Unveiling the Hidden Triggers of Academic Staff Absenteeism in Nigerian Polytechnics: A Case Study of Some Selected Tertiary Institutions of Yobe State, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism is one of the earliest and repetitive researched phenomena in the history of human resource management (HRM) and organizational behaviour (Patton and Johns, 2012). According to Marshall and Farahbakhsh (2013), absenteeism is a serious organizational anomaly for any type of organizations, from the government owned to privately managed establishment and it is one of the underlying factors of loss of performance and commitment to one's job, dissipation of organizational wealth and delicate structure of the organizations and its component around the world. Absenteeism is a recognized obstacle in any organization surveyed by enormous researchers (Dalton and Mesch, 1991; Mayfield and Mayfield, 2009). Employee absenteeism is a pervasive challenge in organizational settings worldwide, with significant implications on productivity, institutional effectiveness, and workplace morale. In the context of tertiary institution, where the quality of teaching, research, and administrative efficiency directly impacts national development, addressing absenteeism among staff members becomes critical. Nigeria's polytechnic sector, a cornerstone of technical and vocational education, faces unique socio-economic and institutional challenges that exacerbate workforce management issues. However, while absenteeism is often attributed to visible factors such as health problems or personal emergencies, its root causes in the Nigerian polytechnic particularly in the region like Yobe State remain understudied, masking systemic triggers that demand urgent exploration. Yobe State, located in North-eastern Nigeria, grapples with complex socio-economic dynamics, including insecurity, poverty, and infrastructural deficits, which may directly influence employee behaviour in public institutions. Polytechnics in the state, tasked with equipping students with technical skills for economic empowerment, rely heavily on consistent staff presence to fulfil their mandates. Yet, anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations suggest persistent absenteeism among academic and non-academic staff, raising concerns about its hidden drivers.

Existing studies on workplace absenteeism in Nigeria often focus on corporate or healthcare sectors, leaving gap in context-specific research within tertiary educational institutions, particularly in polytechnics situated in post-conflict and resource-constrained environments. Employee absenteeism in the Nigerian polytechnics poses a significant threat to institutional productivity, academic quality, and administrative efficiency. Despite its prevalence, the root causes of these phenomena remain inadequately explored, particularly in Yobe state's tertiary institutions. Existing studies on absenteeism in Nigeria often focus on generalized workforce settings, overlooking the unique socio-economic, cultural, and institutional dynamics within the polytechnic system. Factors such as inadequate remuneration, poor working conditions, job dissatisfaction, administrative inefficiencies, and socio-cultural obligations are speculated to contribute to absenteeism but lack empirical validation in the context of Yobe State makes the claims insufficient, thus this research sought to provide cogent validations on the phenomena. Furthermore, the absence of targeted research in this region has hindered the development of context-specific interventions, perpetuating cycles of low staff morale, disrupted academic calendars, and compromised service delivery.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating the hidden triggers of employee absenteeism in selected Yobe State polytechnics, aiming to uncover underlying causes that have not been systematically examined. Specifically, the study seeks to assess the prevalence and pattern of employee absenteeism, the underlying

factors contributing to employee absenteeism, the relationship between institutional policies and the absenteeism rates, and the role of socio-cultural and economic factors on the employee absenteeism in the selected tertiary institutions. By identifying these factors, the research seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and institutional administrators to design effective strategies that mitigate absenteeism and enhance organizational performance. With the aid of mixed-methods approach, this study aims to interrogate institutional policies, workplace culture, socio-economic conditions, and psychological factors that underpin absenteeism. The findings of this study provided actionable insights for policymakers and institutional decision makers to design targeted interventions, fostering a more engaged and coherent workforce environment. Ultimately, addressing absenteeism is not merely about reducing absence rates but also about strengthening the foundation of Nigeria's technical education system, ensuring it remains resilient and responsive to the need of students and society.

Hypothesis Testing

This study tested three different but related hypotheses to deepen our understanding of the real factor(s) contributing to workplace absenteeism in the study area.

H_0: workplace absenteeism is not associated with delays in monthly salary payments.

H_1: workplace absenteeism is associated with delay in monthly salary payments.

