

**Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism and Its Impact on Sustainability of
Leather Footwear Industry in Tamil Nadu**

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Abstract

Absenteeism is one of the major issues which hamper the development of the organization. Absenteeism is the word mostly utilized to refer to unscheduled worker absences from the working environment. The absenteeism turns in to an issue to organizational management especially when employees absent from their workplace without giving adequate notice and by justifying their stand by outfitting fake reasons. Leather industry appoints labourers on temporary basis and is considered to be vulnerable in terms of employee absenteeism. This research highlights the impact of absenteeism on the organizational sustainability of Leather Footwear Industry in Tamilnadu.

Keywords: Employee Absenteeism, Sustainability and Leather Footwear Industry

1. Introduction

1.1. (A) Employee Absenteeism

Absenteeism is defined as “failure to report to work and it happens when employees who were scheduled for work do not attend” (Huczynski&Fitzpatrick, 1989). Failure to report to work has detrimental effect on the organization since it has negative impact on the overall goal of the organization. Harrison and Price (2004) defined absenteeism as, “lack of physical presence at a behavioral setting when and where one is expected to be”.

In a study by Mercer (2008) on the “Total Financial Impact of Employee Absenteeism”, it was reported that the cost of employee absenteeism has been considered as immeasurable and often misunderstood, or dismissed as a negligible amount but the full cost of employee absences is very consequential, amounting to 36% of payroll. Studies have highlighted that better attendance is tantamount to better quality, reduced costs and enhanced productivity (Hazzard, 1990). It is important to note that scheduled work is the critical defining point. On the other hand, vacations, excused holidays are not considered as absenteeism (Price & Mueller, 1986).

1.1.(B) Absenteeism and Productivity

One of the recent estimates on the cost of the impact of unplanned or unscheduled absence eventuates in cost escalation of around 8.7 percent of payroll (Wolters Kluwer, 2015). Organizations and employers are pursuing the knowledge to gain better understanding on how increased absenteeism costs affect the organization’s outcome and what can be done to battle this issue. Leaker (2008) estimated that “United Kingdom had approximately lost £19.2 billion in 2007 to direct and indirect costs of employee absenteeism”.

Increased unscheduled absences cost employers roughly \$3,600 per year for each hourly worker and \$2,650 each year for salaried employees (Forbes, 2013). The inferences which can be drawn from a survey of 94,000 workers by the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index is that the annual costs associated with absenteeism vary by industry, with the greatest loss occurring in professional occupations (Folger, 2017).

1.2. Tamil Nadu in Leather Footwear Production

The state of Tamil Nadu occupies a significant position in the leather map of India. 60% of Indian tanning capacity is in Tamil Nadu. 36% of leather products from India originate from the Vellore District consisting of Ambur, Pernambut, Ranipet and Vaniyambadi Clusters in Tamil Nadu. 50% of total export from India is from Tamil Nadu and the state accounts for 60% share in finished leather production.

Almost 60% of the workforce consists of women in the Indian leather industry and majority of them belong to weaker section of the society (Delaney, 2016). Women make predominant contribution to exports and thereby the national economy. Their entry in to productive work has enabled in improving their household situation and life style.

1.3 Statement of Problem

“Absenteeism” is one of the unbridled catastrophes handled by all the administrators in this modernized world which could result in turnover. Employee absenteeism affects Production Process, Profits, Growth, Goodwill of the organization, delay in process and it will leads to less order from the buyers. Review of literature on the employee absenteeism shows that majority of the past studies have focused on the causes of absenteeism rather than on its impact. Moreover, there has been a dearth of seminal studies on the impact of absenteeism on sustainable productivity in the Indian context. In particular, a detailed research study on the issue of prevalence of employee absenteeism in the Indian leather footwear industry has received minimal research focus.

Hence, the study explores the relationship between absenteeism and productivity. It is an undeniable truth that employee absenteeism cost the organizations dear and investigating the direct impact of employee absenteeism on productivity is an active research paradigm. In addition, there is also a strong need to analyze other variables that are likely to influence absenteeism directly and productivity indirectly. The concept like organizational commitment and job satisfaction are gaining increased significance in the industrial/organizational psychology and organizational behavior. Studying the influence of these variables on absenteeism will give more insights to the effect of absenteeism on productivity.

