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## The critical success factors affecting employee absenteeism among frontline healthcare workers in Lagos state, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the critical success factors affecting employee absenteeism among frontline healthcare workers in Lagos State. Data was collected from 350 frontline healthcare workers using a questionnaire and simple random sampling technique. The statistical analysis revealed a negative significant relationship between the critical success factors and employee absenteeism, a positive significant relationship between the critical success factors and job performance, a negative significant relationship between job performance and employee absenteeism, and a positive significant relationship between the cost of absenteeism and employee absenteeism. This study suggests the need for organizational managements to put the necessary interventions that would encourage, keep the employees going and resilient despite the challenges they might be facing in the workplace to help boost their productivity, quality of service to patients, and promote their organization.

**Keywords:** Critical success factors, employee absenteeism, frontline healthcare workers

### 1. Introduction

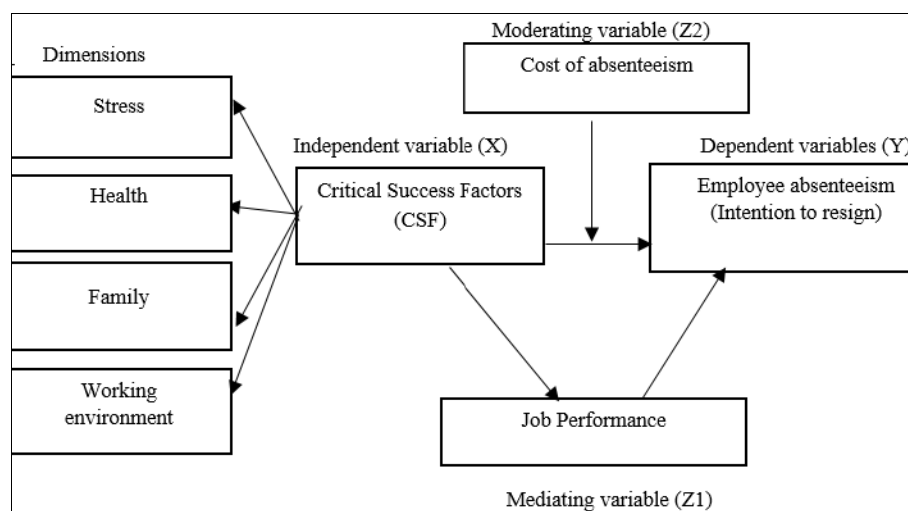
“Employee Absenteeism” is a universal problem facing every organization and has maintained a steady rise over the years, despite its varying rate in terms of the weather, the type of organization, the location, the size of the organization, the level of stress faced at work in terms of job roles and responsibilities, hence, the effect of employee absenteeism affects all businesses and can be very costly and disruptive<sup>[30]</sup>. According to the data from Statistics Canada, absenteeism accounts for approximately 15 to 20% of indirect and direct cost of absenteeism payroll; while the Canada Newswire added that absenteeism also accounts for \$16 billion losses in salary expense<sup>[30]</sup>. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that approximately 2.9% of full-time workers accounted for absence rate at work; and with the increase in the rapid rate of absenteeism at work, absenteeism in the workplace can be described as “terrible”, because it has the tendency to reduce performance and result-oriented productivity of employees<sup>[30]</sup>.

Absenteeism is a good measure for the performance of health system, it is also an important tool that is used to measure the psychological and physical wellbeing of healthcare employees<sup>[32]</sup>. The critical success factors are the key result areas affecting employee absenteeism in this study and they are very important to the success of this study, hence, recent studies have shown some critical success factors to be commonly associated with employee absenteeism in the workplace<sup>[20, 21, 18, 7, 8]</sup>. For example, health was found to be a common factor that affects employee absenteeism in France<sup>[20]</sup>. Consequently, other factors such as level of education, demographic factors like age and gender as well as health were found to be the most occurring factors affecting absenteeism in Brazil<sup>[21, 18]</sup>. According to a study titled ‘Sickness absence in a municipal public service of Goiania, discovered that the prevalence of sickness absence was higher among the women (52.0%), those above 40 years old (55.9%), the married (49.9%), those with no proper schooling (54.4%) and those who had multiple work contracts (53.7%)<sup>[7]</sup>. Demographic factors and job were also found to be associated with absenteeism<sup>[7]</sup>. Additionally, another study observed that the rate of absenteeism in the sample sector at all India level increased to 9.15% as against 8.64%. Among the states in India, it was reported that the highest rate of absenteeism was witnessed in Delhi (13.37%) followed by Chandigarh (13.13%) and Kerala (12.87%)<sup>[8]</sup>.

