

*Sick and working: current challenges and emerging directions for future presenteeism research*

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**Sick and working:**

**Current challenges and emerging directions for future presenteeism research**

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## Special Issue Article

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**ABSTRACT:**

Presenteeism refers to working despite ill health that might otherwise warrant sickness absence. Estimated to cost tens of millions of dollars in lost productivity, the concept has attracted the attention of different academic disciplines, policymakers, and practitioners interested in mitigating the problem. Although a topic of significant interest, the current understanding of presenteeism is compromised by a number of conceptual and methodological factors that follow from one another. We begin this introductory article by providing a brief overview on three specific challenges, namely (1) presenteeism ill-defined as a unitary construct, (2) narrowness of approaches to measure and study presenteeism, and (3) insufficient research on the social and relational dynamism that characterizes presenteeism. We then provide an overview of the eight articles that comprise this issue and analyze how they address the aforementioned three challenges by adopting alternative theoretical frameworks, utilizing new measurement approaches, and/or by shedding light on the dynamic nature of presenteeism. Finally, we discuss fresh perspectives and promising directions for future research endeavors on this topic, with the hope that this issue will inspire further research on the practical implications of presenteeism for promoting positive health and well-being at the workplace.

*Key words: presenteeism, ill-health, well-being, workplace attendance behaviors*

## 1. CURRENT CHALLENGES: RESEARCH GAPS AND OPEN QUESTIONS

The volatility and uncertainty that increasingly affect societies and organizations, along with rapid technology-driven developments and the constant strive to accomplish better financial results with fewer resources, have deleterious effects on the psychological and physiological well-being of employees. With the inevitability of health issues, organizations must confront the reality of employees missing work and the impact it has on productivity (Hemp, 2004; Johns, 2010). While sickness absenteeism, or the failure to show up for work, is a common result of health issues (Johns, 2008), presenteeism has become a prevalent alternative, where employees attend work while ill (Johns, 2010; Karanika-Murray & Cooper, 2018, Ruhle et al., 2020). The term refers to the grey area that exists between the constructs of full engagement at work and absenteeism, i.e., an employee who is physically present at work but absent in mind or behaviour (Smedley, 2011).

Macroeconomic research conducted mainly in North America has attempted to quantify the monetary cost of presenteeism, which includes both healthcare expenses (due to infecting other employees and potential for future health problems for the presentee worker) and a decrease in productivity (Farrell, 2013; Hemp, 2004; Robertson & Cooper, 2011). Nevertheless, companies emphasize the potential negative effects of absenteeism and encourage employees to choose presenteeism (Miraglia & Johns, 2016; Vander Weerdt, Stoddard-Dare, & DeRigne, 2023). Then again, the consequences of presenteeism can be multifaceted, and it is possible for there to be instances in which, for example, presenteeism serves a therapeutic purpose (e.g., Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019; Lohaus, Habermann, El Kertoubi, & Röser, 2021), suggesting that working while ill might not be that bad after all. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has raised attention to how and why individuals choose to work despite showing signs of illness (Kinman & Grant, 2021;

Taylor, Butts, Cole & Pounds, 2021). On the one hand, the high contagion rate of the virus (Manski & Molinari, 2021) has highlighted the importance of health behaviors at work, while on the other hand, working from home (telework) has been on the rise and impacted how working while ill is carried out (Biron, Karanika-Murray, Ivers, Salvoni, & Fernet, 2021; Ruhle & Schmoll, 2021).

Prior work on presenteeism generally falls into one of two lines of questions. Studies within the first line of inquiry consider a wide range of potential antecedents of presenteeism (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Min & Hong, 2023; Miraglia & Johns, 2016). For example, we know that individual differences (e.g., personality traits; Shan et al., 2021) and work conditions (e.g., job demands and job insecurity; Idris, Idris, Syed-Yahya & Zadow, 2023) can influence an individual's decision to engage in presenteeism. The second line of inquiry looks into detrimental consequences of presenteeism for both individuals and organizations, including reduced productivity (Burton, Pranksy, Conti, Chen & Edington, 2004; Collins et al., 2005), long-term absenteeism (Bergström, Bodin, Hagberg, Aronsson, & Josephson, 2009; Hansen & Andersen, 2009), and impaired physical and psychological health (Bergström, Bodin, Hagberg, Lindh, et al., 2009; Gustafsson & Marklund, 2014; Takano, Iwano, Ando, & Okajima, 2023).

Interestingly, despite its costs and the resulting scholarly and practitioner attention, in nearly three decades since Cooper (1996) introduced us to the notion of presenteeism, our understanding of the phenomenon remains limited. In particular, the definition/operationalization of presenteeism, and even more significantly its structure and measurement, lack clarity (Breitsohl, Zöhrer & Ruhle, 2023; Johns, 2010). For example, even though our knowledge of presenteeism's correlates has grown, we continue to lack a thorough theoretical account, including antecedents and consequences. Likewise, meta-

analytic evidence suggests that most of these correlates show only modest effect sizes (Miraglia & Johns, 2016). And while an examination of antecedents of presenteeism is valuable, it is of equal importance to understand the dynamics underlying the actual decision process (Cooper & Lu, 2016; Halbesleben, Witman & Crawford, 2014; Lohaus & Habermann, 2021). Along these lines, our current state of knowledge on presenteeism provides little insight into the underlying psycho-social mechanisms and boundary conditions through which presenteeism impacts work-related outcomes both at the between and within-person levels.

