

## **The Effect of Presenteeism on Job Engagement in Hotels: The Mediating Role of Job Stress**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate how presenteeism affects job engagement through job stress. To attain this goal, 388 responses were collected from five-star hotel employees in Egypt. Data was then analyzed with the PLS-SEM approach by WarpPLS software. The findings showed that presenteeism negatively affects job engagement, and positively affects job stress. Also, job engagement is negatively affected by job stress. Furthermore, job stress was found to mediate the relationship between presenteeism and job engagement. Theoretically, our findings expand our understanding of the extent to which presenteeism engenders detrimental workplace outcomes in terms of high job stress and low job engagement. The study also helps to construct the absent body of literature on presenteeism in the Egyptian cultural context. Practically, the current study provides hotel establishments with thoughts on how the negative consequences of presenteeism can be eliminated in the workplace environment.

**Keywords:** Presenteeism, Job engagement, Job stress, Five-star hotels.

### **Introduction**

The challenges of keeping better levels of job engagement and lower levels of job stress are strategic issues for most organizations. The job engagement ratio represents the performance of the organization and is strategically significant for organization competitiveness (Kumar & Pansari, 2016), particularly in the hotel industry (Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012; Ncube & Jerie, 2012; Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021; Dai et al., 2021). Thus, practitioners are always concerned about job stress and disengagement, while academic scholars continue to investigate the factors that influence job engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Chhetri, 2017; Saks, 2019; Kossyva et al., 2023). Among those factors is presenteeism.

Presenteeism is a recent concept in workplace health (Goto et al., 2020). It is one of the most serious new concerns confronting workers in the hospitality industry (Arslaner and Boylu, 2017; Khairy, 2020; Khairy, & Mahmoud, 2022). Presenteeism is described as an employee's attendance at work while sick (Johns, 2010). This might result in a decrease in corporate productivity (Huang et al., 2021), implying that organizations that better handle employee presenteeism are more competitive (Hemp, 2004). As a result, it is critical to investigate how presenteeism impacts employees, how it is related to job engagement, and how hospitality organizations may better manage it.

On one hand, in the hotel industry, there is surprisingly little study on presenteeism despite its relevance and adverse outcomes (Chia and Chu, 2016, Chia and Chu, 2017; Knani, 2022). It is a somewhat understudied field of research that requires further examination (Ariza-Montes et al., 2021), particularly in terms of how it influences the workplace environment. Therefore, literature is scarce on presenteeism in the hotel business, and this problem is seen as subjective and underreported (Arjona-Fuentes et al., 2019). On the other hand, more research on the factors that

influence work engagement is still needed (Chhetri, 2017), particularly from a non-Western viewpoint.

Given the stressful nature of the hotel workplace, a study on presenteeism might help us better understand the phenomena in the hospitality sector theoretically. By having a greater knowledge of presenteeism, hotel management may operate more efficiently and make better decisions to reduce employee presenteeism, which, in turn, helps hotel establishments reduce job stress and enhance job engagement. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the influence of presenteeism on job engagement by using job stress as a mediator.

### **Literature review and hypotheses development**

Presenteeism occurs when an employee decides to continue working while being ill or injured (Aronsson et al., 2000). Job engagement, on the other hand, is a psychologically connected state of mind, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in the work, as defined by Schaufeli & Bakker (2010) and Salanova & Bakker (2003). Previous research has found that presenteeism has a detrimental impact on job engagement (Côté et al., 2021; Seo et al., 2023). It has been discovered that presenteeism-related health issues hurt job engagement (De Beer, 2014). Presenteeism reduces workers' capacity to recuperate from workplace stress or exhaustion, which can harm job engagement (De Beer, 2014; Côté et al., 2021). Apart from the detrimental influence on employees' health, presenteeism can also contribute to decreased productivity, mistakes in work, or lower quality of service (Gilbreath & Karimi, 2012), which produces stress in employees who are prone to presenteeism, and hence, reduces job engagement. Consequently, the first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*H1: Presenteeism negatively affects job engagement.*