H_0: there is no linkage between workload pressure and workplace absenteeism.

H_1: to workplace absenteeism is linked to workload pressure.

H_0: there is no nexus between transportation challenges and workplace absenteeism.

H_1: Transportation problem is associated with workplace absenteeism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter outlined and discussed the literature associated with the research topic that served the basis for this study. Firstly, the meaning of workplace absenteeism was buttressed. The types of workplace absenteeism, theories and models on absenteeism were explained and the causes of workplace absenteeism were given followed by how workplace absenteeism will be minimized. This chapter ends with a brief conclusion on the reviewed literature.

Meaning and types of Absenteeism

The term "absenteeism" emanates from the Latin word, "absentia" which is largely used to describe non-attendance of employees for requisite work (Mashonganyika, 2004). Considerable to the nature of the organizations, most studies organize absenteeism into two main categories-the voluntary absenteeism and involuntary absenteeism**.** Voluntary absenteeism implies a deliberate attempt by the worker not to attain the workplace at any given working days and without any concrete reasons, while involuntary absenteeism implies the inability for a staff member to attain the workplace due to reasons beyond the immediate control of the worker, e.g. transportation problems, sickness or family funeral (Steers and Rhodes, 1978; Boxall, et al, 2007).

Theories and Models of Absenteeism

Over the past years, there have been many studies and surveys carried out to uncover what leads to absenteeism. The most noticeable theories are Psychological, sociological, the economic theory and Nicholson's "Attachment" Theory on Absenteeism. Because motivation is very much important and goes hand in hand with absenteeism, there are so many new theories of motivation which are constantly being developed which relates to absenteeism. These theories are such as the attribution theory and the Equity theory.

Psychological Theory

The psychological theory viewed absenteeism of employees in relation to the lack of individual's motivation to attend work regularly. This theory also includes the Maslow's hierarchy of needs which points to employees" impression of whether his or her contribution or presence at work has meaning or not (Maslow, 2000). Employee attendance is conceptualized as largely a function of two variables which are the ability to attend and the motivation to attend.

Sociological Theory

The Sociological theory of absenteeism focuses on the variables within society that affect employee's behaviour and decision-making regarding work at the workplace. In any institution there are numerous norms, rules, conventions, habits and values hence all these have the direct impact on employee's behaviour in relation to presence or absence at the workplace. The strength of this theory is that no one lives in a vacuum. We are surrounded by society, family and culture in everything we do. Even if you stayed in your room all day and did not see anyone, you'd still be influenced by society. What if you turned on the TV? What if you picked up a book or a magazine or logged onto the computer? All these things are influenced by society, and by extension, they are common vehicles for society to influence individuals.

Economic Theory

Under the economic theory, the assumption is that people do not truly want to work, but they do so to maintain a certain standard of living, dependent on a specific financial attainment level. Therefore, high performance of a worker will depend on monetary rewards; hence if there are no such rewards, then an individual will choose to work less hence lead to absenteeism (Treble, 2011). The traditionalist economic perspective sees the need to work competing with other alternatives as commodities within the same market. For that reason, the weakness of this theory is that it neglects other factors which lead to absenteeism, only it focuses on the economic point of view. However, in a real-world phenomenon there are other motivations behind an employee's decision to report for work or not apart from the monetary or economic rewards.

Attribution Theory

The attribution theory proposes that we watch a person's actions and then attempt to set up whether interior or exterior forces caused it. If it is judged to be inner, it is seen as being under the person's power; if it is judged to be external, it is seen because of the circumstances. Attribution is thought to be subjected to numeral considerations, because we judge events in circumstances. For instance, we review how distinguishing behaviour is and whether behaviour is curious for a particular human being.

Equity Theory

The Equity Theory is a straightforward theory which differentiates worker's inputs and the outputs. According to the presumption, the finding to this fair sense of equilibrium serves to make sure that a well-built and constructive connection is achieved with the employee, with the largely result being pleased or satisfied and motivated employees (Jex & Britt, 2008).

