work, organise them by groups, identify individual incidents and trends, and create classifiers. We analysed the applicability of international experience in the promotion of theory and practice of diagnosing the causes and consequences of employee absenteeism during working hours. We provided statistics for the differentiation of the absenteeism rates by country and by public and private sectors. We organised the information based on the expenses of the organisations related to the absence of their employees from work. It was shown that employee absenteeism has a negative effect on the economic results of a company, on the relationships between colleagues and their ability to work in a team, and on the employee's family and environment. The article provides an example of the systematisation of the causes of absenteeism by groups and specifies a group associated with a lack of balance between work and private life with two categories of problems: 1) Maternity leave, upbringing of children, stable marriage; 2) Taking care of elderly parents and relatives, other family problems. We provided an example of a classifier for the causes of absenteeism with four groups of causes. The classifier allows identifying the causes relating to management in each group. Consequently, the following causes were identified: uncontrollable that cannot be avoided, partially controllable, and fully controllable.

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1. Introduction

The analysis showed that absenteeism is a problem at the governmental, organisational, and personal levels. Decreased productivity creates a risk for a decrease in gross domestic product and the formation of the unemployed segment. A reserve pool of labour may lead to public unrest, an increase in government expenditures on support of those dismissed from organisations and their families, and a decline in the birth rate. At the organisational level, absenteeism leads to issues in planning, extra load on employees and, as a result, extra payment for their overtime work, and the risk of defects, unsatisfied clients, and a degradation in the organisational environment. If an employee is not motivated to fulfil their tasks, is suffering from emotional burnout, and is physically and mentally unwell, their performance will decline, which will gradually lead to their professional degradation, loss of their competitive edge, and the inability to innovate. The problem of absenteeism and presenteeism is becoming more and more pressing for the Russian labour market. It is difficult to diagnose and prevent this phenomenon due to insufficient research in order to develop statistical conclusions regarding the scale of the phenomenon, groups of relevant reasons, consequences, and a classifier of preventive measures.

2. Problem Statement

The original information for the solution of this problem includes statistical data and study materials. It also includes national and international experience accumulated and presented in scientific publications. The research requires the following five stages. First of all, to identify the relevant reasons and consequences of absenteeism in the workplace. Second, to prove the applicability of international experience in the study. Third, to identify the causes of the decrease of the employees' performance in organisations. Fourth, to analyse the figures of uneven distribution of the standard time that employees spend at the workplace within a year by countries. Fifth, to provide a cost estimate of absences per employee and evaluate their influence on the economic results of an organisation.

3. Research Questions

The research field for the solution of the problem includes the following 7 issues: 1) relevant reasons and consequences of absenteeism in the workplace; 2) applicability of international experience in their study; 3) causes of the decrease in employee performance in organisations; 4) figures showing the uneven distribution of the standard time that employees spend at the workplace within a year by countries: Japan, West Germany, Portugal, Switzerland; 5) duration of absences; 6) cost estimate of absences per employee; 7) influence of absenteeism on the economic results of an organisation, the relationships between colleagues and their ability to work in a team, the employee's family, and the people around them.

Therefore, the following study was conducted.

3.1. The applicability of international experience in the study of the theory and practice of diagnosing the causes and consequences of employees being absent from work during the working hours

The standard time of presence of employees at work is different in view of different countries throughout the year. In the USA this time equals 1896 hours, in Portugal – 1882 hours, in Japan – 1880 hours, and in West Germany – 1620 hours. On average, in Portugal they work 42 hours a week, in Switzerland – 40,5 hours a week, in Japan – 40 hours a week, and in Germany – 36,6 hours a week. Americans have the shortest holiday time, which is 23 days, and the Japanese also have a short holiday time (25 days), while Italians have the longest, which is 42 days. Despite the differences, researchers from almost all countries note, sometimes ironically, that almost 220 times a year every employee decides in the morning whether to go to work, to stay at home, or to do something else (Gieffers & Pohen, 1983). According to Norwegian studies (Mastekaasa, 2020), public sector employees decide against work more often than employees of the private sector. German scientists (Frick et al., 2020) found that the absenteeism rates are higher during day shifts as compared to morning and night shifts, and the rates are especially high during day shifts after three consecutive weeks of night shifts.

