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Katarzyna SZYMAŃSKA[1], Mikołaj ZAJĄC[2], Małgorzata SPYCHAŁA[3], Maciej SZAFRAŃSKI[4]

THE ROLE OF MANAGERS IN MANAGING EMPLOYEE SICK LEAVE

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The aim of this article is to analyse managerial actions that contribute to reducing employee sickness absence and to identify the competencies necessary for effectively managing this phenomenon within an organisation. The analysis was conducted using data obtained from an information system and also the results of an audit carried out in a manufacturing enterprise. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were collected from payroll systems and the Conperio Absence Dashboard tool. The qualitative component was based on a case study involving 52 individuals in managerial positions, including company managers, department heads, and team leaders. Managers' effectiveness in reducing sickness absence depends both on the organizational tools applied and on their competencies, particularly their analytical and interpersonal skills. The most significant factors include regular return-to-work interviews, systematic data analysis, and consistent communication of managerial expectations regarding absence. The article focuses on the practical role of managers in sickness absence management. It highlights the importance of an HR tool used for monitoring and analysing absence, and additionally identifies a research gap concerning the mechanisms through which managers influence employee absence levels.

Keywords: sick leave, managing employee sick leave, role of a manager, manager competencies

1 Poznan University of Technology, Faculty of Engineering Management.
2 Conperio sp. z o.o.
3 Poznan University of Technology, Faculty of Engineering Management. ORCID: 0000-0003-1471-5536.
4 Poznan University of Technology, Faculty of Engineering Management. ORCID: 0000-0002-4281-9845.

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee sickness absence is a regular feature of organizational functioning and represents a significant challenge, regardless of company size or industry (Čikeš et al., 2018). A high level of absence, particularly sudden and unplanned absence, directly affects process continuity, reduces work efficiency, and generates costs (Kim, Garman, 2003). Research indicates that long-term absence reduces enterprises' operating revenues and productivity in a non-linear manner (Aarstad, Kvitastein, 2023). This means that as absence increases, organizational performance does not decline merely proportionally; rather, the negative effect gradually intensifies. Each subsequent increase in absence removes from work processes any employees of growing value to the organization, thereby accelerating the loss of value-creation potential.

At the macroeconomic level, sickness absence reduces economic productivity, increases expenditure on benefits, and places an additional burden on the healthcare system. According to the Polish Social Insurance Institution report Sickness Absence in 2024, total expenditure on sickness absence in Poland increased by 16.1% in 2024 compared with 2023, and amounted to PLN 31,039.7 million.

The causes of excessive absence are multidimensional. They include individual factors, such as health status, motivation, and productivity; organizational factors, including working conditions, monitoring procedures, and process stability; economic factors, related to the costs of replacements and reduced efficiency; systemic factors, resulting from regulations and the functioning of the benefits system; and psychosocial factors, such as stress, occupational burnout, and team relationships. Such a complex issue requires managers to adopt a systemic approach and assume an active role in managing employee sick leave (Striker, 2013).

The importance of absence management is growing in view of demographic and health-related trends, such as population ageing, the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, and high levels of stress. Maintaining organizational effectiveness requires managers not only to plan resources effectively but also to reduce the scale and consequences of absence by implementing appropriate strategies and data-monitoring tools.

Although many studies have examined the causes of absence, less attention has been paid to how managers use HR tools, analyze data, and influence attendance within teams. The research gap also concerns managerial competencies and their importance for performing functions within the absence management system.

The aim of this article is to analyze managerial actions that contribute to reducing employee sickness absence and to identify the competencies necessary for effectively managing this phenomenon within an organization. The analysis is based on data from an information system and an audit conducted in a manufacturing enterprise, supplemented by survey research among managerial staff. Particular attention is paid to the use of data to support managerial decision-making and early intervention.

A limitation of the study is that the analysis covered a single company and a group of 52 managers, which limits the generalizability of the results. However, this points to the need for comparative research across different industries and types of organizations.

Further research should include qualitative data, such as interviews with managers and employees, to better understand the motivations and causes of absenteeism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Absence is defined as an employee's failure to be present at work during the time when they are expected to perform their duties in accordance with a schedule or work plan (Lipovac, 2020). Cascio (2001) defines it as any situation in which an employee does not report to work or leaves the workplace when they are expected to be present. Absence is most commonly classified as planned or unplanned, and each of these categories can further be analyzed as voluntary or involuntary (Belita et al., 2013). Planned absences, such as annual leave or training, are known to the employer in advance, thus allowing replacements to be organized. Unplanned absences occur when the employer expects the employee to be present, but the employee does not appear at work (Beil-Hildebrand, 1996). Involuntary absence results from causes beyond the employee's control, whereas voluntary absence is associated with the employee's decision to remain away from work.

Sickness absence is a natural and justified phenomenon, since it enables employees to recover and return to full functioning. However, a problem arises when its frequency becomes excessive or when sick leave is used for reasons unrelated to health (Striker, 2016). In practice, a distinction is made between natural absence, associated with seasonality and illness, and occupational absence, including the "grey area", referring to leave taken or used for purposes other than those intended (de Paiva et al., 2021).

