

ABSENTEEISM IN COAL INDUSTRY : A CASE STUDY

K. Shankaraiah*

This paper examines the problem of absenteeism in Singareni Collieries Co.Ltd. Many factors including socio-economic ones account for absenteeism of the regular workers. However, this had no pronounced adverse effect on productivity due to the policy of employing 'badli' workers.

INTORUDUCTION

Generally, absenteeism refers to the tendency on the part of the worker to abstain from his scheduled work. Specifically, in Singareni Collieries Company Limited (S.C.C.L.) — which occupies a prominent place in coal industry in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular — absenteeism is expressed as the number of manshifts or mandays (8 hours work) lost due to authorised as well as unauthorised absence, out of the total manshifts scheduled for work. Thus, the rate of absenteeism is obtained as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Manshifts lost}}{\text{Manshifts scheduled}} \times 100$$

INCIDENCE OF ABSENTEEISM IN S.C.C.L.

Table 1 gives the overall average quarterly and yearwise absenteeism rates. It also gives the seasonal indexes of absenteeism, which show variations in the absenteeism rates over a four quarterly period. It is evident from the table that the absenteeism rate is very high during the months of April

to June, and January to March. Heavy work-load assignments, local festivals, etc., account for the high rate of absenteeism during these months. For example, during the month of February, popular festivals like 'Mysamma Jathara' and 'Sammakka Jathara' take place, and most workers participate in them. The rate of absenteeism reduces to minimum every year during the last quarter.

The absenteeism rate varies in accordance with the nature of the job. Table 2 shows that it is more among the 'coal fillers' and less among the other workers.

CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

It is not easy to pinpoint the real causative factors of absenteeism. For, absenteeism is only a symptom of the interplay between environmental (external), organisational and personal factors. And the causes differ in different circumstances.

Table 3, on the basis of a survey of 160 employees in S.C.C.L., shows that socio-economic and organisational factors are the main causes of absenteeism in S.C.C.L.

* Reader in Commerce, Osmania University, Hyderabad, A.P.

Religious and other functions, family burdens and attachment with the village during the harvest season are the main socio-economic factors of absenteeism. Fear of occupational disease, inadequate transportation facilities, absence of reward of regularity, improper action against the absentees, poor working and medical conditions, poor housing and community facilities, poor work relations, III shift (night shift) system, overtime, etc., are identified as the main organisational causes of absenteeism.

EFFECTS OF ABSENTEEISM

From Table 2 it is evident that as high rates of absenteeism are associated with high O.M.S. and vice versa, there exists a positive relationship between absenteeism and productivity, which, in turn, can be explained in terms of the company's policy of employing 'badli' workers in the place of absentee regular workers. S.C.C.L. has maintained a large contingent of 'badli' workers. There are two categories of 'badli' workers, namely 'badli' and 'floating badli' workers. While a 'badli' worker is given a

job when a regular worker is absent, a 'floating badli' is given work when 'badlis' do not report for duty.

Though absenteeism has little impact on productivity, the adverse effects of absenteeism such as losses to absent workers by way of reduced wages, bonus, and incentive payments as well as loss in skill and efficiency and destabilisation of work performance cannot be ruled out.

CONCLUSION

Though absenteeism of the regular workers has no pronounced effect on productivity due to the policy of employing badli workers, absenteeism remains a serious problem in S.C.C.L., which may result in losses to the organisation as also its workers. Occupational diseases and poor organisational facilities are the main reasons for absenteeism. Proper disciplinary action, improved organisational facilities and adequate rewards for regular workers may reduce absenteeism and improve productivity.

Table 1: Average Rate of Absenteeism Among Coal Workers in S.C.C.L., 1979-1989

Year	Coal Fillers	Others	Total Average (2+3)/2	O.M.S. (tonnes)
1	2	3	4	5
1979-80	34.36	20.57	27.465	0.67
1980-81	31.99	22.16	27.075	0.69
1981-82	35.12	21.08	28.100	0.74
1982-83	32.71	21.88	27.295	0.72
1983-84	34.00	20.15	27.075	0.70
1984-85	34.33	24.48	29.405	0.70
1985-86	34.33	22.66	28.495	0.81
1986-87	35.94	22.91	29.425	0.80 ¹
1987-88	41.10	27.30	34.200	0.78
1988-89	34.50	21.70	28.100	0.80
Average of the total	34.838	22.489	28.663	

Source: Management Control Statements, S.C.C.L.

Table 2: Average Absenteeism Rates and Seasonal Indices of Absenteeism in S.C.C.L. (1979-1986)

Year	(Percentages)			
	April- June	July- September	October- December	January- March
1979	26.37	24.07	22.31	32.29
1980	29.36	23.20	23.30	28.70
1981	28.70	24.93	24.80	28.76
1982	28.20	23.90	22.26	26.07
1983	26.10	22.66	23.93	27.36
1984	28.60	23.93	27.17	29.32
1985	29.16	24.23	22.53	28.07
1986	30.66	23.83	22.46	26.60
Seasonal Index	109.16	91.60	90.19	109.05

Source : Management Control Statements, S.C.C.L.

Table 3 : Agreement of Workers on the Factors Causing Absenteeism in S.C.C.L.

Sl. No.	Factors	Agreed percentage (N = 160)
A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS		
1.	Poor educational background	25.00
2.	New marriage	31.25
3.	Attending the religious and other functions	62.50
4.	Family burdens	62.50
5.	Attachment to the village during harvest season	50.00
6.	Intoxication	18.75
B. ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS		
1.	Poor medical facilities	68.75
2.	Poor housing facilities	62.50
3.	Poor community facilities	62.50
4.	Poor working conditions	75.00
5.	Poor work relations	62.50
6.	Fear of occupational disease	87.50
7.	Ill shift system	62.50
8.	Overtime	50.00
9.	Inadequate transportation facilities	68.75
10.	Absence of rewarding for regularity	68.75
11.	Improper action against the absentees	75.00

Source : Field Survey.