In Nigeria, absenteeism among healthcare workers is seen as not just as a key public health issue of concern, but a major “human capital risk” that explains the reduced productivity organizations face in the country, while also describing employee absenteeism to be prevalent <sup>[42]</sup>. Some critical factors that give rise to absenteeism among frontline healthcare workers in Nigeria as outlined in previous studies include illness, family issues, lack of adequate number of healthcare workers <sup>[39, 13, 42]</sup>. According to the World Health Organization, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the density of healthcare workers is already below the World Health Organization’s minimum recommendation of 4.45 healthcare workers per 1,000 population <sup>[51]</sup>. While different studies exist of absenteeism among healthcare workers in non-African countries <sup>[1, 28]</sup>, there are only a few studies in African countries, hence sufficient data is lacking in this area of study <sup>[39]</sup>, hence, the focus of this study is on the critical success factors affecting employee absenteeism among frontline healthcare workers in Lagos State.

The phenomenon “absenteeism” is defined as the failure to report for scheduled work <sup>[29]</sup>. The interest of organizations and professors on absenteeism differs. The interest of most organizations on absenteeism is channeled to the cost of absenteeism while the interest of the professors on absenteeism is channeled to something that is of importance about the kind of the closeness of the employees to the

organization <sup>[29]</sup>. Employee absenteeism also refers to employees who are absent from work to do their scheduled job <sup>[3]</sup>. Employee absenteeism remains a broad and interesting topic to study after it was conducted by different theories namely Herzberg’s theory of motivation, McGregor’s Theory, David McClelland’s theory, Adams theory of motivation, Nicholson’s theory, Steers and Rhodes, and Steers and Rhodes Diagnostic Model Attendance <sup>[31]</sup>. Employee absenteeism has remained a broad and interesting topic to study as its trend has remained increasingly steady over the years and has caused consequential actions that is costly and truculent to organizations <sup>[30]</sup>. However, this study utilizes the service recovery performance model by Boshoff and Allen (2000) which explains the personal assessment of employees’ services to their customers and is related to two outcome variables namely job satisfaction and the intention to resign, with the focus of this study on one outcome which is the intention to resign, and the Steers and Rhodes Diagnostic Model Attendance as the underpinning theory of this study <sup>[31]</sup>. The Steers and Rhodes Diagnostic Model Attendance theory is an overall absenteeism theory that believes absenteeism could either be voluntary or involuntary, and as such focuses on “the ability of employees to attend”, and the “motivation of an employee to attend” <sup>[31]</sup>.



**Fig 1:** Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework of this study consists of independent variable with dimensions, a dependent variable with two outcomes (intention to resign and job satisfaction; as per the service recovery performance model), a mediating variable and a moderating variable as shown in Figure 1. The theoretical framework of the study shows the dependent variable (DV) of employee absenteeism (job satisfaction which is positive and intention to resign which is negative), an independent variable (IV) of critical success factors (CSF) which has four different dimensions namely stress, family, health and working environment. The moderating variable (MV1) of the study is the cost of absenteeism while the mediating variable of the study is job performance. The mediating variable explains the link between employee absenteeism and critical success factors while the moderating variable, cost of absenteeism, explains how the strength of the relation between employee absenteeism and the critical success factors are affected. As per the

framework for the Steers and Rhodes Diagnostic Model Theory, the attendance of employees in the workplace is affected by factors such as presenteeism, explaining why and when an employee comes to work either sick (or not healthy), stressed, family distractions (in the form of divorce which can lead to court matters), personal hardships, negative work environment, and so on which can lead to less performance of duty and can leave organizations with costly consequences <sup>[31]</sup>.