Sickness absence in the workplace is a multifactorial phenomenon influenced by employee characteristics, organizational conditions, and social factors (Goszczyńska, 2019). It encompasses not only physical absence due to illness but also forms part of a broader indicator reflecting both health-related and non-health-related determinants (Melchior et al., 2005). Related concepts include presenteeism and leaveism. Presenteeism refers to attending work despite health problems. In the American context, emphasis is placed on reduced productivity resulting from poor health, whereas the European perspective focuses on attending work despite illness (Wężyk, Merecz, 2013). Leaveism, introduced by Hesketh and Cooper (2014), refers to the use of leave or time off to catch up on work or to recover from illness.

The literature identifies three main groups of factors influencing sickness absence: individual, organizational, and social. Individual factors include gender, age, socio-economic status, and psychological characteristics. Organizational factors encompass company policies, working conditions, workload, organizational justice, organizational size,

and location. Social factors include legal regulations, physicians' practices, monitoring of sick leave, and unemployment levels. Awareness of these determinants is essential, as it enables managers to conduct a more comprehensive analysis and develop more effective absence management policies (Pothuraju, 2019).

Absence is a phenomenon that organizations cannot completely eliminate, but they can manage and control it (Lipovac, 2020). Therefore, absence management constitutes an important strategic activity within human resource management. While often associated with HR departments, direct supervisors play a key role. These are responsible for the practical implementation of absence policies, and their attitudes influence the culture of attendance and non-attendance within the organization (Striker, 2016). Managers face a dilemma: on the one hand, they aim to maximize productivity, which may foster presenteeism; on the other, they should promote health-oriented behaviors and encourage employees to take sick leave when genuinely ill.

Absence management is a continuous process carried out by HR in cooperation with direct supervisors. Managerial actions have a direct impact on absence behavior. Roelen (2010) emphasizes that there is no single leadership style that is effective in all situations. Managers should adapt their approach to the employee's level of readiness, understood as a combination of ability and willingness to perform tasks. Tailoring communication to the employee's situation reduces conflicts regarding the legitimacy of absence. Managers, together with HR and senior management, should establish acceptable absence levels, monitor them, and analyze their causes (Gajdzik, 2014).

Studies conducted in the healthcare sector indicate that deficiencies in leadership quality increase the risk of sickness absence, whereas a leadership style based on support, fairness, and reliability has a protective effect (Stengård et al., 2021). Qualitative research also confirms the role of line managers in monitoring absence patterns and initiating discussions with employees in cases of recurring short-term sick leave. The effectiveness of these actions depends primarily on communication and analytical competencies (Rasmussen et al., 2025).

In examining the scope and subject of sickness absence management, the European Economic and Social Committee distinguished three levels of such management (Kozioł et al., 2016):

- basic level – management is limited to preventing workplace accidents and occupational diseases and is primarily driven by legal regulations in this area, the activities of primary healthcare services, and formal requirements concerning the analysis of the level and structure of sickness absence within the enterprise;
- broader approach – this encompasses preventing all work-related ailments, including the provision of additional health services, as well as organizing rest and recovery during working time;
- most comprehensive approach – includes preventing health problems that in the long term result in sickness absence or reduced quality and productivity of work. At this level, attention is also paid to ensuring good mental and physical health through

various forms of health promotion, enhancing employee well-being, and maintaining a work–life balance.

The process of managing sickness absence in an organization is a multi-stage mechanism that is essential for ensuring operational continuity and the effectiveness of HR activities. Its objective is not only to document and account for sick leave but also to implement preventive measures aimed at reducing both the frequency and duration of employee absence. A contemporary approach covers the entire process, from reporting absence to initiatives that support employee health and well-being.

Based on a review of the literature and empirical research, a framework for sickness absence management within an organization was developed (fig. 1). The first