Nicholson's Attachment Theory of Absenteeism

As a result of the various fragmented theories to adequately explain the causes of absenteeism, Nicholson (1977) developed the attachment theory as an attempt to address the phenomenon of an employee's decision to attend work, known as attendance motivation (Patton & Johns, 2012). Nicholson believed that despite the gathering of much varied research on absenteeism there was a serious lack of theory associated with the topic. He believed that this had caused the "fragmented" nature of the research carried out on absenteeism (Nicholson, 1977).

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the theoretical framework for this study. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory about human demands and motivations which was first presented in a paper published in 1943 (Maslow, 1943) and later extended in the book "Motivation and Personality" (Maslow, 1954). To better understand what motivates human beings, Maslow proposed that human needs can be organized into a hierarchy. This hierarchy ranges from more concrete needs such as food and water to abstract concepts such as self-fulfilment. According to Maslow, when a lower need is met, the next need on the hierarchy becomes our focus of attention. These are the five categories of needs according to Maslow:

Physiological factor

These refer to basic physical needs like drinking when thirsty or eating when hungry. According to Maslow, some of these needs involve our efforts to meet the body's need for homeostasis; that is, maintaining consistent levels in different bodily systems (for example, maintaining a body temperature of 98.6°).

Safety

Once people's physiological requirements are met, the next need that arises is a safe environment. Our safety needs are apparent even early in childhood, as children have a need for safe and predictable environments and typically react with fear or anxiety when these are not met. Maslow pointed out that in adults living in developed nations, safety needs are more apparent in emergency situations (e.g. war and disasters), but this need can also explain why we tend to prefer the familiar or why we do things like purchase insurance and contribute to a savings account.

Love and Belonging

According to Maslow, the next need in the hierarchy involves feeling loved and accepted. This need includes both romantic relationships as well as ties to friends and family members. It also includes our need to feel that we belong to a social group

Esteem

Our esteem needs involve the desire to feel good about ourselves. According to Maslow, esteem needs include two components. The second component involves feeling valued by others; that is, feeling that our achievements and contributions have been recognized by other people. When people's esteem needs are met, they feel confident and see their contributions and achievements as valuable and important. However, when their esteem needs are not met, they may experience what psychologist Alfred Adler called "feelings of inferiority."

Self-Actualization

Self-actualization refers to feeling fulfilled or feeling that we are living up to our potential. One unique feature of self-actualization is that it looks different for everyone. For one person, self-actualization might involve helping others; for another person, it might involve achievements in an artistic or creative field. Essentially, self-actualization means feeling that we are doing what we believe we are meant to do. According to Maslow, achieving self-actualization is relatively rare, and his examples of famous self-actualized individuals include Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, and Mother Teresa.
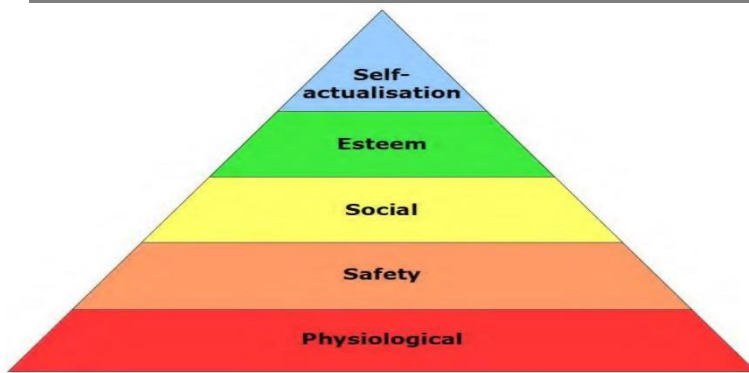
Figure 1.1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is based on the Kaizen (2020), 5M's. According to Kaizen, one useful tool to enhance employee's effectiveness is the 5 M's. By consistently examining the 5 M's, management will be able to identify when something in the process is not working and improve efficiency and profitability. This model can be used for risk management, addressing safety issues, absenteeism and improving performance.

