

## Is presenteeism good or bad? A phenomenological study in schools

### Presenteeism iyi midir kötü müdür? Okullarda fenomenolojik bir çalışma

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**ABSTRACT:** The study aims to analyse the phenomenon in a holistic and comprehensive way according to the perceptions of education workers who experience presenteeism more frequently and reveal the relationship of presenteeism with the sociological, psychological, and theological dynamics of Turkish society. The study was conducted with a phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research methods. The study group consists of five teachers and five school administrators working in Elazığ, a province in Türkiye in the 2020-2021 academic year. It was determined that educators can voluntarily decide to work when they are not feeling well due to motivations such as a sense of responsibility, conscience, commitment to work, public service, and religious sensitivity. In addition, some participants stated that due to organisational pressure, economic difficulties, and workload, employees make a forced decision to work when they are not well. Finally, in addition to the negative results of presenteeism, positive results, which are rarely seen in the literature, were also obtained. Therefore, the experience of presenteeism should be evaluated considering its positive and negative effects on organisations and employees. Finally, suggestions were developed to monitor the situation of employees experiencing presenteeism, develop policies regarding this, and prevent them from being forced to work in bad situations they cannot tolerate.

**Keywords:** Presenteeism, bad presenteeism, good presenteeism, involuntary presenteeism, voluntary presenteeism.

**ÖZ:** Bu çalışma presenteeismi daha sık deneyimleyen eğitim çalışanlarının algılarına göre olguyu bütüncül ve kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz etmeyi ve Türk toplumunun sosyolojik, psikolojik ve teolojik dinamikleriyle ilişkisini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden fenomenolojik desende yürütülmüştür. Çalışma grubunu Türkiye'nin Elazığ ilinde 2020-2021 eğitim-öğretim yılında görev yapan beş öğretmen ve beş okul yöneticisi oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların sorumluluk duygusu, vicdan, işe bağlılık, kamu hizmeti, dini duyarlılık gibi motivasyonlar nedeniyle kendilerini iyi hissetmedikleri durumlarda gönüllü olarak çalışmaya karar verebildikleri belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca bazı katılımcılar örgütsel baskı, ekonomik zorluklar ve iş yükü nedeniyle iyi olmadıkları zamanlarda zorunlu bir şekilde çalışmaya karar verdiklerini ifade etmiştir. Son olarak, Presenteeism'in olumsuz sonuçlarına ek olarak, literatürde nadiren görülen olumlu sonuçları da öngördüğü belirlenmiştir. Dolayısıyla presenteeism deneyimi, örgütler ve çalışanlar üzerindeki olumlu ve olumsuz etkileri dikkate alınarak değerlendirilmelidir. Bu bağlamda son olarak, presenteeism yaşayan çalışanların durumlarının izlenmesi, buna yönelik politikalar geliştirilmesi ve tahammül edemeyecekleri kötü durumlarda çalışmaya zorlanmalarını engellenmeye yönelik öneriler geliştirilmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Presenteeism, kötü presenteeism, iyi presenteeism, gönülsüz presenteeism, gönüllü presenteeism.

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Human resources are shown as the principal capital of organisations (Ployhart et al., 2014) established to realise specific goals (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019). Organisations want to use their human resources most effectively to achieve their goals (Açıklan, 1994). With the policies they have developed for this purpose, traditional human resources departments try to keep their employees at work (Nahar, 2018), build their competencies, and benefit from them (Torraco, 2005). However, this point of view has brought with it a focus on preventing the absenteeism of employees under all circumstances. This situation revealed the phenomenon of presenteeism, known to cause a loss of approximately 150 billion dollars in the USA (Hemp, 2004) and 225 billion Euros in Germany (Abasilim et al., 2015) and negatively affected the well-being of employees (Caverley et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2016; McGregor et al., 2016).

When the literature on presenteeism is examined, it is difficult to say that there is a consensus on the meaning of the concept. European researchers (e.g., Aronsson et al., 2000; Hansen & Andersen, 2008) act in a reductionist framework toward the premises of the phenomenon, the motivation behind it, and its consequences. In contrast, North American researchers (e.g., Caverley et al., 2007; Koopman et al., 2002) focus more on the results of the case. However, as Johns (2010) states, the phenomenon lacks a conceptual point of view, and this situation needs to be handled holistically.