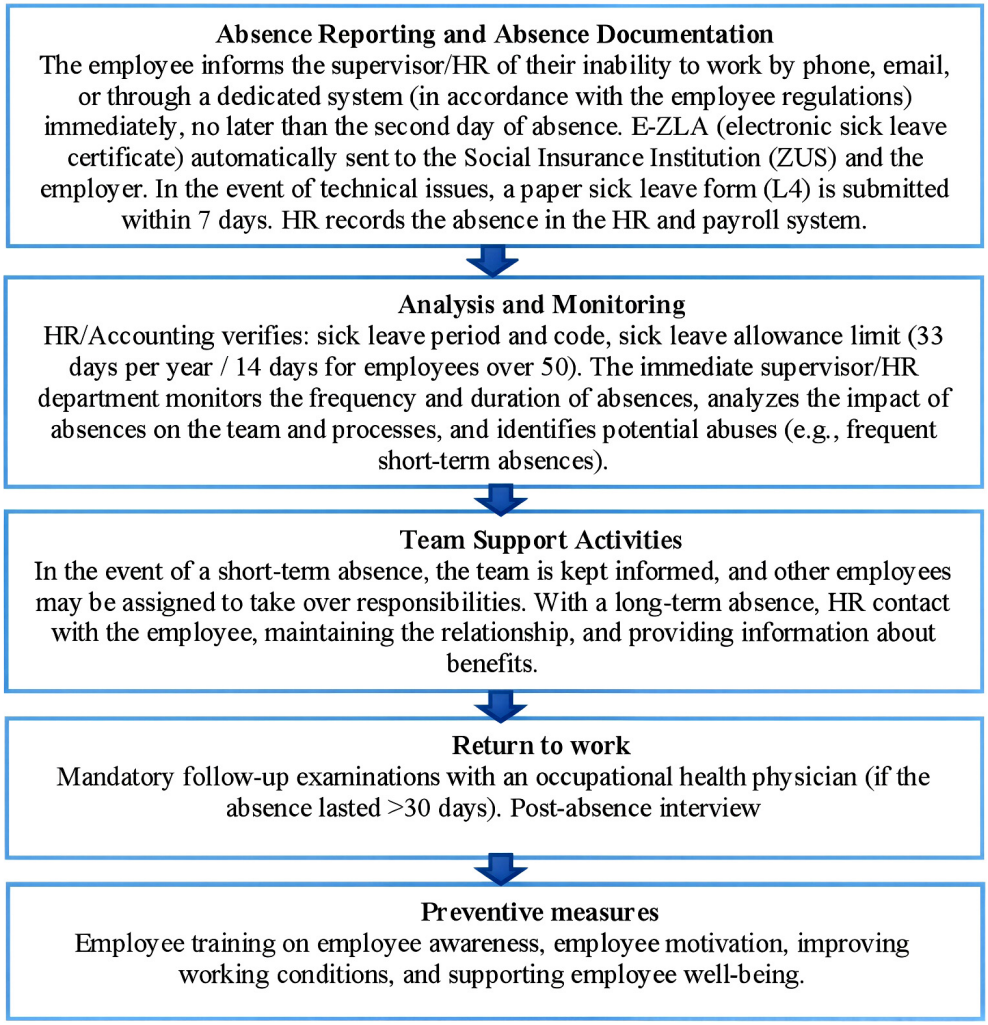

Fig. 1. Sickness absence management diagram (own study)

stage involves the prompt reporting of an employee's absence (in accordance with § 2(2) of the Regulation on the justification of absences from work and the granting of leave), typically via telephone, email, or an HR system. This enables effective work planning and minimizes the impact of the absence on how the team functions. The next stage involves documenting the sick leave, usually in electronic form (e-ZLA), which is registered by the HR department in the personnel system, allowing for further administrative processing and statistical analysis.

The next stage involves formal control, including the verification of the duration of sick leave and the medical indications specified in the certificate. This stage enables the identification of errors in the documentation. Subsequently, direct supervisors, in cooperation with the HR department, analyze and monitor absence, paying particular attention to recurring short-term absences. Regular monitoring forms the basis for corrective actions as well as for the development of reports and key performance indicators (KPIs) in the area of human resource management.

The next stage focuses on activities supporting both the employee and the team. In the case of short-term absences, maintaining the flow of information and flexibly adjusting duties are crucial. For long-term absences, HR maintains contact with the employee, providing information on benefits, return-to-work options, and organizational support. After an absence exceeding 30 days, occupational health examinations are conducted, and the return to work is preceded by a return-to-work interview, where the reasons for the absence and preventive measures are discussed.

The final stage involves preventive actions aimed at reducing absence in the long term through the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, workplace ergonomics, psychological support, and initiatives to improve working conditions. Effective prevention requires cooperation between HR and managerial staff, resulting in reduced absence, increased employee satisfaction, and a strengthened organizational culture.

The role of a manager encompasses behaviors, decisions, and ways of influencing both the organizational environment and people. As noted by M. Mroziewski (2005), a role can be defined as "a set of expectations and obligatory patterns of behavior associated with a given position". Managers play a key role in managing employee sickness absence by creating a supportive work environment, implementing consistent absence-related procedures, and taking into account the psychological and emotional factors influencing absence. It is essential that managers are aware of legal and ethical considerations and focus on improving working conditions in order to reduce absence rates and promote employee well-being.

Figure 2 presents the process of managing employee sickness absence within an organization, as well as the role of the manager at each stage of this process. The objective of these actions is to ensure the continuity of team operations, minimize the negative impact of absence on organizational effectiveness, and implement preventive measures that support employee health and engagement.