Factors
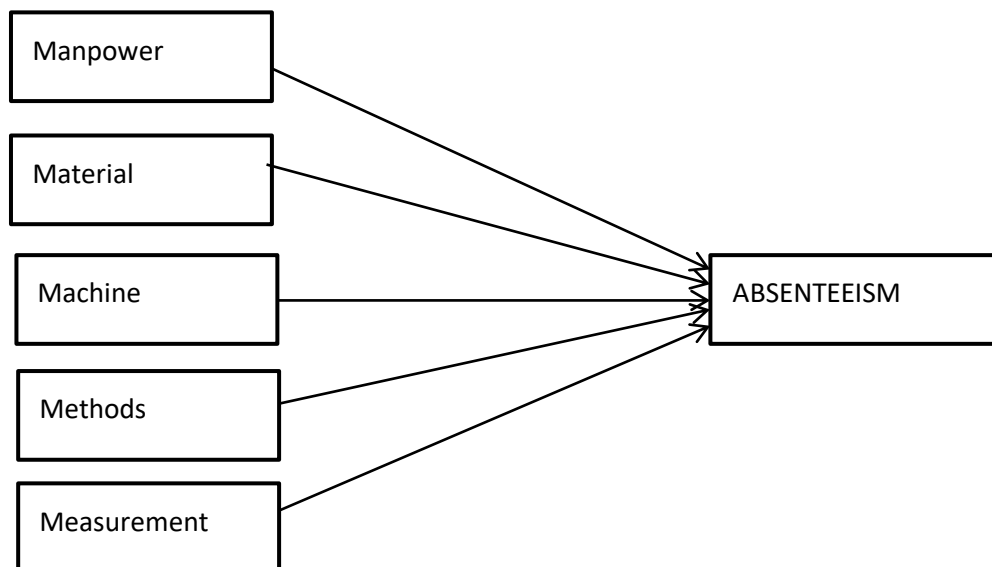
Source: Kaizen (2020)

Figure 1.2: 5 M's of absenteeism

Manpower. The first of the five M's is the most important. The right personnel for the right position are a sure bet for organizational effectiveness and efficiency. No two ways about that. Thus, tardiness and absenteeism, erratic acts, alcoholism, ill training, ineptitude are some of the significant attributes of man at work that could improve the apple cart of an organisation. Human resources determine the workings of the other four basic organisation resources. People make sure materials, machines, minutes and money are utilized in a judicious manner to achieve goals or aims and objectives of organizations and enterprises. With the right man in the right job, a large portion of effective business management will have been achieved. It is, therefore, the responsibility of managers to engage employees in continuous improvement and development. They must constantly seek feedback from employees on their health conditions, inclination and other issue related to his family or personal life. The management should also create opportunities for thoughtful changes to process standards. It is also essential that managers recognize and reward system those who are contributing to positive change. In fact, improvement should be a key component of employee goals and performance management.

Materials. Without materials, human resource is made superfluous. Thereupon, every prudent thinking and planning conscious organization knows that materials needed for any organizational activities or service must be in place before "man" can be of use in any organizational activity. The flow of materials is an important element of Kaizen. To eliminate excess inventory, a just-in-time model is adopted to chart how materials should flow in a process. Only necessary materials are in the work area.

Machines (Equipment, Technology). The need for managers to understand the operation of each piece of equipment and tool that will facilitates learning in academic milieu is obvious, but technology plays an important role in other sectors as well. In University, polytechnics, and colleges for example, "machines" might include photocopier machines and printing machines and other software applications. Whether it is a physical machine or a software application, managers must ensure that it works as expected and that use of the technology is achieving the desired goal. However, without man and materials, machines will be useless. They need to be operated by man and fed with materials. That again is a doubtless fact.

Methods. Without standards, improvement cannot occur without established standards. Once the best practice for a process is put in place and executed accordingly, administrators can guide the operational employees on how they should effectively carry out their work fittingly. Standard work procedures should be easily accessible at the worksite and contain relevant diagrams, visuals or supporting materials where necessary. Undoubtedly, the standard, while painstakingly followed, is not set in stone. Managers lead employees though an improvement cycle whenever an opportunity for improvement is uncovered. A new standard is developed and maintained until the next opportunity comes along.

Measurement. Management must have key performance indicators to appraise whether a process is running smoothly. These efforts will both uncover gaps in the workflow and serve as a foundation for tracking measurable advancements over time. Visual tools are the most powerful measurement method, as they allow people to immediately identify disruption in workflow, deviations from standard outcomes, or tasks that have not been finished on schedule.

