CHAPTER-I
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION
The issue of absenteeism in higher institutions is faced by virtually every country in the world. In India, its magnitude is far greater than in the western countries. Absenteeism is generally understood in different ways by different persons. It is commonly understood as an employee or a group of employees remaining absent from work either continuously for a long period or repeatedly for short periods. But in the institutional field, absenteeism conveys an alternative meaning, and is expressed in various ways in different countries or institutions. In simple language, it is the total number of workers absent expressed as a percentage of the total number of workers employed. In more technical words the same may be said to mean “a ratio of the number of production man-days or shifts lost to the total number of production man-days or shifts scheduled to work. Absenteeism is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation. Traditionally, absenteeism has been viewed as an indicator of poor individual performance, as well as a breach of an implicit contract between employee and employer; it was seen as a management problem, and framed in economic or quasi-economic terms. More recent scholarship seeks to understand absenteeism as an indicator of psychological, medical, or social adjustment to work.

1.2 DEFINITION
Employee Absenteeism can be defined as stress that leads to work exhaustion. Sadly, it is the most gifted and committed employees that tend to burn out first. Because of their high standards and tendency towards perfectionism, these employees end up burning the candle at both ends. It refers to workers absence from their regular task when he is normally schedule to work. According to Webster’s dictionary, “Absenteeism is the practice or habit of being an absentee and an absentee is one who habitually stays away from work.”
According to Labor Bureau of Shimla, ‘Absenteeism is the total man shifts lost because of absence as percentage of total number of man shifts scheduled to work’. In other words, it signifies the absence of an employee from work when he is scheduled to be at work. Any employee may stay away from work, if he has taken leave to which he is entitled or on ground of sickness or some accident or without any previous sanction of leave. There is no universal or standard definition surrounding workplace absenteeism. “Employees missing part or whole days of work due to personal illness, personal business, or other reasons (excluding paid vacation). These absences may be avoidable or unavoidable.” According to French Man, “Absence occurs whenever a person chooses to allocate time to activities that compete with scheduled work either to satisfy the waxing and waning of underlying motivational rhythms.” Absenteeism is a pattern in which an employee is habitually absent from work. Chronic absenteeism is often an indicator of poor employee performance. Absenteeism can also be defined as “Failure of employees to report for work when they are schedule to work.”

According to Martocchio & Harrison, ‘Lack of an individual physical presence at given location and time when there is a social expectation for him or her to be there” According to Gibbons(1966), Johns(1978), Jones, (1971), “The non-attendance of employees for scheduled work, it distinguishes absenteeism from other forms of non-attendance that are arranged in advanced and specifically avoids judgments of legitimacy associated with absent events that are implied by as sick leave”.

Employee absenteeism is an acknowledged problem in any organization which uses fixed work schedules Dalton & Mesch (1991) and Cascio (2000) as cited by Mayfield & Mayfield (2009) defines it as any failure to report for or stay at work as scheduled, regardless of what the reason is. According to Avey and his colleagues, absenteeism can be involuntary or it can be voluntary. Involuntary absenteeism is under normal circumstances unavoidable, for example in cases when the employee is sick Avey, Pater & West (2006) This type of absenteeism is also called white absenteeism Sanders & Nauta (2004).

Owing to the large amount of research conducted on absenteeism there are a plethora of definitions of absenteeism. Absenteeism is defined as “an unplanned, disruptive incident and can be seen as non-attendance when an employee is scheduled for work”
Van der Merwe & Miller (1988), Milkovich and Boudreau (1994) further define absenteeism as “the frequency and/or duration of work time lost when employees do not come to work.” Johnson, Croghan and Crawford (2003) posit the view that absence is attributed to illness or injury and accepted as such by the employer.