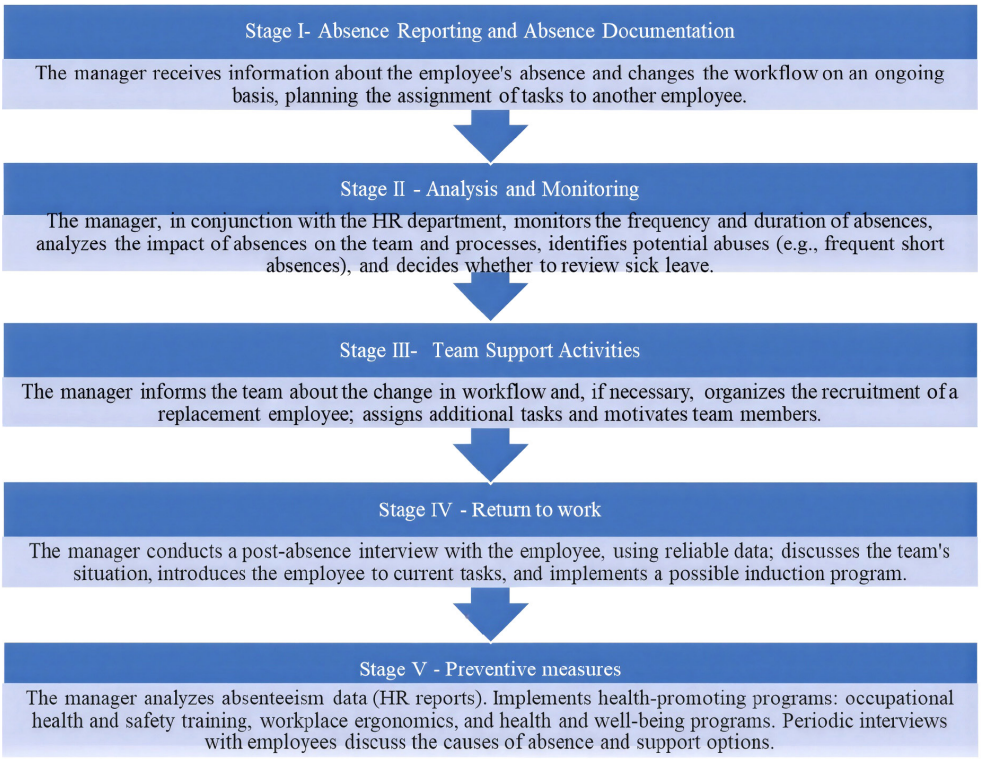

Fig. 2. The role of the manager at the individual stages of managing employee sickness absence (own study)

The process of managing employee absence encompasses activities from the initial reporting of absence, through analysis and monitoring, to supporting the employee upon their return to work and implementing preventive measures. The role of the manager is central: they are responsible both for the ongoing organization of work and for cooperation with the HR department in analyzing absence, communicating with the team, and fostering a work environment conducive to employee health and engagement. The entire process contributes to the development of an organizational culture based on responsibility, transparency, and concern for employee well-being.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The study was based on a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, and employed a case study of a light manufacturing enterprise employing between 1,000 and 2,000 workers, located in a small town in Poland outside special economic zones. Anonymized data were obtained from the Conperio Absence Dashboard tool. The analysis was conducted in two stages: first, based on

source data extracted from the system, and second, based on data obtained through in-depth interviews conducted for the period from October 2023 to September 2024.

The aim of the analysis was to assess whether the absence rate remained at a natural level, identify factors influencing its magnitude, estimate the scale of the "grey area", and indicate areas requiring interventions to reduce absence. The study and interviews also aimed to examine absence management practices, identify risk factors, and determine the competencies required by managers to effectively manage sickness absence.

Quantitative data were derived from the payroll system and the Conperio Absence Dashboard, which enables real-time monitoring of absences and analysis across departments, teams, and managers. The data collected included the number of absence days, employee allocation to departments and teams, and the assignment of absences to specific managers and team leaders. The data were standardized and segmented according to organizational level, managerial responsibility, and type of absence.

The survey analysis covered responses from 52 individuals in managerial positions, supplemented by interviews with representatives of HR, occupational health and safety (OHS), and production management. The survey was divided into two management levels: team leaders (32 individuals) and managers/supervisors (20 individuals). Microsoft Excel and the Conperio Absence Dashboard were used for processing and analyzing the data. The following indicators were applied: overall absence rate, absence rate excluding pregnancy-related absence, estimated rate of non-health-related absences, hospitalization-related absence rate, absence rate related to medical recommendations, average duration of absence per employee, and average absence rate by department.

The integration of system-based data and survey responses enabled a comprehensive analysis of absence, both in terms of its scale and its managerial and organizational determinants. Access to reliable data makes it possible to assess the current situation, forecast the consequences of decisions, and implement solutions tailored to the actual needs of the organization.

4. DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis indicates a significant relationship between access to data and the effectiveness of return-to-work interviews. Although such interviews are widely conducted, they do not produce the expected outcomes without support from reliable information on the scale and nature of absence. Data provide context, increase objectivity, and enhance the likelihood that these interviews become a genuine management tool rather than a mere formality.

In the organizations studied, return-to-work interviews do not fully perform their intended function due to limited access to data, a lack of systemic consistency, insufficient managerial competencies, and low levels of employee trust. Their

effectiveness increases only when they are part of a comprehensive absence management policy that includes access to data, health support measures, motivational tools, and proper managerial training.

The study confirms that sickness absence destabilizes organizational functioning – it reduces productivity, disrupts operations, generates costs, and negatively affects team morale. Existing management procedures, including return-to-work interviews, are perceived as insufficient, particularly in the context of systemic conditions such as easy access to sick leave and the lack of coherent motivational solutions.

A key limitation in effective absence management is the competency gap among managerial staff. Many managers have been promoted based on operational performance rather than their ability to manage people, which results in deficiencies in communication, motivation, and analytical skills necessary for conducting constructive discussions. Additionally, managers often lack full access to data or the ability to interpret it correctly, leading to corrective actions being taken intuitively rather than on the basis of a reliable diagnosis.

The findings highlight the need for an integrated absence management policy that combines control mechanisms, health support, organizational motivation, and managerial competencies. Only within such a framework can return-to-work interviews become an effective tool for reducing sickness absence and improving overall organizational performance.

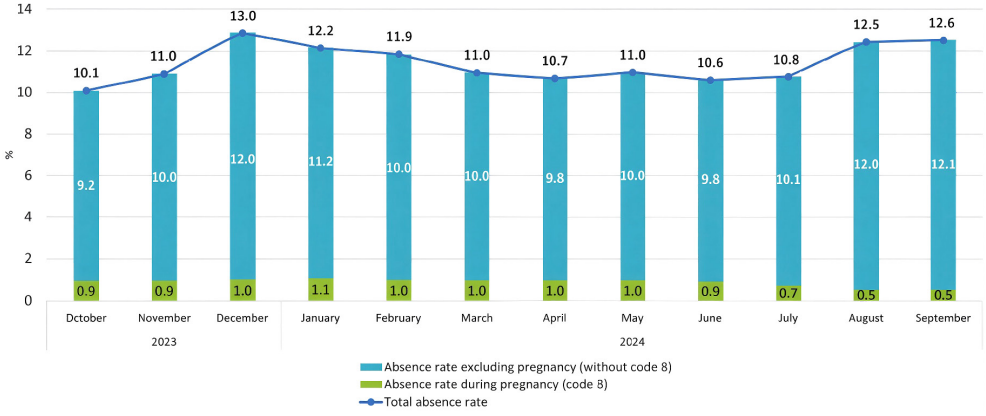

Chart 1. Absenteeism rate by structure (own study based on data from Conperio)