It was found that this number varies from country to country as follows: in Great Britain and Canada there was 60% more absences from work in the public sector as compared to the private sector, in Denmark – 84% more, in the USA – 40% more, in the Netherlands – 31% more, and in Germany – 10-17% more.

Employee absence from the workplace is a problem that remains significant. As estimated by American scientists, excessive unscheduled absenteeism cost employers about 2650 dollars a year per each salary worker and 3600 dollars per each hourly worker. On the whole, the cost of absenteeism accounts for 8.7% of the payroll budget, and employers are rightly looking for information about how the growth of this expenditure item can influence the company's total financial results and how to battle this problem. In the service sector alone they lose 2.3% of scheduled working time due to unscheduled absence of employees from their workplace. In some sectors, the overall costs of unscheduled absenteeism reach 20% of the payroll budget (Easton & Goodale, 2005).

Statistics Canada presents data according to which in 2007, 10.2 days of the working time of an average full-time employee were lost due to personal reasons, 8.1 of which were lost because of their sickness or incapacity and another 2.1 days due to personal or family needs. In 1997 the value of working time loss by one employee was 7.4 days, which is indicative of a negative development of this trend in the future (Kocakulah et al., 2016).

As estimated by French scientists, the issue of absenteeism from the workplace has become a subject of active interdisciplinary studies in the field of economics, management, human resource management, medicine, and psychology (Bierla et al., 2013). They conducted a bibliographical analysis which showed that 310 articles dedicated to absenteeism have been published in 98 specialised journals since 1970, and in 1990-1999 and 2000-2009 their number increased thrice as compared to the initial year of the study.

According to West German researchers, some time ago the problem of absenteeism from the workplace was urgent only for some departments or organisations, but now the well-being of the whole country's economy depends on the scale of this issue (Frick et al., 2020). Employee absenteeism can have a negative effect on, first of all, the economic results of a company, second, on the relationships between

colleagues and their ability to work in a team, and third, on the employee's family and the people around them.

3.2. Analysis of the situation and identification of the causes of absenteeism (based on the example of finding a balance between work and private life)

Identification and registration of the incidents of absenteeism and tendency towards it in an organisation. To start work on the prevention and reduction of absenteeism, we need to identify that it exists in an organisation. The problem often lies not in the fact that the data on attendance is not collected, but that it is not collected and not properly analysed (Kocakulah et al., 2016). To substantiate the problem, it is important to develop a system of data registration (in addition to time keeping) and institutionalise it, that is to assign the tracking of staff to different subdivisions, such as HR department, supervisors of the departments where these employees work, or specialised controllers. To determine the trends of absenteeism, the information must be collected about absence by months (for instance, peak absenteeism falls between January and May), days of the week (for instance, on Monday), and structural subdivisions (for instance, in tool shops or logistics departments). It is reasonable to identify the job position and ethnicity of absentees, their (if known) alcohol addiction or other type of addictions, nonstandard sexual orientation, etc. Incidents of absence must be recorded and distributed by causes and degree of absence (full, partial). If the cause and the essence of the problem are unknown, it will be very hard to make a decision. Classification of the causes of absenteeism by groups. Absenteeism can be caused by employee sickness, working conditions, the management style of an organisation, or a lack of a balance between work and private life. As for work, the relevance of the balance between work and private life is determined by rapidly-changing types of working places, the need for self-development and training in accordance with the requirements, as well as intensive intellectual labour and learning to use a virtual working space, etc. Changes in private life are associated with longer life expectancy, which brings the need to take care of the elderly parents and to keep vertical (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents) and horizontal (relatives) communications. New family models (nuclear, incomplete, guest, same-sex marriage) lead to greater, as compared to a traditional family, individual load related to the performance of educational and household functions. When employees need and want to fulfil themselves professionally and to keep their workplace, it leads to problems in family life because they have little time left for the performance of their family functions. The imbalance of these life segments often causes absenteeism (Table 1).

