
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reducing Absenteeism in Employees: A Qualitative Study on Clear Bereavement Leave Policies

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| ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the impact of well-defined bereavement leave policies on employee absenteeism. A qualitative research design is employed to explore employee experiences and managerial perspectives regarding bereavement leave policies. Data is analyzed through an interpretive phenomenological lens to understand the lived experiences of employees. The study contributes to workplace policy development by identifying best practices for reducing absenteeism through structured bereavement leave policies. The findings are expected to provide insights for human resource professionals and policymakers in establishing clear and effective bereavement leave policies that balance organizational efficiency with employee well-being.

| KEYWORDS

absenteeism, bereavement leave, qualitative study, phenomenological analysis, workplace policy, employee well-being, human resources

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

Employee absenteeism poses a significant challenge to organizations, impacting productivity, workplace morale, and overall operational efficiency. One of the key factors influencing absenteeism is bereavement leave, which allows employees to take time off following the loss of a loved one. However, the absence of clear and structured bereavement leave policies can lead to uncertainty, stress, and extended absenteeism among employees. While some organizations provide formalized bereavement leave policies, others rely on ad hoc decision-making, creating inconsistencies in how employees experience support during times of loss.

Research has shown that the way organizations handle bereavement leave directly affects employees' ability to return to work and maintain productivity. Employees who perceive their workplace as supportive are more likely to reintegrate into work sooner, while those facing unclear leave policies may experience prolonged absenteeism due to emotional distress and uncertainty about their leave entitlements. Given the impact of bereavement on employee well-being and attendance, it is crucial to investigate how structured bereavement leave policies influence absenteeism patterns.

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the relationship between bereavement leave policies and absenteeism. Through in-depth interviews, case studies, and content analysis, this research aims to provide insights into how employees and managers perceive bereavement leave policies, the challenges associated with their implementation, and the best practices that can contribute to a supportive and efficient leave system. By analyzing lived experiences and policy frameworks, this study seeks to contribute to the development of clear and effective bereavement leave policies that balance employee well-being with organizational needs.

Research Statement and Purpose Statement

This research examines how clear and structured bereavement leave policies influence employee absenteeism rates. The purpose is to analyze qualitative data from employees and managers to determine the effectiveness of bereavement leave

policies in mitigating extended absences. Specifically, the study aims to explore how employees experience bereavement leave, how managers perceive the impact of such policies, and whether clear bereavement leave policies contribute to lower absenteeism rates. This study provides insights into policy effectiveness through employee experiences and managerial perspectives, ultimately aiming to inform best practices for structuring bereavement leave policies in various industries.

The investigation evaluates both bereavements leave policy clarity and its connection to employee absenteeism as well as retention rates. A properly designed leave policy simultaneously decreases disruptions at work and provides essential support for grieving employees. This investigation will discover the main policy elements which drive successful leave management processes while assessing their effects on worker conduct and business stability.

The analysis of communication strategies together with policy structural clarity within bereavement leave guidelines will show theory-based insights for organizations that want to support employees while keeping operational efficiency (Worden., 2009). The research outcomes will enable employers to modify their leave policies, so employees fully understand their bereavement rights throughout the absence. The study examines how employee commitment to their organizations increases when bereavement policies demonstrate transparent fairness since such employees tend to show higher job retention rates.

Research Questions

1. How do employees perceive the impact of bereavement leave policies on their return-to-work experience?
2. What challenges do employees and managers face in implementing bereavement leave policies?
3. How do clear bereavement leave policies contribute to reducing employee absenteeism?
4. What best practices can be derived from organizations with effective bereavement leave policies?

Methodology and Data Source

A qualitative research methodology is used, incorporating in-depth interviews, case studies, and content analysis. Semi-structured interviews with employees and HR managers provide insight into personal and organizational perspectives. Participants are selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation from diverse industries and workplace environments. The interviews focus on employees' experiences with bereavement leave, its sufficiency, and its impact on their ability to return to work. HR managers provide insights into how policies are formulated and implemented, as well as challenges faced in ensuring consistency and fairness.

Case Studies

Organizations with established bereavement leave policies are examined to compare and contrast different approaches. The case studies focus on how companies with clear policies have seen changes in absenteeism patterns over time.