Measurement of Absenteeism

Before implementing strategies to manage absenteeism, organisations need to evaluate the scale and impact of the problems within their workforce. Evaluating and tracking absenteeism within an organisation is essential for uncovering recurring patterns and trends, which empowers management to delve into and resolve potential root causes. A key element in monitoring workplace absenteeism is using an effective measurement tool. There are many ways to measure absenteeism, and the most common ways are through the means of „Time lost rate" and „Frequency rate" (Rhodes and Steers, 1990).

Time wastage rate: According to CIPD (2013) this method calculates the percentage of available time lost due to absenteeism. This method can be used for different departments within an organization to identify areas of concern. The formula to calculate the time lost rate is:

Frequency measure: This method shows the period an employee being absences in his or her records quantify in form of percentage. According to CIPD (2013) it calculates the spread of absenteeism in an organisation. This method does not indicate how long an absence period is or if an employee has taken more than one absence in a specified period. Nicholson's model of Attachment is based around the frequency rate method. Nicholson states that an absence dependent variable is "frequency, not time-lost" (Nicholson, 1977). The formula to calculate the frequency rate is:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology serves as a foundational element in a scholarly inquiry, systematically outlining the procedures and decisions that guide a study's execution. Brynard and Hanekom (2006) emphasize that methodology not only structures the research process but also ensures its rigor, enabling the study to contribute meaningfully to its field. This research adopts a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative interviews with staff and administrators, quantitative evaluation of attendance records, and survey data to generate

comprehensive insights. The target population comprises 575 staff members from Mai Idris Alooma Polytechnic Geidam and Federal Polytechnic Damaturu in Yobe State. Using Krejcie and Morgan's sampling table, a representative sample of 226 participants was selected. Data collection integrates both primary sources (interviews, surveys) and secondary sources (existing records). Analysis employs descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentage tabulations, alongside inferential methods, with chi-square tests applied to examine relationships between variables. This dual analytical approach ensures robust interpretation of the dataset, aligning methodological choices with the study's objectives.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the discussion of the data analysis and interpretation of the results obtained for better understanding of the research direction. The analysis and discussion of this study tailored toward ascertaining whether the objectives of the study were made.

Table 1. Level of Education

Certificate	Frequency	Percentage
PHD	25	11
MSc	31	14
BSc	120	53
HND	50	22
Total	226	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows the frequency of the sample of polytechnic staffers which comprised of 226 respondents with varying educational qualifications. Over half (53%, n=120) held bachelor's degrees (BSc), forming the largest group. Vocational education was also well-represented, with 22% (n=50) being HND holders. Postgraduate qualifications were less common, with 14% (n=31) holding master's degrees (MSc) and 11% (n=25) possessing PhDs. The prevalence of BSc holders (53%) suggests that the surveyed population predominantly consists of individuals with foundational academic training. This could imply alignment with fields where undergraduate degrees are standard (e.g., engineering, business, or applied sciences). The notable presence of HND holders (22%) highlights a substantial cohort with technical or vocational expertise, which may reflect the inclusion of industries valuing hands-on skills (e.g., technology, vocational trades). The smaller percentages of MSc (14%) and PhD (11%) holders indicate that advanced academic qualifications are less common in this sample. This distribution might mirror workforce norms in sectors where postgraduate credentials are not mandatory, or it could signal a gap in specialized expertise.

Table 2. Frequency of absenteeism among staff members.

Types of Absenteeism	Frequency	Percentage
Voluntary Absenteeism	80	35
Involuntary Absenteeism	108	48
Other Absenteeism	38	17
Total	226	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 categorized absenteeism among 226 respondents into three types. Nearly half (48%, n=108) reported involuntary absenteeism, while 35% (n=80) cited voluntary absences. A smaller proportion (17%, n=38) attributed their workplace absenteeism to other unspecified reasons. The high rate of involuntary absenteeism (48%) suggests that factors beyond employees' immediate control—such as health issues, caregiving responsibilities, or external emergencies—may significantly disrupt workplace attendance. This could signal challenges in workforce stability or well-being. The 35% voluntary absenteeism rate might reflect issues like disengagement, burnout, or personal choices (e.g., unplanned leave for leisure). This raises questions about workplace culture, job satisfaction, or flexibility in leave policies. The 17% attributed to "other" reasons underscores the need for deeper investigation into unclassified factors (e.g., hybrid work ambiguities, mental health struggles, or systemic inefficiencies). Clarifying these could refine absenteeism policies. The dominance of involuntary absences may require supportive measures (e.g., health resources, flexible schedules). Voluntary absences could indicate a need to address employee morale or work-life balance. The "other" category highlights gaps in existing absenteeism frameworks, urging tailored surveys to capture nuanced causes.