2. Review of Literature

This chapter deals with the review of the conceptual and theoretical literature on various core concepts of the research like employee absenteeism, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The chapter also provides a detailed review of different employee absenteeism models, antecedents of absenteeism and empirical studies on employee absenteeism in Indian and international context. The final section of the chapter is focused on the summary and research gap.

Review of Studies on The Antecedents of Absenteeism: Van der Merwe and Miller (1988) listed the important reasons for absenteeism based on the three main categories as given below:

- **Personal factors:** It includes age of employee, marital status, income level, length of service, education, health, past attendance record and personal value of non-work activities.

- **Organizational factors:** Focus on variables like size of organization, quality and nature of supervision, work group size and structure, shift work, overtime, organization control systems and absence control policies, incentive schemes and type of work.
- **Attitudinal factors:** Focus on the unfavorable attitudes towards the job.

Commitment: Organizational commitment and job satisfaction are important antecedents of absenteeism. Organizational commitment is often considered as a measure of loyalty to the employing organization, identifying with the organization and its core values and goals. Often, employee with higher commitment towards organization shows cognitive desire for meaningful involvement in the organizational activities (Mowday et al., 1979; Cook & Wall, 1980). It is imperative that employees with strong allegiance towards their organization have a greater desire to be part of that organization and strive to put forth their continuous effort to ensure the success of the organization (Mowday et al., 1982).

It is natural that employees with low organizational commitment see every simple obstacle as the reason to stay away from work. On the other hand, employee with strong organizational commitment might see every impediment as another challenge to be overcome. Therefore, the level of organizational commitment influences an employee to avail unauthorized leave (absent) or turn up to work (Steers & Rhodes, 1978).

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction on the other hand, is an “affective response by an employee concerning his or her particular job in an organization” (Cranny et al., 1992). Job satisfaction is a measure of the degree to which a person likes his or her job (Spector, 1996). Job satisfaction is believed to have an inverse effect on employee absenteeism. Scott and Taylor (1985) stated that “a frequent explanation for this inverse relationship is a hedonistic calculus: employees will withdraw or be absent from a work situation that is painful and dissatisfying.”

Review of Studies on The Impact of Absenteeism: Several studies have discussed on the outcome of Absenteeism. Morrow et al. (1999) pointed that absenteeism lowers the process quality and output of an organization as well as its operational efficiency.

Absenteeism affects other withdrawal behaviors like turnover. Several studies have indicated a strong positive association between absenteeism and turnover (Waters & Roach, 1979; Farrell & Petersen 1984).

Levy (1994) contended that absenteeism has counter productive effect on profitability and productivity of the company, in addition to impacting service delivery efficiency, work ethics, labour relations, worker co-operation, profits, and trust between fellow workers and with supervisors (management) and company owners.

Lambert (2001) estimated the direct and indirect costs for organizations because of absenteeism. The direct costs encompasses sick pay, fringe benefits that still must be paid, overtime to fill the position, and over staffing (in which additional workers are scheduled to fill in for those employees who are absent). Indirect costs consists of loss of expertise and experience because of absence, disruptions in work, reduced productivity due to reduced workforce, loss of management's time to revise work assignments, administration costs involving in monitoring and administering the absence program, training costs associated with replacement workers instead of absent worker, and reduction in the morale of other employees (Dilts et al., 1985; Huczynski & Fitzpatrick, 1989).

2.2 Research Gap

In this chapter a detailed analysis of the past literature related to the core area of research study like employee absenteeism, job satisfaction, and commitment toward job, causes and effects of employee absenteeism on organizational sustainability was carried out. Overall 146 research articles from different sources like peer reviewed journal papers (print and online) published at the national and internal level, research reports, dissertations, website articles were reviewed in this study.

The review of literature on absenteeism, particularly, causes and effects of employee absenteeism was found to be significant for framing the research problem. The empirical studies conducted on employee absenteeism in India as well as in other countries have helped the researcher to identifying the research gap.

