

# THE PREVALENCE OF ABSENTEEISM AMONG REGISTERED NURSES IN TERTIARY HOSPITAL MULTAN

*Original Research*

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Absenteeism among registered nurses is a significant challenge faced by healthcare organizations worldwide, affecting both operational efficiency and the quality of patient care. Factors such as long working hours, high stress, and family responsibilities are often cited as contributors to absenteeism in nursing. Addressing this issue is crucial for maintaining high standards of patient care and improving staff morale.

**Objective:** This study aimed to determine the prevalence of absenteeism among registered nurses in a tertiary care hospital and identify contributing factors related to work and family issues.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted at a tertiary care hospital, involving registered nurses from various departments. Data were collected using an adaptive questionnaire that included demographic information, work-related factors, and family-related issues. The sample was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with descriptive statistics used to interpret the results.

**Results:** The study found that 76.7% of nurses agreed that absenteeism is prevalent in the tertiary hospital, while 20% disagreed, and 4% remained neutral. This indicates a significant recognition among nursing staff of the impact of absenteeism on hospital operations. The study also identified that workplace stress, family responsibilities, and long working hours were major contributing factors to absenteeism.

**Conclusion:** Absenteeism among registered nurses in tertiary care hospitals is a critical issue that affects patient care, operational efficiency, and the well-being of staff. To address this, it is recommended that hospitals implement flexible scheduling, enhance support for mental health, and improve management practices to reduce absenteeism.

**Keywords:** Absenteeism, Hospital Management, Nurse, Nurse Manager, Occupational Health, Registered Nurses, Tertiary Care Hospital.

## INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism in the nursing profession has become a pressing concern within healthcare organizations globally. This issue has a significant impact on patient care, staff morale, and the operational efficiency of hospitals. Nurses, due to the demanding nature of their profession—marked by long hours, high stress, and physical exhaustion—are particularly susceptible to absenteeism, which leads to several adverse consequences. The absence of registered nurses disrupts staffing ratios, increases the workload of remaining staff, and compromises the quality of care, all of which negatively affect patient outcomes and satisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, underscoring the urgency for effective strategies to manage absenteeism and provide support to the healthcare workforce (1,2). Over the decades, research on absenteeism has highlighted various contributing factors, including job dissatisfaction, workplace stress, and personal health issues. Early studies in the 1970s and 1980s predominantly focused on the relationship between absenteeism and job satisfaction, pointing to factors such as inadequate pay, lack of recognition, and poor working conditions (3). Later research shifted attention to organizational factors, emphasizing the role of management practices, staffing levels, and workplace culture in influencing absenteeism rates (4). In more recent years, the impact of absenteeism on hospital operations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has become a focal point of study. These studies suggest that absenteeism is not only a problem for healthcare providers but also a significant financial burden, further exacerbating the existing challenges of healthcare delivery (5,6).

Despite substantial research efforts, absenteeism among registered nurses remains a persistent issue, especially in tertiary hospitals, which often face heightened pressure to provide continuous and quality care. Studies indicate that absenteeism rates among nurses can vary widely, ranging from 4% to 14% globally, influenced by factors such as hospital size, location, and specialty. However, the prevalence is generally higher in developing countries, where poor working conditions and inadequate remuneration are significant contributors to absenteeism (7,8). As absenteeism strains the healthcare system, it increases the burden on the remaining staff, leading to burnout, decreased productivity, and compromised patient care (9). Addressing absenteeism is critical not only for improving workforce stability and productivity but also for enhancing the quality of patient care and reducing financial strain on healthcare institutions. High rates of absenteeism among nurses can result in understaffing, increased workload, and a decline in morale, ultimately affecting patient safety and care quality. Interventions such as stress management programs, flexible scheduling, and improved leadership have been proposed to mitigate absenteeism and support the well-being of nurses (10,11). However, there remains a need for more comprehensive research to understand the complex interplay of personal, occupational, and organizational factors contributing to absenteeism. This study aims to investigate the prevalence and causes of absenteeism among registered nurses, focusing on the factors that influence this issue. By understanding these factors, the study seeks to propose evidence-based strategies to reduce absenteeism, thereby improving the efficiency of healthcare delivery and enhancing patient outcomes. The objective of this research is to provide valuable insights for hospital administrators, policymakers, and healthcare professionals, contributing to the development of effective strategies to manage absenteeism in nursing. Ultimately, this study will help in creating a more resilient and efficient healthcare workforce, fostering a positive work environment that supports both nurse well-being and high-quality patient care.

