Pandemic, Workplace Culture and the Challenges of Presenteeism: Perspectives of Occupational Health and Safety Studies

ASSOCIATE PROF Dr. YAHYA SALEH IBRAHIM DIRECTOR INSTITUTE OF HEALTH SCIENCES & TECHNOLOGY, (IHST) KADUNA STATE UNIVERSITY-KADUNA



 Pandemics are large-scale outbreaks of infectious disease that can greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption.

 Evidence suggests that the likelihood of pandemics has increased over the past century because of increased global travel and integration, urbanization, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment (Jones and others 2008; Morse 1995).



Introduction

These trends likely will continue and will intensify.

 Significant policy attention has focused on the need to identify and limit emerging outbreaks that might lead to pandemics

*To expand and sustain investment and employment for livelihood of the citizens

To build preparedness and health capacity (Smolinsky, Hamburg, and Lederberg 2003).

COVID-19 & WORKPLACE CULTURE

The menaces of Covid-19 pandemic have pushed
 and force the change not only in schedules of work
 but in the workplace setup.

 The national and international governments and agencies directives on social distance, isolation, reduction and restriction in local and international movements, suffice an explanation on how the work culture and workplace set-up has been impacted, (Van Stolk & Whitemore, 2020).

COVID-19 & WORKPLACE CULTURE

The old tradition of workplace culture where many employees have the feelings and the pressure to turn up to the office at all costs, despite their ill condition is lay to rest with the new guideline on work and workplace set-up due to covid-19pandemic (Van Stolk & Whitemore, 2020).

* The global pandemic of COVID-19 has shown that, it is more critical than ever for work setting managers to tackle the widespread challenge of "presenteeism", (Kinman & Grant, 2020).

PRESENTEEISM & COVID-19

- * The condition of presenteeism, where people will have to do with suboptimal health condition just to keep job explained over 50% cases of workers condition before the pandemic, (Kinman & Grant, 2020).
- In a survey conducted to determine the Healthiest
 Workplace competition in Britain the results suggest that
 50% of workers have one stress-related condition,
- ★ 50% have job satisfaction that has to do with financial concerns at 20%
- * These conditions contributed to a forceful presenteeism levels to retained job, (EURAND, 2019).

PRESENTEEISM & COVID-19

*The concept of presenteeism has been accepted as a work stressors in the last decade, with attendant act of working more hours than required, (John, 2010). * This condition was reported in the UK with more than 4 in 5 people experiencing it compared to previous studies report, (Skagen & Collins, 2016).

The challenge of presenteeism became apparent with the continues spread of coronavirus (Covid-19) globally, (Hayes, Priestley, Ishmakhametov, et al, 2020).

The need to expand and evolve program that will create awareness on how employers should be concious of this work setting that enhances work fatality is now, with an unending tendency of digital work setting as the new normal, (Waizenegger, McKenna, Cai, et al, 2020).

The present work order is discouraging, due to presence of overwork serving as the best way to tackling, 'presenteeism', it is as well suspicious with the government and medical professionals warnings around social distancing and self-isolation, (Niven & Ciborowska, 2015).

* The combined expectation of most workers to meet their target while staying at home observing social distance, maintaining selfisolation and/or maintaining social distance is creating additional stressors that are either life threathening or difficult to manage.

Being present in office has its own challenges of having: **★**i. Hash supervisor, *x*ii.Uncooperative or jelous collegues antagonizing success or progress as well as