From the review of literature, it is very clear that majority of the studies on employee absenteeism have been carried out in Western countries which addressed problems in their context. The review of literature failed to identify the large scale studies on absenteeism among industrial employees in the Indian context in general and leather footwear industry in particular. On the basis of gap in research, objectives of the present study were framed.

3.1 Methodology

In this chapter, the Scope of the study, Conceptual model, Objectives, Hypotheses, research design and methodology of this research work is presented. The chapter provides a detailed analysis and discussion on the area of study, population and sample.

3.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the present study is highlighted below:

- The study focuses on identifying the key factors for employee absenteeism in leather footwear industries in Tamil Nadu (vellore district and chennai).
- The study analyses the level of satisfaction of employees in leather footwear industries in Tamil Nadu (vellore district and chennai).
- The study explores the commitment level of employees working in leather footwear industries in Tamil Nadu (vellore district and chennai).
- The study will investigate the impact of employees absenteeism on Organizational Sustainability.

3.3 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model hypothesized for the study is shown in Figure 3.1. The study hypothesizes that variables like organizational commitment and job satisfaction has direct impact on the antecedents to employee absenteeism in leather footwear industries which in turn has negative impact on the sustainable productivity of the organization. In addition, it is also hypothesized that demographic and personal characteristics of employees like gender, age, education, experience, marital status and their income level has propounding impact on the antecedents to employee absenteeism.

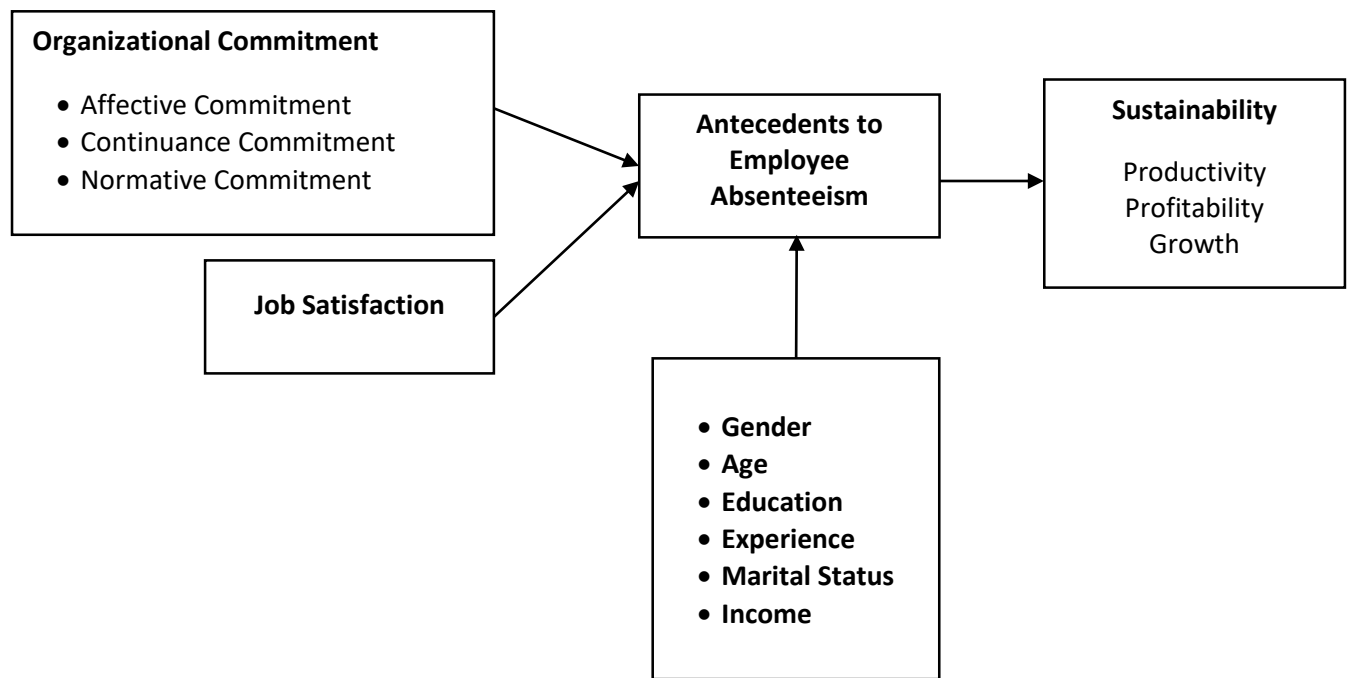


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Model

Based on the proposed conceptual model, several objectives were framed and hypothesis were formulated for testing, using the data collected from the sample of respondents of the study.