Therefore, in this study, the strengths of qualitative research (understanding, definition, and explanation) will be used to form a basis for understanding presenteeism from a holistic perspective. Presenteeism is experienced more intensely in the field of education compared to other areas (Aronsson et al., 2000; Bergström et al., 2009; Ferreira & Martinez, 2012; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). In this context, determining the relationship of presenteeism with social, cultural, and individual variables and revealing the results of this experience will contribute to the literature. In particular, it can be said that some cultural codes (e.g., the perception of work as worship, the sanctity attributed to services such as education, and the dominance of social control mechanisms) will help to understand the sociological and psychological elements underlying the presenteeism experience (Cooper & Lu, 2016; Ferreira et al., 2021). For this purpose, the phenomenon of presenteeism is examined according to the participants' perceptions, using a phenomenological design to analyse the phenomenological interviews, memoing, and messages received from the participants after the interviews.

### **What Is Presenteeism?**

Although it is a common experience for organisations, organisational presenteeism is a relatively new concept for organisational behaviour researchers (Cooper & Lu, 2016). In addition to this innovation, it cannot be said that an agreed-upon definition of the concept has been made (Freeling et al., 2020; Hansen & Andersen, 2008) because the concept is both inconsistent (Johns, 2011) and complex (Wang et al., 2010). Therefore, different definitions of the phenomenon are encountered in the literature (Johns, 2011).

We can divide these different definitions of existence into three approaches to research. The first, presenteeism, is formulated as *continuing to work while sick*, predominantly accepted by European researchers (Johns, 2010), aiming to understand the phenomenon's antecedents, consequences, and the primary motivation behind the

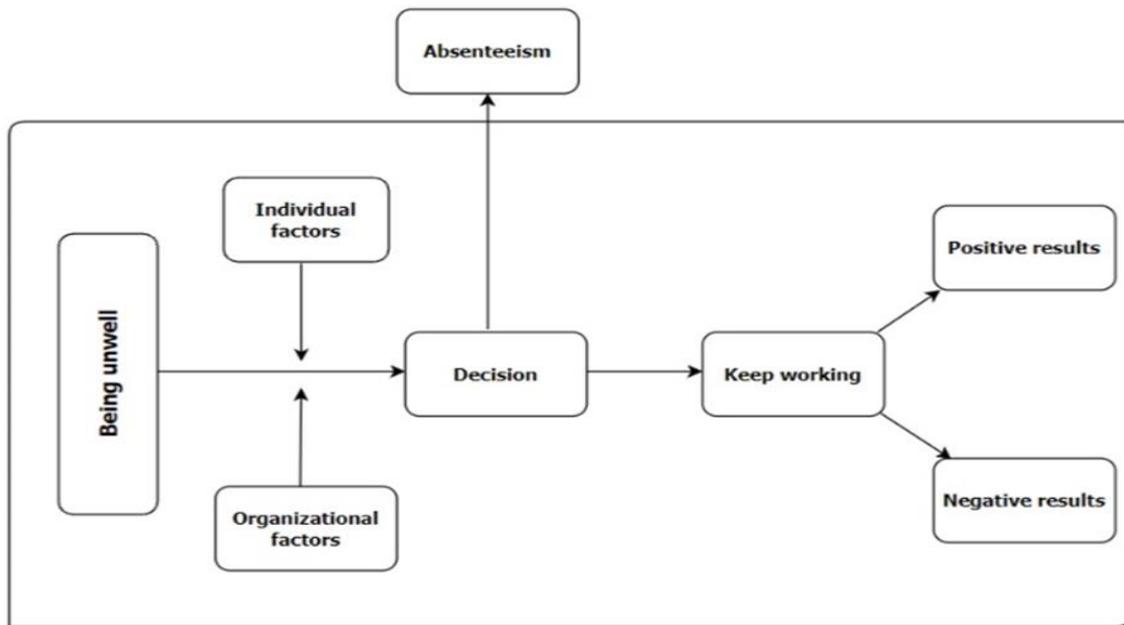
phenomenon. Concentrating on antecedents and conclusions, this approach refers to employee-related factors, working conditions, and environmental factors associated with presenteeism (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019). This perspective, which explains presenteeism as a result of a decision-making dilemma (staying at home, resting, and working while sick), examines the antecedents and consequences of the phenomenon separately, with a behaviourist/reductionist attitude. Some researchers in this approach (e.g., Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019) emphasise that working can have positive effects, especially in some mild disease states, contrary to the common belief that the experience of presenteeism can have negative consequences.