The data analysis provided a comprehensive picture of sickness absence in the company studied. The results were presented in the form of sickness absence rates for the entire organization and comparisons between departments and managers. The total absenteeism rate indicated that the average level of absenteeism during the study period was 11.5%, while excluding pregnancy-related absences, it was 10.6%. The sickness absence curve shows a seasonal pattern – an increase in autumn and

winter, a decrease in spring and summer, and a subsequent increase at the end of summer. The hospitalization-related absence rate was 1.15%, representing over 7% of all sick leave during the study period. The average annual rate of absenteeism in the "gray zone" – i.e., sick leave taken for reasons other than ill health or used inappropriately – was estimated at 3.28%. However, this value is not constant throughout the year, and fluctuations are visible in the graph below. The gray area is primarily found among sick leave certificates marked with the indication "2 – the patient can walk" and care, as well as some sick leave certificates marked with the code "1 – the patient should lie down", due to the issuance of sick leave certificates with an indication for bed rest during teleconsultation. According to estimates, sick leave unrelated to employee health conditions accounted for an average of 31% of sick leave during the period under review.

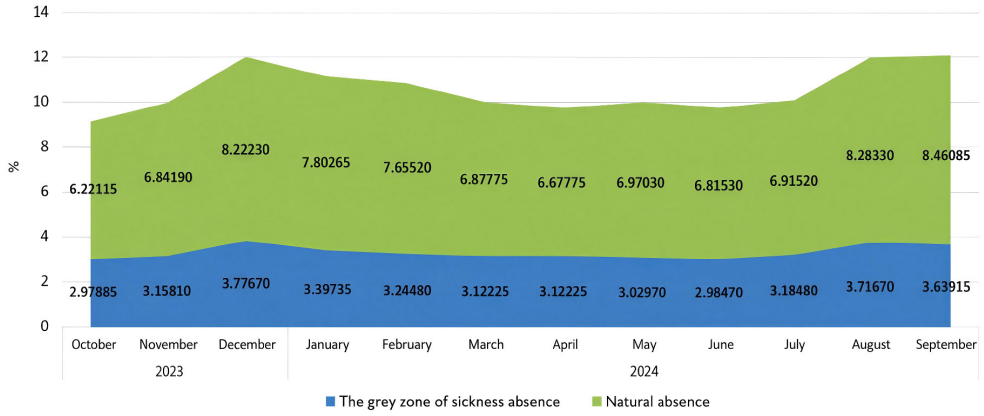

Chart 2. Estimated absenteeism "gray zone" (own study based on data from Conperio)

During the period under review, there were an average of 3.6 sick leave days per employee. The average duration of sick leave was 10.6 days. The extremely low turnover rate indicates a lack of perceived risk of job loss among employees. However, the attractiveness of an employer does not stem from its competitiveness in the labor market, but rather from limited professional alternatives. Long-term employees often have no real opportunities to change jobs, while the younger generation is not interested in employment in conditions that deviate from their expectations, both in environmental and financial terms. Excessive staff stability creates additional challenges, as employees accustomed to established company rules demonstrate a high level of resistance to implemented organizational changes. The employment structure, dominated by long-serving and elderly individuals, suggests a further increase in absenteeism in the coming years. Two main reasons for this phenomenon can be identified. Firstly, it is an objective factor resulting from the natural deterioration of health with age. Secondly, a significant decline in work

motivation among long-term employees stems from a persistent belief that there are no real consequences for counterproductive behaviors, such as overusing sick leave.

Comparing the average absenteeism rate by department revealed significant differences in absenteeism levels. The highest absenteeism rates were recorded in direct production departments, where physical work requires process continuity; each absent employee requires the team to shift or make up their workload. The total sick leave rate was 12.1% (11.3% excluding pregnancy-related absences). Administrative and HR departments had the lowest absenteeism rates (4.7%; 3.2% excluding pregnancy-related absences). This stems from the fact that these employees avoid taking sick leave because each absence generates a backlog and requires subsequent catch-up work. The nature of office work means that responsibilities neither disappear nor can they be fully performed by others, making the decision to take sick leave a last resort. The rate for indirect production workers was 8.1% (6.7% excluding pregnancy-related sick leave).