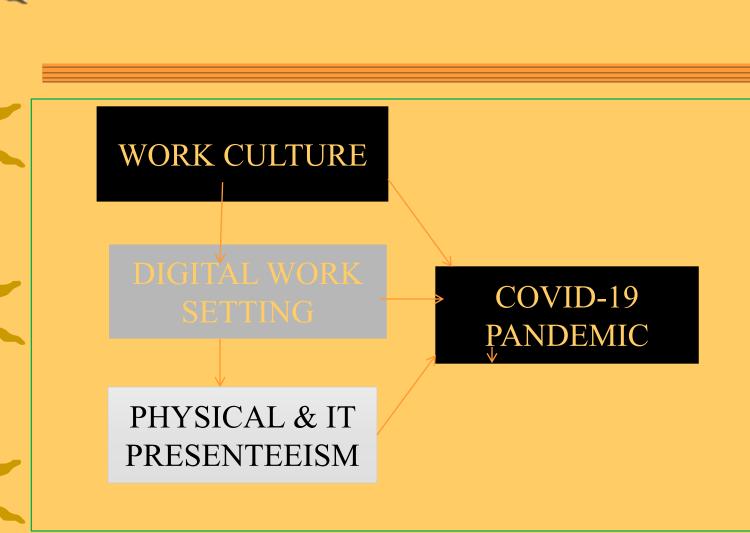
iii. Meeting undiminishing targets.These conbined to heighten office stress level

DIGITAL PRESENTEEISM

The new normalsupported by IT and
Medical conditions, propelled by Covid-19, evolves new work culture,

*Under digital work setting which expunged physical presence in a seculuded place call an office,

★That is what is today referred to as the new normal.



CONCEPTUAL MODEL

* The model of this study is depicted by the above diagram representing the intersections unveiling the various relationships between the independent and the dependent variable it is a straight line relationship thus:

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

- 1.That work culture is affected by Covid-19
 pandemic
- *2.That digital work setting is affected byCovid-19
- *3.That Presenteeism is affected by Covid-19
- 4.That work culture is influence by Digital Work setting
- ★ 5.That digital work setting is affected by Presenteeism

DIGITAL PRESENTEEISM



PRESENTEEISM AS THE NEW NORMAL

*Today's workplace culture has many employees feeling the pressure to turn up to the office at all costs, even when ill; *However, the global pandemic COVID-19 has shown it is more critical than ever for businesses to tackle the widespread challenge of "presenteeism" especially when majority are working from home.

PRESENTEEISM AS THE NEW NORMAL

- * In the last decade, presenteeism known as the act of working more hours than required, has tripled in the UK and other countries with more than 4 in 5 people observing it compared to just a quarter in 2010.
- As coronavirus (Covid-19) continues to spread, both within the UK and globally, employers should be discouraging, and tackling, 'presenteeism' amid government warnings around social distancing and self-isolation.

PRESENTEEISM AS THE NEW NORMAL

- With business practices, and management, being put to the test, show casing the reality of presenteeism and what business owners can do to help keep their workers safe during a pandemic.
- * There is the need to tackle the Previous, 1 in 5 people ignoring their doctor's advice to stay home when unwell,
- Studies indicate that doing so can not only reduce productivity by over 30%, but cost a company £4,000 in lost business, on average per employee.

PRESENTEEISM AS THE NEW NORMAL

- * Nonetheless, most workers displaying little-to-no cold/flu-like symptoms continue to go into work, despite warnings from the government about doing so, (John Williams , 2021).
- * This act tend to add to the number of those with an ailment that have long effect on productivity and performance of employee
- * For those who are able to work from home, many businesses & government still aren't enforcing employees to do so, (Williams, 2021).

RESENTEEISM IS A GLOBAL ISSUE

Previously defined as "showing up to work when one is ill"

- The concept of 'presenteeism' has evolved to include a wide range of detrimental behaviours relating to how we work.
- This includes employees who arrive early and stay late to show commitment,
- Those who work during annual leave
- * Those who respond to emails at all hours,
- Mistaking an unhealthy attitude towards work as a strong work ethic, often to the detriment of their personal wellbeing.

PRESENTEEISM IS A GLOBAL ISSUE

- Although the believe that those working from home are generally more productive than in an office, IT presenteeism, may be true
- * It shows that Remote workers are, on average, working an extra 1.5 days a week, as they feel it is easier to finish a task as they don't need to think about commuting to office the next day.
- * It is established that, they tend to deal with stressors, burnout and muscularskeletal malfunctions, which add unproductive results

What Drives Presenteeism?

Although figures from the Office of Nations
 Statistics ONS indicate, in the past 25 years, sickness absence has steadily decreased, the pressure to turn up at work at all costs has significantly increased presenteeism, which results in a toxic workplace culture in which no one wins.