The physical and emotional well-being of hotel staff influences service excellence. Employees who are physically and mentally fit will be more successful and efficient in their service delivery. Customers will be unsatisfied with the service if this is not the case (Tukelturk et al., 2014). Employees' efforts to give sensitive service and attain client happiness might, however, boost their stress levels in hotels, where interpersonal ties are important. Presenteeism and stressful working situations have a positive link (Hirsch et al., 2015; Khairy, 2020; Khairy & Mahmoud, 2022). Presenteeism, which is marked by extreme stress, is therefore a significant issue for workers in the hotel business (Arslaner & Boylu, 2017). In addition, by requiring extended working hours, managers reinforced presenteeism as an organizational value (Cullen and McLaughlin, 2006). Thus, extended working hours that deprive workers of enough downtime and personal space—a primary issue within the tourist industry—can exacerbate employee stress levels (Arslaner & Boylu, 2017). Therefore, the second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*H2: Presenteeism positively affects job stress.*

Stress is widely seen as an unfavorable tension (Chen et al., 2006). Job stress is a hazardous sort of stress that leads employees to have negative physical, psychological, behavioral, and social repercussions (Pearsall et al., 2009). Job stress is emotions of excessive difficulty, anxiety, tension, irritation, uncertainty, and worry caused by work-related demands (Bhui et al., 2016). According to Liu et al. (2021), job stress may be attributed to several concerns such as not

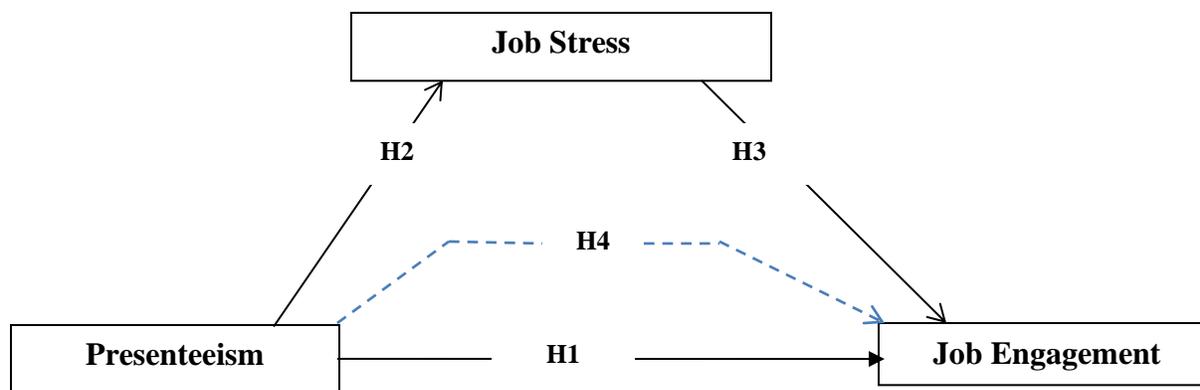
meeting job requirements, not fulfilling role expectations, not making the necessary advancement in the profession, and communication hurdles. Employees who are stressed have greater anxiety and have difficulty connecting with customers and coworkers (Wen et al., 2020), hence difficulty in engaging in higher job engagement.

Employees' views towards their jobs and the organization become more unfavorable when stress levels reach an unacceptable level (Hight and Park, 2019). Conservation of Resources Theory, proposed by Hobfoll (1989), can explain this harmful effect of stress on hotel personnel (Khliefat et al., 2021). Employees, according to this notion, always guard their varied resources “including their health” and attempt to prevent risks that might deplete these resources (Hobfoll, 2001), in this case, this is presenteeism. Employees may get worried or upset if they lose these resources or experience another stressful event (Tsaour and Tang, 2012). This reduces pleasant feelings (Akgunduz et al., 2023) and, as a result, job engagement. Consequently, the third and fourth hypotheses are formulated as follows:

*H3: Job stress negatively affects job engagement.*

*H4: Job stress mediates the relationship between presenteeism and job engagement.*

The conceptual model of the study is presented in Figure (1) below.



