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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

### Identifying and Prioritizing Factors Affecting the Mental Absence of Faculty Members, Case of Study: Payam Noor University, Fars Province

Somayyeh Zarei 

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Educational  
Sciences and Counseling,  
Payame Noor University,  
Tehran, Iran.

#### \*Correspondence

Somayyeh Zarei  
E-mail:  
[zarey.somayyeh@pnu.ac.ir](mailto:zarey.somayyeh@pnu.ac.ir)

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#### EXTENDED A B S T R A C T

##### Introduction

In the current era, universities are considered one of the most important pillars and elements of sustainable development and one of the most important tools for solving the challenges and complexities of human societies in all aspects. Meanwhile, faculty members are considered one of the most important pillars of the university system and one of the most important human capitals of a university, and their management and development is one of the fundamental and central issues in academic circles. On the other hand, the study shows that the measures taken in relation to the management of these human capitals in all universities are not sufficiently effective, and faculty members in many universities are exposed to many challenges and problems, and these challenges can pose serious obstacles to their performance. One of the consequences of human capital mismanagement in today's organizations is the phenomenon of mental absence, which can also cause universities to face serious problems in the process of utilizing their human capital. The mental absence of faculty members can have many negative consequences at different levels. In this situation, faculty members apply their minimal knowledge, skills, and abilities to the organization, lack the necessary job enthusiasm, and perform job duties with indifference. Therefore, mental absence is a topic that must be seriously studied and the factors affecting the occurrence of this phenomenon in workplaces must be identified accurately and scientifically. However, a review of studies conducted on mental absence shows that despite researchers' attention to employees' mental absence and its study among different statistical communities, this issue has not been investigated and studied in universities and among faculty members, and questions related to the factors affecting faculty members' mental absence remain unanswered. Therefore, the mental absence of faculty members is a topic that requires further empirical research in order to identify the factors affecting this phenomenon in the academic context. Therefore, the present study was designed with the aim of identifying and prioritizing the factors affecting the mental absence of faculty members. Because, mental absence is a phenomenon that appears in different conditions and contexts, under the influence of different factors and elements, and in academic organizations, due to the special characteristics of these environments, it can be different from commercial and manufacturing organizations.

### **Methodology**

This study falls into the category of applied research in terms of purpose and is a mixed research in terms of the type of data collection and analysis. The qualitative part of the research was conducted using the thematic analysis method and the quantitative part was conducted using the R-Swara method. Thematic analysis is a systematic method for identifying, organizing, and reporting semantic patterns (themes) in qualitative data; and due to its practicality, it is one of the most common methods of analyzing qualitative data in social science research. The goal of this method is to find important and interesting themes (semantic patterns) in the texts and materials under study in order to answer the research question. In the present study, the method proposed by Brown and Clark (Brown and Clark, 2006) was used, which introduces content analysis as a six-step process. The R-Swara method is also a multi-criteria decision-making technique that was developed by integrating the Raff theory set and the Swara method. The statistical population of the study consists of faculty members of Payam Noor University of Fars Province. In the qualitative section, 17 people were selected as sample members using purposive sampling method. The necessary data in this section was also collected using semi-structured interviews. The required data in the quantitative section was collected using a questionnaire. In this way, the output of the qualitative section was organized in the form of a questionnaire and distributed among the participants, and finally 15 questionnaires were collected. To assess the validity of the analyses in the qualitative section, intra-subject agreement was used, and the results indicate the validity of the analyses.

### **Findings**

After each interview, the interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and studied in order to gain a better understanding of the data. In the second stage, phrases appropriate to the research objective were extracted. In this process, 63 phrases were extracted, and in the third stage, these phrases were coded and the primary themes were identified while being analyzed. In the fourth stage, initial themes were reviewed and basic themes were identified by modifying and strengthening the initial themes. After that, the themes created were examined and an attempt was made to identify a set of distinct, non-repetitive basic themes that included a set of ideas raised in different parts of the original text. In the fifth stage, while drawing the theme network, the basic themes were categorized into organizing themes. In this way, the identified themes were classified into similar and coherent groups and organizing themes were extracted. After identifying these factors, in the quantitative part of the research, prioritization of these factors was carried out based on the opinions of experts. The results showed that factors affecting the mental absence of faculty members, in order of priority, are: lack of attention to faculty members as human capital, lack of job security and concerns related to job loss, having personal and family problems, the hierarchical organizational structure of the university, Concentration of decision-making at top management levels, Severe segmentation in the organization (island structure) and lack of a spirit of cooperation among faculty members, Managers' lack of attention to the personal and professional needs of faculty members, Paying attention to inappropriate criteria when evaluating the performance of faculty members, The individual's lack of fit with the prevailing culture of the university, Weakness in communication skills and abilities, Managers' look down on faculty members, Lack of accountability of managers towards faculty members, Having an interest and mental preoccupation with work outside of university, The intense and extreme competitive culture that dominates the university, Political factionalism in university appointments and dismissals, Having heavy and high job duties and expectations and Lack of consistency and fit between different job duties.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Although mental absence is a topic that has been studied by other researchers, this issue

has been examined and analyzed for the first time in academic environments and among faculty members in this study, which can be considered as one of the innovations of this study. In addition, ranking the factors affecting mental absence in workplaces has been considered for the first time in this study and can be considered as the second innovation of the research.

The research findings, in addition to increasing the theoretical and empirical richness of the subject, improve the perspective of university administrators (at all levels) towards mental absence among faculty members and, by introducing the factors affecting the formation of this phenomenon, can support them in taking the necessary measures to prevent mental absence among faculty members. The present study can also support the design and implementation of necessary management interventions to improve the quality of work life of faculty members by identifying factors affecting the mental absence of faculty members. Prioritizing the factors affecting this phenomenon also increases managers' understanding of the impact of each of the identified factors, and they can prioritize and implement the necessary measures related to this phenomenon, considering the importance of each of these factors. Therefore, it is recommended that university administrators consider the findings when making policies, planning, and implementing management measures related to preventing or reducing mental absence among faculty members.

In addition to university administrators and policymakers, researchers interested in this field can also use the research clues from this study to design and implement future studies. For example, given that the focus of this study was on Payam Noor University, other researchers can examine the mental absence of faculty members and the factors affecting it in other universities and compare the results with the present results. Also, given the insufficient richness of the empirical background of the subject (the subjective mental absence of faculty members), future studies can be conducted around modeling the factors affecting this phenomenon in the form of comprehensive and multidimensional frameworks. It seems that the use of methods such as grounded theory can analyze and examine other dimensions of the subject. Examining the lived experience of faculty members regarding the phenomenon of mental absence can also further explain the hidden aspects of this phenomenon.

#### **KEY WORDS**

Mental Absence, Mental Absence of Faculty Members, Thematic Analysis, R-Swara Method.

