

Nº 40

AD-MINISTER

UNIVERSIDAD EAFIT · MEDELLÍN · COLOMBIA · ENERO - JUNIO 2022 · ISSN 1692-0279 · E-ISSN: 2256-4322

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JEL: M0, E2, Q10

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17230/Ad-minister.40.2>



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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT BETWEEN PRESENTEEISM AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF SUGAR MANUFACTURING IN ERZINCAN, TURKEY

EL PAPEL MEDIADOR DEL APOYO PERCIBIDO DEL SUPERVISOR ENTRE EL PRESENTISMO Y EL DESEMPEÑO DEL EMPLEADO: UN ESTUDIO DE LA FABRICACIÓN DE AZÚCAR EN ERZINCAN, TURQUÍA

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RECEIVED: 20/05/2021

MODIFIED: 16/07/2021

ACCEPTED: 20/06/2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17230/Ad-minister.40.2>

ABSTRACT

There is a broad understanding that a relationship exists between leaders' behavior and employees' reaction, particularly in the sense of presenteeism, which ensures the good health of employees. However, we agree that much less is understood about potential mediating processes that underline the links between supervisory support, presenteeism and employees' support. In this study, the indicators of employee performance are linked with presenteeism, while supervisor support plays a mediating factor. We linked social learning theory, where individuals value observable behaviors. The findings of the study revealed a positive relationship between presenteeism and employee performance in Erzincan state of Turkey. The study found positive mediation of supervisory support between presenteeism and employee performance. The relationship of the research model was tested with the help of implementation of adopted questionnaires from 280 individuals who responded as potential participants. The analysis explored positive remarks of the hypothesis (accepted). The findings of the study, contributes to both the academic and non-academic arenas, leading to potential understanding as to the importance of both presenteeism and supervisory support.

KEYWORDS

Presenteeism, Supervisory Support, Employees Performance, Social Relation Theory.

RESUMEN

Existe un amplio entendimiento de que existe una relación entre el comportamiento de los líderes y la reacción de los empleados, particularmente en el sentido del presentismo que asegura la buena salud de los empleados. Sin embargo, estamos de acuerdo en que se entiende mucho menos sobre los posibles procesos de mediación que subrayan los vínculos entre el apoyo de la supervisión, el presentismo y el apoyo de los empleados. En este estudio, los indicadores de desempeño de los empleados, vinculados con el presentismo, mientras que los supervisores apoyan jugar como mediador. Vinculamos la teoría del aprendizaje social, donde las personas valoran los comportamientos superables. Los hallazgos del estudio revelaron una relación positiva entre el presentismo y el desempeño de los empleados en el estado Erzincan de Turquía. El estudio encontró una mediación positiva del apoyo de la supervisión entre el presentismo y el desempeño de los empleados. La relación del modelo de investigación se probó con la ayuda de la implementación de cuestionarios adoptados de 280 personas que respondieron al cuestionario como participantes potenciales. El análisis exploró comentarios positivos de la hipótesis (aceptada). Los hallazgos del estudio contribuyen tanto al ámbito académico como al no académico, lo que lleva a una posible comprensión e importancia tanto del presentismo como del apoyo de la supervisión.

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The Mediating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support Between Presenteeism and Employee Performance:
A Study of Sugar Manufacturing in Erzincan, Turkey

PALABRAS CLAVE

Presentismo, Apoyo de la Supervisión, Desempeño de los Empleados, Teoría de las Relaciones Sociales.

INTRODUCTION

Employees who work while being sick are estimated to number between thirty and more than ninety percent (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). Presenteeism can affect work capacity and wellbeing, such as an increased risk of emotional fatigue and sick leave (Gustafsson & Marklund, 2011). According to (Taloyan *et al.*, 2012) health is considered an important factor of performance. Employee (poor) performance may have a significant effect on businesses and society as a whole, resulting in decreased efficiency and higher costs associated with medical and rehabilitation treatments (Hemp, 2004; Wieser *et al.*, 2011).

Several contextual and employee-related variables associated with presenteeism, such as job demands and resources, as well as health and work attitudes, have been established after two decades of presenteeism studies (e.g. Miraglia & Johns, 2016). For example, studies show that understaffing, a heavy workload, and overtime, as well as a lack of job control and leadership support, are all correlated with higher absenteeism (Miraglia & Johns, 2016). In general, these results suggest that work characteristics and leadership behavior are important in predicting presenteeism.

