


IMPACTS OF ABSENCES OF PROFESSIONALS IN HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

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**Elizabeth Fernandes Reis¹, Alessandra Caires Braga², Andrea Fernandes Vieira³ and
Lucianna Reis Novaes⁴**

ABSTRACT

Tracking absences in health services is not only a logistical challenge, but also an action to control organizational risk management. An effective absence management strategy maintains workflow continuity and strengthens organizational culture. Absence management is really a win-win, providing cost savings while improving employee experiences and preserving productivity levels. An effective absence management structure is proactive, which means that even if the unexpected happens, it will be easy to identify the problem and set up a contingency plan. Managers must remember that behind every statistic is a real person. Productivity numbers aren't everything, and burnout is very real. It is essential to take into account each employee individually for the health system to thrive and be sustainable. This study aimed to demonstrate the impact of absence management in health services in Brazil.

Keywords: Absence Management. Absenteeism. Turnover. Productivity. Organizational Climate.

¹ Graduated in Medicine from the Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp)

Medical residency in Cardiology at Unifesp

Post-Graduation in Project Management from Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV)

Coordinator of ONA Accreditation and Distinction Programs at the Qualisa Institute of Management (IQG), São Paulo/SP

² Degree in Biochemical Pharmacy from the Bandeirantes University of São Paulo (Uniban)

Post-graduation in Hospital Administration and Health System from Faculdades Oswaldo Cruz

Postgraduate degree in Improvement in Compliance in the Health Area from the Institute of Teaching and Research of Hospital Sírio Libanês

MBA in Strategic Management from Anhembi Morumbi University (UAM)

ONA Evaluator at Instituto Qualisa de Gestão (IQG), São Paulo/SP

³ Degree in Biomedical Sciences from the University of Santo Amaro (Unisa)

MBA in Strategic Management from the University of São Paulo (USP)

Master's Degree in Biomedical Sciences from USP

Lead Auditor by ISO 9001:2015

ONA Evaluator at Instituto Qualisa de Gestão (IQG), São Paulo/SP

⁴ Bachelor's degree in Nursing from the Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas (PUC Campinas)

Specialization in Hospital Administration from the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Santa Casa de São Paulo (FCMSCSP)

Specialization in Stomatherapy from the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the State University of Campinas (Unicamp)

Evaluator of the Qualisa Institute of Management (IQG), São Paulo/SP

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to monitor the absences of professionals in health services.

METHODOLOGY

The following people management indicators were used: turnover and absenteeism, which are extremely relevant information for understanding the work environment in health services. These indicators are sensitive to external and internal factors, amplifying the causal link of their occurrence.

To analyze the indicators of absenteeism and turnover, we used information on the staff of the 31 institutions participating in the Brazilian Patient Safety Program (PBSP) during the year 2023, provided by the participants through the indicator collection and analysis system of the Qualisa Institute of Management (IQG).

In general, the data referring to the number of active professionals, absences, hiring, and dismissals, as well as the number of hours contracted and hours of absence – justified or not – allowed the compilation of the indicators.

RESULTS

From the individual results of the indicators, the means and medians for each month were calculated, according to the Table 1.

Table 1: Average turnover and absenteeism of institutions participating in the PBSP in 2023.

Month	Absenteeism		Turnover	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
January	5,24	4,04	3,11	2,07
February	5,05	3,29	2,86	2,50
March	6,08	4,18	4,26	4,13
April	6,05	4,15	4,40	3,80
May	5,70	4,16	4,34	3,85
June	5,77	3,16	3,64	3,49
July	4,80	2,95	2,75	3,05
August	4,90	2,59	3,58	2,99
September	4,21	1,97	2,64	1,95
October	2,87	2,48	3,34	3,25
November	3,81	2,42	2,70	3,05
December	3,87	3,92	3,38	2,77

Source: prepared by the authors/IQG.

For the calculation of financial costs (Table 2), information on professionals dismissed in the month was used and the average cost of absenteeism was calculated according to the base salary of the nursing technician established by the Federal Council of Nursing (COFEN) and the estimate made by the Betta 1 study.

Table 2: Financial impact of absenteeism and turnover in PBSP participating institutions in 2023.

Month	Financial impact (in reais)	
	Average	Median
January	523.778,08	214.197,45
February	473.582,51	245.138,00
March	657.014,13	343.048,56
April	724.882,37	323.170,05
May	706.571,76	396.308,18
June	650.126,08	333.221,53
July	436.402,36	249.140,59
August	600.848,38	233.618,54
September	462.550,82	143.099,45
October	401.085,25	269.410,50
November	381.795,26	232.509,65
December	433.903,70	266.776,15

Source: prepared by the authors/IQG.

The annual averages were 4.86% of absenteeism and 3.42% of turnover, and the average values of the first semester were 5.65% of absenteeism and 3.77% of turnover, against 4.08% and 3.06%, respectively, in the second semester (Table 1).

The comparison, by means of hypothesis testing, between the values of absenteeism and turnover in the first and second semesters allows us to affirm that the values of the first semester are statistically higher than those of the second semester with a reliability level of 95%, discarding the possibility that the difference is the result of mere chance.

