Gender Differences in Absenteeism

Employee characteristics and attitudes of secondary school teachers were examined to determine if men and women had different reasons for being absent. Although women were found to perceive some work related factors different than men and to take substantially more days off than men, their absence occurrences were not significantly different. In addition, an employees's age and attitude toward pay were the only factors found to exhibit a gender-related impact on absenteeism. Perceived role conflict, and job involvement were found to be significantly related to absenteeism for both men and women.

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Absenteeism can be an expensive problem in both public and private sector organizations. In 1984, Steers and Rhodes estimated that absenteeism was costing the U.S. economy approximately 38 billion dollars annually. In 1980, over 89 million working hours were being lost each week due to employee absences (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1982). Because absenteeism is so costly, researchers have attempted to identify the factors that cause, or are related to absenteeism so that appropriate solutions can be developed. Unfortunately, findings from empirical research have been neither consistent in terms of identifying the causes of absenteeism nor in terms of identifying solutions which consistently reduce absenteeism. For instance, job satisfaction and personal characteristics (such as age and family size), have been found to be related to absenteeism in some studies, but not related in others. According to Steers and Rhodes (1978), the inconsistency of these findings may be explained by other variables which moderate these relationships.

Scott and Mabes (1984) identified gender as one such moderator. Gender has become a significant employment factor due to the changing nature of the U.S. labor force. In 1940, only 27.4% of adult women were employed, while in 1986, this percentage had risen to 54.7% (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1987).

It has been historically assumed that men and women participated in the workforce for different reasons. In the past, men provided the primary source of family income while most women were unpaid homemakers. In recent years, the increase in the number of single parent households, the feminist movement, civil rights legislation, and inflation have all had an effect on changing the make-up of the workforce and the nature of the relationship between women and their jobs. Not only are more women working, they are also holding more diverse jobs; some of which were previously held only be men. While U.S. law demands that men and women be treated equally in the workplace, it must be recognized that men and women are not necessarily alike in their motivation and commitment to work. In fact, identifying those areas where gender-related differences

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exist may help managers develop policies that will provide a more equitable work environment for all employees.

Attendance is one way in which women differ from men in the workplace. In 1980, the incidence rate of absenteeism for women was 58% higher than men; 7.9% and 5.0%, respectively (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1982). Hedges (1973) postulated that this aggregate rate difference could be explained in part by job factors which are frequently associated with gender. For example, the lower paying and less skilled jobs in which women are more likely to be employed are associated with higher rates of absenteeism (Hedges, 1973). Hedges contended that as employment conditions and cultural roles of men and women became more similar, their patterns of absenteeism will be similar as well. In support of this contention, Hedges (1973) found that when job level was held constant, the gender differences in absenteeism rates narrowed. Leigh (1983), however, found that fundamental differences still existed in absenteeism rates based on gender even when factors such as job level, education and experience were held constant. Higher rates of absenteeism by women may indicate that there may be fundamental differences in the reasons why men and women are absent. This research examines the differences believed to be related to absenteeism behavior in a research setting where men and women hold jobs at the same pay levels.

Literature Review

Previous absenteeism research has examined demographic characteristics and attitudes as they relate to work attendance. Although numerous variables have been found to relate to absenteeism, only those which might exhibit gender-related differences are examined here.

Employee Demographic Characteristics

Age: Reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1982) show that when aggregate absenteeism data was broken down by gender, men and women tend to exhibit different rates of absenteeism for different age groups. In 1980, men from 16 to 19 years of age have the highest incidence of absenteeism. The incidence of absenteeism decreases as men age, reaching a low for those in the 25-34 age group. Absenteeism rates for men fluctuate through middle age but increase in the oldest age group, those age 55 and up. Although women in the 16-19 age group also exhibit the highest incidence of absenteeism, the rates in the other groups are very dissimilar from those of men. Women have their next highest rates in the 25-34 age group and have their lowest rates between 35-44 and over 55.

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Taylor (1981) observed from other national statistics that the absenteeism rates for men and women differ by the greatest amount for those aged 25 to 44. He hypothesized that this is partially due to increased family responsibilities for this age group of women. Isambert-Jamati (1962) also found that women's absenteeism decreased as age increased, which coincides with declining responsibility for childrearing. These findings indicate an interaction between age and gender, such that women will have significantly higher absenteeism rates than men during their child-bearing years.

Number of Dependents: While it is acknowledged that child rearing is becoming more of a shared responsibility for couples, it is believed that women are still more likely to stay home to care for sick children. Two studies indicated that a positive relationship existed between absenteeism and family size for women (Naylor and Vincent, 1959; Garrison and Muchinsky, 1977). However, no significant relationship was found in a subsequent study (Johns, 1978). Markham, Dansereau and Alutto (1982) found a significant interaction on absenteeism between gender and season of the year. In this study, women's absenteeism rates matched men's rates during all seasons except winter. Markham, et al. (1982) suggested that the difference may be due to women staying home to care for the family during winter months when the greatest number of illnesses occur. Overall, these studies suggest a significant positive relationship between the number of dependents and absenteeism rates for women but not for men.