The second research approach led by North American researchers (Johns, 2010) defines presenteeism as a loss of productivity due to continuing to work despite health problems (Goetzel et al., 2004; Hummer et al., 2002; Turpin et al., 2004; Whitehouse, 2005). This approach focuses on the medical interventions necessary to measure the loss of productivity caused by presenteeism (Goetzel et al., 2004; Koopman et al., 2002; Li et al., 2019; Schultz et al., 2009) and reducing the loss resulting from these measurements (e.g., Ammendolia et al., 2016; Burton et al., 2006). Therefore, this approach evaluates presenteeism as a completely negative experience (Johns, 2010) and characterises it as a situation that needs to be controlled.

Contrary to the first two approaches, which limited the presenteeism name to *come to work while sick*, the approach that can be considered as a third approach tried to explain the concept by expanding it. Presenteeism, which is associated with factors such as stress (Gilbreath & Karimi, 2012), depression (Wang et al., 2010), and private jobs (D'Abate & Eddy, 2007), as well as physical health problems that will prevent the employee from performing at a high level and collecting his cognitive energy in the workplace, is defined as existing but functionally disappearing (Cooper & Lu, 2016). This definition does not limit presenteeism with the disease but associates the employee's functioning in the workplace with variables unrelated to the disease. While this perspective broadens the meaning of presenteeism, it still refers to its negative consequences.

Unlike these three research traditions, we explain presenteeism as *a phenomenon that predicts positive and negative results as a result of which the employee continues to work compulsorily and voluntarily despite reasons that may prevent him from feeling well* (Fig. 1). In this definition, we refer to the reality that presenteeism is a process (Vera-Calzaretta & Juarez-Garcia, 2014), which the three research traditions overlook. Besides, we do not deal with presenteeism from a reductionist point of view, as in the first tradition, by separating its causes and effects. We combine the cause and effect by considering the phenomenon holistically. In addition, we consider the phenomenon in the second and third approaches not only as a loss of productivity but as a reality of business life that can be associated with positive and negative results. Again, as in the first and second traditions, we associate the phenomenon not only as an experience based on health conditions but also with variables other than the illness that prevents the employee from performing his duties generally at work.

Figure 1  
Presenteeism Process



Another issue that we think is important in our definition is that, unlike other definitions, the elements of obligation and voluntariness are mentioned. What this obligation and/or volunteering means are the requirements and motivations behind the decision to presenteeism. Indeed, research on presenteeism has shown that compelling or motivating factors such as public service motivation (Deng et al., 2019), organisational culture (Ruhle & Süß, 2020), nature of work (Caverley et al., 2007; MacGregor et al., 2008; Veale et al., 2016), manager and colleague pressure (Baker-McClearn et al., 2010; Rebmann et al., 2016), workload (Shan et al., 2022), the difficulty of employee substitution (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005), and economic difficulties (Chiu et al., 2017; Hemp, 2004; Webster et al., 2019) are effective in making a presenteeism decision.

### Presenteeism as Being Unwell

Generally, presenteeism research focuses on the health problems behind the inability to function of employees in the workplace (Evans, 2004; Johansson & Lundberg, 2004; Turpin et al., 2004). Much of the research focuses on physical health problems such as allergies, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, heart disease, hypertension, migraine/headache, fatigue, respiratory infections, and neck and back pain (Aronsson et al., 2000; Bae, 2021; Baker-McClearn et al., 2010; Caverley et al., 2007; Dudenhöffer et al., 2017; Gwinnutt et al., 2020; Hiles et al., 2018; Kinman & Wray, 2018), relatively ignoring the other health problems of individuals. However, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as the absence of symptoms of physical illness and a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being (Ni et al., 2020). As can be understood from the definition, health is evaluated multidimensionally and is explained by the state of well-being. Therefore, it would be an incomplete and wrong attitude to consider presenteeism as a process that starts with only physical health problems because presenteeism is an experience that begins with the employee's decision to

continue working in inappropriate bio-psycho-social conditions (Vera-Calzaretta & Juarez-Garcia, 2014).