Past reviews (e.g., Dew & Taupo, 2009; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Johns, 2010; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Zhang, Bansback & Anis, 2011), position papers (Ruhle et al., 2020) and commentaries (e.g., Breitsohl et al., 2023; López & Nuñez, 2023; Priebe & Hägerbäumer, 2023) highlight the potential scope for further development of the existing theoretical frameworks and methodologies in this field. We contend that there are three fundamental issues that have stimulated the need for (and importance of) this Special Issue – having to do with conceptualization, measurement and dynamism of presenteeism. Moreover, we believe that these issues also have the potential to offer new perspectives and directions to advance the theoretical and practical development of this research stream. We briefly discuss the three issues.

***What constitutes presenteeism?*** Firstly, there is an inherent difficulty in defining presenteeism, so much so that several past papers have abstained from a concise definition of the construct. Others have provided an inventory of definitions, critiquing those that are subpar and making recommendations for alternative conceptualizations (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Ruhle et al., 2020). For example, Johns (2010) lists nine different definitions of presenteeism before himself defining the concept as “attending work while ill” (p. 521). Yet seeking to broaden this earlier conceptualization of sickness

presenteeism, researchers have recently called for more inclusive *non-location bound* operationalization of the construct (Ruhle et al., 2020; Kinman & Grant; 2021). Indeed, this resurgence is reflected in studies that investigate the relationship between home-based teleworking and presenteeism in pre-and post-pandemic times advancing our understanding of presenteeism in remote work contexts (e.g., Gerich, 2022; Steidelmüller, Meyer & Müller, 2020). This approach, wherein two very dissimilar phenomena – attendance and illness – co-occur in negative directions to share the same conceptual space, has become the most common way to operationalize presenteeism. That is, presenteeism is typically understood to be a behavior that meets two conditions, namely that the employee must attend work (irrespective of the location), and that they must be physically or mentally ill, or at the very least, believe they are ill (e.g., Gosselin, Lemyre & Corneil, 2013).

As such, it appears that presenteeism is an aggregate construct that has sometimes been confused with a unitary construct. This matter frustrates the development of cumulative knowledge because the correlates of one phenomenon (either attendance or ill-health) may or may not correlate, or correlate in opposite direction, with the other phenomenon. For example, presenteeism is positively associated with absenteeism (e.g., Aronsson, Gustafsson, & Dallner, 2000). Most of this positive correlation is likely due to the association with ill-health, as absenteeism is *not* positively associated with attendance. Building on this example, the dual nature of presenteeism has created other interpretive problems for variables that positively relate to one facet of presenteeism and negatively relate to the other. For example, a lack of autonomy is likely be stressful, engendering ill-health, but to boost attendance due to workplace constraints. When these inconsistent correlates are combined, the overall effect sizes are likely to be small (e.g., Miraglia & Johns, 2016). By simultaneously predicting two unrelated constructs - health and

attendance, we run the risk of masking conceptual regularities, thereby thwarting the development of strong theory. Separating the two could boost the size of the obtained relationships, though they will sometimes be in different directions, and therefore allow for theory development.

Another conceptual issue has to do with the valence attributed to presenteeism (positive versus negative), also discussed in terms of its benefits or functionality. Most definitions carry negative connotations, disregarding the possible positive effects of presenteeism (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). As noted above, presenteeism may have therapeutic benefits. Partially doing one's work while ill may surpass not doing any work. Indeed, empirical evidence is gradually accumulating that shows the occurrence of positive effects and co-occurrence of both negative and positive effects (e.g., Biron, Karanika-Murray, & Ivers, 2022; Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019), suggesting that presenteeism should not be evaluated and labelled as a behavior that is in itself positive or negative (Ruhle et al., 2020).

Secondly, following on from the dissensus over conceptualization, *measuring presenteeism* has proven exceedingly difficult. At the moment there is no widely accepted measure of presenteeism. Notably, although prior work has suggested it to be a “complex construct” (Cartwright & Cooper, 2014), virtually no research has focused on the possibility of presenteeism being multi-dimensional. Instead, most measures of presenteeism are unidimensional, and look at either the number of days/times individuals go to work despite feeling sick (Gerich, 2014; Whysall et al., 2023) or the severity of illness legitimizing sick leave but not taken (Aronsson et al., 2000), with another common measure tapping perceived pressure to continue to work despite being ill (Lu et al., 2013).

Other measurement issues prevent accurate observation of presenteeism. For example, as is common in absenteeism literature (see Harrison & Martocchio, 1998), presenteeism

researchers often “post-dict” the phenomena in question. That is, they query as to past attendance, hopeful that retrospective bias does not cloud the judgment of respondents. In addition, Harrison and Martocchio (1998) note that the impact of certain antecedents develops slowly (e.g., work values, general physical fitness) whereas the impact of others unfolds more quickly (e.g., acute stressors). Measurement timeframe, therefore, can tilt the results in favor of shorter- or longer-term antecedents. For instance, with a long timeframe researcher are more likely to find that chronic antecedents (e.g., general health) are strong predictors of presenteeism, whereas a short timeframe is more likely to reveal the strength of acute antecedents (e.g., a personal injury).

