

## INDICES OF MOTIVELESS BEHAVIOR AND THE SYNDROME WITHDRAWAL IN A MEDIUM-SIZED ORGANIZATION

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### ABSTRACT

The subject of this study are two samples of workers in a medium-sized metal factory. The experimental sample consisted of 612 workers who have held stable jobs at the factory for ten years or more. The control sample consisted of 1500 workers who have held various jobs within the factory during the last ten years. Both groups of workers were further divided into those of up to 50 years of age and those of over 50, and further subdivided according to sex.

Two sources of data were used: a 60-item attitude questionnaire with yes – no type of items, and the medical records gathered during the ten-year period for each worker separately, containing data on absences and personal, professional, social and medical data.

The factor of adaptation difficulties was significant in the case of workers who have changed their jobs within the factory during the last ten years as compared to the workers who have held stable jobs for ten years. The former had been absent more frequently than had been the workers who have held stable jobs ( $\chi^2=17.959$ ).

The second significant factor was the process of ageing. In the sample of adapted workers (ten years or more on a stable job) who were over 50 years of age the frequency of absences was lower but the absences were longer than those of the younger workers who had changed their jobs within the factory during the ten-year period.

The authors discuss the life crisis of the so-called "small man" and the development of "rental" tendencies or tendencies of withdrawal from profession. The authors also attempt to find the causes of motiveless behavior. Several factors appear to cause absenteeism. Although showing a negative trend the data are not significant. It was not possible to establish clear effect of life crisis on the motivation of the working man, although part of the data point to the factors of imagined dangers and the problem of advancement (in the case of women). The authors point to the need for further study and a scientific investigation of particular critical periods in the lives of workers which have such a considerable effect on the workers' productive abilities and psychical well-being.

This paper discusses absenteeism among workers in a medium-sized metal factory. Characteristics of the factory are the absence of a stressful environment which could cause massive conflict reactions, and of harmful effects deriving from external factors, and seemingly stable and harmonious interpersonal relations. Nevertheless, absenteeism has been growing in this factory from year

to year. Initially, total absenteeism accounted for 15% of total working time, to reach gradually a percentage which would be considerable even under special stress circumstances. For the ten-year period reviewed, the average percentage was 10% with an annual increase of 1%. Measures undertaken by the occupational health service reduced absences due to sick leaves and illnesses from 6.07% to 5.87%. The decrease in sick leaves suggests that accidents at work could not account for the great increase in absenteeism at the factory. Therefore, we turned our attention to two processes that seemed to have played a part in the absenteeism of the workers: the process of ageing and the process of adaptation to the working place.

#### SUBJECTS AND METHODOLOGY

The sample included workers who have held stable jobs at the factory for a period of ten years or more. Data were collected from a total of 700 workers (612 of these were usable). The first source of data was a questionnaire containing 60 yes – no type questions on the motivation of workers regarding their respective jobs, and on the attitudes of the workers towards their current jobs and working conditions.

The second source of data were the regular medical records on absenteeism, duration of absences, and causes of absences which also contained data on type of job, age, sex, marital status, etc. The experimental sample of 612 workers was further divided into two groups. The first group comprised workers of up to 50 years of age and the second those of over 50. These were further subdivided according to sex.

The control sample comprised 1500 workers who have changed their jobs within the factory during the last ten years for reasons of higher pay or better working conditions. These workers were reportedly dissatisfied with their jobs, i.e. they were not adapted to them. Like the experimental group, the control group was also divided into two groups (workers of up to 50 years of age and workers of over 50) and then subdivided according to sex.

#### RESULTS

The patterns of absenteeism of the two groups of workers revealed certain differences. In comparison with workers who have stayed in their jobs for ten years or more, workers who had changed their jobs within the factory showed a significantly higher rate of absenteeism ( $\chi^2=17.957$ ). While during the probationary period absenteeism was negligible, later on, during the period of struggle for better pay, establishment and adaptation, younger workers who shifted from job to job within the factory showed a higher rate of absenteeism. They reported to find it difficult to cope with their frustrations and reacted to them with an increased number of absences.

