Absenteeism of Employees in Forward Shoes (India) Pvt. Ltd., Cochin, Kerala: A Case Study

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Abstract

Absenteeism is a significant challenge impacting the productivity and operational efficiency of labour-intensive industries worldwide. It reflects employees' disengagement and dissatisfaction, resulting in decreased performance and increased costs for organizations. This study investigates the phenomenon of absenteeism by analysing existing literature on its causes and effects, focusing specifically on the manufacturing sector. Various factors contribute to absenteeism, including poor working conditions, long hours, inadequate job satisfaction, health-related issues, and insufficient employee welfare programs. Absenteeism is influenced by individual, organizational, and environmental factors. Key contributors such as stress, low job satisfaction, and poor work-life balance lead to increased absenteeism, which directly affects company productivity and morale. Long working hours, lack of incentives and inadequate welfare measures significantly contribute to high absenteeism rates in all types industries. Unfavourable workplace conditions and limited rewards often result in disengaged employees, further exacerbating absenteeism. Poor working environments and excessive workloads are critical factors in raising absenteeism rates. Studies revealed that implementing wellness programs and enhancing employee engagement can effectively reduce absenteeism levels. The integration of health and wellness initiatives, along with fostering a positive and supportive work culture, has shown substantial improvements in employee attendance. This concludes that addressing absenteeism necessitates a comprehensive approach, including enhancements in workplace conditions, better work-life balance, and a strong focus on employee health and engagement. Such strategies can lead to a more motivated workforce, improved productivity, and reduced operational disruptions. So there is a pressing need for managers to focus more effectively on addressing absenteeism issues and to develop more comprehensive leave policies.

Key Words: Absenteeism; employee engagement; footwear industry; management; development; training; performance; Kerala

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Introduction

Effective management of employee attendance is crucial for the smooth operation of businesses, as absenteeism can significantly impact productivity, profitability, and operational costs. Unplanned absences disrupt workflow and can lead to delays in project timelines, which, in turn, can affect customer satisfaction and the company's reputation [1]. While managers must grant leave for legitimate reasons, excessive or unplanned absences, especially those occurring without prior notice, can harm the organization's overall efficiency [6]. Therefore, supervisors must carefully monitor absenteeism to mitigate its adverse effects [2]. Persistent absenteeism without valid reasons needs to be addressed proactively to maintain operational efficiency. Although only a small percentage of employees may be involved, managing attendance effectively can lead to enhanced productivity, improved employee morale, and reduced operational costs [3]. Consequently human resources departments must continuously develop strategies to monitor and manage absenteeism, ensuring that they are tailored to meet the specific needs of the organization and its workforce [4]. Despite extensive research on absenteeism, it remains a prevalent issue across various industries, necessitating ongoing efforts from HR teams to mitigate its impact. Organizations employ a variety of strategies to reduce absenteeism and achieve their operational goals [5]. These strategies must evolve continually to align with changing employee attitudes and workplace dynamics. Furthermore, companies often implement innovative HR policies and methods to foster a culture of attendance and accountability [7]. This study aims to analyze absenteeism rates within the context of Forward Shoes (India) Pvt. Ltd. in Cochin and propose practical solutions to mitigate this pressing issue. Given that absenteeism remains a significant challenge for many organizations,

particularly in sectors where operational continuity is crucial, a targeted approach is essential. While existing research provides general insights into managing absenteeism, there is still a lack of focused literature addressing HR issues in developing countries [11]. This gap underscores the need for further exploration of culturally relevant strategies that resonate with local workforce dynamics. Ongoing efforts are critical to developing effective remedial measures and enhancing workforce management practices in the region.