A report on presenteeism by Employment
 Studies found some of the leading causes to include:

What Drives Presenteeism?

- Manager Behaviour: Due to a sense of responsibility, managers can also be presenteeism culprits, unknowingly putting pressure on employees to act the same way.
- Concern for Colleagues: Studies show employees are likely to go to work ill to avoid a colleague dealing with an additional workload or pressure, especially in situations where there is no replacement.
- Company Culture: Studies have found perfect attendance to be seen as a sign of commitment to a job, while taking time off sick is seen as a sign of under-performance, particularly in the private sector; a work ethic can be unknowingly perpetuated in an organisation by senior managers and long-time employees.

Solution to Drivers of Presenteeism

* Combating presenteeism during a pandemic: As with anything new and unknown, there is a level of uncertainty that comes with a pandemic. Keep an eye on the news, and reiterate decisions that could affect their job/ability to work as quickly as possible to reassure people.

 Ensure employees know that they are able to work from home: Although it may not be possible for all roles and industries, companies where staff
 are able to carry out tasks out of the office, should
 let employees know this is something they can do as soon as possible.

What Drives Presenteeism?

Encourage Senior Members to Lead by Example: By managing their own absence and presence and encouraging a healthy work-life balance, line managers and senior members of staff can act as better role models for the organisation, inspiring their teams to do the same. Ensure employees are 'online' during working hours and encourage them to log off at the end of the day as normal.

Enable Flexibility: Employees who adjust their working hours and environment are less likely to fall into the cycle of presenteeism. By offering options such as flexible working options or hours, employees can feel more in control and still maintain their work.



The Concept of Unlimited Vacation Policy

*What is Unlimited Vacation?

*Unlimited vacation is an increasingly popular benefit among startups and high growth companies.

*Employees under these policies are permitted to take as much time off as they need under the expectation that their work gets done in a timely manner.

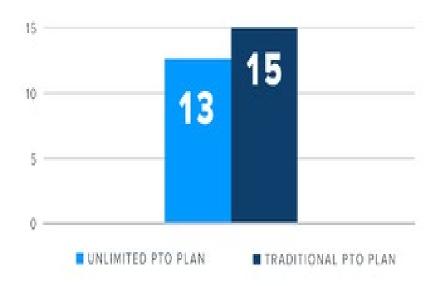
The Concept of Unlimited Vacation Policy

• At its best, unlimited vacation benefit gives employees more flexibility with their Paid Time Off and entrusts them to manage their own time.

While the promise of unlimited vacation still dazzles many, there is also skepticism around the effectiveness of these plans.

This is a policy to manage time while performing primary function off office setting
Typical e.g. is Friday off for Kaduna state.

AVERAGE PTO DAYS TAKEN BY EMPLOYEES





- * 1. Best Practices: Unlimited PTO works best when employers and employees keep each other in mind. This establishes a company culture that encourages both good work ethic and employee well-being.
- * 2. Align Policy with Core Values: Companies that have successfully implemented unlimited vacation policies are those who genuinely want to see employees take meaningful time off. If a company upholds values around employee happiness, well-being, and appreciation as a motivator for high quality work, employees will in turn value the mission and success of the company.



- * A successful unlimited vacation policy contributes to a culture of mutual respect, which can boost both productivity and morale.
- * Trusting employees with the responsibility to build their own time-off schedule nurtures a culture of trust, goodwill, and mutual respect.
- * A genuine interest in employee well-being and happiness motivates these employees to work harder.

Redefine Success Standards: In naturally competitive work environments, employees often feel compelled to compete with their peers for hours clocked.

- Employees do their best work when the company genuinely cares for them.
- Working long hours for the sake of proving value is not sustainable and doesn't contribute to productivity.
- * To avoid this pitfall, success within a company should be clearly defined by quality of work, rather than face time

- Communication is Key:Company culture can help shape the boundaries of unlimited PTO, but the specifics of these boundaries are often ambiguous.
- Employees frequently fall into a trap of taking less time off than they deserve because they don't know where to draw the line between acceptable and excessive.
- An open dialogue about expectations and needs between employer and employee can create more transparency around unlimited vacation.