Employee absenteeism is a serious issue that has maintained a constant increase over the years. The presence of employees in any organization is crucial for the success and survival of organizations. When employees are not happy with their jobs, they avoid work but when they are happy, they have a high spirit to put in their best, leading their organizations to huge success <sup>[30]</sup>. Stress is the leading cause and notable issue of employee absenteeism. Many employees in their various workplaces pass through

different kinds of stress at work that can lead them to resign from work, thus, stress, though complex, is defined as emotional pressure/state of tension that is experienced by people who look towards extraordinary demands and opportunities <sup>[46]</sup>. Stress is a work-related factor that is associated with employee absenteeism. The stress that is related to work reduces not only the productivity of employees but also their health and can as well cause psychological problems <sup>[10]</sup>. Job satisfaction is the general attitude, pleasurable emotional state from the appraisal of one's job, an affective reaction to one's job, and an attitude towards one's job <sup>[12]</sup>. How productive employees can be depending on how satisfied they are with their jobs. The productivity levels of employees get increased when the employees are given the right systems to guide and help them in their working systems, and thus, would also improve performance <sup>[17]</sup>. Family is a crucial factor that affects employee absenteeism. Family issues can result to most decisions employees make towards their works/jobs. The issues arising from families can force employees to either resign from their workplaces/jobs or be absent from their workplaces. previous study supported this statement as they mentioned in their study that family issues are one of the primary reasons for unplanned absences. For instance, Work family role conflict is an issue that affects absenteeism <sup>[30]</sup>. A study found work family role conflict to have a strong positive relationship with employee absenteeism <sup>[49]</sup>. In Europe, the two fundamental components in the workplace are health and work <sup>[20]</sup>. Illness has also been discovered as one of the most occurring factors that caused the absence among employees [39]. The physical environment has an impact on the health of the employees but affects absenteeism both directly and indirectly. When the health of employees is affected by indirect absenteeism, it can also be associated with health-related problems, humidity, room temperature and lighting <sup>[6]</sup>.

Globally, absenteeism is a big problem that most countries organizations face and as such cost each country billions of dollars every year. The cost of absenteeism is both financial and non-financial <sup>[34]</sup>. Absenteeism costs affects every sector of business whether it is a public or private sector but especially the public sector. For example, in Canada, absenteeism can cost the government approximately \$871 million in lost wages <sup>[35]</sup> and in Malaysia, absenteeism cost can cause 2.7 million ringgits <sup>[6]</sup>. The annual cost associated with absenteeism varies for different organizations and may have the largest loss among employees who are professionals <sup>[19]</sup>. Hence, the stated factors above and as shown in Figure 1 are posited to affect employee absenteeism among frontline healthcare workers. They are therefore postulated as the principal factors affecting employee absenteeism among frontline healthcare workers.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional study design and a simple random sampling technique to collect data from frontline healthcare workers in selected hospitals in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research instrument used for this study was an online questionnaire where 350 respondents deemed usable. The service recovery performance model by Boshoff and Allen (2000) was the adopted model for this study and the Steers and Rhodes Diagnostic Model of Employee Attendance (1990) was used as the theory for the research

study. The model and the theory adopted was used to explain the theoretical framework of this study. A proper consent of the participants was sought before the commencement of data collection stating that this research was clearly and solely for academic purposes. Data collected was analyzed using a descriptive and inferential statistics.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Sociodemographic Result of Respondents

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents of this study. The description of the sample in Table 1 indicated that 82 (23.4%), 130 (37.1%), 102 (29.1%), and 36 (10.4%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and >50 years, respectively. Most of the respondents were females 201 (57.4%) while 149 (42.6%) were male respondents. Out of 350 (100.0%) respondents, only 188 (53.7%) were married. Majority of the respondents 179 (51.1%) had a college or university degree while 122 (34.9%) had a postgraduate degree. The major work experience indicated by the respondents ranged from 6-10 years 204 (58.3%) and 0-5 years 84 (24.0%). Furthermore, the findings from this sociodemographic profile also indicated the monthly salary and working hours of the study's respondents. The sample in Table 1 showed that most of the respondents 334 (95.4%) worked for 5-10 hours per day.

