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Presenteeism in Australian Workforce; Impact of Psychological Flexibility and Autonomous Motivation

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Description

Modern workplaces should acquire proper strategies in reacting effectively to presenteeism and its associated cost of productivity loss in order to increase firm's profitability. Presenteeism is defined as being present at work but unable to be fully engaged with the work environment. In fact, presenteeism is employees' inappropriate copying strategies to deal with stress and exhaustion caused by unfavourable work environment and fear of job or payment loss (Cooper, 1999 & Lack, 2011).

Wide range of physiological, financial, social, and medical studies has been conducted in relation to presenteeism in the workplace; however, escalating costs of presenteeism is still one of the major health-related financial burden to the global economy and a threat to individuals' well-being. Therefore, many researchers and scholars have emphasised on the importance of more precise research in this area. (Bond et al., 2001 & Cooper et al., 1999).

This study investigates the impact of autonomous motivation and psychological flexibility on employees' well being and their level presenteeism. The theoretical framework in this paper is based on Self-determination theory and the research hypotheses will be examined by using online questionaries sent to randomly selected participants. The last phase of study is aiming to introduce the main elements of autonomous motivation (i.e. competence, relatedness, autonomy) and psychological flexibility (i.e. acceptance, action) in reducing the level of presenteeism at workplace.

Location

iC - SBS Teaching Facility

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Presenteeism in Australian Workforce; Impact of Psychological Flexibility and Autonomous Motivation

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Introduction

Modern workplaces should acquire proper strategies in reacting effectively to presenteeism and its associated cost of productivity loss in order to increase firm's profitability. Presenteeism is defined as being present at work but unable to be fully engaged with the work environment. In fact, presenteeism is employees' inappropriate copying strategies to deal with stress and exhaustion caused by unfavourable work environment and fear of job or payment loss (Cooper, 1999 & Lack, 2011).

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Literature review

Self-determination theory (SDT):

Self-determination theory (SDT) will base the framework in this study. According to SDT, opportunities to satisfy the three core intrinsic physiological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness facilitate internalization of values and create sustainable autonomous motivation.

Studies suggest that employees working in such supportive work environment have a higher level of physical and psychological well-being and lower rate of absenteeism (Deci et al., 2000 & Blais et al., 1992). Moreover, studies indicate that autonomous motivation correlates with proactive engagement and commitment at workforce, which leads to greater psychological health, job satisfaction, and performance (Baard, Deci et al., 2004; & Gagne and Deci et al., 2004; & Deci et al., 2001).

Researches in several domain and settings have emphasised the importance of autonomous motivation at work to enhance employees' level of wellbeing and productivity (Guest, 1997; Purcell, 1999).

Psychological flexibility:

Psychological flexibility includes six core process of acceptance, cognitive defusion, being in the present moment, self as context, values clarification and committed action (Bond et al., 2010).

Healthy acceptance of undesirable events caused from unalterable work demands that would interfere with effective work-related behaviours of employees, increases individual's psychological flexibility and helps them to identify their goals and actions.

Importantly, strength of psychological flexibility leads to effective treatment of wide range of mental illnesses such as stress, anxiety, burnouts, and chronic pains. Furthermore, it improves employees' intrinsic motivation, goal setting skills, work performance, commitment, and engagement (Hayes, 2004 & Bond et al., 2001 & Cox et al., 2000 & Locke & Latham, 1990).

Presenteeism:

Presenteeism is a multi-dimensional and complex problem that is constantly being shaped by individuals and organisational factors such as employees' health concerns and job-related stressors that contribute to presenteeism, which negatively influence individual's health, productivity, work-life balance, and overall wellbeing (Hardy et al., 2003 & Grinyer et al., 2000 & Chatterji et al., 2002 & Taylor et al., 2003 & Hansson et al., 2006).

Accordingly, researchers have been introducing various interventions to attack presenteeism and its associated negative effects on employees and organisations. Workplace wellness programs for enhancement of employees' physical and psychological status, creating positive changes in organisational culture, and shifting to autonomous leadership styles are amongst these attempts to reduce presenteeism at workplace (Chapman, 2005).

However, statistics and other relevant studies indicates that presenteeism has remained as one of the major issues contributing to companies' productivity loss as well as risks to individuals' health. Cost of presenteeism in 2010 was estimated $180 billion in the USA (Weaver, 2010) and work-related stress, anxiety, and depression resulted in13 million lost working days annually in Britain alone (Hardy et al., 2003). Therefore, there is a clear need for modern workplaces to adopt more effective strategies and approaches to reduce presenteeism in the workplace.

Research Design:

Research question:

How the psychological flexibility of employees would affect the relationship between autonomous motivation and presenteeism?

Research Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Autonomous motivation of employees is negatively related to the level of presenteeism

Employees' autonomy, relatedness, and competency lead to autonomous motivation. Higher level of autonomous motivation increases engagement, creativity, commitment, performance, and wellbeing that in turn decrease the level of presenteeism (Deci et al., 2009).

Hypothesis 2: Psychological flexibility of employees moderates the relationship between autonomous motivation and presenteeism.

According to ACT, psychological flexibility improves the levels of employees' mental health, psychological acceptance, commitment, and overall wellbeing. Consequently, employees' psychological flexibility decreases the level of presenteeism and would mediate the relationship between autonomous motivation and presenteeism (Hayes, 2004; Bond et al., 2001 & Cox et al., 2000).

Methodology:

The research hypotheses would be examined by online questionnaires measuring autonomous motivation, psychological flexibility and presenteeism (Quantitative). The questionnaire would be adopted from Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-16), Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ), and Health and Work Performance Questionnaire (HPQ) to measure all required criteria in this study.

The randomly selected participants would be requested to fill the developed questionnaire and the data gathered from minimum 300 complete surveys would be analysed to test the hypotheses. The findings from the first phase of the study would be examined further to analyse what specific element or elements resulted in higher levels of presenteeism to shed more light on the areas individuals and organisation should focus to decrease the level presenteeism for higher economic and social benefits.

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