Distance to work: Transportation problems can affect an employee's ability to get to work. Isambert-Jamati (1962) found that there was a positive relationship between distance to work and absenteeism rates for women but not for men. Isambert-Jamati theorized that women who drive long distances to work were more likely to be absent because of the fatigue associated with a full work day, child care and home responsibilities and the long commute. Furthermore, when car problems do occur women may be more likely to sacrifice work attendance than their husbands. Finally, women who are single heads of household are likely to have less disposable income than men and may not be able to afford the same quality of transportation. This research indicates that there may be an interaction between distance to work and gender, such that a positive relationship to absenteeism will be found for women but not for men.

Employee Attitudes

A number of employee attitudes have also been found to be related to absenteeism (Steers and Rhodes, 1984). Attitudes thought to have a gender-related impact on absenteeism include role conflict, job satisfaction,

central life interest, and job involvement. These attitudes are examined in this study.

Role Conflict: When employees face conflict between work demand and the demands of a family or a community member, they must make decisions concerning the importance of each role. Those who believe family or community roles are more important may be absent more frequently than employees who place less value on such roles. Chadwick-Jones, Nicholson and Brown (1982) found that among blue collar workers, women felt that their families placed more pressure on them to stay at home rather than go to work. Thus, when a child is ill, women may be more likely to remain home with the child. Men, on the other hand, may perceive role conflict but defer to the woman in child care obligations. For men therefore, a sick child may create less role conflict and thus, not contribute to increased absenteeism. Furthermore, women are more likely to assume child care responsibilities than men in case of a divorce. The existence of these role-identification differences indicate that women may perceive substantially more role conflict than men and thus, have substantially higher levels of absenteeism.

Job Satisfaction: Pain-avoidance and motivational models of absenteeism imply that if work is painful or unstimulating, employees tend to avoid work. The possibility exists that men and women respond to a dissatisfying work environment in different ways. Scott and Mabes (1984) found significant correlations between absenteeism and all dimensions of satisfaction for men. For women, they only found one significant relationship which was between absenteeism and satisfaction with pay. Metzner and Mann (1953) reported similar finding. For women, no relationships were identified; however, for men, absenteeism was negatively related to attitudes toward satisfaction with supervision, the work group, wages and promotions, and overall satisfaction. Furthermore, men may perceive work as a central part of their life, more so than women, and as a result be more likely to withdraw form work (be absent) when they are dissatisfied. Finally, because women are absent more frequently for home related reasons, they would not be able to take time off for a job related reason without having their attendance rates threaten their employment. Thus, job satisfaction may have a significant negative relationship to absenteeism for men but not for women.

Centrality of Work to Life: Absenteeism rates may differ between men and women to the extent that there are differences in the degree to which work is central to their lives. The concept of work centrality was developed by Dubin (1973) who asserted that people tend to have a central life interest, or a place where thy prefer to act out their life. He classified central life interests of people into three groups: work centered, non-work centered, and non-centered. Those who are work centered choose work as a preferred locale for behavior when there is an equal likelihood that the

behavior could take place elsewhere. For example, they prefer to spend a day off with co-workers than with in-laws. Non-work centered people are those whose families or other organizations represent the focal point of their actions. Non-centered people show no particular preference for places or people with whom they would rather spend their time.

Although no previous studies focused on the existence of a relationship between work centrality and absenteeism, Dubin, Champoux and Porter (1975) found that individuals who are work centered tend to express high job commitment. Since Steers (1977) reported the existence of an inverse relationship between job commitment and absenteeism, it would follow that work-centered employees have high job commitment an therefore low absenteeism rates. However, for non-work centered or non-centered employees who have low job commitment, one would predict that their rates of absenteeism would be higher than for work-centered employees.

Employees who are work-centered may be less likely to let factors such as sick children or minor illnesses keep them from attending work. On the other hand, those who are not work-centered would be more likely to accept their own absence as necessary when extraneous factors intervened. Montagna (1977) noted that women were not as strongly socialized to give priority to their occupations as men were. Therefore, men may be more likely to express work as their central life interests than women, and are subsequently less likely to be absent.

Job Involvement: Job involvement is a similar construct to central life interests. While work centrality deals with where an individual prefers to carry out their activities, job involvement refers to the belief an individual has in the value of a specific job's goals and activities. Two studies have found a strong negative relationship between job involvement and absence frequency (Breaugh, 1981; Cheloha and Farr, 1980). Cheloha and Farr (1980) also found a negative relationship between job involvement and the number of days absent (duration measure). It is thought that if employees believe that their job is very important then they will tend to be highly absorbed by work activities even though they may dislike certain aspects of their job. As a result, they will be absent less often since they believe it is unlikely that anyone could adequately take their place. The same logic used in the central life interest analysis would indicate that women will express less job involvement than men and subsequently be absent more frequently.

A Multivariate Explanation of Absenteeism

By looking at only individual variables and their ability to predict absenteeism, an overly simplistic view of employee behavior may be obtained. As a result, multivariate analysis may reveal more realistic information about the causes of absenteeism and how gender effects that relationship. In their model, Steers and Rhodes (1978) suggested that employee attendance is influenced by tow factors; motivations to attend and ability to attend. Motivation, which is largely influenced by satisfaction with the job and internal and external pressures to attend, only becomes an influence if one actually has the ability to maintain an acceptable rate of absenteeism. If, as hypothesized, women are more likely to be absent due to factors relating to their ability to get to work, such as the presence of sick children or problems with the second car, they would not have an acceptable level of leave left to take for discretionary absences. Men, on the other hand, are not absent as frequently and so instead have the luxury of being absent because they are dissatisfied with or unmotivated by their jobs. Furthermore, if work is more central to men as has been hypothesized, then men may react more strongly to job dissatisfaction by having higher levels of absenteeism. Thus, it is predicted that variables associated with work motivation will be more strongly related to absenteeism for men than for women. By the same token, factors outside of the work environment will be more strongly related to absenteeism for women than men.