There is a growing body of research exploring the correlation between supervisory style, leadership support, and presenteeism (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Miraglia & Johns, 2016), responding to earlier calls to investigate supervisor responses to employee presenteeism (Nyber, Westerlund, Magnusson Hanson, & theorell, 2008). However, very little is known regarding the mediating mechanisms that underpin the ties between presenteeism, supervisor behavior, wellbeing, and performance (Inceoglu, Thomas, Chu, Plans & Gerbasi, 2018). In this research study, issues related to ethical work climate (Victor & Cullan, 1987; 1988) and social learning are combined (Bandura, 1971) to investigate whether a specific type of presenteeism, predicts employee performance, through an indirect effect of supervisory supportive behavior. Following the lead of European researchers, we characterize presenteeism as the condition working while ill (Johns, 2010).

In response to earlier calls to investigate supervisors' roles in an individual's presenteeism (Nyberg, Westerlund, Magnusson Hanson, & Theorell, 2008), there is an increasing body of research exploring the correlations between presenteeism and employee performance (Lohaus & Ohaus, 2010). The findings of some studies for example (Miraglia and Johns, 2016; Habermann, 2019) investigated the mediating mechanisms of supervisory support that underpin the ties between individual performance and presenteeism (Inceoglu, Thomas, Chu, Plans, & Gerbasi, 2018). In summary, this study aims to determine the mediating role of supervisory support between presenteeism and employee performance of sugar manufacturing in Erzincan, Turkey.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

According to social learning theory, workers must value the observable behavior with the value of a behavior that results from its expected outcomes (Bandura, 1971). Presenteeism can be harmful to individual wellbeing and efficiency in the workplace (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Miraglia & Johns, 2016). There is, however, an increasing body of literature addressing the positive effects such as diversion from health issues (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). Other researchers, see presenteeism as a type of organizational citizenship behavior (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019).

Furthermore, there is a dependency between supervisor and employees (workers), which can be a cause for successful social learning of potentially negative supervisory behavior (Berscheid, Graziano, Monson, & Dermer, 1976). Individuals (employees) rely on their supervisors, as supervisors have control over working conditions, resources, and penalties (Bandura, 1986). In conclusion, we contend that employees note that supervisory behavior is linked with absenteeism / presenteeism and see linkage of this behavior as potentially beneficial. Furthermore, we believe that supervisors serve as important role models for workers, and their degree of presenteeism serves as a behavioral cue, shaping employee presenteeism through social learning.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Presenteeism and Employees Performance

Employee attitudes and behavior toward performance, staying, leaving, or engaging in work are influenced by a variety of practical, psychological, organizational and individual factors, such as changes in external environment (internet, electronic and social media), relationship with supervisors and work partners, as well as personal value, motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational performance-related culture (Ferreira, *et al.*, 2015). The term presenteeism is characterized as an employee motivated behavior in which an employee comes to work when sick (Johns, 2010). However, numerous inherited organizational characteristics are known to promote employee presenteeism. Organizational measures such as pay, sick pay, attendance management, downsizing, and job security, have all been proposed to promote presenteeism. In summary, there are three major triggers of presenteeism: organizational policies, work design elements, and presenteeism culture (Johns, 2010).

Presenteeism is an employee behavior that is primarily motivated by two factors; First, personal motivation (which could be work related loyalty or dedication to supervisors, stakeholders and an organization). Second, workplace pressures (which could be fear of losing a job or negative opinion from a supervisor and or colleagues regarding an employee's presenteeism for work (Lu *et al.*, 2013). An employee's behavior manifestations continue to be influenced by contextual variables that contributes to individual outcomes (Dew *et al.*, 2005). Presenteeism is often viewed as an employee's

manifestation of loyalty, a form of organizational citizenship behavior (Zhou *et al.*, 2016), or even an emergent psychological contract influencing the degree to which an employee attends work while sick as a result of a collective social relationship or expectations. Therefore, we are proposing our first research hypothesis.

H1: There is a positive relationship between presenteeism and performance

Presenteeism and Perceived Supervisor Support

Following the global economic downturn and financial crisis, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of companies downsized or re-engineered in an effort to do more with less. Organizations place a high value on employee productivity and performance, especially in today's highly competitive, technologically advanced, and fast paced work environment. In general, individuals who are ill will not come to work, a phenomenon known as absenteeism. However, there is a phenomenon known as presenteeism that has developed over time in which people choose to attend work even though they are sick (Aronsson, Gustafsson, & Dallner, 2000). Supervisory support can influence employee presenteeism in different ways (Wegge, Shemla & Haslam, 2014). As it relates to employees acceptable or unacceptable behaviors toward workplace, presenteeism and performance lead to different outcomes (Krana better & Niessen, 2017; Wegge *et al.*, 2014).

