

Does Work Family Conflict Cause Absenteeism? Evidence from Orit Apparels Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Human resource has been recognized an important competitive advantage if it is utilized optimum level. However, this is not true if the rate of absenteeism is very high. Absence is a prominent issue of today's working life as it leads to both direct and indirect costs for all the stakeholders of an organization such as low productivity and ineffectiveness. The objective of this study is to find any relationship between work family conflict and the rate of absenteeism. Research design applied for this study is case study method with a sample of 200 employees from Orit Apparels Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, Sri Lanka. Results support a positive relationship between work-family conflict and the rate of absenteeism. Implications of findings are also discussed.

Keywords: Human resource, work-family conflict, absenteeism.

Introduction

Among the resources human resources is the only one live resource. Human resources have the ability of getting or reacting for something. So that it is very difficult to control because the resources can be dynamic and change from time to time, according to their values, attitudes and influencing other external factors. Therefore, it is necessary to pay special attention to human resources. Absence is a prominent issue of today's working life. It has been widely acknowledged that absence leads to both direct and indirect costs for the employees themselves, organizations and society as a whole (Edwards & Greasley, 2010). Lowered productivity and effectiveness of the organizations are among the most evident consequences of employee's absence. An absentee is a person who is expected to be in a particular place at a particular time but who is not there. Cascio (2003) see employee absenteeism as "any failure of an employee to report for or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of the reason".

Sri Lanka is very reputed for the quality garment production all over the world. So there are large numbers of garment factories in the country also working thousands of people in those factories. However, labor absenteeism rate increase day-by-day continuously. When increasing number of employees day-by-day managing human resource more important part of the organization. Orit Apparel Lanka is one of the very popular garment factories in Sri Lanka however; labor absenteeism rate is increasing continuously.

Barmby, Ercolani and Treble (2002) stated that absence is not purely a medical condition. While employee absence often is described as sickness, there are more aspects

which play a role or have an effect on the absence behavior of employees. Wright and Whitaker (2001) stressed this aspect; sickness is a complex phenomenon that is influenced strongly by factors other than health. Throughout previous research many determinants have been tested upon their possible explanatory abilities on employee absence behavior. While these determinants often showed similar results it is sometimes difficult to compare these outcomes since other exogenous factors influenced them.

The success of the garment industry depends on their employees. Without their involvement it is difficult to achieve organizational goals and objectives. During the past years employee absenteeism becomes a serious problem of the garment industry in Sri Lanka. Employee absenteeism can hurt the productivity of the organization. So that needs too much concern towards this problem.

In Orit Apparels Lanka (pvt) Ltd rate of labor absenteeism is high in every month. Their objective is keeping monthly labor absenteeism at 5.5 percent but present monthly absenteeism rate is between 6-7.5 percent. It is too higher than expected level. Further, employees from Orit say that they are facing the problem of work-family conflict. So mainly, this research focuses on studying the affect of whether work-family conflict on labor absenteeism in Orit Apparels Lanka (pvt) Ltd.

Although there are many reasons were reported for high absence rate, such as illness, pregnancy, work- family conflict appears to be significant factor. Employee long hours at work increase work-family conflict and this conflict is in turn results to stress-related health problems, including absenteeism (John & Ugoani, 2015).

Literature Review

Locke et al (2007, p.17) defines Absenteeism as "the lack of physical presence at a given location and time when there is a social expectation for the employee to be there". Absenteeism is a type of unscheduled activity which threatens the organization to fall in danger as it leads to the disruption of the daily process. Such effect of absenteeism affects the turnover of the organization leading to decreased selection and training cost. Unscheduled absenteeism affects almost every type of organization. Hoque and Islam (2003) describe absenteeism as "a subject to be studied, a matter to be thought over and a plan to be solved. They noted that the indirect cost of absenteeism can be up to three times higher than the direct costs of absenteeism. It therefore becomes vital that organizations recognize the extent of this problem due to high cost associated with continued with unscheduled absences. Absenteeism in the workplace is receiving increasing attention and organizations are taking a closer look at the costs of absenteeism as well as issues such as employee loyalty and commitment (Obasan, 2011). A study conducted by organizational care South Africa has revealed that South African companies are losing millions of rands a year due to absenteeism in the workplace. Robins et al (2003) indicate that South African managers consider absenteeism their most serious discipline problem. If not managed and controlled, absenteeism can "spread like an epidemic, creating a range of disciplinary problems for organizations. The main problem is perhaps that many employees believe sick leave is a benefit like annual leave and they are entitled to take it, irrespective of the condition of their health. However the issue of absenteeism is a multi-facet one and a phenomenon which requires a multi-pronged approach.