Literature review

Kanakaraj R and Aravind H (2019), Habeebur Rehman (2019), Gosselin, Lemyre and Corneil (2013), examined limited control over job-related decisions, and excessive workloads are significant factors that contribute to increased absenteeism among employees. *Chaudhary and Sharma (2012)* pointed out that factors like low job satisfaction, extended working hours, and inadequate employee welfare programs play a key role in driving absenteeism. *Rabiyathul Basariya S (2014)* examined employee absenteeism in Indian industries. *Ayshath Sameena and Karunakaran N (2023), Jithu. K. P and Karunakaran N (2023) and Sanushma. S and Karunakaran. N (2022)* examined employee retention strategies adopted by companies and effect of employee motivation techniques in Kerala. *Sharma and Singh (2019)* identified several factors contributing to absenteeism in a shoe manufacturing company in Tamil Nadu. *Gupta (2015),* in a study of Indian manufacturing firms, found that organizations that implemented wellness programs and promoted employee engagement saw a significant reduction in absenteeism. Pillai's (2011) reveals that cultural elements, such as festivals, regional strikes, and family obligations, often contribute to absenteeism in the state. Additionally, elevated absenteeism rates in Kerala's private sector are linked to factors

like job dissatisfaction, comparatively lower wages than in other states, and insufficient employee welfare initiatives.

Research gap

Examining absenteeism in the footwear manufacturing sector underscores the pressing need for updated, context-specific data that reflects the unique challenges faced by this industry. Earlier studies have primarily concentrated on generic factors such as job dissatisfaction, insufficient workplace conditions, and managerial practices. However, these studies often fail to consider the specific socio-economic and cultural dynamics that significantly influence employee behavior in this region. Factors like local economic conditions, community values, and cultural norms play a critical role in shaping attendance patterns and workplace engagement.

Objectives of the study

· To study about the rate of Absenteeism in Forward shoes private Ltd., Cochin

· To study about leave rules and opportunity for encashment of leave

· To study about the causes of Absenteeism.

· To study whether the employees are aware about the consequences of Absenteeism.

· To know employee satisfaction on the welfare measures taken for the Employees.

· To recommend effective mechanism to manage the Absenteeism.

Research methodology

For the study, primary data gathering tool of questionnaire and interview were administered among a sample of 150. Forward Shoes (India) Pvt. Ltd. in Cochin, Kerala was used for selecting the sample and study. To assess the association and significance of categorical data, correlation, regression, percentage analysis were used and conducted chi-square test also.

Analysis and discussion

Every month taken for the study show the absenteeism percentage is more than 5% (table 1)

Table 1: Rate of absenteeism

Months	Total no. of work force (a)	No. of working days (b)	Total no. of working employee days C=(a*b)	Lost days during this period (d)	Absenteeism rate R=(d/c) *100
October	487	23	11201	670	5.98
November	470	22	10340	573	5.54
December	478	24	11472	648	5.65
January	475	19	9025	518	5.74
February	473	22	10406	573	5.51
March	473	25	11825	622	5.26

Absence Rate = No. of man days lost/No. of man days planned to Work x 10
Source; Primary Data

From table 2, it is clear that 57% of employee are agree with the working environment at same time 22% employees are partially satisfied with the working arrangement. 4 percent employee disagrees with the working conditions and strongly satisfied with 6%; shows that company has to improve its working condition further.

Table 2: Working environment provides to employees by the management

Particulars	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	12	8
Agree	86	57
Partially agree	44	29
Disagree	8	5
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

Analysis shows a cordial relationship exists between the employee and employer, strong positive relationship exiting between them. It is found that 73 percent of employee are agree that there is sound relationship exist, and 16 percentage are agree with (table 3).

Table 3: Cordial relationship between employee and employer

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	110	73
Agree	24	16
Partially agree	12	8
Disagree	4	3
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

36 percent of employees are agreeing with the length of break time given to them. 47 percentages are partially agreed (table 4).

Table 4: Sufficient Lunch and Break Time

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	7
Agree	54	36
Partially agree	70	47
Disagree	16	11
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

From table 5, it is clear that only 5 percentage of employee are strongly agreed and satisfied with the availabilities of drinking water. 8 percentages are agreed and partially agreed are 69 percentages.

