

## Withdrawal Behaviours and Absenteeism at Work Post Covid-19

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### Abstract

Withdrawal behaviours and their manifestation in the form of absenteeism are negatively linked with the productivity of organizations and, therefore, a cause for concern for the management. This paper is aimed at discerning the determinants of withdrawal behaviour at an individual, group, and organizational level so as to formulate policies to mitigate the negative implications. This paper is a review of published literature on withdrawal and absenteeism at work and summarises critical points in relation to the Covid situation. This paper further reviews the problem during and post-pandemic literature and suggests the next steps in addressing it. Electronic databases of published peer-reviewed journals have been included in formulating the conceptual framework. Evidence-based research suggests Biographical characteristics, surface level, and deep-level diversities, including age, gender, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation, are important individual-level inputs that determine the form in which employees will manifest withdrawal cognition. Additionally, group structure, cohesion, leadership style, organizational justice, and organizational culture are antecedents of withdrawal behaviour at the group or organizational level. Furthermore, the analysis of determinants and antecedents provided for inferring the positive impact of withdrawal behaviour on emotional exhaustion, which in turn may prevent turnover and increase productivity, provided that the organization positively reacts to the coping mechanism. All the above-mentioned inferences were instrumental in solving the dichotomy of evidence with respect to the impact of a continuing crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic on withdrawal behaviour, and the analysis indicates that the manifestation of withdrawal behaviours is aggravated in such situations. In the current scenario, human resource management should aim at enhancing employee engagement, job commitment, and job satisfaction by furthering the psychological contract of role expectation via assuring job security, providing compensation, engaging in active communication, and accommodating employees' psychological needs.

**Keywords:** *Withdrawal behaviour, absenteeism, diversity, organizational inputs, COVID-19 pandemic*



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### INTRODUCTION

The efficiency and productivity of organizations and the impact of employee behaviour on them have been one of the most important pillars of organizational behaviour studies. Employees and their behaviour are key antecedents of service quality, competitive advantage, organizational efficiency, and productivity (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Even-Zohar, 2011). The bond of job commitment and job satisfaction are instrumental in predisposing employees to perform their jobs efficiently and manifest extra-job-role behaviours, both of which, in turn, maintain the productivity and innovation levels in an organizational setting (Chen & Yuan, 2014). However, the gradual erosion of the aforementioned bond leads to employee disengagement, which manifests as withdrawal from work or from the organization, and in either N case, this disengagement is detrimental to the efficiency of the organization (De Stobbeir et al., 2018).

While withdrawal behaviours may be of different types, absenteeism remains the most widespread and potentially the costliest problem (Hansen et al., 2019). Withdrawal from work is

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one of the production deviances that employees manifest either in the form of psychological disengagement or physical disengagement (Akerstrom et al., 2021). Absenteeism is a physical manifestation of withdrawal from work and has negative economic repercussions on the organization. In India, an average of 10 percent of the country's labour force is absent at any given time; this translates to a direct cost of approximately 9 percent of payroll (Basariya, 2013). In the United States, unscheduled absenteeism costs employers 8.7 percent of payroll (Robbins & Judge, 2013). According to another report based in the United States, which considered the productivity loss across several occupations, provided that unscheduled absence costs approximately \$3600 per year for each hourly work (CIRCADIAN, 2014).

The negative implications that absenteeism has on an organization make it an important issue to be studied for the purpose of its successful management. Withdrawal behaviour manifested in the form of absenteeism has been an important topic of research in human resource management studies, and the empirical evidence suggests that absenteeism, which is organizationally unexcused, is the most problematic form of absent behaviour (Bukchin & Cohen, 2013). In addition to this, with respect to identifying excessive absenteeism so as to assess the severity of the negative impact on the organization, it is the measure of the frequency of absence in a specific period of time which takes primacy over the duration of absence (Bierla et al., 2013). Furthermore, withdrawal behaviour, including absenteeism, is a work outcome and is therefore influenced by input variables and processes like biographical characteristics, group structure, leadership style, etcetera (Quratulain & Al-Hawari, 2021).

The importance of mitigating excessive withdrawal and absenteeism predisposes the need for locating the causes of discontent and disengagement, which can then be either modified or eliminated. Several common causes which are provided as reasons for absence behaviour include sickness, availability of transport facilities, duration of work hours, time of working, i.e., whether the employee is working night shift or day shift, accidents, social and religious functions, drinking and amusement, nature of work, etc. (Basariya, 2013). The study of withdrawal behaviour and absenteeism is indispensable in understanding the context behind employee behaviour which in turn will allow human resource managers of organizations to frame policies to mitigate the negative impacts of withdrawal behaviour.