**Table 1:** Socio-demographic profile of respondents.

No.	Socio-demography variable	N	%
1	<b>Age</b>		
	20-29	82	23.4
	30-39	130	37.1
	40-49	102	29.1
	>50	36	10.4
2	<b>Gender</b>		
	Female	201	57.4
	Male	149	42.6
3	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Single	119	34.0
	Married	188	53.7
	Separated	18	5.1
	Widow	10	2.9
	Widower	15	4.3
4	<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
	High School	6	1.7
	College/University	179	51.1
	Postgraduate	122	34.9
	Professional	43	12.3
5	<b>Working Experience</b>		
	0-5 years	84	24.0
	6-10 years	204	58.3
	11-15 years	51	14.6
	16-20 years	6	1.7
	21-19 years	5	1.4
6	<b>Working Hour</b>		
	1-5 hours	16	4.6
	5-10 hours	334	95.4
7	<b>Professional Category</b>		
	Doctor	147	42.0
	Nurse	203	58.0

### 3.2 Research Study Reliability Test Result

The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for this research study constructs were computed using

SmartPLS. The reliability test conducted for this research study as shown in Table 2 using a Cronbach's alpha and a composite reliability indicated that all the variables (intention to resign, stress, health, family, working environment, job performance and cost of absenteeism) are highly reliable, having coefficient alpha values of 0.94, 0.78, 0.82, 0.76, 0.78, 0.81, and 0.70 respectively, and exceeding the threshold level of  $> 0.700$  [25]; while also exceeding the minimum recommended threshold level for composite reliability of  $> 0.700$  [33]. Hence, all the variables of study showed a range of good and reliable coefficient alpha value and composite reliability.

**Table 2: Research Study Reliability Test Result**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability
Intention to resign	0.94	0.96
Stress	0.78	0.85
Health	0.82	0.84
Family	0.76	0.89
Working Environment	0.78	0.85
Job Performance	0.81	0.87
Cost of absenteeism	0.70	0.81

### 3.3 Path Coefficient

In testing the hypotheses outlined for this study, the path coefficient analysis was employed. Employing this analysis displayed the relationship between the variables of study [15]. The standardised  $\beta$  in the multiple regression analysis is similar in path coefficient of SEM-PLS. Bootstrapping was done to check the significance of the path coefficients in the study. So, by employing the use of PLS Bootstrap technique, the value of  $\beta$  was checked to observe the proposed hypotheses in the structural model. Past studies

have reported that the path coefficient value must be at least 0.1 to account for a particular effect in the model [15].

So, from the further assessment of the goodness fit to test which hypothesis was significant in relation to this study, it was discovered that the critical success factors had a significant relationship with the intention to resign of employees ( $\beta = -0.408$ ,  $t = 8.226$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hence, H1 was supported. Secondly, the findings of the study revealed job performance to have a significant relationship with intention to resign ( $\beta = -0.172$ ,  $t = 2.956$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hence, H2 was supported. Also, mediation analysis was performed to ascertain the mediating role of job performance. The result revealed a significant ( $p < .05$ ) mediating role of job performance ( $\beta = -0.075$ ,  $t = 2.699$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ) relationship between the critical success factors of study and the intention to resign. Thirdly, the findings of the study revealed the cost of absenteeism to have a significant relationship with intention to resign ( $\beta = -0.195$ ,  $t = 4.709$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hence, H3 was supported. The findings of the study revealed critical success factors to have a significant relationship with job performance ( $\beta = 0.436$ ,  $t = 8.379$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hence, H4 was supported.

Mediation analysis was performed to estimate the mediating role of job performance on the critical success factors and intention to resign. The results of the study showed job performance was found to mediate a significant relationship between the critical success factors and the intention to resign ( $\beta = -0.074$ ,  $t = 2.699$ ,  $p < .001$ ), hence, H5 was supported; and lastly, moderation analysis was performed to ascertain the moderating role of cost of absenteeism. The result revealed a significant ( $p < .05$ ) moderating effect of cost of absenteeism ( $\beta = 0.176$ ,  $t = 3.763$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) on the intention to resign, hence, H6 was supported.

**Table 3: Path Coefficient**

Hypothesis Statement (Relationship)	OS	SM	SD	t	P Values	Results
CSF -> Intention to resign	-0.408	-0.408	0.05	8.226	0.000	Significant
CSF -> Job Performance	0.436	0.438	0.052	8.379	0.000	Significant
Cost of absenteeism -> Intention to resign	-0.195	-0.201	0.041	4.709	0.000	Significant
Job performance -> Intention to resign	-0.172	-0.169	0.058	2.956	0.003	Significant
Moderating effect 1 -> Intention to resign	0.176	0.181	0.047	3.763	0.000	Significant
CSF -> Job Performance -> Intention to resign	-0.075	-0.074	0.028	2.699	0.007	Significant

### 4. Discussion

Employee absenteeism has remained a burden in human resource management [4], hence this study examined if there was a significant relationship between the critical success factors of study and employee absenteeism. The result of this study showed a negative significant relationship between the critical success factors and employee absenteeism which is consistent with other studies. This implies that although employees perceived their work to be challenging, it was still not enough reason for them to be absent and resign from their work.