Table 5: Employees satisfaction with availability of drinking water

| Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	5
Agree	12	8
Partially agree	104	69
Disagree	26	17
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

64 percentages are strongly agreed with the safety measures taken by company, 25 percentages are agreed, and 7 percentages partially agreed (table 6).

Table 6: Safety provisions strictly followed

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	96	64
Agree	38	25
Partially agree	10	7
Disagree	6	4
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

It is shown that 57% of employee is agreeing with the non-monitory incentives, 22% are partially satisfied and 4 percent disagrees (table 7).

Figure 1: Sufficient non-financial incentives

Sufficient non-financial incentives given
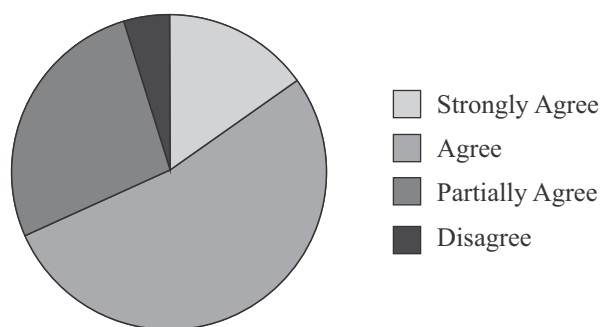
Source; Primary Data

Table 7: Sufficient non-financial incentives

Particulars	Respondents	%
Strongly agree	12	16
Agree	86	57
Partially agree	44	29
Disagree	8	5
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

It is found that there is strong positive attitude from the part of the employees towards the exiting disciplinary rules. 73 percent are strongly agreed, 16 percentages are agreed and only 6 and 2 percentage of employees is agreed and disagree respectively (table 8).

Table 8: Proper disciplinary rules

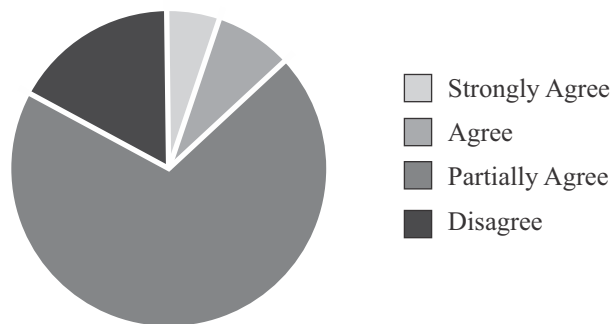| Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	105	73
Agree	24	16
Partially agree	12	8
Disagree	4	3
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

Table 9 shows that only 7 percentage of employee are strongly agree with the present leave policy of the company. 36 percent are agreeing with the present policies relating the leave. 11 percentages are partially agreed.

Table 9: Company's leave policy

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	7
Agree	34	36
Partially agree	16	11
Disagree	70	47
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

Figure 2: Freedom for informal association

Sufficient non-financial incentives given

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Partially Agree
- Disagree

Source; Primary Data

From the table 10, it is clear that only 5 percentage of employee are strongly agree that the employee are free to form informal association. 8 percentage of employee are agreed. Partially agreed are 69 percentages and 17are disagreed (table 10).

Table 10: Freedom for informal association and employee union

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	5
Agree	12	8
Partially agree	104	69
Disagree	26	17
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

From the analysis it clear that 57% of employee are agree that there is a scope for career development, 22% are partially agreed and 4 percent disagreed (table 11).

Table 11: Scope for career development

Particulars	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	12	16
Agree	86	57
Partially agree	44	29
Disagree	8	5
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

Table 12 made to know whether the managers understand the personal problems. It is found that 8 percent of employee is strongly agreed, 16 percentages are agreed with, 73 are partially agreed and 3 parentages are disagreed.

Table 12: Management understanding for employee's personal problem that leads to employee absenteeism

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	8
Agree	24	16
Partially agree	105	73
Disagree	4	3
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

7 percentage of employee are strongly agreed with the number of allowed leave in a year; 36 percent agreeing with the present situation. 11 percentages of employees are partially agreed (table 13).

