WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL IN BEING HABITUALLY LATE OR ABSENT FROM WORK?

by:

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If you have been reviewing monthly reports on employees’ attendance and noticed that some of them frequently reported for duty beyond schedule, the number of late comers and the frequency of tardiness increased per month, a number of or some employees have been several times absent from work for various reasons (aside from ill-health) without approved application for leave of absence, then warning signs of habitual tardiness and absenteeism are present.

So, what’s the big deal in being habitually late or absent from work? Having habitually late or even worse, absent employee, affects not only the employee, the co-workers, the clients, the management but the entire workplace as well. In a school setting, this “Domino Effect” is evident in late submission of school reports, delayed delivery of school services, unfinished Budget of Work, problems on student discipline and classroom management, conflict among employees and ultimately, below par learning outcomes on the part of the students.

Written articles and relevant studies on impacts, effects and consequences of habitual tardiness and absenteeism on organizations, to the employees, on the students’ performance prove that these behaviors should not be left unaddressed.

Ussad (2017) in her article “Effects of Being Late for Work on Employers” mentioned productivity loss, negative morale, customer dissatisfaction and management problems among the issues that a manager will have to deal with when employees do not come on time. Similarly, Mc Querry (2015) stated that habitual tardiness creates an immediate negative impact the on co-workers productivity, in service delivery to
customers and that dealing with this unprofessional behavior can make other employees resentful, which can lead to decreased morale and reduced job satisfaction as well as poor interpersonal relationships with other workers.

Likewise, Dafiaghor (2011) considered lateness as a major problem confronting administrators in schools and concluded that the abnormal behavior disorganizes and causes distraction to the individual and the whole system, inhibits the process of achieving the goals of the school and leads to absenteeism and general failure in life.

On absenteeism, Goodman and Atkin (1984) summarized the positive and negative consequences of absenteeism on the individual worker, adjacent workers, work groups, and organizations, union officers, family and society. From the individual viewpoint, positive effects are reduction of job-related stress, meeting of nonwork-role obligations, benefit from compensatory nonwork activities, compliance with norms to be absent while the negative consequences are loss of pay, receiving formal and informal discipline, increased accidents and altered job perception. As for the co-worker, positive consequences include opportunity to work on a different job which could lead to skills enhancement and get overtime pay while the bad effects are increased work load, undesired overtime, increased accidents and conflict with the absent co-worker. For the work group, members may benefit by gaining knowledge of multiple jobs, and becoming more flexible in responding to absenteeism and production problems. On the other hand, the undesirable consequences are increased coordination problem, decreased productivity and increased accidents. On the organization-management viewpoint, positive consequences are improved job knowledge base in the workforce, greater labor force flexibility while the problems that are most likely to happen are decreased productivity, increased costs, more grievances and increased accidents. For the union officers, absenteeism of a co-worker may lead to articulated and strengthened power position and increased solidarity among members while the ill effects are weakened power position and increased costs in processing grievances. Family of an absentee
employee is also affected positively when he/she gets to deal with health or illness problem, manage marital and child problem and maintenance of spouse earnings. The negative consequences that the family might face, however, are less earning, decline in work reputation and aggravated marital and child problems. As for the effects on society, absenteeism from work may lead to reduction of job-related stress and mental health problem, reduced marital-related problems and participation in community political processes while the negative consequence is loss of productivity.

On the impact of teacher absenteeism on student performance, the study of Miller et. al. (2007) mentioned several literature explaining the mechanisms through which teacher absences may reduce student achievement which include (a) reduction of instructional intensity which may happen when a regularly assigned teacher is absent (Capitan & et al., 1980; Gagne, 1977; Varlas, 2001), (b) creation of discontinuities of instruction, the disruption of the regular routines and procedures of the classroom (Rundall, 1986; Turbeville, 1987) and (c) inhibition of attempts by school faculties to implement consistent instructional practices across classrooms and grades like failure to collaborate with colleagues on improving instruction which implies that a teacher’s absence not only impacts negatively on the students he or she directly works with, but also on the students taught by the teacher’s colleagues.

As for the impact on student’s achievement in a particular subject, Finlayson (2009) found out that higher teacher absenteeism leads to lower student math scores on standardized tests.

Problems on tardiness and absenteeism in schools are serious issues that leaving them unaddressed will eventually lead to inefficiency, underperformance, deterioration of the organization’s work culture and high employee turnover. Sadly, some employees are not even aware of the seriousness of these violations, that these are administrative offenses which could lead to suspension or dismissal from service.
To handle these problems, Mason (2015) recommended that there is a need to emphasize policy on attendance and to document employee attendance for purposes of disciplining them.