Cascio (2003) defines absenteeism as “any failure of an employee to report for or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of the reason.” The author points out that the term “as scheduled” carries significance in that it automatically excludes holidays (annual leave), court cases, maternity leave and the like. This definition also eliminates the problem of determining whether an absence is excusable or not for example, in the case of verified illnesses. Cascio (2003) maintains that “from a business perspective, the employee is absent and is simply not available to perform his or her job; that absence will cost money.”

Rhodes and Steers (1990) maintain that people tend to have different perspectives or attach different meanings when viewing the topic of employee absenteeism. To the manager, absence is often seen as a problem to be solved, but to the employee it can take on a very different meaning. For the employee, absenteeism can be symbolic of deeper feelings of hostility or perceptions of inequitable treatment in the job situation or a way to sabotage the organization for the poor work environment or other attributes of the job. Attempts to understand and deal with absenteeism will therefore, according to Rhodes and Steers (1990) depend on the assumptions being used. When viewed from an organizational perspective, the resulting actions/recommendations will more likely focus on absence control policies within the organization. On the other hand, viewing it from the employees’ perspective may lead to a focus on improving the work environment and a culture of attendance rather than absenteeism. A combination of both models can also be employed to solve this problem.

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The psychological model that discusses this is the "withdrawal model," which assumes that absenteeism represents individual withdrawal from dissatisfying
working conditions. This finds empirical support in a negative association between absence and job satisfaction, especially satisfaction with the work itself.

Medical-based understanding of absenteeism find support in research that links absenteeism with smoking, problem drinking, low back pain, and migraines. Absence ascribed to medical causes is often still, at least in part, voluntary. The line between psychological and medical causation is blurry, given that there are positive links between both work stress and depression and absenteeism. Depressive tendencies may lie behind some of the absence ascribed to poor physical health, as with adoption of a "culturally approved sick role". This places the adjective "sickness" before the word "absence", and carries a burden of more proof than is usually offered.

Evidence indicates that absence is generally viewed as "mildly deviant workplace behavior." For example, people tend to hold negative stereotypes of absentees, underreport their own absenteeism, and believe their own attendance record is better than that of their peers. Negative attributions about absence then bring about three outcomes: the behavior is open to social control, sensitive to social context, and is a potential source of workplace conflict.

Owing to the large amount of research conducted on absenteeism, there are many variations to the definition of absenteeism, each one specific to the work of the researcher at the time. For the purpose of this research, an overview of the various definitions of absenteeism being used in research will be presented. Based on this, the researcher will provide a working definition of absenteeism that will be applicable for this research.

- Absence constitutes a single day of missed work Martocchio & Jimeno (2003).
- Absence occurs whenever a person chooses to allocate time to activities that compete with scheduled work, either to satisfy the waxing and waning of underlying motivational rhythms Fichman (1984) or to maximize personal utility Chelius (1981).
- An individual’s lack of physical presence at a given location and time when there is a social expectation for him or her to be there Martocchio & Harrison (1993).
Absenteeism refers to the non-attendance of employees for scheduled work 

A working definition of absenteeism for this research is that absenteeism is defined as 
a failure of an employee to report to work when he/she is scheduled to do so 
(unexcused absence). The absence that occurs refers to short periods of absence taken 
over a period of one year. This contributes to the first literature aim, namely to 
conceptualize the construct of employee absenteeism, the origins and consequences in 
the workplace.

1.3 THEORIES OF ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism in Indian industries is not a new phenomenon. It is the manifestation of a 
decision by employees not to present themselves at their place of work, at a time 
when it is planned by the management that they should be in attendance. Many 
research reports reveal that there has been a phenomenal increase in absenteeism in 
some industrial sectors. The absenteeism becomes a problem to organizational 
management particularly when employees absent from their work environment 
without giving sufficient notice and by justifying their stand by furnishing fake 
reasons. The reasons for absenteeism are many. The factors contributing to 
absenteeism from work includes individual and environmental factors. These consists 
of sickness, accidents, occupational diseases, poor production planning (flow of 
work), bad working conditions and inadequate welfare conditions, lack of trained 
laborers, insecurity in employment, collective bargaining process, rigid control 
system, lack of supervisory support, lack of interest, lack of cohesive and cordial 
culture and so on. The individual reasons may vary from organization to organization 
depending upon the organizational climate, employee's attitude and influence of 
external organizational factors (market forces, social activities that influence the 
industrial culture prevailing in geographical zone etc.)

