



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

# Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/paid](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/paid)



## Understanding non-work presenteeism: Relationships between emotional intelligence, boredom, procrastination and job stress



Howe Chern Wan<sup>a</sup>, Luke A. Downey<sup>a,b</sup>, Con Stough<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Centre for Human Psychopharmacology, Swinburne University of Technology, Australia

<sup>b</sup> Department of Psychology, Swansea University, Wales, UK

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Available online 10 February 2014

#### Keywords:

Presenteeism  
Emotional intelligence  
Boredom  
Procrastination  
Job stress  
EI

### ABSTRACT

Non-work related presenteeism refers to the behaviour of employees who engage in personal activities instead of work-related activities whilst at work. Currently, limited research exists concerning non-work related presenteeism, despite the suggestion that it can financially impact organisations more than absenteeism. The aim of the present study was to examine whether any significant relationships existed between non-work related presenteeism and four theoretically linked psychological variables: emotional intelligence (EI), job stress, boredom, and procrastination. Data was collected via an online questionnaire. A sample of 57 male and 127 female full-time employees across several industries and organisations completed the surveys. As hypothesised, a significant relationship was observed between non-work related presenteeism and EI ( $r = -0.25$ ), boredom ( $r = 0.33$ ) and procrastination ( $r = 0.26$ ). Self-reported levels of job stress, however, were not significantly related to non-work related presenteeism. These results suggest that developing EI and improving job-related engagement may decrease non-work presenteeism.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

It has been suggested that non-work related presenteeism is a growing cause for concern for organisations, especially in business environments where global competitiveness demands a highly efficient and productive workforce (D'Abate & Eddy, 2007). Defined as attending work but engaging in personal activities, presenteeism has been estimated to cost organisations in America US\$8875 per employee per year based upon the fraction of lost productivity from reported salary figures (D'Abate & Eddy, 2007). The total cost of lowered productivity in that study due to non-work related presenteeism was approximately US\$1,020,625 per annum. Compared to absenteeism, which is defined as not attending scheduled work (Johns, 2010), presenteeism is becoming a bigger financial problem for organisations (Goetzel et al., 2004; Hertz & Baker, 2002), accounting for 63% of Bank One's health-related costs (US\$311.8 million), while absenteeism contributed to 6% (US\$27 million) of the costs (Hemp, 2004). This finding suggests that employees who attend work, and who are unable to work effectively due to illness or personal problems, significantly cost an organisation in terms of lowered productivity. This lowered productivity manifests as working slowly, lower quality of work,

lower quantity of output, and making more mistakes on the job (Hemp, 2004).

Non-work related presenteeism is defined in the present study as attending work, but not performing effectively on the job due to a lack of concentration (Johns, 2010, 2011; Simpson, 1998) as a result of the employee engaging in personal activities (D'Abate & Eddy, 2007). The act of engaging in non-work related activities, such as checking one's personal email, or surfing the Internet, are brief activities that can be discontinued at will, and which are immediately rewarding (Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001). The rationale that non-work related activities require only a small amount of time make them popular forms of procrastination (Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001). Currently, there is a lack of literature on non-work related presenteeism, as most researchers tend to focus their attention on the medical aspects of presenteeism (Aronsson, Gustafsson, & Dallner, 2000; Hemp, 2004; Sanderson & Cocker, 2013), otherwise known as sickness presenteeism, which is defined as an employee going to work, but not being able to work at full productivity due to illness or medical conditions (Aronsson et al., 2000; Chatterji & Tilley, 2002; Hemp, 2004). To date, only limited examination of the construct of non-work related presenteeism has occurred (D'Abate, 2005; D'Abate & Eddy, 2007; Johns, 2010, 2011).

An early study concerning non-work related presenteeism (D'Abate & Eddy, 2007) identified that a positive relationship existed between levels of employee procrastination and non-work

\* Tel.: +61 3 9214 5781; fax: +61 3 9214 5002.

E-mail address: [cstough@swin.edu.au](mailto:cstough@swin.edu.au) (C. Stough).

related presenteeism. Through procrastination, the employee may engage in other tasks than those supposed to be completed (Davis, Flett, & Besser, 2002), and this may occur for variable reasons such as the employee being either stressed or bored at work (D'Abate, 2005). It has been suggested that with regard to illness-related presenteeism that "when people don't feel good, they simply don't do their best work" (Hemp, 2004, p. 55). Similarly, when organisations acknowledge that employees work best when they feel good emotionally (Oosthuizen, Koortzen, & Ramesar, 2009), they reap the benefits in terms of long-term sustainability and profitability through employee productivity (Mikolajczak, Roy, Luminet, Fillée, & de Timary, 2007). Employees who are distracted by personal or non-work related matters tend to be less focused on their work, which leads to lower productivity and quality of output (D'Abate & Eddy, 2007). There are, however, suggestions that there may be some benefits in letting employees engage in non-work related activities (Belanger & Van Slyke, 2002; D'Abate & Eddy, 2007), with employees casual browsing of the internet possibly helping them develop skills that could be utilised by their company in the future (Blanchard & Henle, 2008) or engender feelings of camaraderie or appreciation when employees are able to complete or conduct reasonable amounts of personal activities within work hours. This presents a dilemma for organisations: If non-work related presenteeism does not reduce the employee's productivity, should it be ignored? Or encouraged; given it may improve productivity in some employees by counteracting the effect of common workplace concerns such as job stress or boredom, or reduce procrastination.