Additionally, the current scenario is marked by increasing competitiveness and job demands, which in turn has led to a myriad of stressors and emotional exhaustion (Byrne et al., 2017). In addition, the job-hopping tendency in various sectors is associated with a low level of job commitment which is also an important antecedent of withdrawal behavior. Furthermore, the pandemic scenario has prompted organizations and employees to shift their work to the virtual platform, and evidence suggests that the stress due to risk to health and life, coupled with the stress due to economic downtimes, is aggravated even further due the blurring of lines between work and family thereby increasing conflict between them (Karatepe et al., 2020).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Withdrawal Behaviour**

The set of psychological or physical actions that employees undertake so as to disengage themselves from the work and organization is referred to as withdrawal behaviour. Withdrawal behaviour is a type of counterproductive work behaviour which negatively impacts the interest and

productivity of the organization. The first basic theory of the progression of job withdrawal demarcated the various forms of withdrawal behaviour - commitment, absenteeism, and turnover (Farrell & Petersen, 1984). Job satisfaction and employee engagement, and commitment are important determinants of withdrawal behaviours (Robbins & Judge, 2013). There are several other input variables at the individual, group, and organizational levels, which lead to the manifestation of different forms of withdrawal behaviours (Newstrom, 2007).

The above-mentioned input variables are inclusive of but not limited to leadership, management policies, role expectations, work environment, co-worker behaviour, biographical characteristics, etcetera (Alexander, 2005). The manifestation of withdrawal behaviour has either been studied independently based on the premise that each form is unique (Rosse, 1988) or has been studied with the aim of establishing links between them (Mobley, 1982). Although there have been several studies that provide that no such link exists between the different forms of withdrawal behaviours (Carmeli, 2005), the dominant view that continues to persist is that the forms of withdrawal behaviours are positively related (Koslowsky, 2009). There is evidence to support that there exists a sequential aspect to the various forms of withdrawal behaviours (Berry et al., 2012), and employee withdrawal is first reflected in lateness which is regarded as a mild form of withdrawal, followed by absenteeism, and, finally, turnover. The correlation between withdrawal behaviour and individual attitudes has been proven to be mediated by withdrawal cognitions and cost-benefit calculations (Koslowsky, 2009). Employee withdrawal also arises as a consequence of perceived unfairness in the distributive and procedural justice systems of the organization (Howard & Cordes, 2010).

In addition to this, employee behavioural activation and inhibition systems, which in turn are dependent on the big five personality trait dimensions, are important determinants of withdrawal behaviour in organization settings (Renn et al., 2014). Furthermore, the plurality of withdrawal behaviours at work is also impacted by employee's self-regulatory goal-directed tasks (Bélanger et al., 2016) and can also be a consequence of mistreatment by customers, the linkage of which is mediated by emotional exhaustion (Wang & Wang, 2017). Studies have also asserted the mediating effect that withdrawal behaviour has on despotic leadership and employee performance (Nauman et al., 2020).

### **Absenteeism**

Absenteeism is a form of withdrawal behaviour manifested by employees and involves temporary withdrawal from work for a myriad of reasons ranging from psychological, physical, and family issues (Mathis & Jackson, 2004). Absenteeism has severe negative economic implications for organizations, particularly those whose production is based on an assembly-line approach (Martocchio & Jimeno, 2003). Absenteeism has been one of the oldest and most researched concepts in organizational behaviour, with studies elaborating on the basis of the said employee behaviour so as to formulate solutions to counter absenteeism, which in turn would enhance the productivity and efficiency of organizations (Behrend, 1951).

Several different parameters have been used to distinguish different types of absenteeism, voluntary and involuntary (March & Simon, 1958), authorized and unauthorized (Gibson, 1966; Johns, 1978), organizationally excused and organizationally unexcused (Blau, 1985), etcetera. Time-lost measures and frequency of absence are the two important metrics for absenteeism.

Absenteeism is also regarded as a strategy employed to navigate the supervisor-subordinate tension (Biron & Bamberger, 2012), and the decision to attend work is based on the aim moulding the supervisor-subordinate relationship so as to reach the desired pole in the dialectic tension (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Furthermore, absenteeism, unemployment, and production are cointegrated, and absenteeism is inversely proportional to unemployment and production (Audas & Goddard, 2001).