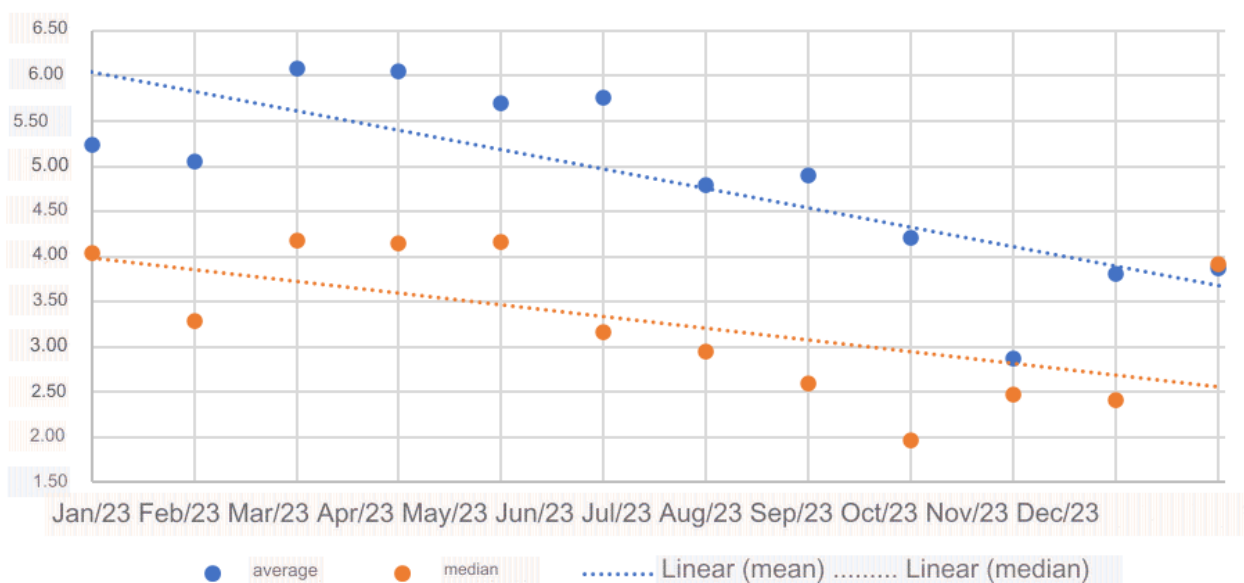
These results indicate that each of the institutions analyzed had, on average, 42 professionals absent per month in the first semester and 29 professionals absent per month in the second semester, resulting in an average cost equivalent to approximately 150 and 109 average nursing salaries in the first and second semesters, respectively.

These annualized estimates can be even higher if the management of these indicators considers the dismissal of professionals with longer contract time, the time of

leave, the professional classes with the highest average salary and the lower productivity generated by absences.

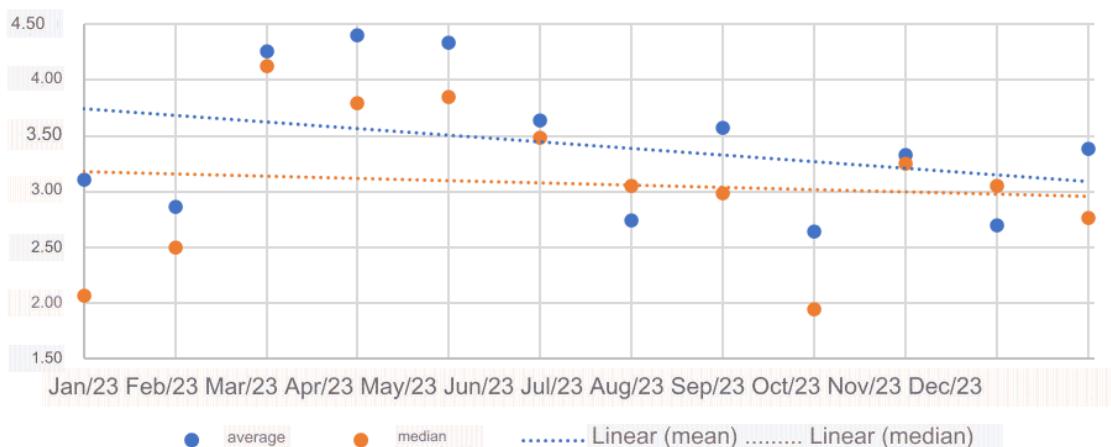
It can be seen that, in the period analyzed, absenteeism shows a downward trend, both in the mean and in the median, while turnover has a more slight downward trend, almost stability, as shown in graphs 1 and 2.

Graph 1: Monthly averages and medians of absenteeism in the 31 institutions analyzed, between January and December 2023.



Source: prepared by the authors/IQG.

Graph 2: Monthly averages and medians of turnover in the 31 institutions analyzed, between January and December 2023.