Methodology

Research Location

This study was conducted at all junior and senior high schools in a county school system located in an urban area in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The research location was selected because there were substantial numbers of both men and women in comparable jobs and income levels. The county school system was composed of 5 high schools and 5 junior high schools. The smallest school employed 24 teachers while the largest school employed 88 teachers. Throughout the school system, there were 539 teachers, librarians and guidance counselors. The average employee was 40 years old and had twelve years of tenure in the county system. One hundred fifty two employees were men (28.2%) and 387 were women (71.8%).

Data Collection

Absenteeism data and information about employee characteristics were taken from personnel records. A survey was administered to all teachers, librarians, and guidance counselors over a one week period during faculty meetings. Administration of the survey was conducted by the research team who were available to answer questions about the study. For all employees who were absent or not available, a survey and stamped self-addressed envelope were left to be filled out and returned by mail.

The survey asked employees to put their social security number on the form to allow information to be matched with their personnel records. The confidentially of individual responses was stressed by the researchers. In all, 539 surveys were administered; 444 were filled out and returned during the administration of the questionnaire; and 22 were filled out and mailed in later. This amounted to an 86% return rate. Three hundred and forty of these surveys were matched with corresponding absenteeism data from employee records. (Some employees were unwilling to provide their social security number). Thus, complete data was available for 63% of the secondary teachers, librarians and guidance counselors employed by the school system.

Variable Measures

Demographic Data: The demographic data obtained from employee records consisted of birthdate, race, social security number, years of experience, job title and job status (full time vs. part time). The demographic information from the employee survey included gender, marital status, number and age of children, presence of dependent adults in the household other than spouse, whether the employee held a second job, characteristics of a spouse's job, and distance from home-to-work.

Absenteeism Data: Two specific measures, the frequency and the duration of absence, are often used to monitor absenteeism in organizations. Frequency is measured by a count of the number of occurrences of absenteeism regardless of the number of days a person is absent. This measure tends to place greater weight on short term absences. It is believed that most single day or short term absences are voluntary, or related to discretionary reasons for absence (Gibson, 1966). On the other hand, duration, which is measured by the total number of days a person is absent (long-term and short-term), emphasizes long term absences, or those believed to be more likely caused by serious illnesses or injury. According to Chadwick-Jones, Brown, Nicholson and Sheppard (1971) duration is an insensitive indicator of voluntary absence.

Data on the individual's absenteeism record for the school year were obtained from personnel records. The number of absence occurrences

(frequency) and total number of days absent (duration) were recorded in each of the following categories: personal leave, illness leave, and family illness or death. An occurrence was defined to be each incidence of absenteeism regardless of the length of time the employee was absent. The total days absent referred to the total number of days that the employee was absent during the time period.

Job Satisfaction Measure: The Cornell Job Description Index (JDI) was used to measure job satisfaction. The JDI was selected because it had previously been shown to be more consistently related to both duration and frequency measures of absenteeism than other measures of job satisfaction (Scott and Taylor, 1985).

The JDI is comprised of six separate scales which measure satisfaction toward the job in general, the work itself, the supervisor, workmates, pay, and promotional opportunities. Each of these scales consisted of either nine or eighteen adjectives. For example, one adjective in the scale regarding pay attitudes was "underpaid." The respondent was to replay Y (for yes) when the adjective or phrase described their job, N (for no) when the item did not describe their job and ? (question mark) if they could not decide. Smith and Sandman (1981) discuss Job Description Index in some detail.

Central Life Interest Measure: Another set of items in the survey were designed to determine whether work was the principle motivation or interest in life as compared to non-work activities, such as family or community. A scale developed by Dubin (1973) consisted of 32 items which was designed to force a respondent to select one of three alternatives for a particular situation, (i.e. preference for a work setting, a home/church/community setting, or indifference to the setting). Scoring was designed simply to classify an individual as being "work centered," "non-work centered," or "non-centered," not to produce continuous scores. In order to use the scale within the constraints of the survey, the length of the survey had to be reduced. Based on the pilot survey, items were dropped which had prompted criticism or were considered ambiguous. The scale used had twenty items.

Job Involvement Measure: In an effort to measure job involvement, a portion of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire was included. This scale had been originally developed by Lodahl and Kejner (1965). Three statements attempt to measure to degree to which an individual identifies with their job. For example, to the statement "I live, eat, and breathe my job" respondents were asked to choose which of the following described their feelings: strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neither agree or disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree.

Role Conflict Measure: The role conflict scale attempted to assess the degree of conflict an individual feels exists between work, spouse, children, or community. This scale was developed especially for this study, since a review of the literature did not reveal a suitable short scale that was oriented toward absenteeism research. One item from this scale was "Conflicts often occur between my job and my responsibilities to my children." Respondents were again asked to choose between seven choices; strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, agree, strongly agree and not applicable.

Reason for Absence Measure: The last major section of the questionnaire was intended to determine the "real reason" for an employee's last two absences. (Oftentimes the reason given for the record may not reflect the true reason for the absence). Respondents were asked to indicate which of the twenty reasons given described why they had not attended work during their last two absences. This list is provided in Tables 9 and 10.