Referent group norms, like peer absence norms, have a positive impact on absenteeism, and the positive relation of the latter to absenteeism is amplified in the case of those subordinates who perceive the supervisor to be less supportive (Biron & Bamberger, 2012). Self-reported absenteeism rates span behaviour settings. Additionally, the aforementioned rate and strength of social expectations correspond with each other (Harrison & Price, 2003). The rate of absenteeism varies depending on the firm family status, stronger career incentives, and concentration of ownership (Bennedson et al., n.d.). Family-supportive policies are instrumental in curbing absenteeism as it has also been linked to family structure and family-work burnout (Erickson et al., 2000). The rate of absenteeism in the case of lower tenure employees increases in accordance with the dominant norm of the organization. However, the aforementioned effect is moderated by the perception of social context. (Dello Russo et al., 2013).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Due to all the above-mentioned scenarios, it becomes pertinent to revisit the evidence available on withdrawal behaviour and absenteeism so as to discern the determinants and antecedents of the said employee behaviour, which in turn could be instrumental in framing management policies in a direction that increases job commitment and job satisfaction, mitigates the possibility and negative impact of withdrawal behaviour and thus, enables organizations to emerge successful in the current competitive business environment. This research aims to undertake a systematic review of the literature on withdrawal behaviour and absenteeism so as to delineate the determinants and antecedents. The discernment of the above-mentioned aspect will be instrumental in understanding the positive implications of withdrawal behaviour, which is a research gap in the existing literature. In addition to this, the determinants of withdrawal behaviour and its linkage with emotional exhaustion will infer the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on an employee's behaviour.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Antecedents to Withdrawal and Absenteeism at work**

#### **A. Biographical characteristics are important determinants of the occurrence of absenteeism as a form of withdrawal behaviour**

Individual-level inputs include diversity, personality, and values; as these inputs determine the process that an individual chooses to undertake, they inevitably become important determinants of the outcomes (Rudolph et al., 2017). Withdrawal behaviour is one of the several outcomes manifested at an individual level; this manifestation is determined by the inputs and, in turn, also influences them (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Surface level diversity, like race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, etcetera, can trigger withdrawal

behaviour in the employee through several pathways (Mallette & Cabrera, 1991). Age is an important determinant of the form of withdrawal behaviour that employees manifest. Empirical evidence suggests that in cases where seniority in age coincides with seniority in tenure at the organization, employees are more committed to the organization, and disengagement and dissatisfaction with work will not result in a manifestation of excessive absenteeism due to the loyalty that employees feel towards the organization (Pinto et al., 2017). In addition to this, due to fewer employment opportunities with an increase in age, employees do not manifest withdrawal in the form of turnover (Dello Russo et al., 2013).

However, organization policies like eldercare policies, pension provisions, etcetera can be important determinants in shaping perception, and negative perception would be reflected in employee withdrawal in the form of absenteeism (Zacher & Winter, 2011). Ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation determine the form of withdrawal behaviour that employees manifest through pathways like discrimination, incivility at the workplace, and ingroup formation (Jones, 2009). The aforementioned pathways can negatively impact the emotions and perception of workplace culture and justice, both distributive and procedural (Cole et al., 2010). The negative impact on the processes through which employees engage in turn impacts the work outcome, and studies suggest that absenteeism is the most common and frequently opted form of withdrawal behaviour in such organizational settings (Howard & Cordes, 2010). In addition to the demographic characteristics, deep-level diversity, such as values, and stress-handling mechanisms, can determine the form of withdrawal behaviour that an employee chooses to undertake (Griffeth et al., 1999). Evidence suggests that turnover is a high-risk choice; disengaged and dissatisfied employees manifest withdrawal in the form of absenteeism which is regarded as the milder and safest form of disengaging from work or organization (Tak, 2011).

#### **B. Group and Organizational level variables are antecedents of withdrawal behaviour**

Organizational norms and variables like group structures, style of leadership, organizational culture, human resource management policies, etcetera can be important determinants of the form of withdrawal behaviour (Koslowsky, 2009). Studies suggest that group and organizational level antecedents play an instrumental role, and at times the primary role is the absent behaviour of employees (Biron & Bamberger, 2012). Group cohesiveness and group structure are inputs that influence the strength of withdrawal behaviour at work (Harrison & Price, 2003). In addition to this, organizational culture is an antecedent of withdrawal behaviour, with studies establishing a moderate to strong link with absenteeism (Falkenburg & Schyns, 2007).