Table 13: Allowed number of leave per year is satisfactory

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	7
Agree	34	36
Partially agree	16	11
Disagree	70	47
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

From the details it is clear that only 5 percentage of employee are strongly agree that the employee is given training periodically. 8 percentage of employee are agreed. Partially agreed are 69 percentage (table 14).

Table 14: Proper training is given periodically

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	5
Agree	12	8
Partially agree	104	69
Disagree	26	17
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

25 percentages are strongly agreed, 7 percentages are agreed and 4 percentage employees are disagreed (table 15).

Table 15: Employee participation in management

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	38	25
Agree	10	7
Partially agree	96	64
Disagree	6	4
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

57% of employee is agreeing that they are informed properly the result of performance appraisal. 22% are partially agreed, 4 percent disagreed (table 16).

Table 16: Employees are properly informed the results of Performance appraisal

Particulars	Number of Respondents	%
Strongly agree	12	16
Agree	86	57
Partially agree	44	29
Disagree	8	5
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

It is found that 8 percent of employees are strongly agreed 16 percentages are agreed with, 73 are partially agreed and 3 parentages are disagreed (table 17).

Table 17: Whether company's working hours comfortable and satisfactory

Description	Respondents	%
Strongly agree	12	8
Agree	24	16
Partially agree	105	73
Disagree	4	3
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

Figure in table 18 shows that only 7 percentage of employee are strongly agree with fringe benefits allowed; 36 percent agreeing with the present situation and 11 percentages are partially agreed. This show that majority of employee (47 percentage) are disagree with the existing benefits.

Table 18: Satisfied with fringe benefits and perquisites

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	7
Agree	34	36
Partially agree	16	11
Disagree	70	47
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

5 percentage of employee are strongly agreed that the employees are given rewards for their better performance. 8 percentage of employee are agreed. Partially agreed are 69 percentage and 17 are disagreed (table 19).

Table 19: Proper recognition and reward

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	5
Agree	12	8
Partially agree	104	69
Disagree	26	17
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

The analysis shows that 64 percentages of employees are partially agreed with the statement. Only 25 percentages are strongly agreed. 7 percentage of employee are agreed; 4 percentages are disagreed (table 20).

Figure 3: Satisfaction with the existing technology used
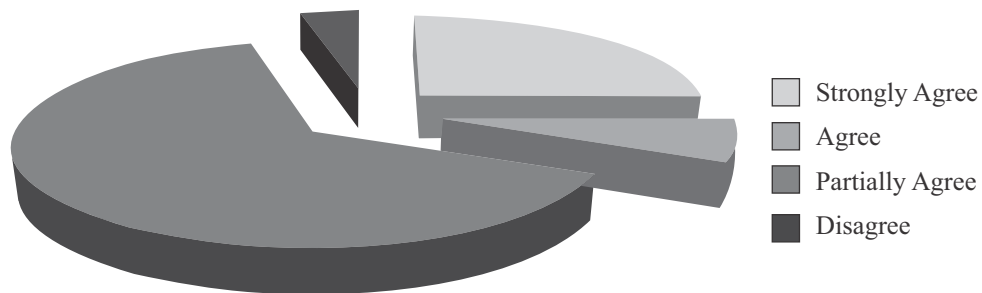
Source; Primary Data

Table 20: Satisfied with the existing technology used

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	38	25
Agree	10	7
Partially agree	96	64
Disagree	6	4
Total	150	100

Source; Primary Data

Table 21 shows the correlation between age and employees getting prior permission for taking leave.

Table 21: Correlation on employees getting prior permission for taking leave

Age	SA	A	PA	DA
18-22	18	52	20	10
23-27	14	6	4	6
28-32	4	2	-	4
Above	-	4	4	2
Value of r is -0.072.				