As we mentioned, well-being enables individuals to increase their capacity to use their abilities and skills and to reach their maximum potential (Myers & Williard, 2003). In this sense, well-being is a comprehensive state and negativity in any of these states can hinder the energy, attention, and motivation to perform a task (Gómez et al., 2022). Consequently, we associate the experience of presenteeism not only with physical health problems but also with negativities in the state of mental and psychological that will put the person in a negative state of well-being.

### **Why Does A Person Keep Working When Unwell?**

There is surprisingly little research on this topic in the presenteeism literature. This issue was partially addressed in the comprehensive literature review conducted by Johns (2010). The motivation and obligations behind the employee's continuing to work despite not feeling well psychologically, physically, and cognitively will have an essential place in understanding the presenteeism phenomenon. Studies in the literature indicate that when employees are not well, they may work voluntarily (e.g., Cooper & Lu, 2019; Grant, 2008; Grant & Parker, 2009; Humphrey et al., 2007) or involuntary (e.g., Baker-McCleary et al., 2010; Biron & Saksvik, 2009). In this sense, presenteeism can be divided into *involuntary presenteeism* and *voluntary presenteeism* (Holland & Collins, 2018).

Organisational policies (Holland & Collins, 2018), pressures to participate (manager, colleague, clients) (Baker-McCleary et al., 2010; Biron & Saksvik, 2009; Rebmann et al., 2016), the interdependence of tasks (Grant & Parker, 2009), fear of losing one's job (Holland & Collins, 2018), economic concerns (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Chiu et al., 2017), workload (Hansen & Andersen, 2008; Shan et al., 2022), and organisational culture (Ruhle & Süß, 2020) are widespread situations for the employee to participate in working life due to obligation (Biron et al., 2006). This situation is defined as involuntary presenteeism in the literature (Gosselin & Lauzier, 2011). Involuntary presenteeism is a type of presenteeism that predicts specific results and where the employee continues to work, forced by factors that he cannot control.

On the other hand, the type of presenteeism, which is directly dependent on the employee's personal decision, can be controlled by the employee regardless of compelling reasons and is formed by internal motivation (Cooper & Lu, 2019; Gosselin & Lauzier, 2011). The critical point here is that the decision to continue working when the employee is not well is not a result of necessity but an extension of the person's desire, belief, responsibility, and commitment attitudes. Studies proved that although employees are not well, they continue to work because of commitment to work (Snir & Harpaz, 2012), professionalism (Gosselin & Lauzier, 2011), and perceived importance of the task (Grant, 2008), conscientiousness (Johns, 2011).

### **Presenteeism as A Fearful Process**

*The New York Times* called presenteeism the most significant discovery of 2004 (Zengerle, 2004). In recent years, research on presenteeism has shown the considerable impact of the phenomenon on individuals and organisations. In particular, studies indicated that presenteeism is somewhat associated with adverse outcomes (Johns,

2010, 2011; Lohaus & Habermann, 2019). Results from both cross-sectional (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Goldstein et al., 2019; Miraglia & Johns, 2016) and longitudinal studies (Beswick et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2021; Chou & Mach, 2021; Demerouti et al., 2009; Hiles et al., 2018; Lu et al., 2013) show that presenteeism in organisational life generally predicts adverse outcomes, that is, bad presenteeism (Cooper & Lu, 2016). Bad presenteeism is when the experience of presenteeism is seen as a risk factor for employees and organisations.

The risk that presenteeism poses can be grouped under two headings: employee well-being and employee performance. In a two-wave study of Taiwanese workers, Lu et al. (2013) revealed a negative impact of presenteeism on mental health, physical health, and job satisfaction. The same study determined that employees who experienced presenteeism experienced a significant sense of exhaustion. The state of being unwell, which can be eliminated by rest or treatment, worsens by continuing to work. Deprivation of recovery status of employees and their worsening can lead to chronic problems in the future. Indeed, Bergström et al. (2009) found that participants were absent from illness for more than 30 days due to the psychological and physical disorders caused by presenteeism.