**Figure (1):** Conceptual model of the study and hypotheses

## **Study methodology**

### **3.1. Instrument Development and Measures**

This study is a quantitative study relying on a self-administered questionnaire to investigate the three latent variables including “presenteeism, job engagement, and job stress” on a 5-point Likert scale. A 6-item scale adopted from Koopman et al. (2002) was employed to measure employees' presenteeism. For example, "Because of my health problem, the stresses of my job were much harder to handle” and “My health problem distracted me from taking pleasure at work". In addition, Huang et al. (2018) 7-item scale was used to assess job stress. For instance, “I am more stressed out than I should be by my job” and “Time for other activities is limited by working at a hotel”. Furthermore, job engagement was evaluated by a 5-item scale adapted from Jung, et al. (2021). Sample items include: “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose” and “I am enthusiastic about my job”. Comprehensive measurement items can be found in Appendix (A).

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

Five-star hotel employees are more likely to be inclined to presenteeism because of the demanding workload and job requirements at five-star hotels that endeavor to consistently deliver great services to their guests. Consequently, to investigate the suggested model of the current study, data was gathered from full-time staff working at Egypt's five-star hotels, more specifically in Greater Cairo. Thirty-four 5-star hotels are operating in Greater Cairo (Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, 2018). Cochran's (1963) sampling approach "385 responses considered a representative sample" was adopted in this study, since official numbers of the total number of five-star hotel employees seem to be absent. 600 questionnaires were distributed to employees of 25 hotels "those that accepted to be involved in the research" using the convenience sampling approach. With a response rate of 64.7%, 388 valid questionnaires were returned.

### **Data analysis**

PLS-SEM, a well-known analytical method, is utilized using WarpPLS software version 7.0 to analyze the study's proposed model and test research hypotheses.

### **Participant's profile**

Participant's characteristics are presented in Table (1). 388 employees participated in the current study; 315 (81.2%) men and 73 (18.8%) women. There were 186 (47.9%) respondents between the ages of 30 and less than 45, while 157 (40.5%) respondents had less than 30 years old, and 45 (11.6%) had 45 years old or more. In addition, the majority of them (n=305, or 78.6%) had a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 234 (60.3%), 100 (25.8%), and 54 (13.9%) of the respondents had tenure of 2 to >4 years, 4 to >8 years, and > 8 years, respectively.

**Table 1.** Participant's profile (N=388).

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	315	81.2
	Female	73	18.8
<b>Age</b>	< 30 years	157	40.5
	30: < 45 years	186	47.9
	45 and more	45	11.6
<b>Education</b>	High schools/institute	50	12.9
	Bachelor	305	78.6
	Master/PhD	33	8.5
<b>Experience</b>	2 to >4 years	234	60.3
	4 to >8 years	100	25.8
	> 8 years	54	13.9

### **Results**

#### **Reliability and validity**

Given that they are larger than 0.5, the item loadings were considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2010). Table 2 demonstrates that Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values greater than 0.7 indicate strong reliability. Similarly, because the AVE values are more than 0.5, the validity of the scales has been demonstrated (Hair et al., 2020). Furthermore, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) show that it is devoid of common method bias because the values of VIF are  $\leq 3.3$  (Kock, 2015).

**Table 2.** Factor loadings, Cronbach's, CR, AVE, and VIF

		CA	CR	AVE	VIFs
Presenteeism		0.921	0.883	0.737	1.868
Pres.1	0.882				
Pres.2	0.870				
Pres.3	0.953				
Pres.4	0.886				
Pres.5	0.922				
Pres.6	0.186				
Job Engagement (JE)		0.963	0.952	0.841	2.583
JE.1	0.884				
JE.2	0.910				
JE.3	0.964				
JE.4	0.942				
JE.5	0.881				
Job Stress (JS)		0.927	0.907	0.647	3.122
JS.1	0.787				
JS.2	0.845				
JS.3	0.809				
JS.4	0.840				
JS.5	0.821				
JS.6	0.614				
JS.7	0.883				

Furthermore, according to the results in Table 3, the discriminant validity of the study model has therefore been achieved. Franke and Sarstedt (2019) said that "the correlation between two latent variables must be significantly less than unity to prove discriminant validity, and the AVE value for each variable must be greater than the greatest common value".