Absence behavior is discussed in terms of theories on absences such as the notion of 
the informal contract, perceived inequity, and withdrawal from stressful work 
situations, dynamic conflict, social exchange, withdrawal, non-attendance, 
organizationally excused vs. organizationally unexcused, involuntary vs. voluntary
and lastly a four-category taxonomy. The relevance of each of these perspectives to this specific research will also be discussed.

**Motivation Theories**

- **Maslow’s Theories of Motivation**
  Abraham Maslow (1968) categorized human needs in a pecking order with physiological needs at the base. For Maslow, the physiological needs are satisfied by food, shelter, clothing, sleep and sex. Next is the need for job security and safe working conditions or environment. This need is followed by social needs satisfied by human contacts and assurances of belonging. This is followed by the desire for achievements, status, esteem and respect from others and finally the urge to achieve one’s potential and new responsibilities which is self-actualizing. Maslow argued that lower level needs had to be satisfied before the next higher level need would motivate employees.

- **Herzberg’s Theories of Motivation**
  Herzberg's work categorized motivation into two factors: motivator and hygiene Herzberg et al., (1957) factors. Motivator or intrinsic factors, such as achievement and recognition, produce job satisfaction. Hygiene or extrinsic factors, such as pay and job security, produce job dissatisfaction. Frederick Herzberg claims that dissatisfaction will decrease when a worker enjoys good pay and security; good working conditions; good interpersonal relationships; good company policies; and good supervisors. Satisfaction, on the other hand, will increase when a worker enjoys the feeling of achievement; recognition; fulfilling work; a feeling of responsibility; and advancement and growth.

**Adams’ Theory of Motivation: The Equity Theory**

The equity theory focuses on the fact that individuals compare their job inputs and outcomes with those of others and then respond so as to eliminate any inequities. The equity theory explains how people develop perceptions of fairness in the distribution and exchange of resources. Adams (1965) admits that when a worker finds himself in a situation of inequity, he/she becomes unsatisfied and will mobilize all his/her energy to reduce those inequities through thoughts or behavior. For Adams, equity is
achieved when the ratio of employee outcomes over inputs is equal to other employee outcomes over inputs. This can be illustrated by the following equation:

**McGregor’s Theories of Motivation (Theory X and Theory Y)**

The two most commonly held streams of management philosophy are known as Theory X and Theory Y, which were developed by Douglass McGregor (1960). Theory X holds that workers are generally irresponsible, unwilling to work, and must be persuaded to perform their obligations to their employers. On the other hand, Theory Y holds that given an appropriate work environment and in the absence of exceptional disincentives, workers are dedicated to their tasks, are generally self-motivated, and will carry out their tasks with minimal direction from their supervisors. The two basic styles are reflected in management policies on job design, training, employee security, reward structure, organizational structure, and industrial relations.

**McClelland’s Theories of Motivation (Achievement Motivation Theory)**

David McClelland’s of motivation (1961) focuses on three needs: Need for achievement (the drive to excel, to achieve in relation to a set of standards, to strive to succeed) need for power (the need to make others behave in a way that they could not have behaved otherwise) and need for affiliation (the desire for friendly and close interpersonal relationships). If one of these needs is on the rise, its intensity will determine the behavior.

**Vroom and Lawler’s Expectancy Theory**

As John Ivan Fosu (2010) indicated, a key point in this approach is that an individual behavior is formed not on some sense of object reality but on how he actually sees the world around him. The core of the theory relates how a person perceives the relationships between three things-efforts, performance and reward Cole (1995). The strength of the attraction of particular outcomes or rewards for an individual is termed “valence”. The degree of belief that a particular act will produce a particular outcome is termed “expectancy”.