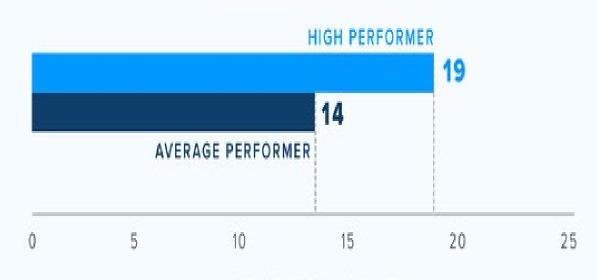


*Lead By Example: To ensure a successful PTO policy, it's critical that managers lead by example.

If direct reports see their managers taking vacation time, they will feel more comfortable to take time off, too.
 This example-setting should start from the

*This example-setting should start from the top and work its way throughout the organization-HR inclusive!





NUMBER OF PTO DAYS TAKEN

Benefits of Unlimited Vacation

*Performance: It doesn't take long for employees to feel the burnout associated with underutilized PTO.

* Looking at trends in employee vacation and performance data, it's clear that employees who are considered high performers took an average of five more vacation days per year than lower performers

Benefits of Unlimited Vacation

- Reduce Accrued Expenses:
 - The Work Still Gets Done serving two vantages for employer and employee
- * Attract and Retain Top Talents, due flexibility of time
- The share of job postings advertising unlimited vacation is rising fast, from about 450 postings per million in May 2015 to nearly 1,300 postings per million in May 2019, up 178%.
- Nonetheless, unlimited vacation is a rare benefit. Only 0.13% of job postings, or just more than one in 1,000, had terms like "open PTO" or "unlimited vacation" in the job description.
 - □ Tech occupations such as software engineer and data scientist are around six to eight times more likely than other jobs to offer unlimited vacation.

PAID TIME OFF TRENDS IN THE U.S

In 2018, Americans took 1.8 billion domestic leisure trips, whose \$650 billion in spending supported 5.5 million American jobs-making this thriving segment a critical component of the travel industry and the U.S. economy as a whole.

- There is an opportunity to further grow domestic leisure travel, based on paid time off (PTO) and vacation usage trends.
- More than half of Americans (55%) are still not using all their paid time off and those that are using their days, are spending just a portion of them to travel and see the USA.
- In 2018, American workers failed to use 768 million days of PTO-a 9% increase from 2017.

LOOKING BACK: PTO USAGE IN AMERICA

- On the bright side, Americans used an average of 17.4 days of PTO, a slight increase from the 7.2 days in 2017, continuining a positive trend that started in 2015.
- * Prior decades Americans took up to 20 days off.
 - Americans used just over half of their paid time off (9 of the 17.4 days) to travel—one day more than in 2017.
- * If more Americans converted a portion of their time off to travel, the economic opportunity for the travel industry
 - amounts to \$151.5 billion in additional travel spending, which would create two million American jobs.

USING PAID TIME OFF TO TRAVEL:

Excluding Americans who indicated cost is a top barrier to spending their time off to travel.

In 2018, Americans took 1.8 billion trips around the U.S.

*Yet, they still left 768 million vacation days unused

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

* Digital Presenteeism has come to stay

- * preparation to accomodate it in a work policy and employee handbooks is eminent
- Reducing level of presenteeism in our work setting by subtituting it with Paid off Vacations, maintaining, targets and allowing employee to have control over his time creates another platform for productivity and performance

* Focus should be on performance and result in place of making employee to be present only

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Boredom and Burnout associated with Digital presenteeism can be subtituted by making one day on and four days off for physical office
- Stress associated with Digital Presenteeism can be
 reduced by determining cloacking in and cloacking
 by the supervisor and management in general
- Those Employees on Paid Off Vacation can also be given a target per day, week, and month by developing Key Performance Indicators (KPI), per staff on leave

RECOMMENDATIONS

*Organizations, government and private business owners should join hands to advance the new normal phenomena

- *Presenteeism is the old normal that need to be subtituted by the digital presenteeism as the new normal
- *Alternatively the two should official work in the Nigeria as done in Kaduna state, through stepwise application of PTO policy