Organizational norms and the norms of the referent group would determine the type of employee behaviour that is sanctioned or accepted and, in turn, is useful in assessing withdrawal cognition (Alexander, 2005). Role expectation is another determinant of withdrawal behaviour (Newstrom, 2007); the expected behaviour and tolerance levels can be perceived through the organization's reaction to the psychological contract violations on the part of co-workers (Brummelhuis et al., 2016). Psychological contract violation on the part of the organization has been associated with greater work withdrawal (Song & Lee, 2020). Organizational justice, perception of fairness, and equity in the organization have

also been linked with withdrawal cognition and behaviour (Cole et al., 2010). Of the three forms of justice, distributive, procedural, and interactional, procedural justice has been strongly associated with withdrawal behaviour (Akerstrom et al., 2021).

In addition to this, the relationship between distributive and interpersonal justice and employees' withdrawal behaviour is mediated by emotional exhaustion (Liao et al., 2008). Withdrawal cognition linked with the perception of organizational justice is generally manifested in the form of absenteeism, however, turnover intentions are also a prominent work outcome in the aforementioned case (Bukchin & Cohen, 2013). Leadership style, leader-member exchange, and reward systems are also linked to withdrawal behaviour in employees, and the linkage is usually established through the pathway of employee engagement (Nauman et al., 2020). Supervisor-subordinate relations can have a negative impact on employee attitude and emotions and, in turn, trigger withdrawal behaviours (Graen et al., 1982). Furthermore, the strength of differentiation that the leader does between their employees and ingroup formation can also result in employee disengagement (Kim & Beehr, 2019). Withdrawal behaviour has a positive impact on the stress level of employees. Individual motivation levels are an important prerequisite in the assessment of withdrawal cognition (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Theories pertaining to emotional regulation put forth the premise that employee withdrawal from work or organization may be a coping mechanism for emotional exhaustion (Martinko et al., 2002).

Production deviances, including withdrawal behaviour, are processes that employees undertake to gain control over stressors Neuman and Baron (2005). Job stressors, work overload, and perceived inequity lead to emotional exhaustion, which in turn is linked with withdrawal behaviour (Krischer et al., 2010). This disengagement from work or organizations is a key indicator of effective coping in an organizational setting (Bies et al., 1997; Folger & Skarlicki, 2005). The aforementioned coping behaviour can be productive or counterproductive based on individual differences (Diefendorff & Mehta, 2007). Withdrawal behaviours aim to tackle the source of stress and emotional exhaustion either directly or indirectly; this attack, in turn, mitigates the negative implications of stress on employee productivity (Sliter et al., 2012). Withdrawal behaviours like absenteeism allow employees to escape stressful situations at work, like aversive workplace culture, despotic leadership, group conflict, and perceived inequity (Ighravwe et al., 2016). This avoidance in the form of withdrawal behaviour allows employees to meet their self-regulated goals and maintain productivity levels that would have otherwise been hampered had they not been absent (Zatzick & Iverson, 2011).

In addition to this, lenient organizational policies, particularly those pertaining to motivation, allows the employee to cope with emotional exhaustion and maintain motivation levels and engagement (Chi & Liang, 2013). Furthermore, tolerance to mild withdrawal behaviours like absenteeism reflects is linked with perceived positive organizational norms and culture, and this is associated with increased job commitment (Carmeli & Gefen, 2005). Withdrawal behaviour may also benefit the organization if the withdrawal cognitions and behaviours are assessed by the management so as to ascertain the antecedents to such employee behaviour (Diestel & Schmidt, 2010). This assessment can be used by the organization to improve the work environment, which in turn would

increase organizational commitment and job satisfaction, thereby mitigating existing as well as future withdrawal cognitions.

**C. COVID-19 pandemic and the occurrence of withdrawal behaviour at work**

There is a dichotomy in evidence pertaining to the impact of a crisis, particularly an economic crisis like the one caused due to the COVID-19 pandemic, on withdrawal behaviour. In the case of organizations that lay off employees during economic downturns, evidence suggests that those who remain report losses in job commitment and satisfaction and an increase in stress and dissatisfaction (Birla et al., 2013). In addition to this, withdrawal from work, both psychological withdrawal and physical withdrawal in the form of an increase in sick leaves, have been reported (Audas & Goddard, 2001). Other sets of studies suggest that economic crisis threatens the existence of organizations which in turn motivates the employees to undertake decisions that are essential to reaching the requisite efficiency and productivity level that would ensure the survival of the organization, and these decisions usually involve not manifesting withdrawal behaviours (de Reuver et al., 2019).