## METHODS

The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive design to assess the prevalence of absenteeism among registered nurses in a tertiary-level hospital. The design was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of absenteeism rates and the factors influencing these rates. The study was conducted in a tertiary care hospital known for its large nursing staff and diverse patient population, offering an ideal setting for the research. The hospital provided essential facilities, including conference rooms for conducting interviews and focus group discussions, as well as administrative support for coordinating with nursing staff. Collaboration with the hospital's nursing departments facilitated the distribution and collection of questionnaires, ensuring ethical compliance throughout the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the hospital's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and all participants provided informed consent before participation. The study population consisted of registered nurses employed at the selected tertiary care hospital. Inclusion criteria included nurses with at least one year of work experience in the hospital. Nurses on extended leave, those who resigned during the study period, non-registered nurses, and temporary staff were excluded from the study. A sample size of 30 registered nurses was selected

using a convenient sampling technique, which was chosen to ensure representation from various hospital departments and shifts. While Cochran's formula is typically used for large sample size estimations, the sample size of 30 was deliberately selected based on practical considerations, such as the hospital's specific capacity for recruitment and data collection. In this case, 30 nurses were considered sufficient to identify meaningful patterns and trends regarding absenteeism, especially in a single hospital setting. The targeted sample size of 30 was appropriate for a cross-sectional study focused on descriptive analysis, ensuring a feasible and manageable scope for data collection within the given timeframe (7,11).

Data collection was carried out using an adaptive questionnaire designed to gather relevant information about absenteeism and its potential causes. The questionnaire included questions on workplace stress levels, personal health status, and demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, educational level, decision-making involvement, and work stress. Quantitative data was organized and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which facilitated statistical analysis and the identification of trends. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and statistical tests were conducted to explore relationships between absenteeism and independent variables. Ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed throughout the study. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality of participant information was ensured, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. The research aimed to provide valuable insights into the factors contributing to absenteeism among registered nurses, focusing on workplace stress, personal health, and demographic characteristics.

## RESULTS

The data collected from the respondents revealed significant insights into various factors contributing to absenteeism among nurses. The results demonstrated a strong correlation between workplace stress and absenteeism, with 50% of participants agreeing and 26.7% strongly agreeing that workplace stress contributes to absenteeism. A smaller portion, 13.3%, disagreed, while 10% remained neutral, suggesting that a substantial majority perceives workplace stress as a key factor influencing absenteeism. Regarding burnout due to long working hours, 43.3% of nurses agreed, and 40% strongly agreed, reflecting a combined total of 83.3% who believe that extended working hours contribute to burnout. Only 3.3% strongly disagreed, and 6.7% disagreed, showing that a smaller proportion of nurses did not associate long working hours with burnout. When asked about the difficulty in balancing work and personal life, 43.3% of respondents agreed, and 30% strongly agreed, with 73.3% of nurses experiencing challenges in this area. A smaller percentage, 6.7%, strongly disagreed, and another 6.7% disagreed, suggesting a minority of respondents did not face significant difficulty balancing work and personal life. The perception of poor management as a contributing factor to absenteeism was reported by 46.7% of nurses agreeing and 30% strongly agreeing. This resulted in 76.7% of respondents recognizing poor management as a key driver of absenteeism. Only 6.7% strongly disagreed, and another 6.7% disagreed, indicating that a smaller proportion did not attribute absenteeism to management issues. Transport issues also contributed to absenteeism, with 46.7% agreeing and 20% strongly agreeing, leading to 66.7% of respondents who considered transport-related problems as a factor influencing absenteeism. A smaller group, 20%, remained neutral, and only 13.3% disagreed, suggesting that transport problems were perceived as a relevant issue by most respondents. Staffing shortages were seen as a factor influencing absenteeism by 36.7% agreeing and 26.7% strongly agreeing, collectively representing 63.4% of respondents who acknowledged staffing issues as a contributing factor to absenteeism. Only 13.3% disagreed, with 3.3% strongly disagreeing, showing that a minority did not perceive staffing as a key factor in their attendance.