Analytical Methods

Three statistical techniques were employed in this study. First, a T-test for unequal sample size was used to determine if there were gender differences between the mean scores of the measures. Second, hierarchial regression was used to test the first seven hypotheses. This procedure is appropriate since it tests not only for main effects of a continuous and a categorical variable, but also for the significance of their interaction (Cohne and Cohen, 1983). In this procedure, the significance of main effects for gender and another independent variable are tested first. Then, the significance of the interaction of these variables is tested to determine if the interaction is able to add anything significant to the explanation of absenteeism above and beyond the main effects. Lastly, stepwise regression analysis was used to identify what combination of variables are related to absenteeism for men and women.

Regarding the use of absence data, Hammer and Landau (1981) stress the importance of examining the data for violation of assumptions of normality. These data were found not to be affected by violations of the normally assumption.

Research Findings

Differences Between Men and Women

The differences between men and women in this work setting are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Surprisingly, women were not found to exhibit significantly higher occurrences of absenteeism than men. Women

Table 1

Mean Differences Between Men and Women

VARIABLE NAMES	MEN N	MEN Mean	MEN Standard Deviation	WOMEN N	WOMEN Mean	WOMEN Standard Deviation	F Value
Days absent	111	4.83	4.38	243	6.92	8.93	4.89***
Occurrences of absence	111	3.29	2.21	243	3.92	2.37	1.15
Hours desired to work	111	35.69	9.00	235	33.11	10.13	1.26
Hours spouse works	74	39.09	10.57	150	47.19	10.28	1.06
Distance to work	111	8.94	8.75	243	8.83	8.16	1.15
Job Tenure	111	11.55	6.71	242	10.80	6.63	1.02
Age	111	39.35	8.30	243	39.33	8.20	1.03
Dependent children & adults	109	1.21	1.24	235	.95	1.02	1.49*
Attitude towards work	110	1.83	.57	242	1.84	.42	1.81***
Attitude towards supervision	109	2.30	.65	240	2.29	.64	1.04
Attitude towards co-workers	110	2.25	.65	237	2.43	.57	1.30
Attitude towards promotional opportunity	110	.66	.66	238	.63	.59	1.24
Attitude towards pay	109	.83	.71	239	.97	.73	1.06
Attitude towards job *in general*	108	2.29	.63	240	2.39	.47	1.79***
Role Conflict	111	2.31	1.16	243	2.31	1.36	1.36
Job Involvement	111	4.20	1.23	243	4.44	1.14	1.15

* p.<05
** p<.01
*** p<.001

Table 2

Differences in Proportions of Responses for Men and Women

Variable	Total Sample Men (P)	Total Sample Women (P)	X^2
If there were a conflict between important work activities and home responsibilities, I would first take care of.			
My home responsibility	60.19%	52.75%	1.614
My work responsibility	39.81	47.25	
When a non-work activity must be handled during work hours.			
I usually do it.	54.39	55.80	.033
My spouse or other family member does it	45.61	44.20	
Do you have a second job elsewhere?			
Yes	37.27	13.64	25.447***
No	62.73	86.36	
What is your marital status?			
Single widowed, divorced/separated	22.52	32.10	3.387
Married	77.48	67.90	
When my children (or elderly people in the home) are ill or off from school and we cannot find someone to take care of them.			
I usually stay home with them.	15.00	87.65	61.082***
My spouse usually stays home with them.	85.00	12.35	
Choose one of the following.			
I earn most or all of the income at my house.	59.81	45.29	5.539*
My spouse or parent earns most of the income	40.19	54.71	
Is your spouse employed outside the home?			
Yes	81.52	89.89	3.762
No	18.48	10.11	
Work Centrality Classification			
Work Centered	13.43	14.29	18.560***
Non-Work (Home Church Community) Centered	34.33	9.52	
Uncentered	52.24	76.19	

***p < .0001

averaged 3.92 occurrences compared to 3.29 occurrences for men. The number of days absent, or the duration measure, was, however, found to be significantly higher for women. The mean number of days taken off by women is 6.92 in contrast to 4.83 for men.

Table 3

Correlates of Occurrences of Absenteeism and Total Days Absent

	OCCURRENCES OF ABSENTEEISM		TOTAL DAYS ABSENT	
Variables	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employee dependents	.10112 (.2954)	.13411 (.0400)	.15255 (.1133)	.12859 (.0490)
Age	.23922 (.0115)	-.04738 (.4622)	.23980 (.0112)	-.05108 (.4280)
Distance to work	.15242 (.0023)	.08665 (.1782)	.09995 (.2966)	.11355 (.0773)
Role Conflict	-.29015 (.0023)	-.21706 (.0013)	-.29389 (.0020)	-.11909 (.0793)
Job involvement	-.19844 (.0368)	-.21038 (.0010)	-.23484 (.0131)	-.10952 (.0885)
Attitude Toward Work	-.02290 (.8123)	-.07352 (.2546)	.00942 (.9222)	-.01039 (.8723)
Attitude Toward Supervisor	-.00666 (.9452)	-.10715 (.0977)	-.03671 (.7047)	-.00439 (.9461)
Attitude Toward Co-Workers	-.04013 (.6772)	-.01497 (.8187)	.00804 (.9336)	-.00537 (.9345)
Attitude Toward Promotional Opportunities	-.00623 (.9485)	-.05327 (.4133)	-.09263 (.3358)	-.02866 (.6600)
Attitude Toward Pay	-.08880 (.3585)	.03052 (.6387)	-.14638 (.1288)	.20914 (.0011)
Attitude Toward Job in General	-.01054 (.9138)	.02743 (.6725)	.03407 (.7263)	.02743 (.6725)