Presenteeism, which predicts various psychological and physical disorders, also negatively affects the performance of employees because when people do not feel well, they naturally cannot do their jobs in the best way (Hemp, 2004). Therefore, employees who do not feel well will not be as productive as their colleagues and will spend more time and effort to fill the gap that will occur (Roe, 2003). The extra time and effort will deplete the employee's energy and regenerate itself through performance degradation. The performance decline of the employee due to presenteeism will also harm teamwork in areas with mutual task dependence (Johns, 2010). In such a case, other employees who need to focus on their tasks will need to help their teammates who do not feel well or fill the gap left, which will negatively affect the performance of other employees (Abasilim et al., 2015).

Presenteeism has significant risk factors for organisations and the risk it poses for employees. First, it is considered to pose a risk of loss of productivity for organisations (Hemp, 2004; Knies et al., 2012). The employee who is not suitable for work in the workplace may cause a decrease in work speed, an increase in the repetition rate and error rate, the emergence of work accidents (D'Abate & Eddy, 2007), low service quality, and fewer new ideas being introduced (Gilbreath & Karimi, 2012). This leads to a decrease in the amount of production. Burton et al. (2004) stated that migraines or headaches cost \$12 billion and allergies cost \$2.8 billion annually due to a decrease in productivity in the USA. In the same year, the total loss caused by other diseases or ill health was around \$150 billion per year (Hemp, 2004). Abasilim et al. (2015) stated that the annual cost loss is estimated to be around 225 billion Euros in Germany, considered the largest economy in Europe.

As a result, the perspective that evaluates presenteeism as a bad organisational reality sees the phenomenon as a process that creates serious problems for both the employee and the organisation (Perez-Nebra et al., 2020). This approach emphasises that working when you are not well will lead to increased stress, weakening of relations with colleagues, damage to service recipients, and dissatisfaction with service recipients. Likewise, presenteeism, which reduces the quality of working life and

creates a perception of ineffectiveness in the workplace (Ferreira & Martinez, 2012), can be considered a process that requires precautions.

### **Presenteeism with Positive Consequences**

In the literature, presenteeism is generally evaluated as a negative phenomenon that should be avoided (Johns, 2010) because presenteeism is associated with adverse outcomes for both employees and organisations (Strömberg et al., 2017). Taking a healthy and, therefore, fully productive employee as a reference in a phenomenon that starts with an essentially unwell process normalises this point of view. However, many researchers criticise this understanding for ignoring the fact that not every unwell state will negatively affect an employee's future well-being, performance (Steinke & Badura, 2011), or productivity (Vingård et al., 2004). As Halonen et al. (2016) pointed out, a few numbers of unwellness can affect an employee's ability to focus on his job and healthily complete tasks. However, some researchers state that presenteeism can have positive consequences, especially under certain conditions and in some unwell situations (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2009; Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019; Steinke & Badura, 2011; Urtasun & Nuñez, 2018). This perspective, which can be called good presenteeism (Miraglia & Johns, 2016), has rarely been discussed in the relevant literature. As stated by Johns (2008), although it may seem surprising that presenteeism can be positive, it is understood that this is possible when the subject is analysed in depth.

Those who refer to the positive consequences of presenteeism concentrate on the concept of work as the first argument. Focusing on the positive aspects of working, these researchers believe working is good for health and well-being. Because working is meaningful for individuals (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019) — namely, it can help meet basic psychological needs (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) — it can distract employees from daily stress and also work to eliminate certain unwell situations (Halonen et al., 2016). Sanderson et al. (2008) state that continuing relations with work can be an important strategy in rehabilitating employees with psychological problems. Therefore, given the relaxing (Baker-McClearn et al., 2010; Whysall et al., 2018) and therapeutic (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019) characteristics of working, presenteeism may also have functional consequences in some cases.

Job control can be cited as the second argument that presenteeism may have functional consequences (Biron & Saksvik, 2009). Job control, an important reality of working life, is an important determinant of stress and tension that an employee may experience in business life and job demands (Karasek, 1979). It is the ability of employees to meet job demands, perform job duties, and keep work activities under control (Margot & Stan, 1999). An employee's absence due to unwellness may prevent him from meeting job demands and performing job duties. Employees who are absent because they are not well will naturally accumulate their work, which may impact job control and cause a stressful situation. However, as Biron and Saksvik (2009) stated, low productivity due to lack of well-being (due to presenteeism) is better than no productivity due to absenteeism. Employees who can do their jobs to some extent with the presenteeism process can maintain job controls to adjust their workloads and tasks. Not losing job control is important not only for the employee but also for the organisation and colleagues.