In the case of adapted workers (ten years or more in the same job or position) absences were fewer but longer than those of non-adapted workers (who vacillated between jobs within the factory during the ten-year period).

To some extent the data are supported by the experiences of Ljubimir and Milaković<sup>1</sup> who noted special adaptation problems in the case of workers who vacillate between jobs and in whom one may expect either psychosomatic illnesses or an increased rate of absenteeism.

As stated before, it is characteristic for adapted workers (ten or more years in the same job or position) that their absences are longer in duration than those of nonadapted workers. In our sample the length of absences appeared to be closely linked with age, i.e. the older the worker, the longer his absences.

We also examined the relationship between the number and length of absences according to attitudes regarding possibilities of advancement between the experimental and the control group of workers. In the case of men the differences were not significant, while showing clearly in the case of women: women who thought they had no chance of promotion were absent from their jobs significantly longer.

Most of the workers stated that they liked their jobs, thus there were no significant differences in absenteeism regarding this item. However, most of the male workers stated that the supervisors were "indifferent to them". In respect to this item the results showed a mild tendency toward increased absenteeism.

Absenteeism was not statistically significant when compared to the illnesses and accidents at work ( $\chi^2=0.246$ ), but certain importance was attached to the nonrealistic attitudes of workers to dangers at the working place. These attitudes were not only with male workers. Male workers who considered their work place dangerous or harmful were absent more frequently ( $\chi^2=6.948$ ).

Cleanliness at work was a significant motivating factor in the case of male workers, but in the case of female workers this factor was not significant (for male workers  $\chi^2=12.94$ , for female workers  $\chi^2=0.353$ ).

Precision at work was also found to be closely connected with the absenteeism of male workers as regards both frequency ( $\chi^2=4.175$ ) and length of absence.

The factor of job interest appears to have an effect on length of absence but only in the case of female workers.

#### DISCUSSION

In a stable work situation with undisturbed interpersonal relationships which did not seem to include any peculiar patterns of behavior, two important and fundamental processes were observed: adaptation to work and profession in the case of younger workers, and the process of deterioration with age in the case of older workers. Both processes have special financial and medical significance. In fact the overall success of the factory may, to some extent, depend on this.

In the population under study no dramatic developments were observed. Absenteeism was found to increase with age, while the process of decreased motivation was very difficult to analyse. The process of ageing not only leads to increased risk of illness, but also has certain repercussions on work motivation.

As Milaković showed<sup>2</sup> there exists the syndrome of what is called the "small man". This is the working man who, by a successful sublimation of his drives, postpones the satiation of his drive tendencies from the infantile periods, while at the same time carrying in himself ambivalences toward his life situations.

Long years of successful work and adaptation to conditions of relative frustrations can manifest themselves in a withdrawal from work for one day, or in loss motivation for work, absenteeism, or rental tendencies. Loss of motivation may occur either suddenly or gradually. It is known under various names, but popularly it is called "the life crisis".

When feeling dissatisfied with their situation, workers tend to regard as a threatening even those events which previously gave them no cause for complaint. The whole life course starts to be re-examined, and memories of traumas lived through many years ago emerge as a result of the re-examination. The worker starts to evaluate his career failures and life injustices. Certain attitudes toward the environment are formed. A longing for resolving the situation appears at first unconsciously and later consciously. When legal and economic conditions make it possible, the worker will go into retirement. Otherwise, this may result in a neurotic behavior, in "rental neuroses", in the syndrome of absenteeism or withdrawal from the job.

In this study major attention was focused on two motivation processes affecting the rate length of absences of workers at a medium-size factory: the process of adaptation to the job which manifested itself in the case of workers who during a ten-year period shifted from job to job within the factory, and the process of ageing showing in older workers. More attention should be given to the complex interaction of these processes and the problems of job motivation.

#### REFERENCES

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