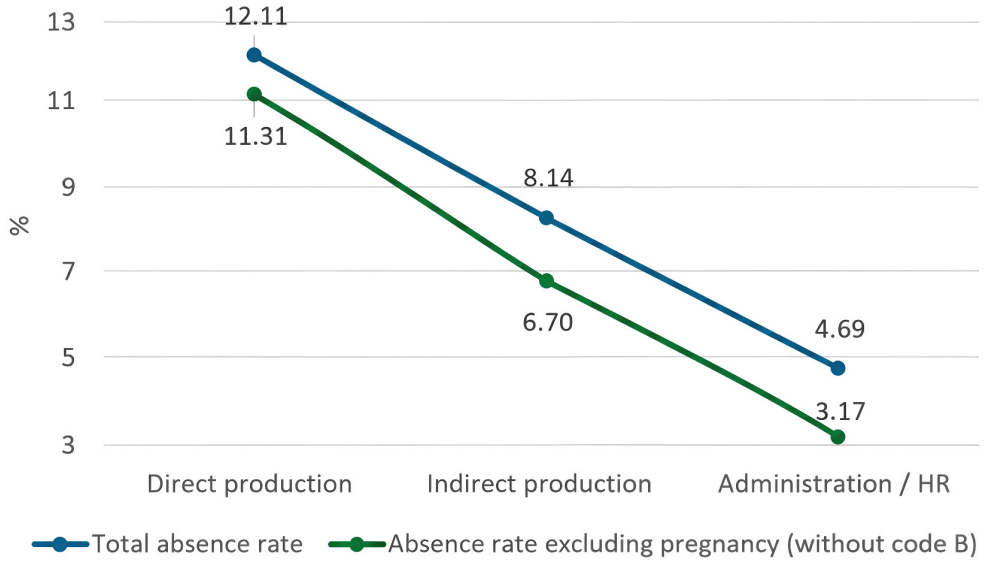

Chart 3. Profile of sickness absence rates by department (own study based on data from Conperio)

From the point of view of the number of competences mentioned by the respondents, there is a large predominance of social competences (21) in relation to technical competences (4). However, leaders must be well equipped with both technological and interpersonal skills. Competencies related to team management, communication, and adaptation to change predominate, suggesting that organizations place great emphasis on flexibility, the ability to work in groups and the ability to manage diverse, dynamic environments. While technical competencies such as AI and digitalization are becoming increasingly important, they are less widely

appreciated among the surveyed respondents, which may be due to the fact that the surveyed group mostly does not see them as crucial for their daily work.

Analysis of the survey results conducted among supervisors indicates a number of factors perceived as important in the context of employee health and organizational functioning. The most frequently cited health threats included inappropriate working conditions – particularly temperature and drafts – as well as an intense work pace, musculoskeletal strain, and stress. Respondents identified temperature and drafts as the most significant factors (tab. 1).

Table 1. Factors important in the context of employee health

Factor	Overall assessment by supervisors	Team Leaders	Managers/ supervisors
Environmental work conditions (temperature, drafts)	Most often indicated as the main health threat	High problem severity	High problem severity
Pace of work/body overload	Perceived as a significant threat	Emphasizes impact on health and absenteeism	Also recognizes the problem, but in a general sense
Stress	Indicated as an important factor	Daily experience (contact with employees)	More general, strategic analysis
Faulty/inappropriate work tools	Varied assessment	56% believe they have a negative impact on health	60% believe they have no significant impact
Sick leave abuse	Divided opinions	74% say it does not occur	50% believe it exists
Sick leave in the absence of vacation	Some supervisors recognize the phenomenon	41% do not recognize the problem	More often recognize such situations
Lateness to work	Phenomenon perceived to varying degrees	Rather marginal	More often raised as a problem

Source: own study based on data from Conperio.

Another important aspect of the study was the assessment of supervisors' competencies in monitoring sickness absence. As many as 72% of respondents declared they had knowledge of how to calculate absenteeism rates within their organizations. However, it is worth noting that access to data on absenteeism rates was limited; 66% of supervisors only have access to information regarding the number of sick days and sick leave for individual employees in their team, while half of the respondents had no data on the absenteeism rate for the entire company.

The study results indicate significant differences in the approaches of the two groups to the issues analyzed. Team leaders were more willing to provide answers, which can be explained by the fact that the questions directly related to their daily duties and operational issues. They were also more likely to cite difficulties related to current work organization, for example, 56% of leaders believed that faulty or inappropriate work tools could negatively impact employee health, while 60% of managers believed this factor had no significant impact. Differences are also evident in employee perceptions: as many as 74% of leaders claimed that employees do not abuse sick leave, while half of managers believed this problem actually exists. Another discrepancy is evident in the issue of taking sick leave when leave is not granted; 41% of leaders do not notice this phenomenon, while managers are more likely to notice it. A similar situation applies to the assessment of the scale of lateness to work. In summary, team leaders are more focused on day-to-day, operational challenges and direct experiences with employees, while managers take a more general and strategic view of the situation. This leads to differences in problem perception, but both perspectives – operational and strategic – complement each other, resulting in a more comprehensive picture of the organization's functioning.

In the survey, the majority of supervisors (65%) admitted that they did not conduct absence follow-up interviews, and among those who did, not all considered them a significant absence management tool. Managers who failed to recognize the impact of these discussions argued primarily that if the employee was truly ill, the sick leave was used anyway, and no discussion would change this. They pointed out that in cases of illness, rest and treatment were paramount, and the decision to issue sick leave was made by a physician, whom the supervisor had no right to question. There was also an opinion that some managers did not conduct discussions regarding absenteeism in their careers because they had not experienced employee abuse of sick leave. Another area of analysis – assessing the impact of sick leave on organizational functioning – revealed that not all supervisors were aware of the consequences of absence. Some respondents did not perceive the significant impact of absence on team task completion or production plans, while others acknowledged that absenteeism could cause disorganization, the need to reassign employees, and a decrease in productivity, although they did not consider this to be a problem requiring intervention. A few indicated that unjustified sick leave negatively impacted team morale. Further analysis revealed that management practices have a significant impact on absenteeism levels. Teams in which supervisors regularly conducted follow-up interviews and monitored and analyzed employee sickness absence on an ongoing basis had significantly lower absence rates compared to teams in which such activities were sporadic or nonexistent.