Table 1. Relevant causes of absenteeism related to the balance between work and private life

No.	Causes of absence from the workplace	Specific description of the cause
1.	Maternity leave, upbringing of children, stable marriage	Absenteeism related to children starts with the birth of a child, and that is only the beginning (Kocakulah et al., 2016). The family situation influencing the decision whether to go to work or not depends on the number of children. Family size positively correlates with absence from work, especially for women (Bierla et al., 2013). The value of women's absence from work is higher as compared to men. According to a popular hypothesis, it is the result of gender segregation on the labour market and consequent differences in employment and working conditions (Melsom & Mastekaasa, 2018). Over 75% of working women have school-aged children, while an average American mother misses nine working days a

	<p>year taking care of children. Employees with children are more often sick at work. As compared to typical families with two parents, single-parent families require childcare twice as often. The possibility of most problems related to work, including absenteeism, is twice or thrice higher for parents with children who have behavioural issues or serious chronic diseases. The value of women's absence from work is higher as compared to men, and the value of short-term absence is especially high for women with small children.</p> <p>When women return to work soon after childbirth (in the USA a quarter of all women return to work in an organisation within 10 days after childbirth), their performance decreases, and they spend less time socialising with their children. This complicates the possibilities for breastfeeding and increases the risk of post-natal depression. The situation often leads to higher rates of sicknesses and hospital admission of infants, which costs billions of dollars every year (Wojcicki, 2014).</p> <p>Growing children require development, so parents have to take them to sports, music, art, language, and other schools and to participate in parents' committees. Parents also visit doctors with their child and undergo periodic health examination, so this causes absenteeism and presenteeism.</p>
2. Taking care of elderly parents and relatives, other family problems	<p>Due to increased life expectancy, children have to take more and more responsibility for the life and health of their elderly parents and relatives. This often causes a "sandwich syndrome", when an employee simultaneously performs the role of an intermediary between children and grandchildren on one side and parents on the other side. Over 44 million Americans take care of a family member or a family friend aged 18 or older. Many of them prefer not to send their elderly parents to a nursing home and take care of them at home (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Doctor's visits, medical examinations, purchase of medication, hospital admissions, and frequent phone calls during work limit an employee's working time. As a result, employees are absent from work for whole days or for a part of the day and perform their work in a state of anxiety. Absenteeism can also be caused by an unstable marriage or the process of divorce. Divorce takes up a lot of free time intended for rest from work and causes psychological distress. Divorce settlements may last for years and requires multiple appearances in court. Each appearance in court requires a full working day or a half of it, and this time off work is often registered as a leave of absence or unpaid leave.</p> <p>Among other causes are life circumstances that prevent students from going to school or university (Birioukov, 2016), poor health as a parameter of "involuntary behaviour" within absenteeism (Johns & Al Hajj, 2016), situations of "alternative social costs" of work when family and friends are enjoying their free time accompanied by absence from work.</p>

Source: authors.

Creating a classifier for the causes of absenteeism. The greatest attention must be paid to the factors that have been known in an organisation for a long time but did not get due attention of the corresponding organisational structures. The classifier can be compiled as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. An example of a classifier for the causes of absenteeism in an organisation

Absences from work		
Group 1. Causes of a medical nature		
1) that cannot be avoided and, as a result, cannot be influenced	2) that are partially avoidable and, therefore, can be influenced	3) that are fully avoidable and can be influenced
Serious sickness	Preventive treatment and treatment that an insurer may ask an insured person to undergo in order to restore their working ability that was lost due to an accident or sickness	
Visiting a doctor during acute illness	Visiting a doctor	
Regular leave	Absence due to a sickness (light or moderate)	
Additional leave (in accordance with the law, for example, due to a sickness or a disability)	Psychosomatic disease (advantage by illness)	
Maternity leave	Absence due to an accident	
	Work injury	
Group 2. Organisational and administrative causes		
Regular leave	Justified absence	Further training seminars and courses conducted by the organisation
Reserve training	Unjustified absence	Emergency leave
Emergency leave	Unpaid emergency leave	Corporate holidays
Paid holidays	Temporary absence	Being late and leaving work early
Student's leave	Too many breaks	
	Data that cannot be statistically accounted for (hidden information): shopping, gossiping, discussing everyday problems on the phone, drinking tea too often, visiting other departments for no reason, visiting websites that are not related to work, watching films online, or playing computer games, etc.	
Group 3. Working conditions		
	Hard working conditions	
	Working place that is harmful for health	
	Type of activity	
	Unclear scope of work	
Size of enterprise	No possibilities for promotion	
Climate conditions	Ineffective hiring	
	Private life	
Group 4. Management (including management style)		
	Management style that does not correspond to the employee's level of development (competence and involvement)	
	Inappropriate (unsuitable) behaviour by the manager	

Source: authors.