Authors like Ruhle et al. (2020) have critically discussed how measurement aspects like content and format of the measure used and retrospective bias conflate the issue of attendance and ill-health, impede consistency and comparability across studies, and, at least partly, explain the small magnitude of empirical findings (Skagen & Collins, 2016; Whysalla, Bowden & Hewitt, 2018). We agree with their observation and in fact argue that health symptoms should be assessed separately from attendance behaviors, at least as a control variable (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Johns, 2011; Luo, Lin & Cooper, 2013). However, such an approach is not flawless; while the concept of attendance appears reasonably clear, self-reports of physical symptoms are potentially problematic (Leventhal, 1980; Pennebaker et al., 1982). Therefore, a relevant measure of presenteeism needs to be able to distinguish between attendance motivation, propensity to engage in presenteeism behavior as well as the act of presenteeism, to be able to shed light into the causes and consequences of the same.

A final word about collective measurements of presenteeism. Presenteeism has been traditionally conceptualized and measured as a phenomenon at the individual level. Yet much like team absenteeism (e.g., Miraglia & Johns, 2021; ten Brummelhuis, Johns,

Lyons, & ter Hoeven, 2016), presenteeism might vary between teams, enough so to warrant investigation at the team level. However, and although we see growing interest in presenteeism culture in recent years (e.g., Hadjisolomou, Mitsakis, & Gary, 2022; Ruhle & Süß, 2020), research has yet to incorporate measures that capture distinct presenteeism profiles of teams within the same organization.

The mention of team-level measurement and measurement timeframe bring us to the third gap in the extant literature, having to do with the need to move beyond a static, individual-centric view of presenteeism, to one that is mindful to the *social and relational dynamics of presenteeism*. Indeed, the extant literature mostly discusses presenteeism in static terms, ignoring changes that employees make to cognitions, work-life boundaries, physical workspaces, and relationships, among other changes, which could impact on their presenteeism behavior over time. A dynamic approach is informed by the idea that employees continuously adjust their level of and legitimate reasons for presenteeism—an approach that can help to guide research on how and when people engage in presenteeism to balance attendance and health requirements to foster work performance. An important element in the dynamic approach to presenteeism is sense-making (George & Jones, 2001), referring to how individuals use feedback from internal (self) and external (e.g., supervisor, coworkers, family) role partners to further adjust presenteeism to foster various outcomes (Klein, 1989). For example, an employee may self-evaluate progress at work by comparing goals with achievements, and coworkers may commend or criticize the employee's work dedication. Knowledge gathered via such feedback can help employees to clarify their thinking about their current work situation and the multiplicity of requirements within and outside their work, and to identify problems and opportunities for making changes in attendance perceptions and behavior (George & Jones, 2001).

With few exceptions however (Bergström et al., 2009; Skagen & Collins, 2016), presenteeism research has mostly utilized cross-sectional data, often comparing high- and low-presenteeism employees. Variations considered within employees are limited to how different antecedents elicit presenteeism via health impairment as opposed to motivational paths (Lohaus & Habermann, 2019; Miraglia & Johns, 2016). Hence, we know little about how presenteeism fluctuates within individuals across time, and how work-related important others (e.g., team members, supervisors) observe, make sense of, and subsequently respond to one's presenteeism (and vice versa). Existing conceptual frameworks similarly fail to incorporate dynamic elements. Only one model, by Halbesleben et al. (2014), directly discusses how attendance behavior results from a decision-making process that arises out of tensions between employee and supervisor. Such research regarding presenteeism as a socially- and- relationally constructed, iterative behavioral response is likely to serve as critical input into our efforts moving forward in developing theory as well as useful practical recommendations.

## **2. EMERGING DIRECTIONS (1): ARTICLES THAT FORM THE SPECIAL ISSUE**

This Special Issue encompasses eight papers that showcase a diversity of perspectives that are both novel and yet complementary in nature. Collectively, the papers contribute to the extant knowledge on presenteeism at work from different theoretical perspectives (e.g., conservation of resources theory, social information processing theory, affective events theory), in various research settings of different industries (e.g., service, manufacturing) and countries (e.g., China, Portugal), and applying different research designs and methodologies (e.g., time-lagged field studies, experiments, scale development). While jointly highlighting the breadth of the growing domain of presenteeism research, these works offer in-depth insights on presenteeism. They also leave scholars with a set of new

and important directions to explore in the future. We briefly discuss the core contributions of these papers, in relation to the three main challenges discussed above.

The opening article by Brosi and Gerpott (2022) critically extends prior conceptualization of presenteeism by focusing not only on why individuals go to work despite being ill but also on why individuals continue to work from home while ill. They label the latter as '*workahomeism*' or work-at-home-presenteeism, coined to describe attendance behavior of employees who work from home, which warrants specific consideration due to the significant shift to remote work during COVID-19 pandemic, which persists, to a certain degree, post pandemic. The study employed three methodological designs (i.e., vignette experiment, critical incidents study and a within-person intervention) and the findings demonstrated differences in employees' reactions to illness (workahomeism versus presenteeism versus resting at home) depending on anticipated and actual felt guilt. By connecting workahomeism with moral emotions such as 'guilt', this study contributes to extending a more processual understanding on presenteeism. Moreover, by acknowledging changes in the design of work (spatial and temporal flexibility), the study advances our understanding of the contextual implications that remote work may have for presenteeism.

In the following article, Correia Leal, Ferreira, and Carvalho (2022) introduce the construct of '*sickness surface acting*', referring to employees' effort to suppress illness symptoms or to fake a healthy status, as an emotional regulation mechanism through which they strive to maintain cheerful and healthy expressions as they work while sick. Beyond contributing to construct development, this study discusses presenteeism as a socially embedded phenomenon. The authors use a daily diary to capture how supervisor distrust—a social-context factor that prompts perceptions of a presenteeism climate—creates pressure to attend work despite ill health, and how anger, related to hostile

customers, creates pressure to conform to organizational display rules. These challenging conditions initiate resource depletion to which employees respond with sickness surface acting, and subsequently, with burnout. The authors identify sickness surface acting as a coping strategy that employees use to comply with their social context and highlight the need for organizations to gear their policies toward reducing the negative effects of emotional labor and identifying social context variables that could impact presenteeism.