Communication with management was regarded positively by 36.7% agreeing and 23.3% strongly agreeing, totaling 60% of respondents who viewed communication with management as open and effective. However, 20% were neutral, and 13.3% disagreed, suggesting room for improvement in this area. Flexible scheduling was identified as a solution to reduce absenteeism by 40% agreeing and 36.7% strongly agreeing, summing up to 76.7% of participants who believed that flexible scheduling would help reduce absenteeism. A smaller portion, 16.7%, remained neutral, and only 6.7% disagreed, indicating a consensus on the potential of flexible scheduling as a strategy to improve attendance. Rewards and recognition were seen as motivators for better attendance, with 40% agreeing and another 40% strongly agreeing, indicating that 80% of respondents considered rewards and recognition as effective motivators for reducing absenteeism. Only 13.3% were neutral, and 6.7% strongly disagreed, showing widespread support for this strategy. Professional development opportunities were identified as enhancing job satisfaction by 36.7% agreeing and 50% strongly agreeing, representing 86.7% of respondents who saw professional development as a means to increase job satisfaction. Only 10% were neutral, and 3.3% disagreed, indicating that most nurses recognized the value of professional growth in improving their job satisfaction. Mental and physical health concerns were recognized as significant contributors to absenteeism, with 53.3% agreeing and 26.7% strongly agreeing,

making up 80% of respondents who viewed health issues as a primary factor affecting attendance. Only 20% remained neutral, indicating that a large majority of nurses perceived health problems as a critical influence on absenteeism.

**Table 1: Factors Contributing to Absenteeism Among Nurses: Workplace Stress, Burnout, and Work-Life Balance**

Factor	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Workplace stress level contributes to absenteeism				
Disagree	4	13.3%	13.3%	13.3%
Neutral	3	10.0%	10.0%	23.3%
Agree	15	50.0%	50.0%	73.3%
Strongly Agree	8	26.7%	26.7%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	
Nurses experience burnout due to long working hours				
Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	10.0%
Neutral	2	6.7%	6.7%	16.7%
Agree	13	43.3%	43.3%	60.0%
Strongly Agree	12	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	
Difficulty in balancing work and personal life				
Strongly Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	13.3%
Neutral	4	13.3%	13.3%	26.7%
Agree	13	43.3%	43.3%	70.0%
Strongly Agree	9	30.0%	30.0%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	

**Table 2: Factors Influencing Absenteeism: Transport Issues and Communication with Management**

Factor	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Transport issues lead to absenteeism				
Strongly Disagree	1	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
Disagree	3	10.0%	10.0%	13.3%
Neutral	6	20.0%	20.0%	33.3%
Agree	14	46.7%	46.7%	80.0%
Strongly Agree	6	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	
Communication with management is open and effective				
Strongly Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Disagree	4	13.3%	13.3%	20.0%
Neutral	6	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%
Agree	11	36.7%	36.7%	76.7%
Strongly Agree	7	23.3%	23.3%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	

**Table 3: Factors That Influence Nurse Attendance: Flexible Scheduling and Rewards & Recognition**

Factor	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Flexible scheduling would reduce absenteeism				
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Neutral	5	16.7%	16.7%	23.3%
Agree	12	40.0%	40.0%	63.3%
Strongly Agree	11	36.7%	36.7%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	
Rewards and recognition would motivate to attend work				
Strongly Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Neutral	4	13.3%	13.3%	20.0%
Agree	12	40.0%	40.0%	60.0%
Strongly Agree	12	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	