Similarly, previous studies have found some critical success factors such as stress, family, health, and work environment to have a significant relationship with employee absenteeism [40, 16, 43, 4]. Conversely, other studies have argued no significant relationship existing between the critical success factors and employee absenteeism. These studies have reported no significant relationships between health, family, and employee absenteeism [11, 52].

The performance of employees is very important in every organization as it has the capacity to determine the success

of an organization. Hence, this study examined if there was a significant relationship between job performance and employee absenteeism. The result of this study showed a significant relationship between job performance and employee absenteeism. This is in conjunction with previous studies that agreed that organizations that experience good employee performance usually have a good service recovery system and has the tendency to enhance the productivity of employees [45, 50]. However, in contrast to the findings of this study, other studies have shown that there is no significant relationship between turnover intentions and the performance of employees [44].

The performance of employees in their organizations can be affected by several factors which is why this study examined if there is a significant relationship between the critical success factors and job performance. The result of this study showed a significant relationship between the critical success factors and job performance, stating factors such as stress, family, health, and work environment to influence the performance of frontline healthcare workers [14, 38, 36, 5]. This study further examined whether job



performance mediated a relationship between the critical success factors and the intention to resign. The findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between the variables. Employees who have better performance are said to be unwilling to resign from their workplace <sup>[47]</sup>. Hence, another study has confirmed job performance as a mediator that significantly impacts critical success factors and employee absenteeism <sup>[37]</sup>. However, in contrast to the findings of this study, another study demonstrated that job satisfaction was a good and positive mediating variable for critical success factors and employee absenteeism outcome, as his study showed a positive mediation effect with job satisfaction <sup>[43]</sup>.

Employee absenteeism when not managed appropriately by organizations can affect the performance of employees and can lead to consequential consequences which could be direct or indirect costs. As such, this study investigated if there was a significant relationship between the cost of absenteeism and employee absenteeism. Productivity losses has been characterized to be absenteeism and presenteeism to stress at work that is estimated at 195 Swiss francs per person and month <sup>[9]</sup>. The result of this study showed a significant relationship between the cost of absenteeism and employee absenteeism. The cost of absenteeism moderated a direct effect on employee absenteeism outcome. Hence, the moderating effect of this study showed a positive significant moderating relationship with employee absenteeism outcome.

The result of this study further revealed that the cost of absenteeism showed a strong moderating positive relationship between the critical success factors and the employee absenteeism outcome, the intention to resign. This means that the cost of absenteeism is the push factor or booster between the critical success factors, job performance, and the intention to resign. The higher the cost of absenteeism, the higher the intention to resign. The strength of the relationship obtained in this study was increasingly strong, hence, an increase in the intention to resign among employees in an organization can impact the productivity, profitability, performance, customer satisfaction (in the case of this study patient satisfaction) and success of the organization, and as such, might be very costly to conscript new employees in the organization <sup>[13]</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

Organizations experience different factors that cause their employees to be absent and resign from work. The positivity of these factors depends on the nature of the organizations and nation. The objective of this study was to investigate the critical success factors that affected employee absenteeism among the frontline healthcare workers in Lagos State. The findings of the research study led the researcher to answer the specific objectives of this study.

The findings of this study divulged a negative significant relationship between the critical success factors and employee absenteeism outcome, a negative significant relationship between job performance and employee absenteeism outcome, a negative significant relationship between cost of absenteeism and employee absenteeism outcome, a positive significant relationship between the critical success factors and job performance, a negative significant mediating relationship of critical success factors and employee absenteeism outcome through job performance, and a positive moderating effect of cost of

absenteeism on employee absenteeism outcome.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher would suggest the need for the management to put the necessary interventions that would encourage, keep the employees going and resilient despite the challenges they might be facing in the workplace to help boost their productivity, quality of service to patients, and promote their organization to avoid the current shortage of frontline healthcare workers that is already affecting the delivery of quality care and cost.

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