Valence and expectancies depend on the individual’s own perception of the situation. For example, the prospect of promotion could be low if he perceives that promotion is attained primarily on the length of service. In such a situation,
performance does not lead to rewards, so effort in that direction is not seen as worthwhile.

**What does Motivation Theories Imly?**

The survey of the different theories of motivation questions the issue of the most efficient motivation theory. Looking at all of them (those used in our study) we realize that all of them focus on the variable “need”. The simple message embedded in all of the above motivation theories is that people need to be kept satisfied in order to perform well in a workplace. Managerial employees should try to treat all workers correctly and never make the mistake of playing workers against each other; while, at the same time, they should also be aware that the ways in which workers get motivated vary richly. A good link between departmental management and human resources (HR) is therefore recommended, although, unfortunately, it is not implemented too often yet in the Ivorian context.

**Social Exchange**

Chadwick-Jones et al., (1982) presented a case for the theory of absenteeism that is social, not individual in emphasis. As a first step Chadwick-Jones et al., (1982) assumed the interdependency of members of work organizations. It seems obvious that individuals do have some mutual obligations to peers, subordinates, and superiors (as well as other relationships outside the work situation). In this context the rights and duties of individuals are both subject to, and representative of, a set of rules about activities in the work situation. What individuals do is therefore likely to be in answer to, on behalf of, in defense of, as well as achieving a compromise with the rules of the group.

The second assumption made by Chadwick-Jones et al. (1982) is that under the employment contract, some form of social exchange is taking place between employers and employees. Whatever they exchange in this situation – whether it be their time, effort, or skill or money, security, congenial friends, or anything else - it will be only what is possible for employees in the organization. Exchanges may be conceived as between individuals and work groups, or between work groups and management, but it would not be realistic to conceive of the exchange between ‘the individual’ and ‘the organization’ while disregarding the social conditions and rules.
In summary, then, the group is in the equation – on one or both sides – and the explanation use must recognize it.

1.4 ORIGINS OF ABSENTEEISM
Research on absenteeism over the past years, particularly conceptual work, has focused on absenteeism’s origins or causes. Researchers have made number of predictions and so many hypothesis have been developed. Harrison and Martocchio (1998), through their review of absenteeism research, indicated that literature suggests five loosely defined classes of variables hypothesized to be origins of absence which are (a) personality; (b) demographic characteristics; (c) job-related attitudes; (d) social context and (e) decision-making mechanisms. we will discuss some point here.

Personality
Researchers have suggested for decades that enduring personality traits account for absenteeism’s moderate stability over time and situations. “Absence proneness” emerged as a term describing this idea Harrison & Price (1993), Johns (1997) has labeled this perspective the “deviance” approach. Porter and Steers (1973) proposed that employees with extreme levels of emotional instability, anxiety, low achievement orientation, aggression, independence, and sociability were likely to be the most frequent absentees. Hogan and Hogan (1989) asserted that those who are at fairly high levels of hostility, impulsiveness, social insensitivity, and alienation are more prone to engage in delinquent work behaviors such as absenteeism. Ferris, Bergin and Wayne (1989) presented a more differentiated view, proposing that personality dimensions also moderate situational and attitudinal relationships with absenteeism.