**Table 4: Impact of Professional Development and Health Concerns on Job Satisfaction and Absenteeism**

Factor	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Professional development opportunities would increase job satisfaction				
Disagree	1	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
Neutral	3	10.0%	10.0%	13.3%
Agree	11	36.7%	36.7%	50.0%
Strongly Agree	15	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	
Mental and physical health concerns related to absenteeism				
Neutral	6	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Agree	16	53.3%	53.3%	73.3%
Strongly Agree	8	26.7%	26.7%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	

**Table 5: Supervisor Support and Mental Health Concerns Impacting Absenteeism**

Factor	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How satisfied are you with the support level of your supervisor?				
Strongly Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	13.3%
Neutral	10	33.3%	33.3%	46.7%
Agree	10	33.3%	33.3%	80.0%
Strongly Agree	6	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	
Hospital anxiety and depression leads to absenteeism				
Disagree	1	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
Neutral	7	23.3%	23.3%	26.7%
Agree	16	53.3%	53.3%	80.0%
Strongly Agree	6	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	

**Table 6: Salary Satisfaction and Overtime Impact on Absenteeism**

Factor	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How satisfied are you with current salaries?				
Strongly Disagree	3	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Disagree	6	20.0%	20.0%	30.0%
Neutral	9	30.0%	30.0%	60.0%
Agree	7	23.3%	23.3%	83.3%
Strongly Agree	5	16.7%	16.7%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	
Overtime or extra shifts beyond regular hours lead to absenteeism				
Disagree	2	6.7%	6.7%	6.7%
Neutral	3	10.0%	10.0%	16.7%
Agree	15	50.0%	50.0%	66.7%
Strongly Agree	10	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	30	100.0%	100.0%	