Source; Calculated with Primary Data

Table 22: Chi-square test: supervisor helps employees, when they feel difficulty in their job

Description	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	20	26.7
Agree	39	52
Partially agree	11	14.6
Disagree	5	6.7
Total	75	100

O	E	(0-E)^2	(O-E)^2/E
1	1	0.36	0.035
1	20.28	1.64	0.081
7	5	1.64	0.287
2	2	0.36	0.138
9	9	0.36	0.037
2	18.72	1.64	0.087
4	5	1.64	0.311
3	2.	0.36	0.150
			1.126

Expected value (E)=(total row* total column)/grand total Significant level at 5%

Degree of freedom (df)=(r-1)(c-1) =(2-1)(4-1)

df=3 at 5%=7.81

Hence the calculated value is less than the tabulated value.

Ho is accepted.

Source; Calculated with Primary Data

The analysis of absenteeism within the company indicates an average rate of 5%, which provides a foundational insight into employee attendance. However, a closer examination reveals a nuanced picture of employee satisfaction and organizational dynamics. Notably, 57% of employees express full satisfaction with their working conditions, indicating a positive environment for more than half of the workforce. Despite this, a significant portion remains dissatisfied, highlighting the need for ongoing assessments and improvements in work place conditions to enhance overall employee morale.

The strong employer-employee relationship is another positive aspect, with 73% of employees confirming this connection. Such a relationship can be vital in fostering a supportive work environment, which may contribute to lower absenteeism rates. Yet, when it comes to personal time, 47% of employees only partially agree that their needs are being met, suggesting that there may be an imbalance between work and personal life that could impact their overall well-being and attendance.

Drinking water availability presents a concern, with only 5% of employees reporting complete satisfaction. Mean while, 69% express partial agreement, indicating that while the issue may not

be entirely neglected, it requires attention to ensure that all employees have access to basic necessities. Safety provisions fare somewhat better, as 64% of employees report satisfaction. This suggests that the company is making strides in ensuring a safe working environment, which is essential for maintaining employee health and reducing absenteeism.

In terms of non-monetary incentives, 57% of employees are content, reflecting recognition of the value of such benefits in enhancing job satisfaction. Moreover, the majority of employees (73%) view disciplinary rules positively, indicating that they appreciate structure and accountability within the organization. However, it is worth noting that 47% of employees disagree with the current leave policies, pointing to a potential area for policy revision to better align with employee expectations and needs.

Informal associations within the company appear to thrive, as evidenced by 69% of employees approving of their presence. This could indicate a supportive community that fosters collaboration and camaraderie among workers. Career development opportunities are satisfactory for 57% of employees, suggesting that while there are avenues for growth, there is still room for enhancement to meet the aspirations of the workforce.

Interestingly, only 8% of employees strongly agree that managers effectively address absenteeism, which raises concerns about the management's role in this area. Additionally, just 36% of employees feel that the leave provided is sufficient, underscoring a potential disconnect between organizational policies and employee needs.

Regarding training programs, 69% of employees partially agree that they are adequate, indicating a need for further investment in skill development to boost overall employee performance and job satisfaction. Performance appraisal feedback is satisfactory for 57% of employees, while 73% partially agree that the working time arrangements suit their needs.

Lastly, fringe benefits appear to be a significant area for improvement, with only 7% of employees expressing satisfaction and 47% reporting dissatisfaction. This indicates a pressing need for the company to revaluate its benefits offerings to ensure they align with employee expectations and contribute to a more positive work environment. Overall, while the analysis highlights several positive aspects of employee satisfaction, it also reveals critical areas that require attention and improvement to foster a more engaged and productive work force.

Conclusion

The conclusion indicates that absenteeism is a moderate issue within the company, with an average rate of 5%. While over half of the employees express satisfaction with their working conditions and non-monetary incentives, there are notable areas of dissatisfaction, particularly concerning personal time and leave policies. These aspects suggest that while employees appreciate certain elements of their work environment, they still feel that their work-life balance is not adequately addressed.

The employer-employee relationship is generally strong, which can be a significant factor in promoting a positive workplace culture. However, concerns regarding fringe benefits, training programs, and the availability of drinking water highlight areas that require attention. Ensuring that basic needs are met and that employees have access to adequate training opportunities is essential for fostering job satisfaction and reducing absenteeism.