Work Family Conflict and Absenteeism

Work-family conflict can be defined as “that type of inter role conflict in which a person is unable to fulfill family related responsibilities because of the job demands, time allocated to and stress/tension created by the job”. Work-family conflict is considered to be an important issue in today’s business world (Burke & El-Kot, 2010). According to Boyar, Maertz, Mosley, and Carr, (2008) long working hours, duty and heavy work load have a direct influence on work-family conflict. Hammer and Thompson (2003) suggest that high levels of work-family conflict are related to dysfunctional outcomes for the individual, such as: life dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression, poor health high levels of work-family conflict lead to increased interpersonal conflict, divorce, and organizations, witness loss of talented employees, tardiness and absenteeism (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

In Greenhaus and Boutell’s study, work-family conflict is defined as a consequence of inconsistent demands between the roles at work and in the family. In other words, work-family conflict exists when the expectations related to a certain role do not meet the requirements of the other role, preventing the efficient performance of that role (Greenhaus, Tammy, & Spector, 2006). Therefore, it could be said that the conflict between work and family domains tends to stem from the conflict between the roles. Several studies reveal that work and family are not two separate domains as they are highly interdependent, having a dynamic relation with one another. While family life is affected by the factors at work, the reverse is also experienced. Empirical studies conclude that there is positive correlation between work-family conflict and the impacts on individuals, such as drinking alcohol, exhaustion, work depression, work anxiety and physical problems (Warner & Hausdorf, 2009; Ballout, 2008; Wilson, Polzer-Debrwyne, Chen, & Fernandes, 2007). Not being limited only by the employees and their families, work-family conflict leads to many other organizational consequences, such as work dissatisfaction, low performance, organizational commitment, irregular attendance at work and high turnover rate (Willis et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2005).

Work-family conflict has been related to important individual and organizational outcomes, such as absenteeism, intentions to leave work, and decreased job, family, and life satisfaction (John & Ugoani, 2015). Given the dual role that many workers have with responsibilities at work and at home, it is increasingly important to identify the interplay between work and non-work factors in absence research. Absence research indicates that work-family conflict influences both health and sickness absence (Pirainen, Rasanen, & Kivimaki, 2003; Jansen, Kant, van Amelsvoort, Kristensen, Swaen, & Nijhuis, 2006). Anderson, Coffey and Byerly (2002) found a link between work-family conflict and a wide range of outcomes absenteeism. Lack of managerial support was found to be a predictor of conflict between work and family in a study conducted by Anderson et al., (2002) on a national representative sample of US employees.

Research Design and Methodology

There are 1650 employees currently working in Orit Apparels Lanka (pvt) Ltd. Among them 115 employees are office staff and others are representing the job in operational workers category. In this study observing the total population is difficult task therefore researcher decided to select the sample to represent total population of Orit Apparels Lanka (pvt) Ltd. The population size is 1535. The sample size of this study was 200. Employees were selected using six months labor absenteeism records from April, 2014 to September, 2104. Researcher used stratified random sampling method.

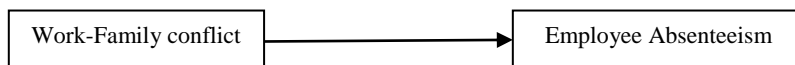


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the above conceptual framework, it is hypothesized as “There is a positive relationship between work-family conflict and employee absenteeism”.

Data were collected using a self-prepared questionnaire which was validated. Questionnaire was designed and it includes 3 sections to measure Absenteeism and work family conflict. The first section covered of personal information such as age, gender, marital status, number of years worked at the industry, length of service and qualifications and position held at the industry etc. and from section 2 work-family conflict and section 3 represent all factors which are effecting to the absenteeism and it’s response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Questionnaires were chosen for this study because anonymity delivers valid responses. For this study, secondary data sources were used. Secondary data was obtained from the records of the company. Further the absenteeism rate of the despondence is also obtained from the records of the company as a supplementary way of verification and to confirm the reliability of the despondence.