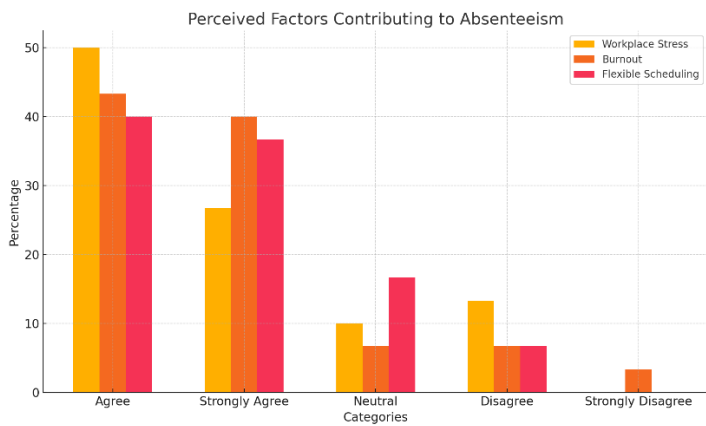


Figure 1 Perceived Factors Contributing to Absenteeism

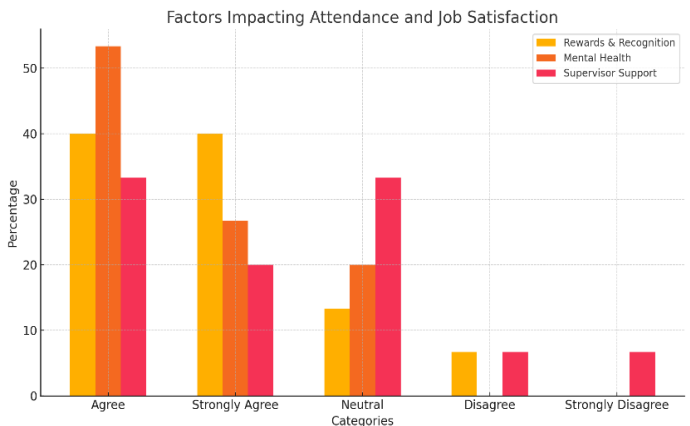


Figure 2 Factors Impacting Attendance and Job Satisfaction

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study underscore the significant role that workplace stress plays in contributing to absenteeism among nurses. A large portion of the respondents, 76.7%, either agreed or strongly agreed that stress is a key factor leading to absenteeism. This result aligns with previous research, which indicates that stress is a primary contributor to absenteeism in healthcare settings, particularly among nurses. This highlights the need for healthcare organizations to address workplace stress through targeted interventions, such as employee support programs, wellness initiatives, and workload management strategies. It is essential for organizations to foster a supportive work environment, where employees feel valued and empowered to manage stress effectively. The implementation of flexible work options, such as remote work or flexible hours, could also help alleviate stress by promoting a better work-life balance, which is a recognized factor in reducing absenteeism (12). The study also revealed that long working hours are a major contributor to burnout among nurses, with 83.3% of respondents acknowledging the connection between extended hours and burnout. This is consistent with existing literature, which consistently links long shifts and high workload with emotional exhaustion and burnout, which are closely associated with absenteeism (13). The finding that a small minority of respondents (10%) disagreed with this statement suggests that some nurses may have developed coping mechanisms or work environments that mitigate the negative impact of long hours. Nevertheless, the majority of nurses' responses indicate that long shifts are a substantial stressor that contributes to absenteeism, supporting the need for healthcare institutions to consider reducing working hours or offering additional support to mitigate the effects of burnout (14). In terms of work-life balance, the study found that 73.3% of respondents reported difficulties in balancing work and



personal life, further confirming that this is a widespread concern among nurses. This result mirrors societal trends where increasing demands from work, combined with personal responsibilities, often lead to stress and burnout. The challenge of maintaining work-life balance is compounded by long working hours, a factor already shown to contribute significantly to burnout (15). While a small proportion of respondents disagreed or remained neutral, it is likely that these individuals have either better coping strategies, more supportive work environments, or different personal circumstances that help them manage this balance effectively. Further investigation into these personal coping mechanisms and support systems could provide valuable insights for organizations aiming to support their workforce better (16).

Another crucial factor identified in this study is poor management practices, with 76.7% of respondents viewing it as a significant contributor to absenteeism. This finding underscores the importance of strong, supportive leadership and effective communication within healthcare settings. Poor management can lead to dissatisfaction, a lack of motivation, and increased absenteeism, as employees feel unsupported or undervalued (17). The minority of respondents who disagreed with this statement may have had positive experiences with management practices, highlighting the variability in management quality across different departments or hospitals. Improving management training, enhancing communication channels, and fostering a culture of recognition and support could significantly reduce absenteeism and improve overall employee morale (18). Transport-related issues also emerged as a notable factor contributing to absenteeism, with 66.7% of respondents recognizing commuting problems as a major barrier to consistent attendance. This suggests that transport issues, such as long commutes, lack of transportation, or traffic, can significantly impact nurses' ability to attend work regularly. While a small group of respondents remained neutral or disagreed, the overall trend indicates that addressing transport-related challenges could help reduce absenteeism (19). Solutions such as providing transport allowances or promoting carpooling among employees could help mitigate this issue. Staffing shortages were another critical factor identified in the study, with 63.4% of respondents stating that staffing levels influence their decision to come to work. This indicates that inadequate staffing is a key consideration for nurses when deciding whether to attend work. A well-staffed workforce not only reduces the burden on individual nurses but also improves patient care and reduces the likelihood of absenteeism. The findings highlight the need for hospitals to ensure that staffing levels are sufficient to meet the demands of the healthcare setting (20).

