A study of sickness absence patterns in an offshore oil and gas workforce in West Africa

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ABSTRACT

Background: Workplace absence in general and sickness absence in particular is a major issue for most organisations and societies. From a research perspective very little work has been done with regards to sickness absence in the offshore oil and gas industry especially in the developing countries of the world where the concept of sickness absence as a whole is not very well defined.

Aims and objectives: The aim of this study is to investigate and analyse the sickness absence situation in an offshore oil and gas workforce in West Africa.

Methods: This is a descriptive study of the sickness absence patterns in an offshore drilling workforce in West Africa. Data was collected for a period of two years and analysis carried out with Excel software.

Results: A total of 181 employees were disembarked from the installations for medical causes and went on sick leave. 46 were expatriate workers (25.4%) while 135 were local (national) workers (74.6%). 3314 days were lost from 159 sickness absence episodes. 28.1% of was due to 122 short term episodes, while 71.9% was due to 37 long term episodes. The absence frequency for each year of study was stable at 9%. The absence severity rate for first year of study was 1.34 while that for the second year was 2.16. Absence duration over two years 20.84, for the individual years the absence duration was calculated at 15.46 and 21.85 respectively.

Conclusions: This study revealed the inadequacy and inconsistency of data capture but demonstrated the feasibility of setting up a proper system for sickness absence management. Trends and patterns of sickness absence were generally consistent with published studies in most areas but also demonstrated some peculiarities unique to the setting in which the study was conducted.