Boekhorst and Halinski (2022) continue the fascinating theme of socially constructed presenteeism and contribute to the debate around the positive implications of presenteeism by examining the indirect effect on organizational citizenship behaviors directed towards the organization (OCBOs) and other individuals (OCBIs) via citizenship pressure. Using data collected in three waves with one-week intervals, they investigate the concept of coworker presenteeism (employees who observe their presentee co-workers), suggesting that it may be interpreted as citizenship behavior. This signal creates heightened pressures on employees to similarly enact citizenship behavior. Recognizing that employees may not uniformly respond to such pressures, the authors investigate how a sense of being mentally distant from one's work (psychological detachment) impacts the relationship between coworker presenteeism and citizenship behavior. They find that employees who are psychologically detached are particularly vulnerable to succumbing to pressure stemming from coworker presenteeism, an outcome attributed to proximity effect. The study underscores the importance of psychological characteristics in predicting employee responses to co-workers' presenteeism.

Further adding to the discussion about functional consequences of presenteeism, the next study by Wang, Ma, Yuan, and Chen (2022) investigates the link between physical pain and job crafting via presenteeism, integrating ideas from the resource-based view of stress. With a 10-day diary, the authors trace presenteeism behavior as trade-offs between

health resources and work resources and explore how presenteeism eventually enables employees to craft their job to foster fit with the environment. The social context in which presenteeism decisions are made is also considered as the study investigates how employees handle physical pain while also experiencing social pain in the form of ostracism (interpersonal mistreatment). To further understand the latter effect, the authors use two-wave data to show how reduced self-esteem mediates the moderation effect of ostracism on the physical pain-presenteeism association.

Authors Wang, Lu, and Lu (2022) also discuss when and for whom presenteeism is likely to be beneficial. With experimental scenario studies they investigate presenteeism as a proactive response to stressful situations. Drawing on the social cognitive framework, they find a positive effect of presenteeism on performance evaluation, especially in the context of highly demanding work. Affective commitment is found to explain this moderation effect. Furthermore, the authors build on trait activation theory to examine differences in coping styles as moderators in the association between workload, presenteeism and subsequent performance. They find that employees with a proactive coping predisposition are more likely to engage in presenteeism under high workload conditions, which results in higher performance evaluations. The study emphasizes the embedded nature of the impact of work-related situational factors as well as personal dispositional factors in unpacking the presenteeism-outcome 'black box'.

Extending the functional view of presenteeism to prospective employees, the sixth paper by Schilpzand, Restubog, and Chen (2022) delves into the effects of contracting the common cold whilst undergoing a job interview. Findings from two experimental studies involving individuals with prior selection experience indicated that exhibiting signs of presenteeism (i.e., attending interviews with a common cold) resulted in biased appraisals. Specifically, raters perceived job applicants' competence to be significantly lower when

they engaged in presenteeism. These unfavourable competence appraisals carried over to hiring recommendations and evaluations of leadership capabilities. In this paper too, individual differences were considered as boundary condition. Specifically, raters low in perspective-taking evaluated job applicants displaying signs of illness as less competent compared to raters high in perspective-taking. This research brings to the forefront the importance of factoring in the social setting in which presenteesim occurs and, how others interpret this behavior.

In the next paper, Luksyte, Unsworth, Avery, Cordery, and Seah (2022) adopt self-regulation theory to examine how gender differences in resource allocation and outcome expectations explain the relationship between presenteeism and another positive outcome, namely extra-role behavior. The authors used a programmatic series of studies with demographically, functionally, and culturally diverse samples. They found that sick men directed their resources toward exploiting their health and protecting their performance – a tendency that resulted in more extra-role behaviors for them. Conversely, sick women were more likely to direct their resources on protecting their health, which results in avoiding extra-role behaviors. Moreover, despite their tendency to health-protection, women did engage in extra-role behavior under conditions of citizenship pressure (perceived expectations to engage in extra-role behaviors). Men were not affected by citizenship pressure.

The eighth and final paper in this volume is dedicated to the development and validation of scales to measure the legitimacy of different attendance behaviors. Ruhle and Breitsohl (2022) describe four studies with which they establish the properties of a three-dimension scale composed of a dimension of motivational presenteeism legitimacy (normative perceptions regarding working despite a lack of motivation to attend work), a dimension of motivational absenteeism legitimacy (perceptions regarding not working due

to a lack of motivation), and a combined dimension of sickness presenteeism legitimacy (perceptions regarding attending work while ill) and sickness absenteeism legitimacy (perceptions regarding situations of sickness absence). The study offers initial empirical evidence on relationships between specific sub-scales and respective behavioral attendance propensities.

### **3. EMERGING DIRECTIONS (2): AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Although authors of the articles in this special issue have collectively made significant progress in advancing novel theories/perspectives on presenteeism, its antecedents, boundary conditions and outcomes, we believe that there remains considerable scope for additional research into the conceptual, theoretical, empirical and methodological advancements of the nature and effects of presenteeism at work. Below we outline streams for future research which are also summarised with relevant future research questions in Table 1.