Organizations that go a step further by accommodating employee needs, like rearranging working hours, providing the flexible option of working from home, and applying for employee assistance programs significantly reduce the negative influence of the crisis situation (Qin & Jiang, 2011). Furthermore, in the above-mentioned cases, employee motivation levels increase, and employees tend to reciprocate the effort put forth by the organization in mitigating the effect of the crisis by increasing efficiency and productivity levels (Qin & Jiang, 2011). Nonetheless, in situations like those of a pandemic where the risk to life is a glaring possibility, organizations that continue to function physically report increased withdrawal behaviour, particularly in the form of increased absenteeism (Stergiou & Farmaki, 2021). In addition to this, during the pandemic, such organizations have relaxed leave policies and have toned down the negative reaction to absenteeism so as to mitigate the health risks of other employees, which in turn has increased the accepted level of absenteeism (Qureshi et al., 2005).

Furthermore, with most organizations shifting to virtual platforms and employees having to work from home, the lines between work and home have blurred, thereby increasing stress levels and family-work conflict (Boyar et al., 2005). In virtual settings, the psychological withdrawal behaviour becomes more rampant as the physical forms of lateness and absenteeism cannot be manifested (Shoes & Probst, 2012). Additionally, with the shifting of work to online platforms, group cohesion decreases, which is linked with increased withdrawal behaviour (Garg & Singh, 2019). The rising stress among the population pushed them towards digital modes of entertainment to keep themselves engaged and reduce their psychological strain (Prati & Mancini, 2021). Meanwhile, companies had to bring in the medium of work from home in order to continue operations of a company. While some companies were successful in implementing work from home in lieu of Covid 19, many companies were unable to do so and, due to lack of productivity, had to face a decline in both their revenue as well as profit.

The result of a decline in revenue led to an exodus of people towards the state of unemployment. The affected ones usually belonged to the migrant factory working economy and had to leave their place of work and move toward their home states. The organised sector felt little to no problem during this era; some companies reported profits much greater than what they expected during a crisis like this. The mandatory application of work from home became a dual-edged sword for companies. While on the one hand, the results from the employees became better, and the employees slowly started to become mentally dependent on their family members; this bond was further strengthened by the elongated period for which they stayed at their homes around their near and dear ones. Though it was extremely important to maintain this relationship at an individual level, it became a problem for the company that had hired the person.

Similarly, psychological problems that hampered the work-life could easily be identified after or during the social isolation caused due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These psychological problems could lead to social withdrawal of the person resulting in low work management efficiency and technique. This Hypothesis can be backed by the Great resignation (Cook, 2021). There has been a steep rise in the resignation provided by mid-career employees who generally belong to the age group of 30-45; this drive was carried by the various opportunities that were available to them after the Covid-19 pandemic. This can also be testified as there was a lack of mid-career employees during the remote work period, and no lower-level employee could easily transit due to the mid-level due to no proper learning experience. As there was no proper skill enhancement for the lower-level employees, they chose to stick with their jobs during this uncertain time.

The age group of 25-30 also chose to change their jobs mainly due to better prospects and opportunities, mainly with regard to pay. Though pay was an important factor in their change in job, most of the employees who resigned preferred to have flexible working practices, health benefits, security, etc., in order to maintain their lifestyle owing to inflation (Qian, 2021). The dearth of benefits relating to health and security was brought into the limelight after the pandemic, where a lot of people had to suffer. This led to psychological conditioning in the minds of the employees who wanted to ensure that they themselves and their near and dear ones were safe at all times. This psychology prompted the workers to find better jobs and, as a result, display signs of job withdrawal in their organization.

### **Scales of measurement for Job Withdrawal**

There are many types of scales that are used to analyse the Job withdrawal tendencies or intention that is being cultivated in an employee. These scales usually take some aspect of the employee's life and incorporate it with statistics to determine the intentions of the employee relating to the job. Some of the aspects that are taken into account are the work-life balance, job satisfaction, turnover intention, etc.

The first scale of measurement that can be used to analyse the Turnover Intention scale uses the Survey Work-Home Interaction-Nijmegen (SWING) instrument to measure the work-life balance of an employee (Geurts et al., 2005). The instrument was used to measure and identify the work-home relationship among the employees. The instrument mainly used four response formats



to identify the relation. This data was further used alongside other instruments, such as the TIS6 used to measure the Turnover intention (Bothma & Roodt, 2013). The TIS6 scale used a 5-item Likert scale to collect the data and identify the Turnover Intention. The factors of Job satisfaction were also involved or included among the other two factors to identify cases of Job withdrawal intention and their correlation. Job satisfaction can be measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire; this questionnaire had the ability to find out both intrinsic and extrinsic factors of Job satisfaction. After finding out the results in related empirical evidence-based papers, it was found that Turnover intentions were directly correlated to negative work-home conditions and lower job satisfaction.