As the third argument, the relationship between presenteeism and organisational citizenship behaviour can be shown (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019). Some researchers consider continuing to work even in the absence of well-being as organisational citizenship behaviour (Miraglia & Johns, 2016). Continuing to work despite being unsuitable for work is considered a sign of commitment to work and loyalty to managers and colleagues (Kinman & Wray, 2018). This may result in appreciation for the employee (Johns, 2010). Perceiving presenteeism as a commitment reflex can contribute positively to social relations in organisations. Therefore, if appropriately managed and supported by adequate resources, continued work during ill health can benefit well-being, performance, and social relationships.

### **Presenteeism at Schools**

Although presenteeism is a phenomenon encountered in almost every profession, it is more common in educational institutions (Bergström et al., 2009). Aronsson et al. (2000) found a rate of presenteeism among preschool teachers of 55% in Sweden. Studies show that education workers are consistently at risk of common mental health disorders compared to other professions (Johnson et al., 2005; Stansfeld et al., 2011). Similarly, according to the 2009 report of the International Labor Organisation (ILO), it was determined that educators experience very common chronic physical disorders (ILO 2009). These data indicate that presenteeism is common in schools.

In addition, the unique feature of the educational activity also increases the frequency of experiencing presenteeism (Ferreira & Martinez, 2012). Education is vital for societies, and this importance brings a high sense of responsibility (Widera et al., 2010). This sense of importance and responsibility enables teachers to work even when they are not well enough to meet their students' learning and help needs (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Grant, 2008). Organisational dynamics also prepare a suitable environment for presenteeism, just as Johns (2011) stated. The lack of replacement in case of absenteeism (Caverley et al., 2007) or the uncertainty about how these employees should behave in case of being unwell (Dew et al., 2005), organisational policies that are not compatible with education and do not support the teacher (Wrate, 1999), managers who do not have enough information about the potential effects of presenteeism, and an organisational climate that sees absenteeism as illegitimate (Dew et al., 2005) make presenteeism a frequently experienced phenomenon in educational institutions.

Some cultural codes are also known to increase the prevalence of presenteeism. For example, it was determined that presenteeism is experienced intensely and widely in eastern societies where duty is seen as sacred and/or work is perceived as worship (Cooper & Lu, 2016; Dew et al., 2005). Working in institutional places where the personality and future of individuals are built increases the importance of the task performed. In addition, the perception of the sanctity and the evaluation of education as an act of worship in society (Polat & Özdemir, 2017) can be a source of motivation for education employees to continue working when they are not well.

Although there are many studies on presenteeism in the literature, no qualitative study has been encountered examining the concept from a comprehensive and holistic perspective. Considering the prevalence of the presenteeism process in the field of education (Aronsson et al., 2000; Bergström et al., 2009), it is considered important to

be able to reveal the relationship of the phenomenon with sociological and psychological dynamics, work practices, and workplace norms, and the results that this process can predict. Therefore, it is thought that a comprehensive analysis of what the phenomenon is, what consequences it predicts, and why it occurs will contribute to the literature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This research aims to reveal the components of presenteeism and holistically examine it by analysing it in depth according to the perceptions of the education workers (EWs) who experience presenteeism more frequently. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought based on the opinions of EWs:

RQ1. EWs continue to work despite what kinds of unwell?

RQ2. How often do EWs work even though they are not well?

RQ3. What are the factors that cause EWs to make presenteeism decisions?

RQ4. What are the positive and negative consequences of working without feeling good?

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted the qualitative research paradigm, considered appropriate to reveal and understand what is behind any phenomenon that is not sufficiently understood (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because the subject of our study is an experience that is not well defined, qualitative research is the best way to obtain information about subjective experiences by turning to someone who knows the subject (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The phenomenological design is a qualitative research design that focuses on the phenomena that are experienced but not fully realised and therefore deprived of detailed information and are used to determine a person's perceptions to understand the experiences of the person (Creswell, 2013). In phenomenological designs, in-depth analyses are made by turning to the subject to understand the phenomenon and adhering to the research discipline through the subject (Patton, 2014). In this study, to find answers to the what, how, and why questions about presenteeism, the phenomenological design was chosen to understand how the participants explained their experiences (Moustakas, 1994) and how they perceived them.