With regard to the consequences, studies have shown that presenteeism has a significant impact on employee performance (Cooper & Dewe, 2008; Caputi, Gernando, & Ashbury, 2017; Goetzel *et al.*, 2004; Zhang, Sun, Anis & Woodcock, 2015). In the occupational field, presenteeism is initially described as the act of reporting to work while unable to function effectively due to a health issue (Aronsson *et al.*, 2000; Dewa *et al.*, 2004). The majority of previous research studies (Sloan, 2012; Cummins, 1990) used a mediating relationship between coworker support, supervisor support and presenteeism; however, such investigations cannot account for the complex relationship between these variables. Thus, we are proposing a second research hypothesis as followings:

H2: There is a positive correlation between presenteeism and supervisory support

Presenteeism, Perceived Supervisor Support and Employee Performance

In the current competitive market environment companies need to continuously enhance the quality of goods and services to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders that leads toward comprehensive and empowering education and training (Asbani, 2015; Chi Hyun, *et al.*, 2020). According to organizational support theory, employees perceive their supervisors as supporting organizational and individual

performance, as the supervisor serves as an agent of the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Previous studies on presenteeism (e.g. Pfeffer, 1978), argue that supervisor support increases the performance of individuals through motivation of presenteeism.

According to social information theory processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), people adopt their work-related attitudes and behaviors to the social context. These social context leader cues regarding expectations and norms are related to an individual's behavior and work related attitude, which they further use to construct and interpret events which further influences an individual's presenteeism (Ruhle & Sub, 2019). For example, one's shared concerns about health may decrease presenteeism within both individuals and the team (Schulz, Zacher, & Lippke, 2017).

Employees who perform often while being ill have more subsequent sick leave days and a higher percentage of sick leave days per sick leave period, while considering a baseline level of employee health (Gustafsson & Marklund, 2011; Taloyan *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, presenteeism is said to occur on more than five occasions during the baseline year (Aronsson, & Josephson, 2009).

In summary, we contend that evaluating intervention rather than only one single factor will provide for more detail regarding the essence of the possible impact of presenteeism on sick leave. Both short and long term sick leave can present different challenges in terms of replacement and recovery. In this regard, and in accordance with the literature on presenteeism, we offer the following mediating role of supervisor support between presenteeism and employee performance:

H3: *Perceived supervisor support mediates the relationship between presenteeism and employee performance*

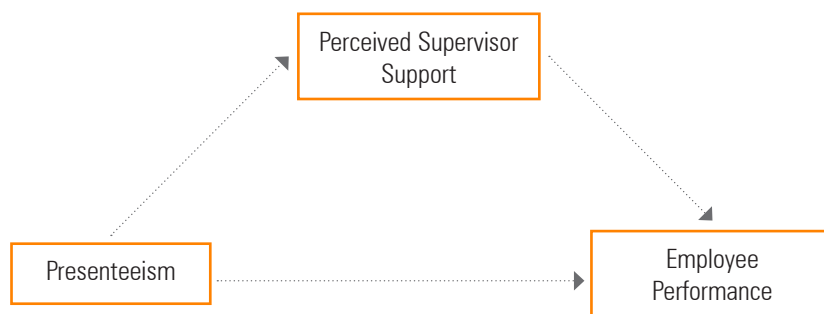


Figure 1: Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Research Population, Sample and Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The universe of this research consists of 280 employees of a factory operating in sugar production. The convenience sampling method, one of the non-random sampling methods, was used in the study. In this context, the population was found to be 280 and 162 at 95% confidence interval (Ural and Kılıç, 2005: 43). 300 questionnaires were distributed to company employees between January 2021 and February 2021. However, after the incorrect and incomplete questionnaires were removed from the questionnaire application, 253 questionnaires were analyzed. 32.8% of the participants participating in the research are women and 67.2% are men. 70.8% of the participants are married, 29.2% are single, 12.3% are between the ages of 18-28, 35.2% are between the ages of 29-39, 28.1% are between the ages of 40-to the age range of 50, 24.5% are 51 and over. According to the graduation level of the participants, 7.9% are primary school graduates, 32.4% are high school graduates, 11.5% are associate degree graduates, 40% are undergraduate and 7.9% are graduate graduates. In addition, when the duration of service of employees in the same workplace is examined, 15.8% are between 1-5 years, 23.7% between 6-10 years, 25.3% between 11-20 years and 35.2% have been serving for 21 years or more.