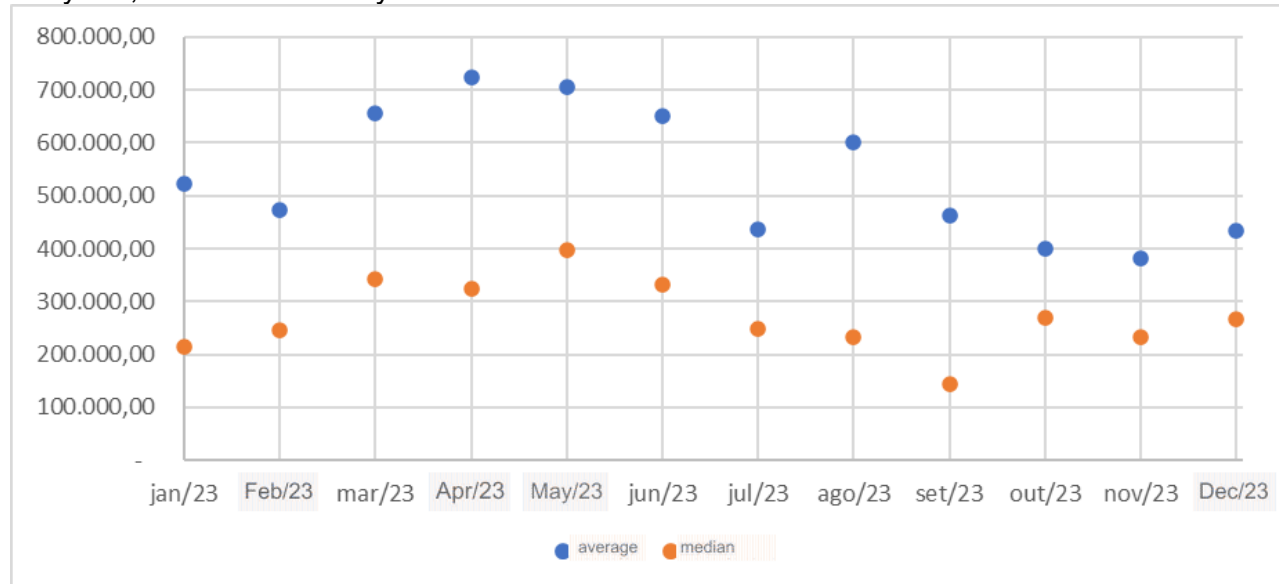
Source: prepared by the authors/IQG.

This drop in absenteeism can be the result of administrative actions aimed at the well-being and commitment of employees, as well as aspects inherent to the labor and business health market, presenting a lot of diversity when analyzing the institutions individually.

The average financial impact on participating institutions (

Table 2) shows substantial differences between the values of the means and medians, indicating that there is a great heterogeneity in the size of the participating institutions. This condition can be better observed in Graph 3.

Graph 3: Monthly financial impact in reais of absenteeism and rotation in the 31 institutions analyzed, between January and December 2023.



Source: prepared by the authors/IQG.

DISCUSSION

Absenteeism is an absence with a direct cause, as the employee is not present in the work environment, while turnover is the absence due to an unfilled vacancy in the organization, either because there was a dismissal in the professional staff, or because the institution is in the process of recruiting and selecting qualified people.

Absence management is a set of solutions implemented to help prevent absenteeism before it becomes constant and habitual. These resources can help managers integrate solutions that support employees in understanding company policies and encourage them to stay healthy and engaged.

Some authors point out that today's managers recognize the impact that measurements have on the performance of their employees, even though they rarely think about indicators as an essential part of their strategies. Therefore, the relevance of this article lies in the fact that it analyzes these indicators as part of the business strategies of health companies.

A study carried out by the consulting firm Robert Half³ shows that, while turnover has grown 38% in three years worldwide, the phenomenon has been registered in 82% of institutions in Brazil. Among the main reasons for the problem, according to the survey, are:

- lack of recognition;
- low pay;
- demotivation;
- concern for the future of the company;
- low work-life balance.

We must reflect that the improvement of the practice environment not only complies with better working conditions for professionals, but that having a favorable environment certainly contributes to better results.

CONCLUSION

People are responsible for the greatest commitment of resources in health organizations, therefore, neglecting the management of people management indicators, without associating absence data with care and financial indicators, is an institutional risk.

Absence management is a complex problem, and not all absences can be prevented, but all can be managed.

Some factors contribute to the increase in absenteeism and turnover, including work overload, management failures, lack of career prospects, lack of attractive benefits, lack of recognition for the work done, heating up of the labor market, lack of clarity in the guidelines related to the position, punitive or non-existent organizational culture, overloaded teams, and associated financial costs. The quality of healthcare can be directly affected by these issues, resulting in adverse consequences for patients and the organization itself.

In addition, absences can generate underutilization, overutilization, and misuse of available resources, responsible for the cost of poor quality in health. A broad understanding of the functioning of the system is essential to identify problems and create innovative solutions to improve the quality of health services.

This study demonstrated the importance of effective absence management to minimize these problems and also brought the need to develop disruptive and transformative strategies for the health system in order to promote quality improvement and provide safety in health services.

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