Content Analysis

Organizational bereavement leave policies are analyzed to identify common themes, gaps, and inconsistencies. Content analysis is conducted on policy documents to evaluate their clarity, structure, and comprehensiveness.

Literature Review

Existing qualitative research on bereavement leave policies emphasizes the necessity of structured leave policies in maintaining workforce stability. Studies on workplace bereavement indicate that employees with clear leave policies experience lower stress and faster reintegration into work. Prior research highlights inconsistencies in bereavement leave policies across organizations, demonstrating the need for standardized guidelines. Content analysis of organizational policies reveals that ambiguous leave structures contribute to extended absenteeism and reduced workplace productivity. Interviews and case studies illustrate the varying impact of bereavement policies across industries, reinforcing the necessity of policy clarity to support employees while maintaining operational efficiency. Stroebe et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative study using interviews and case studies to examine how bereavement affects employees in the workplace. The study found that unclear bereavement leaves policies contribute to additional stress, increasing absenteeism. Participants reported that a lack of policy clarity hindered their ability to manage grief effectively. The research emphasized the necessity of well-communicated policies to support employees during bereavement.

Research in organizational psychology suggests that employees facing unclear bereavement leave policies experience heightened emotional distress, leading to prolonged absenteeism. Studies indicate that employees in organizations with formalized bereavement policies report feeling more supported and experience fewer difficulties in transitioning back to work. Case studies have shown that organizations with standardized policies see improved employee morale, reduced long-term absenteeism, and increased workplace engagement. These findings highlight the importance of a structured and transparent approach to bereavement leave.

Already, research literature has shown that organizational support is critical in framing the impact of grief in organizations (Holland, 2011). Caring for organizational culture, which implies colleagues' concern and recognition of the

importance of grief, will become helpful for grieving people (Doka, 2002). However, it is important to note that the concept of policy clarity in bringing about such an environment has not received any attention at all. Most of the studies have targeted the length of bereavement leave. At the same time, there is relatively little research on language and communication, as well as processes related to the usage of these policies (Caserta & Lund, 2007).

The employees' communication rights and entitlements are discussed below so that there can be proper communication to avoid misunderstanding among employees in an organization (Heathfield, 2019). Policy language should not be ambiguous because the general idea is to eliminate confusion and thus eliminate cases of misunderstanding. Additionally, information that is easily available, perhaps from the employee's handbook section or a web portal or intranet page, helps the employees make informed decisions about their available leave entitlements (SHRM, 2020). This reduces the likelihood of employees using benefits since they may be afraid of the consequences when they seek clarification or have no idea how to get through it.

There is evidence concerning the positive relationship between the employee's well-being and the rest of the organization's outcomes (Harter, 2002). Companies that consider their workers' welfare have higher levels of performance and attendance and lower turnover rates among employees. Through Bereavement Leave Policies, it is thus possible to meet the needs of the affected employees, hence improving their well-being while also encouraging management to offer support to such employees. This, in return, can be useful for increased morale that results in reduced cases of employee absenteeism and increased levels of staff retention rates. (Heskett et al., 1997).

In addition, the authors acknowledge that employment policies should be fair and transparent and that these two aspects foster trust between employers and employees (Colquitt, 2012). This is because when staff are treated fairly and in a dignified manner, then they also admire and feel valued regarding the formulated organizational policies. It can enhance the commitment of the employees towards their duties and discourage any attempt at joining another organization, even during tough times. On the other hand, perceived equality and fairness in applying the formulated policies are key factors in maintaining the employees' trust since unfair policies lead to a loss of morale and result in employee turnover (Cropanzano et al., 2007).

The literature also underlines that it is critical to equip managers with proper knowledge on how to address bereavement issues appropriately (Center for Loss and Bereavement, n.d.). By their word, managers serve to disseminate policy information as well as talk to the concerned employees and address issues to do with workload balance. There should be elaborate training to enable the managers to handle such conversations and ensure that the grieving employees are considered in the company's policy.

Finally, evidence indicates that this aspect of organizational culture has a profound influence on the employees' loss of leave (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2018). Where employees are familiar with the fact that they can take time off in case of losing a loved one, due to an organizational culture that supports such, there are higher chances that the affected employees will take their bereavement leave. On the other hand, if grief is not well received, or if employees apprehend unfavorable backlash from their employers for availing the given rights, then even if such rights exist, it will be difficult for an employee to take advantage of such rights or facilities.