Scales and Analysis of Data

Presenteeism Scale: The “Stanford Presenteeism Scale (SPS 6)” developed by Koopman et al. (2002) was used to measure the presenteeism perceptions of the participants. The presenteeism scale is one-dimensional and consists of six statements.

Employee Performance Scale: In order to measure the employee performance level of the participants in the study, a one-dimensional scale consisting of four statements was used, developed by Sigler and Pearson (2000).

Perceived Supervisor Support Scales: A scale consisting of seven expressions, developed by Karasek (1985), was used to measure the perceptions of supervisor support among the participants.

The means, standard deviations, reliability, and correlation analysis of the variables in the study were obtained using the SPSS 22 program. Before performing the hypothesis tests in the study, the conceptual data model was analyzed with confirmatory factor analysis using the AMOS 17 package program. Later, the tests of the hypotheses were tested with PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013).

RESULTS

The results of the reliability analysis, correlation analysis and factor analysis of the variables were given in the study. Since the analysis regarding the validity of the variables in the study were done before and accepted in the studies, it was not necessary to perform the validity analysis of the variables.

Table 1: Mean, Cronbach's Alpha, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficients Between Variables (N=253)

	α	Ort.	Standard S.	PRS	EP	PSS
PRS	0,762	3,26	0,926	-		
EP	0,749	4,66	0,380	-0,171**	-	
PSS	0,795	4,35	0,471	0,181**	0,331**	-

** = $p < 0,01$ * = $p < 0,05$ PRS: Presenteeism, EP: Employee Performance, PSS: Perceived Supervisor Support

When Table 1 is examined, the means and standard deviations of the variables are given. In Table 1, it is seen that the Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the variables PRS (0.762), EP (0.749) and PSS (0.795) are above the reference value of 0.70. Also, in Table 1, it is seen that there is a negative correlation ($r = -0.171$; $p = 0.000$) between PRS and EP at 99% significance level. In this context, it can be said that as the presenteeism behavior of employees increases, their employee performance decreases. Another finding in Table 1 is that there is a positive correlation ($r = 0.471$; $p = 0.000$) at 99% significance level between PRS and PSS. This finding is that as the presenteeism behavior of employees increases, their perception of supervisor support also increases. Another finding in the table is that a positive correlation ($r = 0.331$; $p = 0.000$) was found between EP and PSS at the 99% significance level. This result can be interpreted as the higher the level of supervisor support perceived by the employees, the higher the employee performance level.

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Table 2. Goodness of Fit Values Regarding Variables (N=253)

	$\chi^2/df \leq 5$	RMSEA $\leq .08$	CFI $\geq .90$	GFI $\geq .85$	NFI $\geq .90$	TLI $\geq .90$
PRS	2.84	0.059	0.95	0.99	0.99	0.98
EP	2.11	0.048	0.99	0.95	0.94	0.96
PSS	3.68	0.078	0.95	0.96	0.94	0.90
Model	3.71	0.074	0.90	0.93	0.92	0.94

PRS: Presenteeism, EP: Employee Performance, PSS: Perceived Supervisor Support

It is seen that the goodness of fit values of the variables in Table 2 provide the referenced goodness of fit values (Hooper et al., 2008). In addition, Table 2 shows that the goodness of fit values of the variables are compatible with the Model and the model is accepted.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

In the study, regression analysis based on the Bootstrap method was applied to analyze the hypothesis tests for whether the perceived supervisor support has a mediating role in the relationship between employees' presenteeism behaviors and employee performance. It is argued that the Bootstrap method is more reliable than the method used by Baron and Kenny (1986) and the Sobel test (Gürbüz, 2019; Hayes, 2018). The process macro application developed by Hayes (2018) was used for the analysis of variables in Table 3. Model 4 was selected at the stage of analysis and a 5000 resampling option was selected with the Bootstrap technique. In the mediation effect analysis performed with Bootstrap, the CI (confidence interval) values at the 95% confidence interval should not be zero (0) in order for the hypotheses to be supported (Gürbüz, 2019).