Table 3. workplace absenteeism among staffers in the preceding year

Reasons for Absenteeism	Frequency	Percentage
Holding multiple jobs	5	2
Influence of alcohol	1	0.4
Transportation cost	85	38
Social needs	4	2
extended work hours	6	3
Insufficient remuneration	50	22
Stagnant career progression	10	4.2
Security concern	50	22
Family care responsibility	10	4.4
Others	5	2
Total	226	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows the survey results from 226 respondents and identified key drivers of workplace absenteeism. Transportation costs emerged as the primary cause (38%, n=85), followed equally by poor salary and security concerns (22% each, n=50). Career stagnation (4.2%, n=10) and family responsibilities (4.4%, n=10) were moderate factors. Smaller influences included extended work hours (3%, n=6), multiple jobholding (2%, n=5), social needs (2%, n=4), and alcohol (0.4%, n=1). Unspecified "other" reasons accounted for 2% (n=5). Transportation costs (38%) overwhelmingly impact attendance, suggesting inadequate commuter support or geographic barriers. Poor salary (22%) reveals compensation dissatisfaction may directly undermine engagement. Security concerns (22%) matching salary issues signals potential safety deficiencies requiring urgent intervention. Career stagnation (4.2%) and extended hours (3%) reflect organizational culture flaws affecting retention. Family responsibilities (4.4%) indicate work-life balance gaps, particularly for caregivers.

Multiple jobholding (2%) highlights financial precarity driving divided commitments. Minimal alcohol influence (0.4%) contradicts stereotypes about substance abuse as a major absenteeism driver. "Social needs" (2%) and unspecified "other" (2%) warrant qualitative follow-up to uncover hidden dynamics. Address transport (e.g., subsidies, remote options) and security (e.g., infrastructure, protocols) as top barriers. Competitive wages and career development paths could mitigate 26%+ of absences (salary + stagnation factors). High transport costs may disproportionately affect low-income workers, while security fears could indicate location-specific risks. This analysis exposes how absenteeism is less about individual choices (e.g., alcohol, social needs) and more tied to structural issues: economic pressures, safety failures, and growth limitations. Organizations should prioritize these systemic fixes over punitive attendance policies.
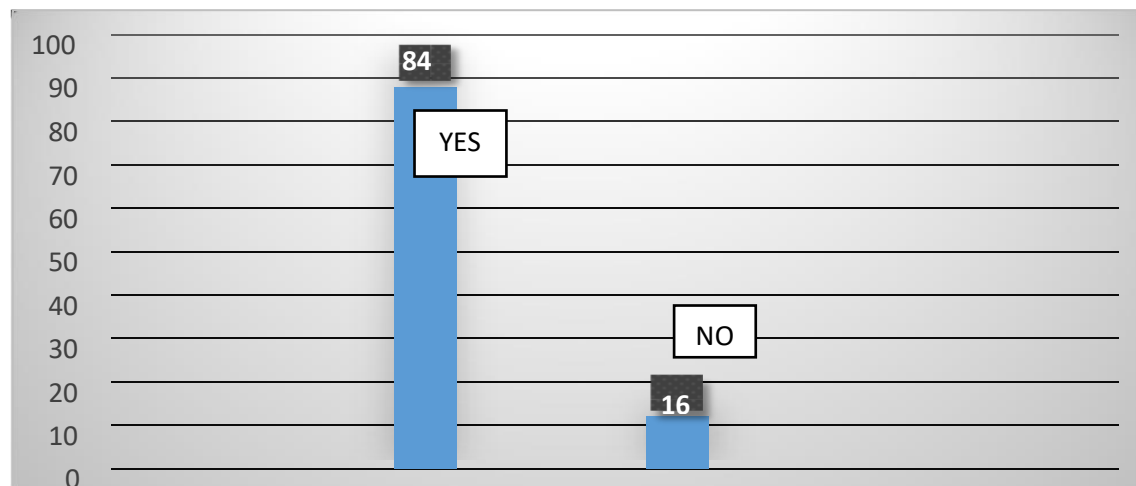

Figure 1.3. Have you been present in your workplace in the past 12 months?