Interestingly, employees exhibit a positive attitude toward disciplinary rules, indicating that they value structure and accountability within the organization. Furthermore, the minimal restrictions on forming informal associations suggest that employees feel empowered to build supportive networks among themselves, which can enhance morale and teamwork.

Nevertheless, there is a pressing need for managers to focus more effectively on addressing absenteeism issues and to develop more comprehensive leave policies. By doing so, the company can enhance overall employee satisfaction, leading to improved attendance and productivity. Ultimately, addressing these concerns will be crucial for maintaining a motivated workforce and promoting a more positive work environment.

Limitations

The study faced several limitations that impacted its comprehensiveness and depth. First and foremost, due to time constraints, it was not feasible to visit and collect data from every department within the company. This limitation significantly narrowed the scope of the research, potentially leaving out valuable insights from departments that may experience different dynamics regarding absenteeism. Each department may have unique challenges and factors influencing employee behaviour, and not including them could result in an incomplete understanding of the issue. Furthermore, the constant engagement of workers in their tasks posed another challenge. Given their busy schedules, it was often difficult to find adequate time to interact with employees and gather comprehensive information. This limitation may have affected the quality and richness of the data collected, as spontaneous interactions during work hours can yield more candid and insightful responses. The inability to conduct in-depth interviews or focus groups could mean that nuanced perspectives on absenteeism—such as personal motivations, cultural influences, or departmental pressures—were overlooked. Moreover, the reliance on quantitative data may have further constrained the findings. While numerical data can highlight trends, they may not fully capture the underlying reasons for absenteeism. Qualitative insights, such as personal stories and individual experiences, are crucial for understanding the emotional and psychological factors at play. The absence of these insights could lead to an oversimplified analysis that does not fully address the complexity of absenteeism. Lastly, the potential for sampling bias must be considered. If the data collected predominantly reflects the views of a particular group of employees—such as those more willing to engage or those from specific departments—this could skew the overall results. Future studies would benefit from a more randomized approach to data collection, ensuring a representative sample across the organization. Addressing these limitations in subsequent research could provide a more holistic view of absenteeism and yield findings that are more robust and actionable.

Scope for future research

Future research on absenteeism at Forward Shoes (India) Pvt. Ltd., Cochin, could expand significantly by delving into the impact of psychological factors such as job stress, burnout, and employee engagement on absenteeism rates. These elements are crucial in understanding how an employee's mental well-being directly influences their attendance and overall job performance. By incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, researchers could gain deeper insights into the personal experiences of employees and how these experiences correlate with absenteeism.

Additionally, studies could investigate how improving workplace ergonomics, offering flexible work arrangements, and introducing mental health support programs might effectively reduce absenteeism. A focus on ergonomics not only enhances employee comfort but can also lead to increased productivity and reduced health-related absences. Furthermore, flexible work arrangements could provide employees with a better work-life balance, addressing the dissatisfaction observed in personal time management.

Examining the role of leadership styles, communication gaps, and employee-manager relationships could further illuminate the underlying causes of absenteeism. Effective leadership and open communication can foster a more supportive work environment, encouraging employees to feel more valued and engaged. Understanding these dynamics may lead to actionable strategies to enhance employee relations and reduce absenteeism.

Moreover, future research could focus on evaluating the effectiveness of training and career development programs. By assessing how these programs impact employee morale and engagement, organizations can tailor their offerings to better meet employees' needs and aspirations. Integrating technology-driven solutions, such as automated attendance systems, may also help track attendance patterns more effectively, enabling management to identify potential issues before they escalate.

Cross-industry comparisons within Kerala's manufacturing sector could yield broader insights into best practices for reducing absenteeism. By analysing successful strategies implemented in other organizations, Forward Shoes could adopt proven methods that align with its unique culture and workforce. This holistic approach to absenteeism research will not only enhance the understanding of its causes but also facilitate the development of comprehensive interventions to improve attendance and foster a more positive workplace environment.

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