Analysis

Data gathered through Interviews and questionnaires. Data will be analyzed both descriptive statistics and correlation. According to the characteristics of gathered data, it was analyses.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of Respondents(N=200)

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	93	46.5
	Female	107	53.5
Marital Status	Married	111	55
	Unmarried	88	45
Age groups	Below 25 years	101	50.5
	26-35 years	77	38.5
	36 – 46years	16	8
	46<	6	3
Education Level	G.C.E (A/L)	93	46.5
	G.C.E (O/L)	99	49.5
	Degree	2	1
	Grade 08	6	3
Year of Experience	Less than 01 year	71	35.5
	01 – 03 years	85	42.5
	03 – 05 years	23	11.5
	More than 05 years	21	10.5
Number of Children	No children	97	48.5
	01 child	48	24
	02 or 03 children	41	20.5
	More than 04 children	14	7

Source: Survey data

The Table1 describes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The correlation matrix in below Tables display correlation coefficients between the independent and dependent variables. The table also indicates Means (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) values of variables. The correlation coefficients are a measure of the strength of the association between any two metric variables.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of work–family conflict and absenteeism

Variables	n	Lowest score	Highest score	M	SD
Work-Family conflict	200	2.01	4.56	3.73	0.657
Absenteeism	200	1.23	4.75	3.75	0.678

Source: Survey Data, 2015

Table3. Relationship between work-family conflict and Absenteeism

	Work-family conflict
Absenteeism	0.36**

**p<0.01 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Source: Survey Data Analysis Results, 2015

The Table 2 also shows that there is a general moderate level, positive and significant relationship ($r=0.36$, $p<0.01$) is observed between work–family conflict absenteeism. Hence, the finding reveals that when an increase in work–family conflict is observed an increase in absenteeism also can be observed. This results also suggested that 13% of the variance in absenteeism is explained by work –family conflict ($r^2=0.13$) of the Orit Apparels Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, Sri Lanka. These findings are consistent with prior research.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the major issues faced by garment industry is labor absenteeism. Orit Apparels Lanka (pvt) Ltd is currently facing this problem on each month. Operational level employees resigned due to various reasons. This study has found work family conflict highly influenced absenteeism. Study suggests if employee can balance work and their family life absenteeism rate can be reduced. Work –family conflict also can be reduced by improving work – family conflict self-efficacy of employee (Rauf, 2013).

Further, the company can implement some other strategies in order to reduce the absenteeism level at Orit Apparels Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, Sri Lanka. Company can increase its attendance allowances and anyone can be received this with presenting to the organization regularly without get leaves. With comparisons to other organization this amount relatively less. The organization can introduce awarding system to their employees who has not reported absent.

Supervisor is most closely person of machine operators in the factory. Supervisor should aware of employee’s family background, high educational needs’ attitudes, and health condition like that. Also supervisors should take action to the problems of machine operators. If supervisor cannot take proper action to the problem they should pass, the problem immediately to the correct persons it is recommended to hold workshop for

supervisors and conduct-counseling programs for supervisors, which help them, solve the employee's problems.

To check the high rate of absenteeism among employees, there should be stringent procedural measures to raise the absenteeism barrier and make it less simple to report oneself sick or obtain permission to stay away from work. In this regard, an obligation or requirement to produce a medical certificate from a government hospital after one day of absence should be imposed. Healthy employees are less likely to fall ill or report sick, and workplace wellness programs can encourage good health. Preventive work-oriented health measures such as regular medical screening, fitness assessment, exercise and nutrition prescriptions are associated with better employee health. Wellness programs can also incorporate measures to reduce stress; as any measure put in place to reduce stress will in turn invariably reduce employees' absenteeism.

Organization wants to lead annually trip, celebrating festival with employees and their family members. Then employees can spend time with their family members and can decrease work family conflict and reduce stress and increase relationship between employers and employees and between employees and supervision.

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