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THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEES' JOB ATTITUDES ON ABSENTEEISM IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

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SUMMARY

Purpose

Tourism and hospitality are critical to global economic structures, contributing substantially to GDP and employment. Globally, the tourism sector accounts for 10.4% of GDP and supports around 334 million jobs, underlining its economic significance. In Croatia, the reliance on tourism is particularly pronounced, with the sector contributing 19.6% of GDP and directly employing 6% of the national workforce. The hotel industry, as a vital component of this sector, operates in a labor-intensive environment where employee skills, knowledge, and behaviors are essential for success. Despite this, the sector faces persistent challenges related to high labor costs and employee absenteeism. Absenteeism, defined as habitual or intentional absence from work, disrupts organizational processes, increases costs, reduces productivity, and adversely affects employee morale.

The challenges caused by absenteeism are particularly pronounced in the hospitality industry, because the quality of service and customer satisfaction depend heavily on the presence and performance of employees. While absenteeism has been extensively examined in hospitals and among nurses, in manufacturing industry and public services, its dynamics within the hotel industry remain underexplored. This is especially true in Croatia, where tourism is such an important part of the economy that it needs more detailed study.

This dissertation aims to address these research gaps by advancing the understanding of absenteeism within the Croatian hotel industry. It seeks to identify the underlying causes of absenteeism and examine its relationship with two key job attitudes: organizational commitment and job involvement. The study further aims to provide actionable strategies for mitigating absenteeism, thereby improving organizational outcomes. These objectives are guided by the central question of how employee attitudes influence absenteeism in the hotel sector and what interventions can effectively address this issue.

Methodology

To provide a robust analysis of absenteeism and its determinants, the research in this thesis was conducted through three research papers. These studies integrate systematic literature review, secondary data analysis, and primary research, offering a comprehensive examination of absenteeism from theoretical, empirical, and practical perspectives.

The first study conducts a systematic review of 100 peer-reviewed articles from the Scopus database, focusing on absenteeism's antecedents and consequences. This review systematically examines determinants such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement, highlighting gaps in research specific to the hospitality industry. Particular attention is given to the role of job attitudes, a recurring theme in absenteeism literature.

The second study analyzes absenteeism trends and costs within Croatia and across EU member states from 2018 to 2023. Using the Human Capital Approach (HCA), the study estimates the economic impact of absenteeism, expressed as productivity losses relative to Gross Value Added (GVA). The research also compares variations in social security models across EU countries, with a specific focus on sickness benefit schemes, which influence absenteeism management.

The third study is based on primary data collected in 2019 from a sample of 734 hotel employees in Croatia. A structured survey measures absenteeism frequency, organizational commitment (including affective, continuance, and normative dimensions), and job involvement. Statistical analyses, including exploratory factor analysis and logistic regression, are used to examine the relationships between job attitudes and absenteeism. Demographic and employment variables, such as age, education level, and management position, are also analyzed to contextualize absenteeism trends.

Findings

The findings of the dissertation provide critical insights into the determinants and implications of absenteeism in the hotel industry. The systematic literature review identifies absenteeism as a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors, including personal, demographic, attitudinal, health-related, organizational, and job-related factors. Among these, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, age, pay satisfaction and job involvement are found to be the most repetitive ones. Additionally, the outcomes of absenteeism identified in this systematic literature review include productivity, turnover, satisfaction, organizational health, and quality.

The secondary data analysis reveals important trends in absenteeism within Croatia and across the EU. Between 2018 and 2023, absenteeism-related productivity losses in Croatia increased from 0.96% to 1.11% of GVA, highlighting its growing economic impact. The hospitality industry, however, recorded lower absenteeism costs (0.81%-0.91% of GVA) compared to the national average (2.05%-2.25% of GVA). This disparity is partly attributed to lower average wages and shorter sick leave durations within the sector. Additionally, the analysis underscores significant variations in sickness benefit schemes across EU countries, reflecting diverse national approaches to absenteeism management.

Primary research on a sample of employees from Croatian hotel companies thoroughly examined the relationship between job attitudes and absenteeism, showing that affective and normative commitment is negatively related to absenteeism, while no statistically significant relationships were found between continuance commitment or job involvement and absenteeism. Additionally, all dimensions of organizational commitment positively affect job involvement. Demographically, absenteeism is more prevalent among younger employees and those in non-management positions, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to retain and engage these groups.

Originality of the research

This dissertation makes a substantial contribution to the academic and practical understanding of absenteeism, particularly within the under-researched context of the Croatian hotel industry. By integrating theoretical, empirical, and practical insights, it provides a comprehensive analysis of absenteeism and its determinants, offering actionable recommendations for both policymakers and industry practitioners.

The use of the Human Capital Approach and incorporating labor force participation rates and unemployment data to quantify absenteeism costs, represents a significant methodological innovation. This approach provides a more accurate measure of productivity losses, addressing common criticisms of overestimation in traditional models. The findings offer valuable benchmarks for assessing absenteeism's economic impact at both the sectoral and national levels.

Empirically, the dissertation challenges conventional assumptions about the relationship between job attitudes and absenteeism. While affective and normative commitment are confirmed as critical predictors of absenteeism, the lack of a significant relationship with job involvement suggests that the dynamics of absenteeism may be influenced by sector-specific factors. This underscores the importance of tailoring absenteeism management strategies to the unique characteristics of the hospitality industry.

Practically, the dissertation provides a range of recommendations for reducing absenteeism. These include implementing wellness programs, flexible work arrangements, and tailored support for younger employees and non-management staff. Additionally, the research emphasizes the need for standardized methods to measure and monitor absenteeism data across countries, enabling more effective policy development and international benchmarking.

In conclusion, this dissertation advances the understanding of absenteeism by addressing critical gaps in literature and practice. Its theoretical insights, methodological innovations, and practical recommendations collectively contribute to enhancing organizational efficiency and sustainability in the hospitality sector, while also providing a foundation for future research and policy development.

Keywords

absenteeism, organizational commitment, job involvement, hotel industry, Human Capital Approach (HCA), logistic regression

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