Job stress has been previously related to job satisfaction, motivation, performance and job withdrawal behaviour (Antón, 2009; Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976; Duraisingam, Pidd, & Roche, 2009). Job stress has various contributors such as the employee's role, their physical environment, and social environment stress (Blau, 1981). Role stress in particular occurs when role requirements of the job outweigh the employees ability to cope with the demands (Lambert, Hogan, & Tucker, 2009). Further to this, a lack of motivation to work through job requirements may lead to feelings of boredom and provide idle time, allowing employees to engage in non-work related activities (D'Abate, 2005).

Boredom within the workplace has been reported to lead to negative workplace consequences such as turnovers, dissatisfaction, accidents, and performance decrements (Game, 2007; Loukidou, Loan-Clarke, & Daniels, 2009). While no unanimous definition exists on whether it is an emotion, state or trait, boredom has been described as an emotional state that is a result of low levels of stimulation (Game, 2007; Loukidou et al., 2009). The lack of stimulation then leads to a search for variety which, if unfulfilled, results in an uneasy experience of boredom (Fisher, 1993). Job monotony has been given much emphasis as the cause of boredom at work (Smith, 1981). Research has shown that it is not always the monotonous nature of repetitive work that induces boredom in an employee (Fisher, 1993; Loukidou et al., 2009), rather, it is the lack of stimulation in one's work that leads to feelings of boredom (Klapp, 1986). In contrast, even work that is highly stimulating, but perceived as meaningless or overwhelming due to a lack of direction or having too many possibilities, can also result in boredom (Fisher, 1993; Loukidou et al., 2009). Where a task is perceived to be uninteresting or boring, attention levels are impaired, resulting in errors or non-work related thoughts. In dealing with the boredom experienced at work, individuals may engage in non-work related strategies such as letter writing, reading, playing games, e-mailing, using the Internet, or smoking (D'Abate, 2005; Fisher, 1993; Game, 2007). This suggests there is an obvious link between non-work related presenteeism and the alleviation of boredom (D'Abate, 2005).

Similar to boredom, procrastination is a common phenomenon in society, with most people engaging in it at one time or another

(Kachgal, Hansen, & Nutter, 2001). Procrastination is defined as delaying a task that is under an individual's control, where the delay itself is under the control of the individual, and the task is one that needs to be completed (Ackerman & Gross, 2005). Ackerman and Gross suggested that the individual is aware of the work that needs to be completed, but is unable to find the self-motivation to perform within a certain time frame. Studies have suggested that job characteristics are related to procrastination (Lonergan & Maher, 2000), and that people tend to procrastinate on tasks that are not stimulating, unpleasant, difficult, or are imposed upon them (Blunt & Pychyl, 2005). The effect of procrastination include negative work outcomes such as lower productivity and poorer performance (Thatcher, Wretschko, & Fridjhon, 2008). Despite the negative outcomes of procrastination, it may not be entirely detrimental to the organisation, and employees may instead obtain some personal benefits from it (Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001). By putting themselves in a time pressured scenario, employees can create a challenge for themselves when performing easy, routine tasks, which could lead to faster completion times (Ohly & Fritz, 2010). It can also create a temporary relief from stress (Ackerman & Gross, 2005; Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001), or alleviate a bad mood temporarily.

The construct of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). This ability has been examined in a wide variety of clinical, social, and workplace capacities. It has been suggested for employees to be more successful at work, in terms of interpersonal relationships and managing work-related problems they need to have well developed EI skills in addition to desirable personality traits and intellect (Downey, Lee, & Stough, 2011). Recent research suggests that a positive relationship exists between EI and job performance (Boyatzis, Good, & Massa, 2012; Carmeli & Josman, 2006; Downey et al., 2011; O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, & Story, 2011), and that through tailored EI development programs, employees can improve their own performance directly by improving their level of EI (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2004; Groves, McEnrue, & Shen, 2008; Jordan, 2009). More emotionally intelligent workers are suggested to be more able to maintain positive affective states, and are able to use their emotions to overcome workplace challenges and enhance their own and others' moods, and handle emotions while motivating those around them towards a goal (Carmeli & Josman, 2006; Downey, Papageorgiou, & Stough, 2006; O'Boyle et al., 2011). Employees who are low on EI, however, are thought to be less effective in managing stress and its negative effects, and less aware of their emotions (Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002). This may lead to negative attitudes towards their profession such as isolating or withdrawing from work altogether, as it is harder for them to engage in positive coping behaviours. Extant research has also illustrated that in response to work stressors such as role ambiguity and role overload, poor coping abilities can result in poorer interpersonal relations and job performance at the individual employee level and impact upon organisation's as a whole in terms of productivity (Bagozzi, 2003; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009).

With employees EI having been observed to have a positive relationship with job performance and career commitment, and a negative relationship with withdrawal intentions, it has also been suggested that EI may significantly reduce an employee's intention to withdraw from work because through their ability to regulate their emotions and cope with stress, persisting in challenging times and finding creative ways to overcome workplace difficulties (Cartwright & Pappas, 2008; Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey, 2006). Given that higher EI predicts better work outcomes such as improved job performance, work climate, productivity, and career success and that boredom, procrastination, and job stress are likely contributors to non-work presenteeism; the aim of the present

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7252336>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7252336>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)