Analysis of teams with varying levels of absenteeism revealed that consistent managerial actions played a key role in effectively managing sickness absence. In teams with low absenteeism, managers regularly conducted follow-up interviews, monitored absence rates in the Conperio Absence Dashboard system, and took

preventive measures. In teams with high absenteeism, these actions were infrequent or haphazard, and the lack of consistent policies contributed to employees interpreting the manager's lack of response as tacit consent to inappropriate behavior. Participative leadership, based on support and open communication, was associated with lower absenteeism, while an autocratic or solely controlling style correlated with increased absenteeism. Systematic follow-up interviews, monitoring, and preventive actions increased employee support, reducing the abuse of sickness absence.

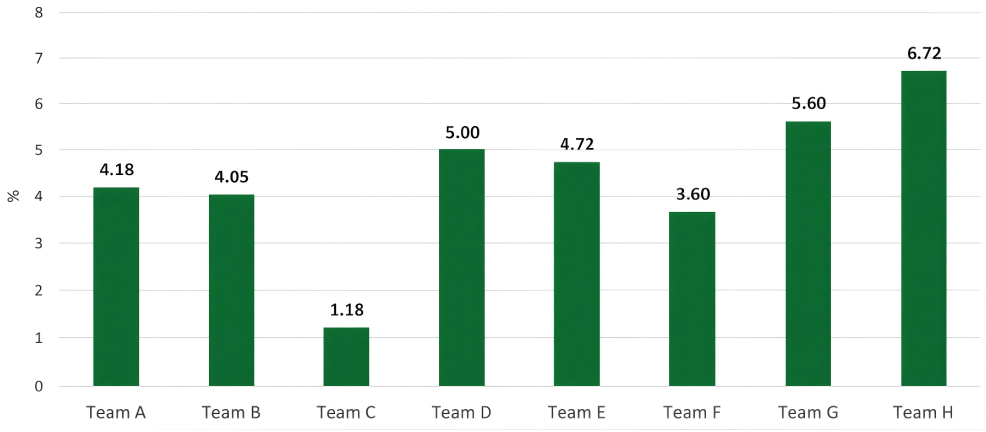

Chart 4. Absenteeism rate broken down by teams (own study based on data from Conperio)

The effectiveness of managers in reducing employee sick leave depends both on the organizational tools available and on their managerial skills, including analytical and interpersonal skills. Among the most effective measures are regular post-absence interviews, which allow for systematic analysis of not only the reasons for absence but also clear communication of the manager's position on absence. Managers agree that it is crucial not only to monitor employee absences and draw conclusions, but above all to conduct interviews with people returning to work and change existing practices in the organization (Skrabulska, 2018). The way in which conversations are conducted influences the employee's perception of their supervisor, and the supervisor's attitude has a significant impact on shaping behavior within the group. Numerous studies indicate that the way managers respond to absences can significantly affect the frequency and length of absences (Armstrong, 2020; Belita, 2013). It is also important to analyze absence data, including not only the recording of sick days, but also the context of absences, such as sick leave immediately before or after vacation, bridging holidays and weekends, or conflict situations that may lead to so-called "retaliatory" dismissals. Systematically tracking such patterns allows managers to make data-driven decisions, plan replacements and work schedules, and take preventive measures, minimizing the negative impact of excessive sick leave on the functioning of the entire team. Absence management includes both preventive and

intervention measures – from creating health policies, through psychological support, to Return to Work (RTW) programs (Szymczak, 2018). Organizational mechanisms such as a system for monitoring and analyzing sick leave, clear policies on absenteeism, employee health support programs, training to develop managerial skills in communication, management, and data analysis, and training to raise managers' awareness of sick leave support managers in effectively managing sick leave. Research by Van Rhenen and co-authors (2007) has shown that training in health conversations, stress recognition, and absence management contributes to a 10-15% reduction in absenteeism over a one-year period. However, the authors point out that these effects only persist if the training is part of the organization's long-term health strategy (Van Rhenen, 2007). The results obtained are largely consistent with the existing literature on the subject, which emphasizes the key role of managers in reducing absenteeism through effective communication and individual support for employees (Kozioł, 2016). However, discrepancies arise in terms of the effectiveness of information systems – some studies suggest that the mere availability of data is not sufficient if managers do not have the appropriate analytical and communication skills. This is confirmed by Rasmussen and his team (2024) conducting qualitative interviews with line managers in the public sector, who stated that managers have access to data on absenteeism but complain about its format, lack of context, and lack of tools for interpretation; they also point to deficits in the analytical and communication skills needed to put the data into practice. The research results presented in the article confirm this thesis, emphasizing the need to integrate training to improve managers' competencies in sick leave monitoring systems.