**Table 3.** Discriminant validity' results

	JE	JS	Presenteeism
Job Engagement (JE)	0.917	-0.779	-0.585
Job Stress (JS)	-0.779	0.804	0.675
Presenteeism	-0.585	0.675	0.828

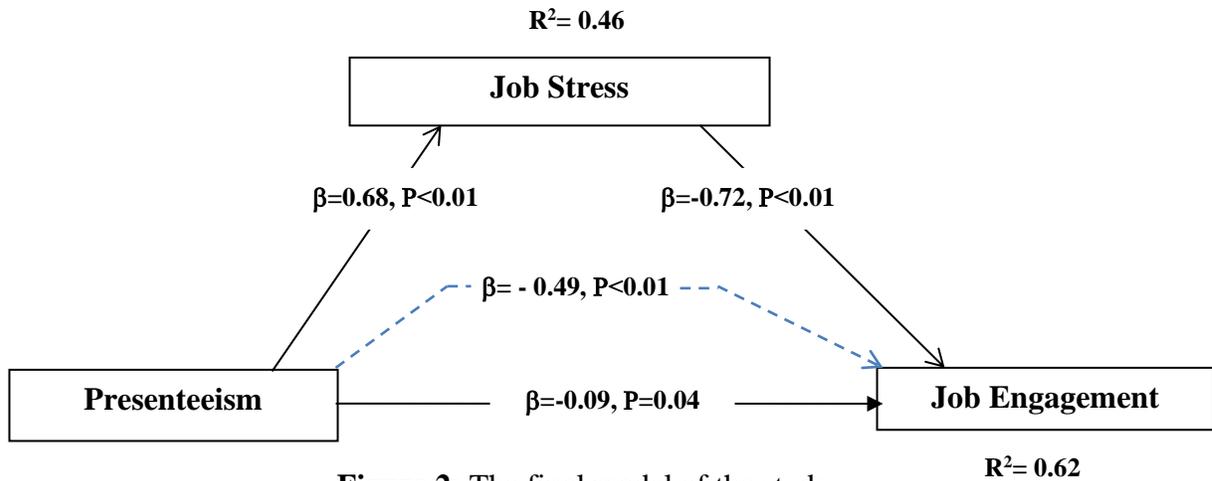
**The research model's fit**

The current study ensured the ten requirements proposed by Kock (2021) for model fit (see Appendix B).

**The results of the structural model for testing study hypotheses**

Figure 2 shows the hypotheses testing results. It can be noted that presenteeism negatively impacts job engagement ( $\beta=-0.09$ ,  $P=0.04$ ) and positively impacts job stress ( $\beta=0.68$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), this means that when presenteeism increases, job engagement decreases and job stress increases. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported. In addition, job stress negatively impacts job engagement ( $\beta=-0.72$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), this means that when job stress increases, job engagement decreases. Thus, H3 is

supported. Furthermore, figure 2 shows that presenteeism interpreted 46% of the variance in job stress ( $R^2=0.46$ ). Moreover, presenteeism and job stress together interpreted 62% of the variance in job engagement ( $R^2=0.62$ ).