3.4 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research study are highlighted below:

- To study the general level of employee absenteeism in leather footwear industry in Tamil Nadu.
- To identify and analyze the impact of antecedents to employee absenteeism in leather footwear industry.
- To study the effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on the absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.
- To review the impact of employee absenteeism on organizational sustainability in leather footwear industry.

3.5 HYPOTHESES

The list of hypotheses framed for the study is presented below:

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.

- H1: Job satisfaction significantly impacts absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.
- Ho2: There is no significant relationship between organizational commitment and absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.
- H2: Organizational commitment significantly impacts absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.
- Ho3: Organizational Sustainability is not significantly impacted by absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.
- H3: Organizational Sustainability is impacted by absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.
- Ho4: There is no significant difference between demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, education, experience, income, number of dependents) and the antecedents to employee absenteeism in leather footwear industry.
- H4: There is a significant difference between demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, education, experience, income, number of dependents) and antecedents to employee absenteeism in leather footwear industry.

3.6 Research Methodology

Research Design: Since the present research was focused on “Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism and its Impact on Sustainability of Leather Footwear Industry in Tamil Nadu”, descriptive research design was considered appropriate for the study.

Study Location: Tamil Nadu

Sampling Method: Stratified Random Sampling method has been used for the study.

Sample Size: The total population size of leather footwear employees in the study areas- Ranipet, Ambur, Pernambut, Vaniyambadi, Vellore and Chennai were 80,000 (CLRI , 2017)

Out of the total population, the sample taken among respondents from the sector is 520.

Sources of data: The researcher has used both primary and secondary data for the research.

Data Analysis Tools: The data collected from the respondents was edited and tabulated and then subjected to various advanced techniques in data analysis using SPSS 25.0 software package.

Initially, descriptive statistics was conducted to measure the parameters like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation. Then, inferential statistics like “Independent Sample t-

test”, “Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)” and “Co-efficient of Correlation”, “Linear Regression” and “Structural Equation Model” Analysis were computed.

3.7 Limitations of The Study

The major limitations of the research are listed below:

- This study has considered only three component model of organizational commitment Allen and Meyer (1993).
- The study considered only the 20 factor model of Job Satisfaction developed by Dubey, Uppal, & Verma (1989).
- This study has considered only some select determinants of employee absenteeism and sustainable productivity due to limitations of time.
- Chronic absenteeism is not considered in the study as leather industry employees contractual laborers. The percentage of absenteeism varies on daily basis and there is also a fluctuation of employee absenteeism from one leather company to another.
- The limitations of the statistical tools during the analytical process are also inherent in this research process.

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The first section of the chapter focuses on the descriptive statistical analysis in which the responses to the questionnaire were analyzed using statistical techniques like frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The second section focuses on the inferential statistics in which various statistical techniques like Independent Sample t-test, One Way ANOVA, Correlation Analysis and “Structural Equation Model” Analysis were computed.

4.2 Demographic Profile Of The Respondents

Gender		Frequency	Percent
	Female	269	51.7
	Male	251	48.3
Marital Status	Unmarried	246	47.3
	Married	274	52.7
Age	Below 25 years	194	37.3
	26 – 35 years	253	48.7
	36 – 50 years	73	14.0
Education	SSLC and Below	81	15.6
	HSC	128	24.6
	ITI / Diploma	145	27.9
	Graduates	114	21.9
	Post Graduates	52	10.0
Experience	Below 1 year	61	11.7
	1-5 Years	303	58.3
	6-10 years	114	21.9
	11-15 years	42	8.1
Income of the Employees	Below Rs. 10,000	298	57.3
	Rs. 10,001- Rs. 20,000	117	22.5
	Above Rs. 20,000	105	20.2
Number of Dependents	No Dependents	84	16.2
	1 – 2	186	35.8
	3 – 5	73	14.0
	Above 5	177	34.0
Leaves Availed	<15 days	216	41.5
	15-30 days	243	46.7

