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New evidence on absenteeism and presenteeism

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Notes

1. Concerning 98 journals (in the field of economics, management science and HRM) listed at the first rank of classification (rank A) by the French Evaluation Agency for Research and Higher Education. We proceeded in two steps. We first searched the following keywords (and their derivatives) in the titles and abstracts of the articles issued between 1970 and 2009: 'absenteeism', 'absence', 'sickness', 'illness' and 'attendance'. Then, if in doubt, we read the abstract of the article to ensure that absenteeism was really the main subject.
2. Employees holding a position equal or beyond the fifth hierarchical level, who in addition are responsible for a business unit, are considered as workers with 'high responsibilities'. It includes heads of department and heads of agency.
3. However, salary elements are rarely relevant for absenteeism/presenteeism studies. The salary is indeed a composite variable: it depends on hierarchical level, age, seniority, gender, etc. As all of these variables also play a role in predicting absences, salary can no longer be introduced as an explanatory variable.
4. By default, absences for illness are recorded as 'short-term illness' absences. When employees suffer from a serious disease, they can claim from a commission for being considered as long-term ill. However, this is not the case for all employees (especially those with a low hierarchical level). As a consequence, the number of long-term illness absences is even 200 times lower than the number of short-term illness absences for absences longer than 15 days.
5. For example, for the variable 'age', we find: as age increases, the number of absences (and not presenteeism) such as short-term illness absences, long-term illness absences, absence. But for the variable 'seniority', we find: as seniority increases (absences), the number of absences decreases. This link suggests that the more senior an employee is, the less he/she is absent.
6. Technically, the difference between the predicted value calculated by the counting equation and the

real absence value. This gap rises when employees attend work while ill and, therefore, is a signal of presenteeism. Moreover, this estimation is made only for employees exhibiting nil absence values (as presenteeism behaviour mainly 'inflates' the frequency of nil value). Then, based on the resulting profile (i.e. the coefficients of the explanatory variables), the probability of presenteeism is computed for each employee, whatever his absence value is. Therefore (and as defined), an employee with a high presenteeism probability can exhibit a positive (and potentially large) absence value. In our data set, even if we assume the strong hypothesis that only individuals with a probability higher than the third quartile value are presenteeists, we find that 26% of the presenteeists do not have a nil absence value.

7. Employees benefit from five days off if they have to look after their ill child. Thus, they are supposed not to take 'short-term illness' leave in that case. These days are fully compensated.

8. The effect depends on the values taken by all the variables. Nevertheless, for an 'average' worker (a 40-year-old man, working full time and without 'high responsibilities'), the gap is about 20 points.

9. The effect is about 15 points for an 'average worker' (see previous note).

10. As underlined previously, the effect depends on the values taken by the variables. For a 40-year-old man, working full time and without 'high responsibilities', the gap is about three days. This effect is approximately cut by a third when considering the presence of a child.

11. This effect represents a cut in absence value. This cut is even smaller (about 10%) when considering the presence of a child (see previous note). There is no difference between the two cases.

12. The

13. This effect represents a cut in absence value. This cut is even smaller (about 10%) when considering the presence of a child (see previous note). There is no difference between the two cases.

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