Demographics
Many studies have accumulated in which gender, age, tenure, education level, and family characteristics have been measured and as evidence accumulated, demographic variables were brought into broadly inclusive and inductive absenteeism models Harrison & Martocchio (1998). The most influential and often cited example of such a model was developed by Steers and Rhodes (1978), (1984) which introduced a series of propositions implying that an individual’s demographic characteristics (personal factors, family characteristics) indirectly influence absenteeism through sets
of medial variables (such as expectations and job satisfaction) and proximal constructs (attendance motivation and ability to attend). These proximal constructs are also predicted to interact – the effects of attendance motivation are tempered or neutralized by low ability to attend. The underlying premise of Steers and Rhodes’ model (1978) is that an employee’s short-term motivation and ability to attend work are the direct precursors of attendance Harrison & Martocchio (1998). Brooke (1986) proposed a revised and more extended model than that of Steers and Rhodes (1978, 1984). He predicted additional, direct inputs of health-related (e.g., alcohol use) and organizational constructs (e.g., permissiveness) to absenteeism, formulated more precise definitions of existing constructs, and argued for additive rather multiplicative effects. Marcus and Smith (1985) presented a sociological model of absenteeism that included demographic characteristics. Their basic contention was that previous research had concentrated too heavily on attitudinal determinants of absenteeism, and that a more fruitful approach would concentrate on absence norms, customs, and socializations.

1.5 MANAGING ABSENTEEISM IN THE WORKPLACE

- The term absenteeism refers to the failure to attend to work. It is one of the major problems faced by companies across the globe today. Unscheduled absenteeism badly hurts the progress of an organization resulting in loss of productivity, increased costs in hiring additional staff and low morale among the workers. It is high time that employers address this problem on a priority basis.

- Employees can be absent for a variety of reasons including sickness, lethargic attitude, family emergencies, too much workload and stress, monotonous work or a general dissatisfaction with the job. A sales professional cites some other reasons like workplace politics, long commute, strained relationship with the immediate supervisor and lack of belongingness towards the organization as reasons for being absent from work. Whatever be the reason absenteeism is not at all a healthy practice and steps should be taken to manage it effectively.

- Innocent absenteeism refers to being absent for those reasons that are beyond the control of the employees like accidents or illnesses. Under such circumstances the employees should not be blamed for not turning up at work.
Culpable absenteeism on the other hand is when employees absent themselves at a time when they are fully capable to attend office. This type of no shows should always be discouraged for it can become a burden to the organization in the long run.

- An HR Manager working in a multinational company suggests few steps of keeping absenteeism to a minimum.
- Communicate your attendance policy across all levels in the organization clearly.
- Measure and thereby monitor the rate of absenteeism in your company on a regular basis.
- Initiate periodic health checkups to avoid absences resulting out of illnesses.
- Implement reward schemes for those employees who are regular.
- Create a favorable and peaceful work environment where relationship between workers and supervisors are professional and devoid of conflict.
- Provide adequate training to managers particularly authoritative ones to curb absenteeism.
- Engage supervisors to speak to employees who were absent and have returned to work.
- Educate and engage your employees actively in the organization. Disciplinary action to correct absentees should mostly be avoided. However counseling sessions can prove useful.
- Keep your employees motivated and try making the organization a fun place to work.

Absenteeism is a vital issue that requires immediate attention by both employers and employees. Employees should enjoy the work they are doing and employers on their part should help them in whatever way they can to make their experience a pleasant one. After all satisfied and happy employees look forward to report to work regularly and absent themselves only for genuine reasons.

- In addition to ensuring that work is appropriately covered during the employee's absence, there are a number of other critical actions that supervisors need to take to manage absenteeism.
They should ensure that all employees are fully aware of the organization’s policies and procedures for dealing with absence.

Be the first point of contact when an employee phones in sick.

Maintain appropriately detailed, accurate, and up-to-date absence records for their staff, (e.g., date, nature of illness/reason for absence, expected return to work date, doctor’s certification if necessary).

Identify any patterns or trends of absence which cause concern.

Conduct return-to-work interviews.

Implement disciplinary procedures where necessary.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As we enter the 21st century, work complexity has become an essential business concern of business organizations. In the present information age, the greatest assets of most companies are now on its composition of work force. Healthy work force is essential for the organizational momentum. In this context it has become essential to investigate worker awareness, sensitivity and managerial implication of employee participation and productivity to maintain the momentum.