Men in the sample reported greater numbers of dependent children than did women in this study, were more likely to have a second job, and were more likely to report that they were the primary breadwinners. Women reported that they are more likely to stay home to take care of sick children or dependent adults and that they desired to work 2.59 hours a week less than men. Women were also more likely to report that they were uncentered on the job centrality measure. Finally, women tend to be

significantly more satisfied with their work and their job in general than men.

On the other hand, there were a number of marked similarities between men and women. They commuted about the same distance, were on average the same age and had about the same amount of tenure with the school system, and reported similar attitudes about their co-workers, promotional opportunities, supervision and pay.

Table 3 show the correlations between the occurrences of absenteeism (frequency) and the total days absent (duration) measures, and the personal characteristics of employees and their attitudes. Personal characteristics and attitudinal variables are listed in the left hand column. The next two columns present the correlational statistics for absence occurrence for men and women, respectively. The last two columns present the correlations for total days absent, and the personal characteristics and attitudinal variables for men and women, respectively. The top number given for each variable is the correlation while the number in parentheses below represents the level of significance.

Age was found to be positively correlated ($p<.05$) for both measures of absenteeism for men; whereas role conflict and job involvement were all found to be negatively correlated ($p<.05$). The number of occurrences of absence for women was found to be significantly related to the number of dependents she had, her perception of role conflict and her job involvement. The number of dependents had a positive relationship, while role conflict and job involvement had a negative relationship. The total days absent (duration) that a woman was absent once again was positively related to the number of dependents she had. Attitude toward pay also correlated positively with total days absent for women.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

H1: There is an interaction between age and gender, such that men will have significantly less absenteeism than women during the child bearing and parenting years.

Age and gender groups were used to test this hypothesis. Young adults were defined to be those between the ages of 21 and 39 since these years were believed to represent the time when parenting responsibilities were the greatest. Sixty six men and 134 women were considered to be young adults according to this classification. The middle adult age group was defined to be those between the ages of 40 and 54. These ages were grouped together because it was believed that they represented the years when childrearing responsibilities were diminished but before health factors related to old age would affect work attendance. This group was comprised of 40 men and 101 women. Older adults, or those past the age

Table 4

Significance Levels and Model Variance for Absence Occurrences

Variable Names	MAIN EFFECTS MODEL				MODEL WITH INTERACTION				
	Model	Gender	Variable	R2	Model	Gender	Variable	Interaction	R2
Age Groups	.0698	.0178	.4822	.0120	.0093	.0168	.4760	.0167	.0427
Dependents	.0049	.0178	.0241	.0307	.0120	.0179	.0243	.5643	.0316
Distance	.0080	.0172	.0446	.0271	.0201	.0174	.0449	.6685	.0276
Role Conflict	.0189	.0175	.1281	.0224	.0001	.0432	.0001	.6265	.0693
Work Attitude	.0204	.0093	.3091	.0220	.0430	.0094	.3095	.5376	.0231
Co-Workers	.0213	.0061	.6691	.0221	.0522	.0062	.6695	.8667	.0222
Supervisors	.0117	.0088	.1512	.0254	.0212	.0088	.1513	.3644	.0277
Pay	.0261	.0070	.9419	.0209	.0409	.0070	.9419	.3224	.0237
Promotions	.0227	.0078	.4793	.0217	.0510	.0079	.4798	.6482	.0223
General Attitude	.0060	.0043	.1450	.0292	.0089	.0043	.1448	.2418	.0331
Centrality	.0655	.0712	.1358	.0373	.1895	.0725	.1383	.8722	.0387
Job Involvement	.0001	.0155	.0001	.0577	.0001	.0157	.0001	.7187	.0581

Note: Because of space limitations, only significance levels are presented for Model, Gender and Variable. The explained variance for the model is presented (R2). The interaction column is the significance levels for the interaction between gender and the variable of interest.

of 55, made up the last age group. Only 13 employees fell into this category, 5 men and 8 women.

To test the hypotheses, it was first necessary to determine the main effects of gender and age groups by utilizing a hierarchial regression model with gender and age as independent variables and absenteeism as the dependent variable. Another regression was then run using a model which includes main effects and an interaction. The resulting change in R2 is tested to determine whether the interaction adds anything significant to the explanation of absenteeism above and beyond the main effects. Analyzing the second regression which includes the interaction is necessary even if the main effects are not found to be significant since the existence of an interaction may mask main effects.

In Tables 4 and 5 the results of the hierarchial regression analyses for the main effects model and for the same model with the interaction are displayed. Table 4 reports the analyses for absence occurrences (frequency) and Table 5 reports days absent (duration). For both tables, the names of the variable of interest are listed in the left column. Then in the next four columns the results of the main effect model are presented and in the final five columns the model which includes the interaction are shown. In the columns labeled model, gender, variable and interaction only the significance levels of the tests are presented to reduce the total number of tables. Note that the column labeled variable represents the significance value for the model is shown. As a result, each row indicates the variable of interest (first row is age groups), next the level of significance for the model, for gender, and for the variable of interest (in this example age) in the main effects model. Then, the R2 (explained variance), for the main effects model is presented. In the final 5 columns the significance levels for model, gender, variable, and interaction, and the R2 (explained variance) are presented for the interaction model.