Each enterprise can have different causes of employee absence from work, so the first-line manager's task is to identify principal staff groups that require the development of downtime reduction measures through the systematisation of information.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify and classify the relevant causes and consequences of absenteeism from the workplace and to develop a classifier. The purpose can be justified by the following aspects. Its implementation requires the analysis of international experience in the management of absenteeism from work in organisations. It allows diagnosing this phenomenon taking into account the duration of paid and non-paid downtime and absences from work. It also allows reducing the stress between the employer's economic and social goals and finding the balance between work and private life for the employee. The productivity of employees at work can be increased. Preventive measures for decreasing the frequency of downtime in Russian organisations will be developed taking into account specific features of the production of goods and services.

5. Research Methods

The methods from the empirical and theoretical levels of the scientific cognition of a problem were used in the study. First of all, using observation we determined the goal and chose and registered the units (country, organisation) suggested for the analysis. We compared the figures of absenteeism in different countries. The results of the measurements were presented. Second, we classified the collected factual information. We selected the parameters for grouping. We developed classifications. Statistical tables with qualitative and quantitative figures were also compiled. Third, we identified the essence of the absenteeism phenomena on the basis of the empirical methods, which allowed justifying the formulated conclusions.

6. Findings

First of all, the need for updating the content of the category of “absenteeism” is justified by the progress of scientific ideas and taking into account economic, social, and behavioural factors. Statistical information shows that the scale of the phenomenon is increasing, which allows classifying it as a risk for the development of an organisation. Employee absenteeism has a triple negative effect on, first of all, economic results of a company, second, on relationships between colleagues and their ability to work in a team, and third, on the employee's family and the people around them. Second, systemised information about the expansion of this phenomenon in an organisation is required for making a decision on how to reduce absenteeism. The efficiency of these efforts depends on the timely and regular identification and registration of the incidents of absenteeism from work and further analysis of the trend. It is reasonable to develop a system of data registration (in addition to time keeping) and institutionalise it. The list of the registered data should include the job position and ethnicity of absentees, their (if known) alcohol addiction or other type of addictions, nonstandard sexual orientation, etc. Incidents of absence must be recorded and distributed by causes and degree of absence (full, partial). Third, the causes of absenteeism can be presented in the form of four main groups: medical causes (employee's health condition), working conditions, the management style of an organisation, and the lack of a balance between work and private life. More detailed information about the phenomenon can be collected when specifying the causes in each group. For example, the cause “balance between work and private life” may include such subgroups as “maternity leave, upbringing of children, stable marriage” and “taking care of elderly parents and relatives, other family

problems". Fourth, the developed classifier of the causes of absenteeism including four groups of causes (health, organisation and administrative work, working conditions, and management) allows identifying the degree of controllability of the phenomenon and develop a diagnostic technology and preventive measures for a decrease in the frequency of the phenomenon in an organisation.

7. Conclusion

The justified application of the scientific ideas to the policy of reducing downtime through the diagnostics of absences from work and the impact of their frequency in Russian organisations identifies the problem as a mass public phenomenon. This is a reference point for its interdisciplinary representation with the involvement of human resource management methods, statistics, and economical analysis into the study. The figures for ageing and the portion of the oldest population allow defining Russia as a relatively young country. The country's economics is on the threshold of a decline in the rate of workforce growth. The unfolding situation presupposes the retention of key employees and the formation of stable staff groups ready for change. Among the destabilising factors of this policy is absenteeism. The transformation of forms and conditions of employment, including the tendency towards remote work increased by the epidemiological situation, involves a correspondent change in the causes of absenteeism. Therefore, the issue acquires the signs of a new reality, which offers a field for further academic research.

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