This is synonymous with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the employees of a few select sectors. In the case of the Medical and IT industries, there was a disruption in the work home relation owing to various situations and conditions, and that led to a rise in the Turnover intention among the employees. Similarly, in the case of the aviation and hospitality sector, there was no proper business operation, and the lack of various profits led to the removal of benefits earlier enjoyed by the employees, and there was a lowering of Job satisfaction among the employees and a rise in Turnover Intention. Scales of Measurement for Psychological impact after COVID-19 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic led to a psychological impact on the mass, which created a lot of problems as a result. Some of these results affected their mental peace and indirectly heightened their turnover intention via affecting factors related to it. Hence, it is important that the psychological impact of COVID-19 should be measured and analysed with Job withdrawal symptoms. The instruments needed to measure the above data are the De Jong-Gierveld Loneliness Scale 9 (DJGLS).

The DJGLS scale contains a three-pointer scale wherein the scores are used to analyse the loneliness or isolation the person is currently wanting or going through. Alongside the De Jong-Gierveld Loneliness scale (DJGLS) we also use the COVID Reaction Scale (COVID-RS) to measure the psychological impact the COVID. RS uses 4 factors to analyse the psychological impact. The first factor is the coping strategies adopted or used by the respondents; then, we take into consideration the variation in receiving information, thirdly we focus on the loneliness model (Gierveld & Tilburg, 2006), and finally, we take into consideration the behaviours exhibited by people on the experience of social isolation mainly due to quarantine. The overall data is then computed to find the relation between the newly exhibited psychological behaviours and the social isolation enforced due to the quarantine. Psychology plays an important role in the overall life of a person, be it maintaining the work-life balance or sustenance of a happy life. The psychological change after COVID has led to changes in multiple aspects of life, which have led to an imbalance in the work-life balance and have indirectly led to rising Job Withdrawal or Turnover intention in an employee, which can become a serious issue for the company.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Withdrawal behaviour is a reflection of employee powerlessness and job alienation, and the subsequent mannerism in which this product deviance is manifested negatively impacts the legitimate interests of the organizations. The manifestation of absenteeism, which is a type of work withdrawal, can be judged based on certain determinants, which include biographical characteristics and deep-level diversity (Mallette & Cabrera, 1991). In addition to this, group-level and organizational-level inputs can influence work outcomes via the processes, and this influence

may be reflected in withdrawal from work (Bamberger & Biron, 2007). However, withdrawal from work can also be a coping mechanism employed by individuals to disengage from stressors and conflicts at work for a temporary period. This temporary abstinence can go a long way in tackling emotional exhaustion and restoring efficiency and productivity levels (Krischer et al., 2010). In the current crisis situation, withdrawal behaviour may aggravate due to several reasons, including downsizing, economic downtimes, work-family conflict, and lack of group cohesion due to the shifting of work to virtual platforms. It is essential that the management takes active steps to mitigate the negative implications of withdrawal behaviour and enhance the positive impact of withdrawal behaviour.

Although there is scope as well need for future research in the areas of positive psychological impacts of withdrawal behaviour and the impact of a pandemic on employee disengagement, human resource management can formulate policies that positively impact employee behaviour. In order to restore or enhance productivity and tackle withdrawal behaviour, first and foremost, management should actively communicate with the employees on plans and causes of downsizing. This communication would reassure the remaining employees that their jobs are secure and would reflect organizational commitment toward its employees, which most probably would be reciprocated by enhanced job commitment (Qin & Jiang, 2011). Secondly, the management should focus on building group cohesion which might have been negatively impacted due to the virtual setting of work. Finally, management should be accommodative of the psychological needs of its employees, which in turn could enhance loyalty and job satisfaction, thereby mitigating or even eliminating work withdrawal.

Fortunately, after the COVID-19 Pandemic, a lot of the sectors have regained their grip, but the issue of Job withdrawal still persists, which can become a vital issue for the companies to counter. Though Job withdrawal is caused due to multiple reasons, it becomes very difficult to trace for each and every employee. Even with the persisting difficulty of tracing the reason, a good work environment alongside involvement in the work process can lead to a reduction in work withdrawal tendencies among the employee.

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