#### **Study Group**

Purposeful sampling, which is accepted as the most important type of qualitative sampling design (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011), was used to identify the participants to examine presenteeism in depth. In this framework, the participants were selected from those who may have experience with presenteeism. Therefore, EWs, the groups with the most intense experience of presenteeism in the literature, were preferred for the study. The study was carried out among teachers working in the province of Elazığ in Türkiye in the 2020-2021 academic year. We chose to conduct the research in institutions (private schools, public schools) with a high level of sensitivity to rules and norms and where disciplinary problems and violence against employees are experienced. These institutions were visited, and we tried to identify employees who might experience

presenteeism (chronic illness, heavy workload, time pressure due to working hours, divorced and having children, having to do additional work, etc.). Identified participants formed the primary analysis unit after their consent was obtained.

Snowball sampling based on participants in the primary analysis unit (informant) was used to identify additional participants. Snowball sampling is based on the logic of enriching information by identifying situations by reaching person-to-person (Creswell, 2013). This aims to expand the sample by asking participants to recommend others for interviews (Babbie, 1995). Necessary information was given about the purpose, risk, benefits, and importance of the research, as well as the procedures used to protect the confidentiality and the voluntariness of participation in the research to obtain reliable and valid information from the participants.

Because organisational presenteeism may differ with certain variables (e.g., gender, job, occupation, corporate culture, age, health status), we decided to use the maximum variation sampling method to ensure participant heterogeneity. Maximum variation sampling involves predetermining some criteria that are different in venues or individuals and then selecting venues or participants that differ significantly according to the criteria (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the snowball sampling method was used until the predetermined diversity of the participants was achieved through key actors. To reach the ideal data in a phenomenological design, Creswell (2013) recommends having 10 participants, provided they conduct long interviews. So, to consider the different dynamics, a total of 10 participants were determined as the study group (Table 1).

Table 1

*Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants*

Identifier	Gender	Marital status	Age	Kids	Occupational seniority	Profession	Education level	Weekly working hour(s)	Type of the current institution
T1	Male	Married	58	3	25	Teacher	Graduate	24	Public
T2	Female	Single	31	-	6	Teacher	Graduate	30	Public
T3	Female	Divorced	34	1	7	Teacher	Postgraduate	40	Private
T4	Male	Married	35	2	9	Teacher	Graduate	34	Private
T5	Female	Married	38	2	12	Teacher	Graduate	30	Public
SA1	Male	Divorced	52	3	20	School administrator	Graduate	40	Public
SA2	Male	Married	44	1	18	School administrator	Postgraduate	40	Public
SA3	Male	Married	54	4	19	School administrator	Graduate	40	Public
DH1	Male	Married	46	3	20	Deputy headmistress	Graduate	40	Private
DH2	Female	Single	48	-	25	Deputy headmistress	Graduate	40	Public

## Data Collection

Appointments were made from the participants who stated that they wanted to express their opinions in the research, and interviews were done by visiting their schools. Before the interview, the researchers explained the definition of presenteeism to the participants in detail. Unstructured, in-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted with the participants. These interviews lasted between 40-45 mins. The phenomenological interview is a data collection method that helps the researcher understand how people attribute meaning to phenomena (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007) and is based on a conscious dialogue between the researcher and the participant (Bailey, 1996). These interviews aimed to reveal the perceptions about the phenomena to capture the essence of the phenomenon. In this direction, Husserl's (2003) phenomenological reduction method was used. We tried to get the participants to turn to the phenomenon essence by leaving aside the variables/issues and experiences unrelated to organisational presenteeism. In these interviews, questions and directions were used to reveal what the participant thinks, feels, and experiences about presenteeism.

Ensuring that the researcher brackets his prejudices is crucial in phenomenological research (Miller & Crabtree, 1992). In this method, which can be seen as second bracketing, the researcher's evaluation of data not related to the phenomenon as if they are related to the phenomenon may jeopardise the validity and reliability of the research. The data obtained during the interview about the phenomenon were confirmed simultaneously to eliminate this risk.