	>30 days	61	11.7
Types of Leave	Casual Leave	163	31.3
	Medical	357	68.7
No. of days of Absent	1 – 3 days	80	15.4
	4 – 5 days	125	24.0
	6 – 7 days	83	16.0
	1 week and more	232	44.6
	Total	520	100

4.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The descriptive statistics of the collected data from employees is shown in Table 4.2. The descriptive data of the variables of the study is represented in terms of mean and standard deviation. Skewness and Kurtosis were used in the study to check the normality of the data. Skewness value between +/- 3.0 and kurtosis value between +/- 3.0 is acceptable for measuring psychometric constructs.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics of Employees Data (N = 520)

S. No.	Variable	No. of Items	Mean (M)	Std. Devn. (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism					
1	Leave Policies	4	2.11	0.40	0.06	0.19
2	Personal Factors	3	3.47	1.04	-1.02	-0.40
3	Work Environment	5	2.56	0.48	0.41	-0.15
4	Benefits and Facilities	2	2.39	0.92	0.90	-0.02
5	Leadership and Management	5	3.03	0.55	-0.57	-0.62
6	Reward and Remuneration	2	2.88	0.63	-0.51	-0.66
7	Job Stress	3	3.73	0.94	-0.57	-0.57
8	Satisfaction With Job	17	2.42	0.76	0.34	0.55
9	Affective Commitment (AC)	5	3.13	0.46	-0.03	-1.28

S. No.	Variable	No. of Items	Mean (M)	Std. Devn. (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism					
10	Continuance Commitment (CC)	5	2.78	0.62	-0.14	-1.08
11	Normative Commitment	6	2.66	0.55	-0.14	-0.36
12	Commitment to Organization	16	2.84	0.44	-0.17	-1.11
13	Impact of Absenteeism on Organizational Sustainability	13	2.53	0.413	-.536	2.547

4.4 Results of Hypothesis Testing

Table 4.3: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis		Result	Level of P – Value
H1:	H01: There is no significant relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.	Rejected	0.05
	H1: Job satisfaction significantly impacts absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.	Accepted	
H2:	H02: There is no significant relationship between organizational commitment and absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.	Rejected	0.05
	H2: organizational commitment significantly impacts absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.	Accepted	
H3	H03: Organizational Sustainability is not significantly impacted by	Rejected	0.05

Hypothesis		Result	Level of P – Value
	absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry. H3: Organizational Sustainability is impacted by absenteeism of employees in leather footwear industry.	Accepted	
H4	Ho4: There is no significant difference between demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, education, experience, income, number of dependents) and the Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism in leather footwear industry. H4: There is a significant difference between demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, education, experience, income, number of dependents) and the Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism in leather footwear industry.		
H04A	Gender Vs Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism	Rejected for Leave Policies, Personal Factors, Benefits and Facilities, Reward and Remuneration, Job Stress Accepted for Work Environment, Leadership and Management	0.05
H04B	Marital Status Vs Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism	Rejected for Leave Policies, Personal Factors, Leadership and Management, Reward and Remuneration, Job Stress Accepted for Work Environment, Benefits and Facilities	0.05
H04C	Age Vs Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism	Rejected	0.01

Hypothesis		Result	Level of P – Value
H04D	Education Vs Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism	Rejected	0.01
H04E	Experience Vs Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism	Rejected	0.01
H04F	Income Vs Antecedents to Employee Absenteeism	Rejected for Leave Policies, Work Environment, Benefits and Facilities, Reward and Remuneration, Accepted for Personal Factors, Leadership and Management, Job Stress	0.05

5.1 Findings and Observations

- The majority of employees sample consisted of female respondents (51.5%).
- The study found that the majority of the employees were young and aged below 35 years (86.0%).
- Only 14.0% of respondents with age above 35 years participated in the study.
- Majority of employees were holding HSC and below qualification (40.2%).
- 27.9% of the respondents have ITI / Diploma qualification relevant to the work in leather footwear industries.
- Majority of the employees (58.3%) have work experience between 1 to 5 Years.
- Employees have fair knowledge about the problems in leather footwear industry and core issues surrounding employees absenteeism.
- Majority of the employees (57.3%) earn below Rs. 10000.
- Majority of the employees were married (52.7%).