**Figure 2:** The final model of the study

Lastly, to investigate job stress as a mediator between presenteeism and job engagement in the model, a “Bootstrapped Confidence Interval” analysis was conducted. Results indicate that the indirect effect's Std.  $\beta = -0.490$  ( $0.680 \times -0.720$ ) is significant ( $P < 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.034$ ), which has a t-value of (-14.400). Also, "95% Bootstrapped Confidence Interval": (LL= -0.556, UL=-0.423), does not cross a zero in between. This confirms that job stress has a statistically significant partially mediating effect on the relationship between presenteeism and job engagement. Thus, H4 is supported.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of presenteeism on hotel employees' job engagement, with an emphasis on job stress as a mediator. Our results strongly support H1, H2, H3, and H4 proposed in the current study, demonstrating that presenteeism negatively affects job engagement, and positively affects job stress. Furthermore, job stress negatively influences job engagement, and also mediates the relationship between presenteeism and job engagement. The study presents empirical evidence that presenteeism has a direct negative impact on hotel employees' job engagement (H1); however, it has a direct positive impact on job stress (H2). These results are consistent with prior research "i.e. Côté et al., 2021; Seo et al., 2023" which claimed that presenteeism had a detrimental influence on job engagement, and consistent with prior research "i.e. Arslaner & Boylu, 2017; Khairy, 2020; Khairy & Mahmoud, 2022" which claimed that presenteeism increases job stress among employees. The study also presents empirical evidence that job stress has a direct positive impact on hotel employees' job engagement (H2); besides, it has a mediating effect on the relationship between presenteeism and job engagement (H3 and H4). These results are consistent with prior research "i.e. Hight and Park, 2019; Akgunduz et al., 2023" which claimed the detrimental influence of job stress on employees' attitudes towards their job and the organization. When they encounter unfavorable affects, employees may report reduced levels of workplace engagement as a result of presenteeism (Ferreira et al., 2019). As in the case of presenteeism, negative affect has been

linked to decreased physical and psychological well-being (Denollet & De Vries, 2006). According to the Conservation of Resources Theory, employees with bad affect "for example, due to presenteeism" have less confidence in their efforts and regard their surroundings as problematic (De Dreu et al., 2008). This apparent loss of resources (e.g., health resources) may result in loss spirals that encourage negative effects (Hobfoll, 2001), resulting in high job stress and poor job engagement. In addition, prolonged presenteeism may lead to psychological exhaustion (Panari & Simbula, 2016) and dehumanization (Vandenbroeck et al., 2017). Presenteeism is a risky organizational behavior that might lead to long-term burnout (Demerouti et al., 2009), which consequently harms work engagement. This is presumably because presenteeism prevents people from having a chance to recuperate, which eventually results in emotional exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2009; Panari & Simbula, 2016).

### **Theoretical and practical implications**

Since this study comes in response to the call for further studies in the area of presenteeism, it contributes to the body of knowledge, specifically because it is the first study that evaluates presenteeism, job engagement, and job stress in one model in the Egyptian hotel industry context. Our theoretical framework and experimental investigation of job stress as a mediator in the relationship between presenteeism and job engagement expand our understanding of the extent to which presenteeism engenders these two detrimental workplace outcomes: high job stress and low job engagement. In addition, this study helps to construct the absent body of literature on presenteeism in the Egyptian cultural context. As a result, this study broadens the understanding of the presenteeism phenomenon in the Egyptian setting by examining new consequences for its impacts. More importantly, this study also supports and enriches Conservation of Resources Theory by integrating presenteeism behavior as a stressor.

The findings of the study imply the negative consequences of presenteeism on the workplace environment in terms of high job stress and low work engagement. Consequently, the current study provides hotel establishments with a significant managerial implication. Hotel management must guarantee that organizational norms and standards are consistent with a zero-presenteeism culture. Hotel management must work hard to educate hotel managers and staff about the negative effects of presenteeism on both individuals and the business. Management should also work to develop an absence policy and procedures for the division of tasks among ill coworkers. Furthermore, to reduce the need for employees to work when unwell, management might also have to redesign some job activities. Moreover, as employees' psychological state is one important pillar that needs to be handled properly when encountering stress at work, hotel management may also need to consult organizational psychologists to do so.