Communication with management, while perceived positively by 60% of respondents, also revealed mixed opinions. This indicates that while many employees feel that communication channels are open and effective, there is still room for improvement. The neutral responses suggest that some employees may feel unsure or indifferent about the quality of communication, while the minority expressing dissatisfaction highlights the need for organizations to address potential gaps in communication. Ensuring that communication is consistent, transparent, and responsive could foster a more supportive work environment and reduce absenteeism. Flexible scheduling was overwhelmingly supported by the majority of respondents, with 76.7% agreeing that it would help reduce absenteeism. This finding aligns with existing literature suggesting that providing employees with flexible work options can significantly improve job satisfaction, reduce stress, and ultimately decrease absenteeism (15,18). While a small number of respondents disagreed, it is likely that for these individuals, flexible scheduling may not be as important or practical in their specific work environment. However, the widespread support for flexible work arrangements indicates that this could be an effective strategy for organizations aiming to reduce absenteeism and improve overall employee well-being. Rewards and recognition also emerged as key motivators for reducing absenteeism, with 80% of respondents agreeing that rewards and recognition would increase their motivation to attend work. This finding supports the notion that employees who feel valued and appreciated are more likely to show up consistently. Positive reinforcement, whether through financial incentives, recognition programs, or career advancement opportunities, could foster higher morale and commitment, leading to lower absenteeism rates (21).

The study also emphasized the importance of professional development opportunities in increasing job satisfaction. A significant majority of respondents (86.7%) believed that professional development would enhance their job satisfaction. This underscores the value of continuous learning and career growth in improving employee engagement and retention. Offering training programs, mentorship, and other opportunities for career advancement could help reduce absenteeism by making employees feel more valued and invested in their roles. Mental and physical health concerns were identified as significant contributors to absenteeism, with 80% of respondents acknowledging the impact of health issues on their attendance. This finding suggests that healthcare organizations must prioritize employee well-being by providing mental health support, wellness programs, and access to healthcare services. By addressing the physical and mental health needs of their workforce, organizations can improve attendance and reduce the overall impact of absenteeism on patient care. Satisfaction with supervisor support was also a key factor, with 53.3% of respondents expressing satisfaction with the support they receive from their supervisors. However, 33.3% of respondents remained neutral, indicating room for improvement in supervisor-employee relationships. Increasing the level of support, communication, and guidance from supervisors could help improve job satisfaction and reduce absenteeism (22).

Finally, anxiety and depression, particularly in high-stress environments like hospitals, were identified as major contributors to absenteeism. The findings suggest that healthcare organizations must address mental health concerns by implementing support systems, such as counseling services, stress management programs, and mental health days, to reduce absenteeism and improve employee well-being. In conclusion, the findings from this study highlight the multifaceted nature of absenteeism among nurses, with workplace stress, long working hours, burnout, and health concerns being key contributors. To address these issues, healthcare organizations must implement strategies such as flexible scheduling, improved management practices, enhanced communication, and stronger support systems for mental and physical health. While the study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing absenteeism, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of specific interventions and to examine absenteeism across different healthcare settings and regions.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, absenteeism among registered nurses in tertiary hospitals remains a significant issue that impacts both patient care and hospital operations. This study highlights the key factors contributing to absenteeism, such as workplace stress, burnout, work-life imbalance, poor management, transportation difficulties, and health concerns. By understanding these underlying causes, the research emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies that address both organizational and personal challenges. Interventions aimed at improving working conditions, supporting nurse well-being, and offering flexible solutions are crucial to reducing absenteeism and ensuring high-quality care. Ultimately, the study reinforces the importance of tackling absenteeism through a multifaceted approach, which will improve nurse attendance, job satisfaction, and patient outcomes, thereby confirming the prevalence of absenteeism in tertiary hospitals.

### Author Contribution

Author	Contribution
Ayesha Jameel*	Substantial Contribution to study design, analysis, acquisition of Data Manuscript Writing Has given Final Approval of the version to be published
Sidra Inayat	Substantial Contribution to study design, acquisition and interpretation of Data Critical Review and Manuscript Writing Has given Final Approval of the version to be published
Sehrish Bibi	Substantial Contribution to acquisition and interpretation of Data Has given Final Approval of the version to be published
Tahira Ejaz	Contributed to Data Collection and Analysis Has given Final Approval of the version to be published
Farri Naz	Contributed to Data Collection and Analysis Has given Final Approval of the version to be published
Aqib Dil Awaiz	Substantial Contribution to study design and Data Analysis Has given Final Approval of the version to be published

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