#### ***Multifaceted nature of presenteeism construct and its nomological network***

The changing nature of work and related recent calls for presenteeism research to be non-location bound have opened a plethora of opportunities for future research to shed light on the dynamic motives behind working while ill (Lohaus et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2013). Since work from anywhere and remote work are the new realities of a post pandemic era, future research needs to examine how and in what ways work design and arrangements foster differences in attendance motivation, as well as how variances in attendance motivation impacts on the presenteeism propensity. For example, from a self-determination theoretical perspective, autonomous forms of motivation are generally regarded more effective in predicting health behavior than non-self-determined or controlled forms (e.g., Hagger, Hardcastle, Chater, Mallett, Pal, & Chatzisarantis, 2014; Teixeira, Marques, Silva, Brunet et al., 2020). This has implications for presenteeism

behavior as functional (i.e., autonomous motivation) versus dysfunctional (i.e., controlled motivation), and might even help in filling the lacuna between presenteeism and absenteeism constructs by providing space for other similar nomological constructs such as leavism (e.g., Richards, Ellis, Canduela, Pustelnikovaite & Saxena, 2022) and workaholism (e.g., Mazzetti, Vignoli, Schaufeli & Guglielmi, 2019) and investigating their relationship with presenteeism and its outcomes. Thus, we need future research to explore the interaction and interconnectedness between autonomous (pull factors) and controlled (push factors) motives at the intersection of concepts underpinned by ideal worker norms (IWNs), work intensification (WI), and information communication technologies (ICTs) to improve our prediction of presenteeism propensity and to better understand the unique conceptual space that presenteeism fills in.

***Unique theoretical processes examining antecedents, mediators/boundary conditions and other outcomes***

To understand the social and relational dynamism that characterizes presenteeism decision-making processes, researchers need to probe the significant value of capturing temporal dynamics. There are two ways temporality could be explored, one from the angle of event-based experience sampling approach and the other being a more person-centered approach to understand momentary variations in presenteeism propensity and its outcomes. There has been dearth of studies investigating the variability in presenteeism behavioural patterns as well as its attendance motivation dynamics, with two exceptions: Rivkin, Diestel, Gerpott, and Unger's (2022) study examines within-person daily variability in presenteeism and its effect on next day work engagement and task performance. Poethke, Klasmeier, Radaca, and Diestel's (2023) weekly diary study documents how flexibilization simultaneously reduces and enhances presenteeism via well-being and flow pathways within-person. Both these studies and Wang et al.'s (2022)

study from our Special Issue indicate high within-person variation in presenteeism indicating presenteeism behavioural pattern to be shaped by dynamic circumstances. Thus, we call for researchers to advance presenteeism research by introducing an episodic lens on presenteeism considering the daily variability underlying the subjectivity of health occurring at various instances of time within and across days. In doing so, we ask future research to also investigate intraindividual decision-making subtleties throughout an individual's workday from morning to evening to expand upon changes in health conditions as well as attendance dynamics.

Furthermore, previous research has considered presenteeism and other work behaviours as well as its outcomes in isolation (e.g., performance: Sandrin, Gillet, Fernet, Depint-Rouault, Leloup, & Portenard, 2019; presenteeism: Mazzetti et al., 2019), sometimes considering pairs of behaviors (e.g., presenteeism and performance: Huyghebaert, Gillet, Beltou, Tellier, & Fouquereau, 2018; performance and counterproductive work behaviors: Fouquereau, Morin, Lapointe, Mokoukolo, & Gillet, 2019), but never adopting a broader picture focusing on possible behavioural combinations. We suggest future research to address these limitations via the adoption of a person-centered approach. Person-centered analyses are specifically designed to identify subpopulations, referred to as profiles, of workers characterized by distinct configurations on a set of variables (Meyer & Morin, 2016). By focusing on employees' profiles formed based on performance, absenteeism, presenteeism, and counterproductive work behaviors, we hope future studies can shed light on a comprehensive typology that accounts for a range of possible presenteeism behavioural profiles and its outcomes as well as for the theoretical processes likely to be involved in each of those profiles.

Additionally, relatively few studies have identified mediators of presenteeism/outcomes relationship such as individual-level psychological distress and

health burden (Coutu et al., 2015; McGregor, Iverson, Caputi, Magee, & Ashbury, 2014). Research in this area is still very much in its infancy. More research is needed to explore the ‘black box’ to help understand the underlying mechanisms through which presenteeism influences individual and workplace outcomes (at different level of analysis). Research by Luksyte, Avery, and Yeo (2015) found mediating roles of emotional engagement and negative affect in predicting in-group co-worker presenteeism. At the individual level, we call for researchers to further explore the role of emotions and affect (positive and negative) in understanding the relationship between presenteeism and its outcomes at different levels. Moreover, given that prior research by Lu et al. (2014) found self-efficacy attenuates the relationships between individual-level presenteeism and indicators of health in a longitudinal setting indicates that individuals high in self-efficacy adjust their goal congruence based on their beliefs in their capabilities and exert greater effort towards coping with work stress situations (Cooper, Dewe, O’Driscoll, 2001; Prati, Pietrantonio, & Cicognani, 2010). We thus, call for researchers to investigate the indirect effects of whether individuals who set challenging goals, strive to achieve those goals (i.e., goal orientations) have active and problem-focused coping strategies and increased exertion of efforts under stress, may allow for ‘good presenteeism’ (e.g., Wang et al., 2022).

Further work is also needed to identify the boundary conditions (moderators) of the presenteeism-outcomes relationship. For example, drawing from prior evidence linking emotional stability with OCB differently under high versus low complexity (Le, Oh, Robbins, Ilies, Holland & Westrick, 2011), it may be that presenteeism have greater negative effect on performance/productivity outcomes when jobs or tasks are more complex than simple. Moreover, presenteeism is likely to be less of a problem when performance ambiguity is low than when it is high, and when substitution at work is high than when it is low. At the team-level researchers might examine potential moderators

such as group climate, team-member exchange, team value congruence, access to resources and cohesion (e.g., Beal, Cohen, Burke & McLendon, 2003; Brown & Tervino, 2006; Gonzalez-Roma, Ferreira & Peiro, 2009). Presenteeism may be expected to generate stronger outcomes for individuals operating in supportive and stimulating team climates. In addition to team climates, more empowering leadership styles such as servant leadership may mitigate the deployment of individual-level presenteeism (e.g., van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Finally, more work is needed to examine how organizational level or industry-level moderators such as sector, labor force participation, unionization, and provision of employee assistance programs and workplace health promotion programs (e.g., Bustillos & Trigos, 2013).

***Extending presenteeism research to other domains i.e., reflecting the changing nature of work; work-life flexibility, work-family interface and social networks***

Despite the recent surge of research in remote/telework contexts (e.g., Ferreira, Mach, Martinez, & Miraglia, 2022; Kinman & Grant, 2021), research on presenteeism has yet to consider the potential mediating and boundary conditions between changing work characteristics and presenteeism. For example, beyond the study by Brosi and Gerpott (2022), in this Special Issue, we know little about the emotional and moral mechanisms that impact employee's decision-making with respect to working when ill from home. The underlying motives of engaging in presenteeism when working from home or working from anywhere versus traditional office-based work environment would be helpful in understanding how different work design and work arrangements can impact presenteeism and its downstream/upstream consequences. Moreover, researchers have often lamented about the autonomy paradox with conflicting findings with respect to telework and its outcomes (e.g., Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden & Veiga, 2005). Yet, only relatively recently has research begun to dive into mediating/moderating

mechanisms of telework-outcomes relationship (e.g., Biron, Casper, & Raghuram, 2022), which may also have implications for presenteeism decision-making and its outcomes. Comparably, we also need more research that highlights the ways through which different work scheduling arrangements allow employees control over features of their work i.e., when, where, and for how long and how continuously they work, and how these impact on their propensity to engage in presenteeism and its outcomes.

In addition, work from home arrangements have resulted in blurring of the work-family boundaries, impacting on the ever-evolving dynamics of work and family roles and their impact on health and well-being (Korunka & Kubicek, 2017; Piszczek, 2017; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). A dynamic view of presenteeism is important to guide research on how teleworkers' presenteeism decisions are made to facilitate concertation between work attendance requirements, nonwork (e.g., family) attendance requirements, and health requirements, while being physically – and potentially psychologically – distant from work-related important others, and while sharing the same space with non-work-related important others (spouse, children).

In addition, research has also emphasized the significance of social networks in determining health-related behavior and the broader social determinants of illness (e.g., see for review, Smith & Christakis, 2008). Social networks have been proposed as a potential influence on health through five fundamental mechanisms, namely social support, social influence, resource accessibility, social engagement, and person-to-person transmission (Berkman & Kawachi 2000, Kawachi & Berkman 2003). Additional research thus is needed to explicitly link characteristics of network structure and network ties in order to understand the mechanisms involved in affecting attendance motivation and presenteeism propensity and its outcomes.

*Addressing multi-level issues*

The existing work has predominantly conceptualized presenteeism as an individual-level construct and examined its antecedents and outcomes using the individual-level analyses. We call on future research looking at relationships between presenteeism and outcomes at multiple or cross-level of analysis. For example, despite great deal of evidence examining same-level direct influences at the individual level (e.g., individual-level presenteeism on individual level productivity), similar same-level direct observations at the team or organizational level analysis are missing. Exploring the relationship between presenteeism and outcomes at different level of analysis has two advantages. From a theoretical point of view, such studies would not only shed light on the appropriateness of aggregating presenteeism to higher levels of analysis, but also allow us to assess the suitability and value of the theories underlying predicted relationships. Second, from a practical point of view, such studies would help organizations to better understand the variance attributed due to presenteeism on its outcomes at different levels of analysis. For example, more work is needed to examine the relationship between co-worker presenteeism and team outcomes such as OCB, initiative taking, team performance, team absenteeism and co-worker health (i.e., team-level predictor→team-level criterion). Likewise, it would be interesting to explore if the negative relationship between individual performance and individual presenteeism holds at team-level (i.e., individual-level predictor→team-level criterion). Perhaps such link depends on how disruptive (chronic) and contagious employees' illness is for their ability to contribute to teamwork.

Moreover, at the organizational level, HR practices might also influence individual and team-level presenteeism and its outcomes. For example, Jensen, Patel and Messersmith (2013) found utilization of high-performance work systems (HPWS) to be

related to higher levels of anxiety and role overload when job control was less. While HPWS may benefit organizational performance in the short term, what effect do they have long-term, e.g., on the lives of individual employees? Critical scholars have argued that HR systems, such as HPWS, are little more than a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” (Godard, 2001; Guest, 1999; Keenoy, 1990; Ramsay, Scholarios & Harley, 2000). These authors argue that organizations implementing HPWS are looking at eliciting greater levels of participation and effort from employees (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Kroon, van de Voorde, & van Veldhoven, 2009; Legge, 1995; Willmott, 1993), which might lead to culture of presenteeism. Such work provides an empirical bridge linking macro resource-based theories to micro-organizational psychology approaches in understanding the presenteeism-outcomes relationship.

Future research could also examine different-level direct influences such as the relationship between team-level presenteeism and individual level outcomes (i.e., team-level predictor→individual-level criterion) and between health supportive HR policies and practices/HPWS and individual level presenteeism (i.e., organizational-level predictor→individual-level criterion). This will provide a better understanding of the relative value of variance in different predictors of presenteeism and their subsequent influence on work and individual outcomes. By incorporating different predictors at multiple level of analyses, research can inform organizations as to comparative effectiveness of organizational-level antecedents (e.g., HR practices) versus individual-level or team-level initiatives (e.g., engaging in physical activity, supportive leadership style) in predicting and controlling for presenteeism. For example, future research might examine whether organizational level predictors of presenteeism such as HR policies and practices, team-level predictors such as leadership/team support, and individual-level

predictors such as job characteristics, have stronger effects on individual or collective presenteeism.

Researchers may also want to investigate cross-level interactions where the strength of the relationship between individual-level predictors and outcome criteria may differ as a function of team-level or organizational/industry variables. Dollard and Bakker (2010) found relationship between individual-level emotional demands (individual-level predictor) and individual-level emotional exhaustion (individual level criterion) to be moderated by the level of psychosocial safety climate (team-level moderator). Future research could investigate other team-level moderators such as team structure/composition, team leadership, team climates (e.g., service climate) to shed light on how to leverage presenteeism most effectively to the benefit of organizations and its employees.

### ***Methodological issues***

With respect to methodological advancement, we urge researchers to examine process models of presenteeism integrating trait (i.e., personality), state (i.e., resources) and process (i.e., coping and appraisal) into a unifying theoretical framework to predict the causes as well as consequences of engaging in presenteeism at multiple level of analyses. Past research has been plagued with cross-sectional designs based on correlates of presenteeism, limiting scholarly understanding of the inferential claims on the “cause and effect” of presenteeism (Ruhle et al., 2020). Likewise, we call for future research to assess individual, relational, and contextual characteristics of presenteeism behavior as a consequence to its outcomes rather than as a cause alone (i.e., issue of reverse causality and endogeneity).

While symptomatology of physical health impairment has been extensively researched in the extant literature, missing from many studies is a strong theoretical

rationale to guide research questions and hypotheses to expand our understanding of employees engaging in presenteeism with mental illness. Future studies should look at more nuanced theoretical perspectives to move beyond surface-level descriptions of mental health to more robust descriptions of mental illness and the processes as well as boundary conditions surrounding individual, co-workers/supervisors and organizational perspectives on working while ill.

Similarly, addressing the current debate on the role of gender (e.g., Luksyte et al., 2022; Patton & Johns, 2007) in determining presenteeism and its consequences, we argue for more heterogeneous sampling i.e., understanding health impairment process and its effect on attendance motivation/decision-making from the perspective of women's physiological changes and work. Here we take the lead from Grandy, Gabriel, and King (2020), and urge researchers to consider physiological transitions of menstruation, maternity and menopause, as health events that are correlates of resource depletion and how women manage to overcome resource depletion directly or indirectly impacting on their attendance motivation, presenteeism propensity and its outcomes. In doing so, we hope that future research can delve into the intricacies of gender stereotyping and stigma, and how these factors influence women's unwavering resolve to exceed societal expectations and stereotypes, and ultimately, their ability to deliver exceptional performance. We believe that this exploration will shed light on the far reaching positive and negative consequences of the role of gender within the presenteeism process and its outcomes from individual, others and organizational perspectives.

## **CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS**

Woody Allen once said that 80% of success in life could be attributed to simply showing up. However, the research on attendance behaviors and presenteeism suggests that this statement may be overly optimistic. Although presenteeism is often associated

with health concerns, it is a multifaceted phenomenon that extends beyond occupational health research. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct further studies at the intersection of occupational health and organizational behaviour to explore the impact of presenteeism on workplace and individual outcomes at various levels of analysis. This will help us develop a better understanding of the interventions aimed to bring about positive health and well-being implications at work.

**Table 1: Areas and Themes for Future Research**

<b>Area for Future Research</b>	<b>Future Research Themes</b>
<i>Conceptual</i>	<p>A clear and comprehensive construct clarification and differentiation between attendance motivation, presenteeism propensity and presenteeism act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to examine variations in presenteeism behavior and its outcomes to understand how, and in what ways work design and arrangements impact different outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Research the interaction and interconnectedness between the avoidance (push factors) and approach (pull factors) motives and their role in predicting presenteeism propensity.</li> <li>▪ Conceptually explore the black box between presenteeism and absenteeism through examination of other nomological constructs (e.g., leavism) and their impact on presenteeism/absenteeism propensity.</li> <li>▪ Breaking away from disciplinary closure and incorporating studies on alternative outcomes of presenteeism, other than performance and productivity loss estimates.</li> </ul>
<i>Theoretical</i>	<p>Antecedents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relational antecedents – understand the role of decision-making dynamics advancing research on microfoundations of presenteeism by explicating both within-and between-person dynamics.</li> <li>▪ Using a person-centered approach to propose a comprehensive typology of presenteeism profiles that accounts for a range of possible work behaviors as well as theoretical processes.</li> </ul> <p>Mediators and Boundary Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore the role of work situational (e.g., LMX), personal dispositional (e.g., goal orientation) as well as emotion factors (e.g., positive/negative affect) as indirect mechanisms through which presenteeism may affect its outcomes at individual, team, and organizational unit of analysis.</li> <li>▪ Examine potential moderators of the presenteeism- outcomes relationship such as group climate, team-member exchange, team value congruence, cohesion, and leadership styles.</li> </ul> <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investigate intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics as outcomes of presenteeism at individual, team and organizational level.</li> <li>▪ How can organizations effectively measure the impact and effectiveness of their interventions in reducing presenteeism and improving overall employee well-being?</li> </ul>

- What are the potential unintended consequences of organizational interventions aimed at reducing presenteeism, and how can these be mitigated or minimized?

### *Empirical*

#### Changing Nature of Work- Remote/Telework

- How does presenteeism manifest in remote/telework environments, and what are the factors that contribute to its prevalence and impact?
- What are the specific health implications of presenteeism in remote/telework settings, and how do they compare to traditional office-based environments?
- How does presenteeism in remote/telework settings contribute to health inequalities among different demographic groups, and what are the underlying mechanisms driving these disparities?
- What are the long-term effects of presenteeism in remote/telework settings on employee well-being, productivity, and organizational performance?
- How do structural and systemic inequalities impact the experience of presenteeism in remote/telework, and what measures can be taken to promote equity and fairness in these work arrangements?
- What role does technology play in facilitating or exacerbating presenteeism in remote/telework, and how can organizations optimize its use to promote employee well-being and work-life balance?

#### Work-Life Flexibility

- In what ways, employment scheduling arrangements that allow employees to exercise choice over certain features of their work arrangements such as when, where, for how long, and how continuously they work, impact on propensity of engaging in presenteeism. What is the subsequent impact on different presenteeism outcomes?
- Examine how gender, racial and other disparities stemming from work-life inequality with respect to flexibility access and use impact presenteeism and its outcomes.
- What interventions can be implemented for workers with limited access to flexible work arrangements, and what impact do these interventions have on presenteeism and its outcomes.

#### Work-Family Interface

- How does presenteeism impact work-family conflict and enrichment, considering the evolving dynamics of work and family roles?
- What are the underlying mechanisms through which presenteeism affects work-family interface outcomes, and how can organizations mitigate these effects?
- What are the differences in presenteeism behaviors across various job types, such as remote work, gig economy, or

traditional office-based work, and how do these differences affect work-family interface?

- How does the gender composition and dynamics within dual career couples influence presenteeism, and how can organizations address gender inequalities and biases in the workplace to reduce its impact?

#### Social Networks

- In what ways are employee's social network structures indicative of their attendance motivation and presenteeism propensity?
- How predictable are the person-centered profiles of presenteeism from the incorporation of social network structure?
- How do different social ties at work influence employees' presenteeism attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and presenteeism outcomes?
- How do network characteristics and network ties affect the provision of social support (perceived and actual), social influence (e.g., norms) as well as access to resources (e.g., information, wellness programs) in predicting presenteeism and its outcomes.

#### Multi-level Analyses/Studies

- Examine different-level direct influences such as the relationship between team-level presenteeism and individual-level performance (i.e., team-level predictor→individual-level criterion) and the relationship between health supportive HR policies and practices and individual-level presenteeism (i.e., organizational-level predictor→individual-level criterion).
- Investigate predictors at different levels of analysis so as to inform comparative effectiveness of organizational level interventions (e.g., health supportive well programs) versus individual-level or team-level initiatives (e.g., supervisor supportive health behaviors) in predicting presenteeism antecedents and outcomes.
- Scrutinize cross-level interactions where the strength of the relationships between the individual-level predictor and outcome criterion may differ as a function of team-level or organizational/industry-level variables.

#### *Methodological*

##### Process models

- Consider presenteeism as a gestalt construct integrating trait (i.e., personality), state (i.e., resources) and process (i.e., coping and appraisal) approaches into a unifying process model where these factors plus contextual influences interact to determine how employees respond to different health events.
- Usage of longitudinal study designs.

#### Measurement and construct validation

- Construct development and validation with respect to disentangling constructs of attendance motivation, presenteeism propensity and act of presenteeism.
- Measuring presenteeism propensity and climate at team-level
- Testing nomological networks

#### Causal chain

- Consider individual, relational, and contextual characteristics of presenteeism behavior as a consequence to its outcomes rather than as a cause alone.
- Tap into temporal issues and their impact on how and why forms of work characteristics impact propensity to engage in presenteeism.
- Continue to explore primary studies with more proximate and direct measures and methodologies, beyond reliance on publicly available databases.
- Looking at experience sampling method as an alternative (quantitative) methodology to better explore health and work events and its effect on health/productivity impairment.

#### Sampling

- Sample the experiences of employees from different occupational level (low, middle, and high-level jobs) as well as categories (vulnerable/precarious workers/work).
  - Investigate potential variations in composition of presenteeism profiles using latent profile analyses to identify how different subpopulations of employees characteristically use distinct combinations of presenteeism/absenteeism strategies to manage their health at work.
  - Understand ill-health from a gender perspective in terms of including acute, episodic, chronic health impairment such as menstruation, maternity, and menopause and its effects on presenteeism propensity and outcomes.
  - Collect data from multiple time points and multiple sources to mitigate common method bias ex ante.
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