Table 3. Regression Analysis Results Related to Mediation Test (N=253)

Perceived Supervisor Support						
Variables	B	SH	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Presenteeism	0,092	0,031	2,921	0,038	0,030	0,155
Employee Performance						
Variables	B	SH	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Perceived Supervisor Support	0,302	0,047	6,377	0,000	0,208	0,395
Presenteeism	-0,098	0,024	-4,071	0,001	-0,145	-0,050
(Direct Effect)						
Presenteeism	-0,070	0,025	-2,754	0,006	-0,120	-0,020
(Total Effect)						
			Effect	SH	LLCI	ULCI
Mediator Effect			0,073	0,030	0,018	0,138

Note: Standardized regression coefficients are specified.

When Table 3 is examined, the coefficients of the multiple regression model are given. In this context, it was questioned whether there is a significant and negative relationship between presenteeism and employee performance in H1 hypothesis. As a result of the analysis, a significant and negative relationship of presenteeism on employee performance was found ($b = -0.098$; $p = 0.001$). According to this result, the H1 hypothesis was accepted. In H2, another hypothesis of the study, it was questioned whether there is a significant and positive relationship between presenteeism and perceived supervisor support.

Accordingly, when the H2 hypothesis was examined, it was found that presenteeism significantly and positively affected the perceived supervisor support ($b = -0.092$; $p = 0.038$). According to this finding, the H2 hypothesis was accepted. In the H3 hypothesis, whether or not there was a positive relationship between perceived supervisor support and employee performance was tested. As a result of the analysis, it was found that the perceived supervisor support and employee performance had a significant and positive relationship ($b = -0.302$; $p = 0.000$).

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The significance of the relationships between variables allowed us to question the mediation relationship. In the H₄ hypothesis, which is the last hypothesis of the study, it was questioned whether perceived supervisor support had a mediating role in the relationship between presenteeism and employee performance. When perceived supervisor support is added to the research model as a tool, it was found that perceived supervisor support has an intermediary effect in the relationship between presenteeism and employee performance ($b = .073$, 95% BCA CI (.018, .138)). According to this result, H₄ hypothesis was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The key aim of this study strives to explain the antecedents of presenteeism and employee behavior with the mediating role of perceived supervisor support within the sugar manufacturing industry in Turkey. The results of our research study support the assumptions that perceived supervisory support mediates the relationship between presenteeism and employee performance. This means that the consequences for all of the hypotheses were positive and accepted. Our study believes that employees might or might not utilize the behavioral cue of their supervisors that leads to adjust their own behavior.

We further argue that there is a direct relationship between presenteeism and employee performance, with strong evidence from the statistical analysis, explained in the results portion of this study. We also reached the position confirming that our mediating variable role was also positive, meaning that perceived supervisor support positively mediates the relationship between the independent variable (presenteeism) and the dependent variable (employees performance). The overall results of our study provides for alternative perspectives, and sheds light on the generalization of the relationship between presenteeism, perceived supervisor support and employee performance.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Conducted under a multi-cultural organizational context, the overall findings of this study are reasonable and consistent within the overall targeted society. This particular study finds a mutually-supportive understanding and relationship between supervisors and subordinates. This relationship is mostly significantly highlighted within the sugar manufacturing industry. However, as the study suggests, future research may seek to examine other industries in order to determine to what extent a leadership or supervisory support exists during presenteeism of employees, and to what extent it may lead to to employee performance. Furthermore, we take into consideration the diversity level, including cultural, occupational or organizational factors (Wang et al., 2018), which have not been addressed in earlier studies (Johns, 2010).

As to the consideration of the results of our study, our interpretation and research in other industries and cultural contexts may be necessary to avoid misunderstanding regarding negative perception of supervisory support. Furthermore, our study has

some limitations: for instance, first, we distributed a total of 280 questionnaires to participants in the sugar manufacturing industry. Future researchers may consider a larger sample size in order to more accurately measure the consequences and the results. Secondly, our study focused on a single, targeted industry. Future studies may consider other industries or multiple industries for data collection. Third, our study utilized only one variable as mediation, whereas future studies may consider adding additional behavioral variables such as mediation, employee work engagement, motivation, training, and development. Furthermore, there is no moderation in our study. Future studies may consider adding moderating variables and to explore these findings. Finally, our study suggests that future studies may conclude the mediating role of work engagement (managerial level), as presenteeism and employee performance.

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