As can be seen in Table 4 (absence occurrences), a significant increase ($p=.0167$) in the value of R2 occurred from the contribution of the interaction between age groups and gender. Therefore, there is a significant interaction between age groups and gender in explaining the number of occurrences of absenteeism. However, no significant interactive effect between age group and gender was found to impact on the total days absent (Table 5).

After finding an interactive effect between age groups and gender in the explanation of the number of occurrences of absenteeism, regression analysis was used to determine in which age group(s) the difference in absence was found. For each of these tests, a subsample was created for each age group. A model that used only gender in the explanation of absenteeism was then tested.

Table 5

Significance Levels and Model Variance for Days Absent

Variable Names	MAIN EFFECTS MODEL				MODEL WITH INTERACTION				
	Model	Gender	Variable	R2	Model	Gender	Variable	Interaction	R2
Age Groups	.0968	.0192	.6588	.0179	.0891	.0190	.6578	.1990	.0270
Dependents	.0048	.0186	.0226	.0308	.0101	.0186	.0227	.4103	.0327
Distance	.0091	.0185	.0485	.0264	.0190	.0186	.0486	.4520	.0280
Role Conflict	.0270	.0188	.1889	.0204	.0081	.0218	.0102	.9146	.0359
Work Attitude	.0536	.0157	.9176	.0166	.1181	.0159	.9177	.8712	.0167
Co-Workers	.0434	.0123	.9611	.0181	.0991	.0125	.9611	.9264	.0181
Supervisors	.0547	.0163	.8600	.0167	.1208	.0164	.8602	.9054	.0167
Pay	.0015	.0149	.0072	.0371	.0001	.0140	.0067	.0062	.0579
Promotions	.0375	.0138	.4794	.0189	.0871	.0139	.4800	.9265	.0189
General Attitude	.0412	.0132	.6277	.0183	.0935	.0134	.6281	.8502	.0184
Centrality	.1111	.0528	.3198	.0312	.2353	.0536	.3221	.6630	.0355
Job Involvement	.0040	.0182	.0188	.0309	.0116	.0184	.0190	.9112	.0310

Note: Because of space limitations, only significance levels are presented for Model, Gender and Variable. The explained variance for the Model is presented (R2). The interaction column is the significance levels for the interaction between gender and variable of interest.

Table 6

Gender and Absence Occurrence for Young, Middle Age and Older Adults

		Young Adults		
SOURCE	**DF**	**F-VALUE**	**SIGNIFICANCE**	R^2
Gender	1	7.05	.0086	.0344
Error	198			
		Middle Age		
SOURCE	**DF**	**F-VALUE**	**SIGNIFICANCE**	R^2
Gender	1	1.43	.2331	.0102
Error	139			
		Older Adults		
SOURCE	**DF**	**F-VALUE**	**SIGNIFICANCE**	R^2
Gender	1	4.55	.0563	.2925
Error	11			

As shown in Table 6, for young adults, or those between the ages of 21 and 39, there was a significant difference in the occurrence of absence for men and women (3.04, and 3.99, respectively). This hypothesis was only partially supported since no interaction was found to exist between gender, age groups, and the number of days a person was absent.

H2: There is an interaction between the gender of the employee and the number of dependents such that a positive relationship to absenteeism will be found for women but not for men.

As shown in Tables 4 and 5 the same hierarchial regression procedure used previously is employed. Although both gender and the number of dependents were found to have a significant effect of absence occurrences and the number of days absent, no significant interactive effect was found. The hypothesis was rejected, because the number of dependents are positively related to absenteeism for both men and women.

H3: There is an interaction between distance to work and gender such that a positive relationship to absenteeism will be found for women but not for men.

As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, both gender and distance to work were found to have main effects on both measures of absenteeism. The interaction of the two variables did not add anything significant to the explanation of absenteeism, so that the results of these tests did not support the hypothesis.

H4: There is an interaction between role conflict and gender such that women will have higher levels of role conflict than men and subsequently higher absenteeism.

Table 4 and Table 5 showed main effects for gender and role conflict for the interaction model for both measures of absenteeism. Significant correlations were also found for both men and women as shown in Table 3. However, no significant interaction was found to explain anything beyond the main effects of gender. This hypothesis was not supported.

H5: There is an interaction between job satisfaction and gender such that a negative relationship to absenteeism will be found for men but not for women.

In Tables 4 and 5 the measures of job satisfaction (JDI) are rows labeled work attitudes, co-workers, supervisors, pay, promotions, and general attitude. The only significant interactive effect which supports the hypothesis is between attitude toward pay and gender for the total number of absent days. By examining the simple correlations between pay attitudes and days absent in Table 3, women were found to have a positive significant correlation between their pay attitude and the number of days they were absent.

H6: There is an interaction between central life interests and gender such that central life interest is related to absenteeism for men but not for women.

As shown in Tables 4 and 5 central life interest (centrality) was not found to be related to the number of days a person was absent (p.3198) or to their number of absence occurrences (p.1358). Neither was the interaction of gender and central life interests found to add anything significant to the explanation of either measure of absenteeism. The hypothesis was not supported.