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 1.3 presents result of the prevalence of absenteeism among staffers over the past one year. Among the 226 respondents, a significant majority (84%, n=189) reported being absent from work, whether voluntarily (e.g., personal leave) or involuntarily (e.g., illness). In contrast, only 16% (n=37) reported consistent presence at work during this period. The key takeaway is the remarkably high rate of absenteeism. 84% of respondents experiencing some form of absence within a year is an extremely significant finding. This suggests absenteeism is a widespread issue within the surveyed population/organization. The sheer scale (nearly 9 out of 10 employees) strongly indicates a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents. This level of absence likely has substantial operational and financial impacts (e.g., reduced productivity, increased workload on present staff, higher costs for temporary cover or overtime). Grouping voluntary and involuntary absences together shows the overall burden. However, it masks important nuances: High rates might indicate underlying health issues, workplace safety concerns, stress/burnout, or potentially seasonal factors like a severe flu season. High rates could point to issues with morale, job satisfaction, work-life balance, engagement, or even problems with company culture or management

The finding that only 16% of respondents were consistently present highlights how pervasive the issue is. It underscores that being absent at least once was the norm within this group over the year. The data simply contrasts those who were absent (84%) with those who were not absent (16%) during the period concerning absenteeism. This data is a strong red flag that necessitates deeper analysis. Understanding the proportion and reasons within each category is crucial for identifying root causes and solutions. How often and for how long are people absent? One long illness is different from frequent short absences. Surveys, interviews, or focus groups are needed to understand why absenteeism is so high (e.g., specific health issues, workload, management practices, lack of flexibility, etc.). Quantifying the operational and financial impact would strengthen the case for intervention. The data reveals an alarmingly high rate of absenteeism (84%) over the past year among respondents, indicating a significant organizational challenge. While showing the overall scale, the grouping of voluntary and involuntary absences highlights the need for more detailed analysis to understand the root causes (e.g., health issues vs. engagement problems) and develop effective strategies to

address this prevalent issue. The low consistent presence rate (16%) further emphasizes the pervasiveness of the problem.

Table 4. Agreement/disagreement between salary delays and workplace absenteeism

Staffers	Agreed	Do not Agreed	Total
Senior staffers	10	30	40
Junior staffers	20	166	186
Total	30	196	266

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5: Chi-square table on the nexus between salary delays and workplace absenteeism

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E)^2	$\underline{(O-E)^2}$ E
10	4.5	5.5	30.3	6.7
20	12.6	7.4	54.8	4.3
30	29.4	0.6	0.4	0.0
166	137.0	29	849	6.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The calculated value is 17.1

$$\frac{\sum(O-E)}{E} = 0.155$$

@ 0.05% level of significance. The degree of freedom

$$(C-1)(R-1), (2-1)(2-1)(1)(1) = 1$$

Therefore, the value of X^2 obtained from table 5 at 1 degree of freedom and at 0.05% level of significance is 3.841. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical table value (that is, 17.1 > 3.841) then, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was effective correlation between Salary delays with workplace absenteeism. This answered the first objective and concludes that delays in payment of monthly salary contribute significantly to workplace absenteeism.

