

# The Social Exchange Theory of Absenteeism and its Relevance in Bangladesh: A Theoretical Evaluation

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## Abstract

The absenteeism defined in terms of inability, appropriateness or an unwillingness to work, is a fact of life besides being a universal phenomena and as such a suitable body of literature exists in connection with it. These studies dealt with or reviewed one or other aspects such as the meaning, functions, impact and strategies to deal with the absence phenomena or put it in some theoretical constructs. Many of these studies also pinpointed that there was no effort to put the findings of absenteeism studies in some theoretical construct or what may be called a theory of absenteeism up to 1966. Before that, the rule of thumb approach or consideration of various isolated facts about absence or putting absence within the broader organization theory was the tradition in the discipline. The rule of thumb approach or the consideration of various isolated facts resulted in 'pseudo-theories' specific to absences but unrelated to broader theoretical framework. Thereafter, a number of theories came in focus and the social exchange theory was adjudged to be the most comprehensive and appropriate theory to explain the absence phenomena. This theory was developed by Chadwick-Jones, Brown and Nicholson almost a quarter of a century ago. It appears that the theory has not outlined its utility. This has been shown by the present authors. Based on empirical data, the authors have shown that the theory has relevance in explaining the voluntary absence phenomena. However, they conclude that an amalgam of social exchange theory and process theory giving rise to the social and cultural model is of much relevance to explain both voluntary and involuntary absences in Bangladesh industry. This is the contention of this paper.

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