H7: There is an interaction between job involvement and gender such that job involvement is negatively related to absenteeism for men but not for women.

The results of tests on this hypothesis are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Although both gender and job involvement were found to significantly contribute to the explanation of both measures of absenteeism, their interaction added nothing above and beyond the main effects of gender. The hypothesis was rejected.

H8: The variables used in the regression procedure included the following: age, role conflict, job involvement, amount of hours desired, attitude toward work, attitude toward supervisor, attitude toward co-workers, attitude toward pay, attitude toward promotional opportunity, attitude toward the job in general, number of employee depend-

ents and distance to work. The centrality of life construct was not included because it was not a continuous variable.

One of the purposes of this study had been to identify multiple factors which could be used to explain absenteeism for men and women. Regression techniques shown in Tables 7 and 8 were used to find what combination of factors would significantly add to the explanation of absenteeism.

Table 7

Multivariate Regression for Occurrence of Absenteeism

Independent Variables	Beta	F Value	Significance	R2
Men (n=104)				
Model		6.39	.0024	.1124
Intercept	2.8995			
Job Involvement	-.4628	7.82	.0062	
Age	.0567	4.92	.0288	
Women (n=220)				
Model		11.63	.0001	.0968
Intercept	7.3561			
Job Involvement	-.3476	6.15	.0139	
Number of hours desired	-.0537	11.57	.0008	

Table 8

Multivariate Regression for Days Absent

Independent Variables	Beta	F Value	Significance	R2
Men (n=104)				
Model		5.78	.0003	.1895
Intercept	25.3627			
Age	1.3094	7.67	.0067	
Job Involvement	-10.9251	12.43	.0006	
Attitude toward pay	-14.1408	6.60	.0117	
Attitude toward job in general	12.4705	3.97	.0492	
Women (n=220)				
Model		9.63	.0001	.1180
Intercept	90.9452			
Number of hours desired	-1.8625	10.07	.0017	
Attitude toward pay	30.3255	13.67	.0003	
Distance to work	1.5046	3.99	.0470	

It was found that for men, job involvement and age were the only two variables to significantly contribute to the level of absence occurrences. Job involvement had a negative influence while age had a positive influence. That is to say, the more involved a man was with his job and the younger he was, the less the number of absence occurrences he would have.

For women, job involvement, and the amount of work hours desired were the only tow variables which significantly added to the prediction of absence occurrences. Both of these variables had negative influences. The less a woman was involved with her job and the less number of hours that she wanted work, the higher her number of absence occurrences would be. The explained variance of these models for men and women were R^2=.1124 and R^2=.0968, respectively.

For a man, the total days absent was found to be best explained by age, job involvement, attitude toward pay, and attitude toward the job in general. A woman's total days absent was explained best by the amount of hours she wished to work, her attitude toward pay, and the distance she lived from work. Of these, only the amount of hours she desired were negatively related to total days absent, while all of the rest of the variables were positively related. The explained variance for these models for men and women were R^2=.1895 and R^2=.1180, respectively.

It is interesting to note that one variable, attitude toward pay, was found to be related to total days absent for both men and women. However, attitude toward pay had a negative relationship for men and a positive relationship for women.

Stated Reasons for Absence

Participants in the survey were asked to indicate the reasons for their last two absences from a list of possible excused for being absent. This list and their responses are shown in Table 9 and Table 10. In explaining their reason for their absences, women were more likely to report a major illness than men. Another observation was that men were somewhat more likely to have taken time off due to child care problems than were women. Women, on the other hand, had taken more time off when a child was ill or hurt. Finally, men were more likely to have taken a day off for sporting of other leisure activities than were women.

Discussion

The purpose of this study has been to determine why women had higher rates of absenteeism than men. Personal characteristics and motivational factors which were thought to be related to possible differences

Table 9

Reason for Last Absence

Reason for Absence	Men (n=94) Frequency	Women (n=228) Frequency
a minor illness	37 (39.36%)	92 (40.35%)
a major illness	2 (2.13%)	20 (8.77%)
an accident off the job	0 (0.00%)	2 (.88%)
domestic violence	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
personal business	12 (12.77%)	13 (5.70%)
transportation problems	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
child care problem	3 (3.19%)	2 (.88%)
child ill or hurt	11 (11.70%)	33 (14.47%)
spouse/friend had day off	1 (1.06%)	2 (.88%)
spouse/friend ill or injured	3 (3.19%)	10 (4.39%)
needed break from job	3 (3.19%)	8 (3.51%)
stress/job pressure	3 (3.19%)	6 (2.63%)
dispute with boss	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
sporting or other leisure activity	4 (4.26%)	3 (1.32%)
court appearance	1 (1.06%)	1 (.44%)
looking for another job	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
community service	0 (0.00%)	3 (1.32%)
funeral	6 (6.38%)	10 (4.39%)
in jail	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
other	3 (3.19%)	12 (5.26%)
no absences	5 (5.32%)	11 (4.82%)
TOTAL	94 (100%)	228 (100%)

between men and women were examined. The data from this survey supported earlier research which shows that women take significantly more day off than do men. However, the actual occurrences of absence for women was not significantly higher than men in this study.