### **Limitations and future research**

This research has certain limitations. First, this study looked at presenteeism and job engagement, with an emphasis on the role of job stress as a mediator. Further study may be necessary to incorporate some moderators, such as human resource practices, leadership, and organizational support, into the existing model. Second, the data sample is limited to a single industry and country—in this case, the hotel business in Egypt. The cultural distinctions offer chances to assess the generalizability of the existing model and to conduct cross-cultural research, for instance, in other MENA countries. Lastly, the study tested the research model in five-star hotels. Thus, comparative studies may be required in different hotel categories "i.e. three and four-star hotels" or other hospitality establishments "i.e. restaurants".

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Appendix (A): Measurement Scales	
Job Stress	
•	JS.1. The hotel has a high rate of burnout among employees at my level.
•	JS.2. I am more stressed out than I should be by my job.
•	JS.3. Work takes up a lot of my time.
•	JS.4. I frequently become frustrated by my job.
•	JS.5. Time for other activities is limited by working at a hotel.
•	JS.6. Occasionally, I have tightness in my chest when I think of my job.
•	JS.7. My work stresses me out more than it should.
Job engagement	
•	JE.1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose
•	JE.2. I am enthusiastic about my job
•	JE.3. My job inspires me
•	JE.4. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
•	JE.5. I get carried away when I am working
Presenteeism	
•	Pres.1. At work, I was able to focus on achieving my goals despite my health problem
•	Pres.2. Despite having my health problem, I was able to finish hard tasks in my work."
•	Pres.3. Despite having my health problem, I felt energetic enough to complete all my work.
•	Pres.4. Because of my health problem, the stresses of my job were much harder to handle.
•	Pres.5. My health problem distracted me from taking pleasure at work.
•	Pres.6. I felt hopeless about finishing certain work tasks, due to my health problem.

Appendix B. Model fit and quality indices

	Assessment	Criterion	Supported/Rejected
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.496, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.539, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.537, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.975	acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$	Supported
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	2.525	acceptable if $\leq 5$ , ideally $\leq 3.3$	Supported
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.625	small $\geq 0.1$ , medium $\geq 0.25$ , large $\geq 0.36$	Supported
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	acceptable if $\geq 0.7$ , ideally = 1	Supported
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	acceptable if $\geq 0.9$ , ideally = 1	Supported
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable if $\geq 0.7$	Supported
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	acceptable if $\geq 0.7$	Supported

الملخص العربي

تأثير حضورية الموظفين على الارتباط الوظيفي في الفنادق: الدور الوسيط للضغط الوظيفي  
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هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على كيفية تأثير حضورية الموظفين "الذهاب للعمل رغم المرض" على الارتباط الوظيفي من خلال الضغط الوظيفي. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم جمع 388 ردًا من موظفي فنادق الخمس نجوم في مصر. ثم تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام نهج PLS-SEM بواسطة برنامج WarpPLS. وأظهرت النتائج أن حضورية الموظفين يؤثر سلباً على الارتباط الوظيفي، ويؤثر إيجاباً على الضغط الوظيفي. كما أن الارتباط الوظيفي يتأثر سلباً بالضغط الوظيفي. علاوة على ذلك، وجد أن الضغط الوظيفي يلعب دوراً وسيطاً في العلاقة بين حضورية الموظفين و الارتباط الوظيفي. من الناحية النظرية، توسع النتائج التي توصلنا إليها فهمنا للمدى الذي يؤدي فيه حضورية الموظفين إلى نتائج ضارة في مكان العمل من حيث ارتفاع الضغط الوظيفي وانخفاض الارتباط الوظيفي. وتساعد الدراسة أيضاً في بناء الجزء الغائب من الأدبيات المتعلقة بحضورية الموظفين في السياق الثقافي المصري. ومن الناحية العملية، تزود الدراسة الحالية المنشآت الفندقية بأفكار حول كيفية التخلص من العواقب السلبية لحضورية الموظفين في بيئة العمل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حضورية الموظفين، الارتباط الوظيفي، الضغط الوظيفي، فنادق الخمس نجوم.