



Presenteeism: Its Importance, Conceptual Clarifications, and a Working Definition

Chandani Werapitiya (werapitiyac@yahoo.com)

H.H.D.N.P. Opatha (opatha@sjp.ac.lk)

R.L.S.Fernando (rlsf@sjp.ac.lk)

Abstract

As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the term Presenteeism seems to be a novel concept though it is a concept being currently researched and discussed particularly in Australia, USA, UK and Europe. According to the literature available in respect of Presenteeism, it has been defined by majority of researchers as that employees work *while they are sick* and few scholars defined it as *working of employees more than the time assigned on a particular job*. Also in a recent research paper it has been defined as *not fully engaged at work*. There is increasingly a serious concern of presenteeism because existing literature reveals that presenteeism results in a huge cost and its cost exceeds the cost of absenteeism. Also existing studies show only the cost of presenteeism owing to working of employees while they are sick and if other behaviours of presenteeism are considered, the cost and the hidden cost would definitely be higher. To highlight the importance of presenteeism from employee perspective and employer perspective; to provide a systematic conceptualization of presenteeism; and to formulate a comprehensive working definition which may be useful for future empirical studies of the concept are the three objectives of this paper. Systematic review method recommended by Tranfield et al (2003) and observation method were utilized to achieve the objectives. The formulated working definition hopefully will avoid confusion and disagreement among scholars regarding the meaning of the concept of presenteeism while serving for accurate operationalization of the variable of presenteeism in conducting future empirical studies. This paper may initiate a concern and an enthusiasm to engage in future research studies which focus on the cost and hidden cost of presenteeism.