A number of differences were found between men and women. First, women wanted to work substantially less hours than men. Women were more satisfied with the work they did and their job in general than men. Second, women reported that their husbands worked substantially more hours than they did. Third, women reported that they were more likely to stay home with sick children. Finally, women were more likely to say that their life was un-centered (in terms of life centrality) than men. Men on the other hand had more dependents, were more likely to have a second job and more often reported that they were the primary breadwinners.

However, of all the variables tested, only the variables of satisfaction with pay and the variable of age were found to have a gender-related differential impact on absenteeism. Absenteeism was found to be highest for women during their child bearing years. This supports the notion that women may be taking more responsibility for childcare and are more likely

Table 10

Reason for the Next Most Recent Absence

Reason for Absence	Men (n=93) Frequency	Women (n=235) Frequency
a minor illness	32 (35.96%)	78 (35.62%)
a major illness	3 (3.37%)	11 (5.02%)
an accident off the job	2 (2.25%)	2 (.91%)
domestic violence	1 (1.12%)	0 (0.00%)
personal business	6 (6.74%)	10 (4.57%)
transportation problems	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
child care problem	1 (1.12%)	3 (1.37%)
child ill or hurt	8 (8.99%)	34 (15.53%)
spouse/friend had day off	0 (0.00%)	2 (.91%)
spouse/friend ill or injured	3 (3.37%)	10 (4.57%)
needed break from job	5 (5.62%)	7 (3.20%)
stress/job pressure	1 (1.12%)	6 (2.74%)
dispute with boss	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
sporting or other leisure activity	2 (2.25%)	5 (2.28%)
court appearance	2 (2.25%)	1 (.46%)
looking for another job	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
community service	0 (0.00%)	1 (.46%)
funeral	3 (3.37%)	8 (3.65%)
in jail	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
other	5 (5.62%)	13 (5.94%)
no absences	15 (16.85%)	28 (12.79%)
TOTAL	89 (100%)	235 (100%)

to stay home to care for a sick child. However this conclusion is not supported by the finding that absenteeism is related to family size for both women and men. However, men's willingness to take more responsibility for dependents must be tempered by the fact that we are examining teachers who may feel they have job security and have different values toward family responsibilities than blue collar workers.

Finding that the total number of days a woman is absent (duration) increased as satisfaction with pay increased runs contrary to motivational theories of absenteeism, which posits that greater satisfaction results in lower absenteeism. It would appear instead that the more satisfied a woman is with her pay, the more likely she is to take time off. However, it is important to not that pay satisfaction is related to the total days absent (duration), which is not thought to reflect short term or discretionary absences. Instead, women may be working to help make financial ends meet in the household. Once those needs are met, they may turn their efforts to other roles in the household including motherhood and therefore have longer periods of absence. The fact that the number of hours that a woman wants to work is also negatively related supports this notion. Young women were also found to have significantly higher occurrences

(frequency) of absence than young men. This supported the hypothesis that younger women were thought to have higher occurrences of absenteeism because of factors related to family responsibilities which have more impact during those years.

When asked to give the reason for their most recent absences women were more likely to report a major illness than men. Women were also more likely to take time off when a child was ill or hurt. However, men are more likely to be absent because of childcare problems, and for sporting or other leisure activities.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study is that if focuses on a profession which may not be representative of other occupations. Women have long dominated the teaching profession, and their work schedules are more likely to coincide with the schedule of their school age children.

A second limitation which is an inherent problem in all absenteeism research is that the reasons given for absenteeism may not necessarily be accurate. Since school policy provided pay for only certain types of absences, employees may not have been truthful in stating why they were absent. Furthermore, reasons for absence given in the employee survey might also be incorrect due to fear of reprisal on the part of the employee of simply forgetfulness.

Finally, attitudes were surveyed on only one occasion during the year for which absenteeism data was recorded. Attitudes could have varied greatly throughout the year and the attitudes recorded may not have been representative of the whole year.

Conclusion

This study confirmed that women take a significantly higher number of days off than men but that the actual number of occurrences of women's absenteeism is not significantly greater. However, the similarities between men and women in terms of absenteeism were even more striking. Role conflict, number of dependents and job involvement are important factors in explaining levels of absenteeism for both men and women.

One finding that had not been hypothesized was a strong relationship between the amount of hours that a woman desired to work and her absenteeism. While part-timers in retail industry have been found to have significantly higher levels of absenteeism than full-timers (Mabes, 1982), the same might not be true for professional occupations.

Although some differences were found between men and women, our study provides only a limited explanation of large and consistent differences between the absence rates of men and women. The notion that women are absent more frequently because of factors outside their control and that men were absent due to job related factors received only limited support. As a result, more research is needed to identify other explanatory variables.

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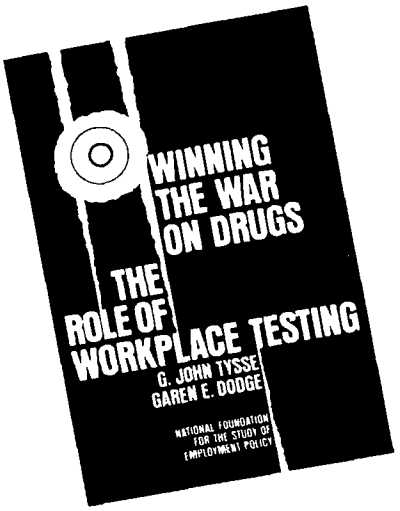

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