- Income level of employees play a significant role in employee absenteeism.
- This causes several health issues which prevent the employees to attend the work on regular basis.
- 68.7% of employees take Medical leave often.
- 44.6% of employees take uninformed leave (absenteeism).
- Absenteeism of employees overburdens co-workers and seriously impact psychological mindset of coworkers.
- Factors like Job Stress (M=3.73), Personal Factors (M=3.47), Leadership and Management (M=3.03), Reward and Remuneration (M=2.88) were top rated factors that influences employee absenteeism in leather footwear industry.
- Level of Satisfaction with Job (M=2.42) and Commitment to Organization (M=2.84) was found to be mediocre.
- Committed employees are attached to the organization to great extent in attaining the set goals.
- Employees perceived that absenteeism has prominent impact on the Organizational Sustainability (Productivity, Profitability and Growth).

5.2 Conclusion

The study investigated impact of absenteeism on sustainability of leather footwear industry. The findings of the study suggest that employee absenteeism is a serious problem in leather footwear industries that need immediate attention.

The major antecedents to employee absenteeism in leather footwear industry are Personal Factors, Job Stress, Leadership and Management, Reward and Remuneration and Work Environment. The variables like organizational commitment and job satisfaction has significant impact on antecedents to employee absenteeism.

Employee absenteeism is an unavoidable hazard which most of the organizations have to bear with and it has to be managed. Employee absenteeism not only affects productivity but indirectly also increase labour turnover, reduces employee morale, effects interpersonal

relations and behaviour of the employees which actually puts an impact of quality and overall productivity.

5.3 Suggestions and Recommendations

As an outcome of the research, following recommendations are provided to the stakeholders:

- To curb female absenteeism workshops can be organized relating to work life balance and stress management etc to boost female employee morale.
- The management of leather footwear industry can organize different absenteeism management programs like health checkups, recreation, exercise, Yoga and other mind relaxation programs.
- By providing better working environment, better pay and benefits and facilities, it is possible that employees motivation can be enhanced which in turn could curtail uninformed leaves taken by employees.
- The majority of the respondents of the study have poor educational background. They lack knowledge about financial management which often leads to increased level of stress which in turn impacts absenteeism. Thus, providing training on financial education at workplaces might improve employees' absenteeism by reducing their financial stress (Kim & Garman, 2003).
- To remove the attitude that works looks boredom and monotonous in nature. Recreation activities, rejuvenation sessions and training programs can be conducted for the employees at regular intervals.
- Employee counseling, Involvement and Engagement activities should be imparted to improve the morale. The study recommends setting up of rehabilitation and counseling center within organization to provide service to employees affected with smoking, drug, alcohol problems, psychological disorders, marital issues, etc.
- The study suggests that, as a gesture of motivating employees' incentives in terms of cash rewards or attendance bonus could be provided in order to reduce absenteeism.
- The study suggests that work attendance policy should be developed, to enable monitoring absenteeism and to intervene early enough when employees are frequently absent from work in order to get them back to work as soon as possible.
- It is recommended that employee fitness program should be organized as this has been found to reduce absenteeism (Isah et al. 2008).

5.4 Directions For Future Research

- The study collected data from few selected organizations and the number of respondents was limited. In addition, the data obtained were largely descriptive in nature. Hence, future investigations could use larger number of organizations from different states of India to study the variation in demographics and organizations.
- Future studies may include in-depth interviews involving larger number of stakeholders including government representatives from labor department, pollution control board, higher officials of the organizations, dependents of employees etc.
- Future research can focus on exploring the link between specific operational costs and the link between their attendance and productivity.
- A separate study can be conducted on the impact of absenteeism on co-workers in terms of their psychosocial behaviour, attitude toward work and contribution to the productivity of the organization.
- Future research can explore the possibility of developing a absenteeism model that reliably predicts future attendance behaviour based on previous absence records and other psychological, work related variables.

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