The following is from a recent email from the Diord Corp. Human Resources Manager:

“Tobor Technologies found that mental health problems and mental illness were responsible for about 15 percent of employee sick days. Tobor amended its employee insurance plan so that workers receive the same coverage for mental illness as they do for physical illness. In addition, the company hired an on-site psychologist and created a system that allows workers to schedule confidential counseling appointments. After one year, the number of sick days used by employees declined by 10 percent. Diord Corp. has had an increase in employee sick days over the past two years, so we should introduce a similar insurance plan and counseling program. These measures will surely reduce employee absenteeism and cause an increase in productivity.”

Write a response in which you examine the argument’s unstated assumptions, making sure to explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

In the email sent by the Diord Corporation Human Resource Manager, a conclusion has been drawn that Diord Corp. should follow in the footsteps of measures taken by Tobor Technologies to make an insurance plan and counselling program to aid the mental health of its workers, to decrease the number of sick days taken. This conclusion is built on the premise that this technique has clearly worked at Tobor, with statistics to substantiate the evidence of the method’s efficacy. However, there are three main unstated assumptions that have been made by the Manager that lead to the argument being weak. Addressing these three assumptions would strengthen the argument made.

First, the argument assumes that the conditions at Tobor are identical to that of Diord. It inadvertently claims that mental health problems are the reason for the sick days being taken by employees at Diord, and never provides evidence for this. It may be possible that the cause of Diord’s increase in sick days over the past two years is the result of other factors, such as inadequate cleaning of the office, a toxic work environment, or external factors like family issues. The locations of Diord’s offices could be possibly unfavourable for employees’ good health. The manager must refute these possibilities to cement his argument, since any evidence that may arise in favour of Diord’s sick days not being a result of poor mental health, would simply break down the argument.

Second, the argument makes the assumption that the number of sick days at Diord Corp. is high enough to warrant such measures. In other words, it assumes that the number of sick days taken by employees is significant enough to impede the company’s productivity. Although it claims that the measures taken will help to increase productivity, there is no logical basis for the same. What if the average number of sick days taken by the employees at Diord increased in the over the past two years by a small factor, going from, say, 5 days per year to 6 days per year? Such a negligible increase may not be ‘addressed’ by the counselling and insurance programs. If the assumption that the increase is sufficient proves unwarranted, then it would falsify the logic of the argument.

Finally, the argument does not consider other ways to reduce sick days at Diord. Let us assume that the previous two assumptions are warranted; Diord employees face mental health problems and are taking more and more sick days each year due to this reason. Then does that necessarily mean that the measures taken by Tobor would also work at Diord? Not necessarily. It may be the case that Diord employees prefer other modes of solving mental issues, like personal therapy sessions, or meditation and mindfulness. There is not enough evidence to prove that a new insurance plan and counselling program would get rid of the difficulties faced by the employees, and the manager does not provide any evidence of the employees wanting or requiring such a program. The human resources department at Diord should, in this case, consider taking a comprehensive survey of Diord’s employees, asking them about why they take sick days, and what health/other issues are leading them to take more sick days. If the survey displays that the manager’s assumption is unwarranted, then it significantly reduces the viability of the proposed measures. The argument would fall apart, and other avenues must be explored.

In conclusion, the argument, as it stands now, makes multiple unstated assumptions, and does not provide substantiative evidence to bolster its logic. These lapses in logic may end up costing the company a lot of money and resources that could have gone to a better purpose, in case the assumptions made by the manager prove unwarranted. If a well-rounded survey of the employees is done, with concrete evidence in favour of certain measures to be taken, then the argument could be better crafted to not be as shaky. Hence, the argument’s reliance on the aforementioned unstated assumptions may lead to a waste of resources if they are proven unwarranted.