Statistics on absenteeism indicate that it is a much important problem but has not received adequate attention from the managements or researchers in the past in our country. This can be due to several reasons such as (i) lack of literature on absenteeism elaborating its nature and effects on industry; (ii) lack of managements awareness of the problem; (iii) lack of understanding of the research methodology to identify the real causes of absenteeism; and (iv) non-availability of professionals who can help industrial managements to identify specific problem areas as well as suggest remedial measures. Of late, many organizations are becoming concerned about absentee behavior of the employees and have handled them effectively. However, the results have largely gone unreported in management journals, with the result some of the organizations who want! To tackle the problem cannot get benefit from the experience of the more successful ones. It becomes important to explore the underlying reasons and solutions to the problem of absenteeism and its probable outcomes.
1.7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Employees absenteeism has emerged as one of the important issues in the present complex business environment. The higher education in the country has witnessed a significant growth over the last few decades. Quality of education is one of the most critical issues to gain competitiveness in the present global educational environment. The absenteeism and its probable outcome are serious issues. With this present research work has been taken up with the following objectives:

- To analyse the causes of absenteeism among the employees of higher educational organizational in Uttarakhand.
- To understand the organizational environment and its impact on employee absenteeism.
- To study the relationship between absenteeism and its relationship with employee performance in higher educational organizations of Uttarakhand.
- To study the measures undertaken by organizations of higher educational institutes to control absenteeism.
- To draw conclusions and suggestions on the basis of the study.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this research is justified on several theoretical and practical grounds. The grounds relate to the dominance of absenteeism in the higher educational institutions and the specific importance of employees absenteeism in achieving organizational goals. Significance of the research on theoretical grounds addresses the importance of employee absenteeism especially, the employees associated with higher education and the relationship between employee performance and other social outcomes. By examining these issues, the study contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of human Resource Management and its relationship with employees absenteeism trend particularly with the employees engaged in education sector.

On the practical grounds, the study assists HR managers to employ various measures to manage employee absenteeism. The study will be able to reveal the cause, consequences and remedial measures of absenteeism among the employees engaged
with higher educational institutes. The thesis will particularly focus on the employees working in educational sector including academicians as well as administrative staff. Moreover, the researcher believes that only with a little modification, the result of this research can be useful to other similar organizations.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

The thesis is well-structured and arranged in a logical sequence. The information so presented will be beneficial to various stake holders of higher educational system in the country. It is presented in such a way that the essential required background information is covered before going further into the next level of detail for maintaining the continuity of the subject matter. This thesis is comprised of six chapters:

Chapter 1 gives introductory view of the topic to the reader. It emphasize on the introduction to the absenteeism, important definitions given by the researcher, theory of motivation and its relation with absenteeism, the problem statement, objectives, significance and how the whole thesis is organized or structured.

Chapter 2 provides the conceptual foundation of the absenteeism and employees behavior at workplace. The attention is given on exploring the background of absenteeism, its causes, consequences and the remedial measures initiated by the management to curb absenteeism.

Chapter 3 critically reviews the literature on absenteeism and its probable outcomes. Particular attention is paid to the literature on the causes, consequences and the remedial measures to reduce or control absenteeism.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological and theoretical approach undertaken by the researcher to conduct the research. Specifically, this chapter describes the research design, explains how the research was conducted, and describes the instrument development including pilot testing, sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 5 covers the analysis of the data collected from the various sources related to
absenteeism trend and its outcomes in higher education. Various other important dimensions regarding employees behavior related to perspectives of absenteeism and its socio-psychological consequences is covered in this chapter.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions drawn from the study, and give recommendations as to how employee can be motivated with the absenteeism management techniques. This chapter also explains the theoretical and practical managerial implications of this study. Finally, it discusses the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research along with the concluding remarks.
References: