

Abstract

Absenteeism is the fact of being frequently away from work or a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation. It is not merely a disciplinary issue stemming from the delinquency of public servants. The problem of absenteeism in the international context is viewed as a sociological problem and also a problem of providing right type of incentives for public employees. It is a major issue in the delivery of services in the rural areas. The government of Bangladesh enacted many rules and regulations to reduce absenteeism, but no significant change has so far taken place in this regard. This paper seeks to determine the magnitude of absenteeism and explain the underlying causes and remedies for this problem. It is based on field data collected directly from a survey in six upazilas in six divisions.

There are three distinct schools of thought on the causes of absenteeism. One school views absenteeism as effect of absence of adequate facilities at the workplace, the second school attributes absenteeism to urban bias. The third school is of view that absenteeism is the outcome of weak administration.

The aims of this study are to measure absenteeism and to find out the causes of absenteeism at the upazila level. The objectives are- to calculate the percentage of absenteeism, compare it with international standard and examine the collected data in respect of different thoughts of absenteeism and find out the reasons of the absenteeism of the upazila level officers and to provide some recommendations to combat absenteeism at that level.

The rate of absenteeism at the upazila level in Bangladesh is about 22 percent whether the international standard of normal absenteeism is about 4 percent. Empirical analysis of this study does not support the hypothesis that the officers do not stay in rural areas owing to lack of adequate facilities. The absenteeism at upazila level officials in Bangladesh cannot be explained by urban bias. The study also indicates that attendance of locally recruited staff is not better than those of highly educated staff recruited from outside.

This study suggests that the main reason for high absenteeism in Bangladesh is weak administration. The rate of absenteeism of NGOs at upazila level is 09 percent compared to 22 percent for the public employees. Attendance is much better in NGOs who follow 'hire and fire' policy.

To create an attendance culture proper monitoring system, rewards for good attendance and punishment for the absentee employee is necessary. It may be ensured by reviewing the attendance register timely and regularly, sudden inspection of lower level office and local monitoring system with the power to take disciplinary action against absenteeism at local level. An efficient delivery of service at local level must start with the regular attendance of its employees.