On that note, as school managers, we should make it a point that all teaching and non-teaching staff are aware of the policy on working hours, conditions for being habitually tardy or absent, of half day absence and undertime and the legal consequences.

As for the relevant policies, Civil Service Memorandum Circular no 1 s. 2017 not only reiterates the policy on government office hours, including administrative offenses and their corresponding penalties but also emphasizes the responsibilities of the head of agency in making sure that employees are strictly observing office hours as provided in Sec 1, 2, 4, 5 Rule XVII, Omnibus Rules Implementing Book V of Executive Order 292:

“Sec 1- It shall be the duty of each head or department or agency to require all officers under him/her to strictly observe the prescribed office hours.

“Sec 2- Each head of department or agency shall require a daily record of attendance of all the officers and employees under him/her including those serving in the field or in the water, to be kept on the proper form and whenever possible, registered on the bundy clock.

“Sec 4- Falsification or irregularities in the keeping of time records will render the guilty officer or employee administratively liable without prejudice to criminal prosecution as the circumstances warrant.

“Sec 5- Officers and employees of all departments and agencies except those covered by special laws shall render not less than eight hours of work a day for five days or a total of 40 hours per week exclusive of time for lunch. As a general rule, such hours shall be form 8 o’clock in the morning and ends in 12 noon; and from 1o’clock to 5 o’clock in the afternoon on all days except Saturday, Sunday and Holidays.”
When does an employee become habitually absent and what is the basis for approving or disapproving an application for leave of absence by an employee? Section 22, Rule XIV, Omnibus Rules Implementing Book V of Executive Order No 292 provides

“An employee who has incurred Unauthorized Absences, exceeding the allowable 2.5 days monthly leave credit under the LEAVE LAW for at least three (3) months in a semester or at least three (3) consecutive months during the year.

“In case of ill-health, heads of department or agencies are encouraged to verify the validity of such claim, if not satisfied with the reason given, should disapprove the application for sick leave. On the other hand, in cases where an employee absents himself from work before approval of the said application, said application should be disapproved.

“In the discretion of any department, agency or office, any government physician maybe authorized to do a spot check on employees who are supposed to be on sick leave.

When is an employee considered habitually tardy? Sec 8, Rule XVIII of the Omnibus Rules Implementing Title , I, Subtitle A, Book V of the Administrative Code of 1987, as amended, provides that:

“Officer and employees who have incurred tardiness and under time, regardless of the number of minutes per day, ten (10) times a month for at least two (2) consecutive months during the year or at least two (2) months in a semester shall be subject to disciplinary action.”

What about the penalty for said administrative offenses? Under Sec 46 (B) (5) Revised Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service, Frequent Unauthorized Absences (Habitual Absenteeism), tardiness in reporting for duty and loafing from duty during regular office hours are grave offenses punishable by suspension of 6 months and one day to one year for the first offense and dismissal from service for the
second offense. Penalty for habitual tardiness was reduced to reprimand for the first offense, suspension for 1-30 days for the second offense and dismissal from service for the third offense by Civil Service Memorandum Circular No. 19 s. 1999 Sec 52 (C)(4) Rule VI of and under Sec 46 (F)(4) Revised Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service.

What if you frequently go on a half day absence and undertime? In the article written by Porras (2014), she emphasized that according to CSC Memorandum Circular No. 16, s. 2010 states that any officer or employee who incurs undertime, regardless of the number of minutes/hours, ten (10) times a month or at least two months in a semester or at least two (2) consecutive months during the year shall be liable for a Simple Misconduct and/or Conduct Prejudicial to the Best Interest of the Service, as the case maybe.

According to Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 17, s. 2010, any officer/employee or employee who is absent in the morning is considered to be tardy, subject to the provisions on Habitual Tardiness and any officer/employee who is absent in the afternoon is considered to have incurred Undertime, subject to the provision on Undertime.

As public servants who should observe the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards, let us bear in mind that our punctuality and regular attendance to work are the first two steps that we can take on the way to achieving improved self and organizational performance in delivering basic education services.
References:


**Civil Service Memorandum Circular no 1 s. 2017**


**Mason, Kevin.** (2015, April 15). Solutions To Poor Attendance: How To Reduce Chronic Absenteeism. Retrieved on Sept 9 2017 from