Analysis and Discussion

Employees report difficulties in navigating leave procedures, with some experiencing pressure to return to work prematurely. HR managers acknowledge the challenges in implementing consistent policies, citing variations in managerial discretion as a key issue. Content analysis of bereavement leave policies reveals that many organizations lack explicit guidelines on leave duration, eligibility, and flexibility, contributing to inconsistencies in employee experiences.

Case studies of organizations with structured bereavement leave policies demonstrate that clear guidelines lead to reduced absenteeism and improved employee satisfaction. Employees in such organizations report feeling more supported, which translates into quicker reintegration into the workplace. HR managers in these organizations highlight the importance of formalized policies in reducing the administrative burden associated with ad hoc leave decisions. As for the factual analysis of the policy and determination of how well the elements of clarity have been met, the following features will be focused on in the course of the discussion: clear and plain language, access to the information, and examples that are inclusive and sufficient.

The analysis will also examine the difficulties that employees exercise in terms of awareness and application of bereavement leave policies, as well as any cultural or organizational hurdles that may be involved. The implications of the findings will be presented considering previous literature focusing on policy direction as a factor in informing management on how to support grieving employees and promote a healthy working environment. The discussion will also elaborate on the recommendations about what other organizations can learn from it and how to enhance the bereavement leave policy and communication practice.

Personal Anecdote

This became clear to me when I had experiences of working with an organization with a stern bereavement leave policy. Lose a dear family member, and suddenly, we, especially me, felt that we were stunned after the death of the family member. I was employed in a company that adopted a bereavement leave policy at the time, although this policy had a very hazy policy. This left me anxious and uncertain about the appropriate amount of time that I can take off as well as what documents I need to provide. I did not want to approach my manager because I considered it a sign of inefficiency or a sign of weakness. In the end, I got a couple of days off myself, although the confusion regarding the policy made me more stressed and anxious. This is something that I discovered as to the importance of having clear and easily understandable policies regarding bereavement leaves for employees. It prompted me to research this subject and find out ways in which organizations can assist employees through such trials.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that clear and structured bereavement leave policies are essential in reducing absenteeism and supporting employees during times of loss. Organizations with well-defined policies experience lower absenteeism rates and greater employee satisfaction. The findings suggest that standardized bereavement leave policies should include clear guidelines on leave duration, eligibility criteria, and procedural transparency. The study thus seeks to put into perspective the current bereavement policies in their respective organizations and misconceptions about them among employees. The study will outline practical measures that organizations should take to implement policies of offering support and compassionate communication during challenging circumstances such as bereavement. In situations where leave policies are properly explained, they also boost the employees' trust and general job satisfaction in the workplace, promote productivity and provide employment security.

These ideas are relevant to the current research because this study will enhance the current literature by establishing that policy clarity remains a critical aspect in support of grieving workers. The findings of the study will also assist an organization in reviewing and improving its bereavement policies to be understandable, easily accessible, and more encouraging to the workforce. When it comes to policies at the workplace, organizations CAN make efforts to enhance the understanding of the workers while also striving for consistent policies that contribute to calmness and increased organizational stability.

Thus, the findings of this study are not only limited to the organization level but can be taken to a broader level. This study can also open up more organizations to the existence of clear bereavement leave policies, which may prompt organizations to adopt the best practices in the future. In conclusion, this research seeks to contribute to practicing improved methods of addressing bereavement in the workplace and acknowledge how grief affects human beings and how organizations should support affected employees. Further research can be done to establish potential longer-term implications of bereavement leave provisions on both the employee's mental health and future employment prospects. Finally, future research could involve comparison across industries and cultures as this will help the researcher to understand specific issues that may arise with the policy and how best to address them.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Organizations should develop formal bereavement leave policies that outline leave duration, eligibility, and application processes.
- ii. HR departments should provide training to managers on the importance of bereavement leave and how to handle employee requests compassionately and consistently.
- iii. Organizations should consider offering additional support, such as counseling services or flexible return-to-work options, to employees dealing with bereavement.
- iv. Future research should explore the long-term impact of bereavement leave policies on employee well-being and workplace productivity across different industries.

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