Table 6: Is there any association between workload pressure and absenteeism

Staffers	For	Indifferent	Against	Total
Senior staffers	7	3	30	40
Junior staffers	20	10	156	186
Total	27	13	186	266

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 7: Chi-square table on the linkage between workload pressure and absenteeism

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E)²	(O-E)² E
7	4.8	2.2	4.84	1.0
20	18.6	1.4	1.96	0.1
3	1.7	1.3	4.03	2.4
10	8.9	1.1	1.21	0.1
30	32.9	-2.9	8.41	0.3
156	153	3	9	0.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The calculated value is 4.0

$$\frac{\sum(O-E)}{E} = 0.155$$

@ 0.05% level of significance. The degree of freedom

$$(C-1)(R-1), (3-1)(2-1)(2)(1) = 2$$

Therefore, the value of X^2 obtained in table 7 at 2 degrees of freedom is 5.991. Since our computed value is less than the one in table 8 (that is, 4.0<5.991), hence we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that no association between workload pressure and workplace absenteeism. This study, therefore, found no association between the level of workload pressure (high, medium, or low) and absenteeism rates.

Table 8: Is there linkage between transportation challenges and workplace absenteeism

Staffers	No	Yes	Total
Senior staffers	10	30	40
Junior staffers	20	166	186
Total	30	196	266

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 9: Chi-square table on the nexus between transportation challenges and workplace absenteeism

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E)²	(O-E)² E
10	4.5	5.5	30.3	6.7
20	12.6	7.4	54.8	4.3
30	29.4	0.6	0.4	0.0
166	137.0	29	849	6.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The calculated value is 17.1

$$\frac{\sum(0-E)}{E} = 0.155$$

@ 0.05% level of significance. The degree of freedom

$$(C-1)(R-1), (2-1)(2-1)(1)(1) = 1$$

Therefore, the value of X^2 obtained in table 9 at 1 degree of freedom is 5.991. The value of calculated chi-square is 17.1. Since the calculated value is bigger than the critical value (that is, 17.1>5.991), we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that transportation challenges increase workplace absenteeism. The result of this study strongly supports that transportation challenges directly lead to higher absenteeism frequency.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that absenteeism among academic staff in Nigerian Polytechnics stems from a multifaceted set of interconnected factors. Key contributors identified include health concerns, workplace behavioural dynamics, transportation cost burdens, leadership styles and effectiveness, organizational structural and procedural challenges, delays in salary payment, family-related obligations and issues, levels of job satisfaction, and individual personality characteristics. Consequently, addressing this complex array of underlying causes is essential for developing effective strategies to reduce absenteeism within these institutions. Prior to implementing specific absenteeism control policies, however, organizations must accurately gauge the severity of the problem. Systematic analysis and measurement of absenteeism are pivotal, enabling the identification of patterns and trends. This process facilitates management's ability to probe the root causes behind absence episodes. Crucially, employing an effective measurement tool is fundamental to successfully monitoring and understanding workplace absenteeism within the academic setting of Yobe State Polytechnics.

Based on the outcome of the research findings, this study provides the following recommendations:

The polytechnics should develop standardized, transparent human resource policies that proactively address absenteeism triggers (e.g., health, family crises). Introduce confidential counselling services, flexible work arrangements (where feasible), and clear protocols for legitimate leave. Regular human resource-staff engagement forums should be mandated to build trust and early intervention.

The polytechnic decision makers should launch targeted staff wellness and security programs. Given Yobe state's unique socio-economic and security challenges, institutions must implement context-specific interventions to reduce the prevalence of absenteeism in the tertiary institutions.

Decision makers in the polytechnics should partner with local security agencies to provide safe transportation, campus security upgrades, and emergency protocols.

The polytechnics should give priority to wellness programs by subsidizing healthcare screenings, mental health support, and hardship funds for emergencies (e.g., flooding, family loss).

The polytechnics should prioritize affordable, secure on-campus staff housing to reduce commute risks.

Government should initiate the polytechnic revitalization fund to upgrade the deteriorating infrastructure (labs, staff offices, lecture halls).

The polytechnics must ensure timely salary payments and review compensation packages to match economic realities.

Recommendations for Further Studies

This study highlights significant opportunities for future research on workplace absenteeism within Nigeria. Due to resource constraints limiting the sample to two institutions. Therefore, subsequent research should expand the scope to include a more representative sample of junior and other staff across all Nigerian higher education institutions. Additionally, further studies should specifically investigate the organizational costs associated with absenteeism. Furthermore, quantitative research is recommended to critically assess the impact of absenteeism in the Nigerian workplace.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article

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