The analysis carried out in the HR system has several significant limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Although the survey data from 263 supervisors may reflect subjective opinions, they are also a reliable source of information and allow for a credible assessment of the observed trends. Furthermore, the study was a case study and covered only one organization, which limits the possibility of generalizing the conclusions to other industries or organizational structures. Nevertheless, the results obtained may serve as a valuable reference or starting point for other companies that wish to consider similar solutions or approaches. Furthermore, the analysis was limited by the length of the article, which may have affected the scope of the data presented and the detail of the conclusions.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An analysis of sick leave in companies highlights the key role of managers in reducing sick leave among employees. The results of the study indicate that leaders with well-developed managerial skills are more effective at managing absenteeism in their teams. Interpersonal skills, an individual approach to employees, and proactive, data-driven action are particularly important, as these elements significantly

increase the effectiveness of the measures taken. Managers who systematically respond to signs of absenteeism and use the available information are better able to support their employees and minimize the risk of sick leave abuse. Access to analytical tools, such as reports and absence monitoring dashboards, enables rapid identification of risk areas and planning of preventive measures. This allows the organization to respond to potential problems before they become serious, and managers to make decisions based on reliable data. The analysis also shows a clear correlation between working conditions and absenteeism levels. Departments where work is more physically demanding and performed in less comfortable conditions have higher absenteeism rates. This result highlights the need for measures to support employee health and improve workplace ergonomics.

Managers play a key role in managing employee sickness absence, influencing their return to work and the overall performance of the team. Sickness absence significantly reduces the productivity of companies, especially when absent employees have in-depth knowledge of the specifics of the company/task and the work of employees is strongly interlinked (Grinza, Rycx, 2020). The research conducted has deepened our understanding of the role of managers in managing employee sick leave and identified key functions and competencies that influence the effectiveness of measures to reduce sick leave in organizations. The analysis of quantitative data from the HR and payroll system and the dedicated Conperio Absence Dashboard tool, combined with qualitative research conducted among 52 managers and team leaders, provided a comprehensive picture of sick leave in a manufacturing company. The research showed that the effectiveness of managerial actions depends both on the tools used and on analytical and interpersonal skills. Post-absence interviews play a particularly important role, but they are only effective when supported by reliable absence data, as part of a systematic approach to sickness absence management and with appropriate preparation of managers. The analysis also revealed a significant "gray area" of absenteeism – accounting for approximately 31% of all sick leave – which indicates a need to strengthen controls, management training, and standardize procedures related to absenteeism management in the organization. The research findings make an important contribution to the theory of sickness absence management, emphasizing the importance of managerial competence, access to data, and the integration of HR activities with line management. The results can also be applied in a broader context of human resource management, pointing to the need for an integrated approach combining control, health support, and employee motivation. The research confirmed that managers play a key mediating role between HR policy and employee behavior. A limitation of the study is that the analysis covered a single company and a group of 52 managers, which limits the generalizability of the results. However, this points to the need for further comparative research across different industries and types of organizations.

Based on the conclusions of the analysis, several practical recommendations can be formulated. First of all, it is worth investing in training for managers, developing

their skills in absence management, effective communication, and data analysis. At the same time, it is important to systematically use HR data in day-to-day team management. Regular monitoring of sick leave allows for problems to be detected at an early stage, preventive measures to be planned, and operational decisions based on facts rather than intuition. Organizations should also develop a culture of presence and promote health in the workplace. Preventive programs, ergonomic workstations, psychological support, and the promotion of healthy behaviors contribute to reducing absenteeism and increasing employee satisfaction, which translates into savings in operating costs and more efficient processes within the company. Standardizing post-absence interview procedures remains equally important – clear guidelines and regular monitoring of managerial effectiveness ensure a consistent approach and increase the effectiveness of preventive measures.

Further research should include qualitative data, such as interviews with managers and employees, to better understand the motivations and causes of absenteeism. Integrating this information with data from absence monitoring tools will provide a more complete picture of the situation. Cross-industry comparisons will enable the universality of conclusions to be assessed and best practices to be identified in different sectors of the economy. Longitudinal studies analyzing changes in absenteeism over time in response to implemented managerial actions will allow for the assessment of the lasting effectiveness of interventions.

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ROLA MENEDŻERA W ZARZĄDZANIU ABSENCJĄ CHOROBOWĄ PRACOWNIKÓW

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza działań menedżerskich przyczyniających się do redukcji absencji chorobowej pracowników oraz identyfikacja kompetencji niezbędnych do efektywnego zarządzania tym zjawiskiem w organizacji. Analizę przeprowadzono na podstawie danych pochodzących z systemu informatycznego oraz wyników audytu wykonanego w przedsiębiorstwie produkcyjnym. W badaniu zastosowano podejście mieszane, łączące metody ilościowe i jakościowe. Dane ilościowe zebrano z systemów płacowych oraz narzędzia Conperio Absence Dashboard. Komponent jakościowy oparto na studium przypadku z udziałem 52 osób zajmujących stanowiska kierownicze, w tym kierowników firm, kierowników działów i liderów zespołów. Skuteczność menedżerów w redukcji absencji chorobowej zależy zarówno od stosowanych narzędzi organizacyjnych, jak i ich kompetencji, w szczególności umiejętności analitycznych i interpersonalnych. Do najważniejszych czynników należą regularne wywiady dotyczące powrotu do pracy, systematyczna analiza danych oraz konsekwentna komunikacja oczekiwań menedżerów dotyczących absencji.

Artykuł koncentruje się na praktycznej roli menedżerów w zarządzaniu absencją chorobową. Podkreślono w nim znaczenie narzędzia HR służącego do monitorowania i analizowania absencji oraz wskazano lukę w badaniach dotyczących mechanizmów, za pomocą których menedżerowie wpływają na poziom absencji pracowników.

Słowa kluczowe: absencja chorobowa, zarządzanie absencją chorobową pracowników, kompetencje menedżera, rola menedżera