Interviews were recorded by phone. In addition, memoing was used to record the details/cues the researcher caught during the interview and thought important for the research and to draw inferences. Considered an important data source in qualitative research, memoing (Birks et al., 2008) are field notes that record what the researcher heard, saw, experienced, and thought during the interview process (Groenewald, 2004). After the data are collected and organised, the researchers overlook and forget the small details they noticed during the interview. Therefore, they do not include them in the evaluation process, which may lead to an incomplete or wrong analysis of the phenomenon. Details such as the code given to the participant, the date and time of the interview, the clues captured, the psychological state of the participant, and the body language he displayed at that moment were recorded in the memoing and then evaluated in the analysis process. The phone number and e-mail of the researcher were given to the participants so that they could also report the details about the phenomenon they could not express during the interviews and that they could remember later.

## Data Analysis

A code was assigned to each participant (teachers: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5; school administrators: SA1, SA2, SA3; deputy headmistress: DH1, DH2). Each sound recording was stored electronically with these code names as a file, together with the e-mails or telephone messages received after the relevant memoing and interview. The 10 recordings that were created were transcribed and recorded after their analysis/listening and transcription were made. Notes (e.g., codes, themes, relational contexts) taken during the interview were also recorded in these files. While analysing voice recordings, memoing, and e-mails/phone messages, the following questions were considered to ensure a better analysis process and the research discipline.

What happened, and what was the mood?, What was it associated with?, Who was it associated with?, Why did the event occur?, How did the event take place? ,Under what conditions did it take place?, What consequences did the event predict?.

Descriptive and content analyses were carried out together on the data obtained during the research process. Since the themes related to presenteeism were determined beforehand, and research questions were created accordingly, the data were first subjected to descriptive analysis since, in descriptive analysis, categories are determined in advance, and the data are summarised and interpreted within these categories (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In addition, we tried to discover the underlying meanings of the data through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), an analysis technique used to make inferences about the subject from meaningful materials (text, sound recording, documents, etc.). Content analysis is a reproducible and valid technique used in qualitative research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Renz et al., 2018) to reveal the characteristics of the phenomenon, especially in communication research (Krippendorff, 1989).

In content analysis, the triangulation technique (Denzin, 1970), which is used to increase the validity of the study, reduce the researcher's bias, and provide a multi-perspective approach to the examined phenomenon, was preferred to increase confidence in the research data and to provide a deeper analysis of the case. There are several types of content analysis (Casey & Murphy, 2009). This study used data triangulation (deciphering of interviews, memoing, and e-mails received from participants about the experience after the interview) and researcher triangulation (analysis by three different researchers).

The thematic inferences agreed by the three researchers were transferred to the NVivo 11 package programme. Detailed data analysis was conducted with this software, which provides significant advantages in systematising and associating themes and codes (Banihani & Syed, 2017). For a holistic evaluation, the matrix encoding query option of the software was used. In the tables created with the matrix coding query option, the categories and codes that participants refer to, how often each participant refers to these categories and codes, and their percentages are shown.

### **Validity and Accuracy**

In qualitative research, where objectivity is difficult to achieve compared to quantitative research, it is necessary to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings and interpretations throughout the data collection and analysis process. There are various strategies used in qualitative research for this purpose. Creswell (2002) lists data diversity, expert review, and participant confirmation as the most critical strategies. All three strategies were used in the research to obtain valid, believable, and accurate results. Data triangulation was used to provide data diversity, and we tried to establish consistency between the findings obtained from the phenomenological interviews, memoing, and post-interview messages. With participant confirmation, the second strategy, the researchers' results and opinions reached during the interview were confirmed simultaneously, trying to avoid false inferences. In addition, evaluations were made by three different researchers (researcher triangulation) to ensure objectivity towards the inferences. The results of these three researchers were compared, and the

agreed conclusions were presented to another field expert for review. The desired revisions were evaluated, and the appropriate ones were made.

### Ethical Procedures

With the decision of the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Firat University, dated 18.05.2021 and numbered 12/6, it was decided that this study complies with the ethical rules.

### Results

In line with the sub-objectives of the research, four themes were created. First, the starting point of presenteeism, the quality of not being well, was determined. Secondly, it was determined how often it was experienced to continue working despite feeling unwell. Third, the factors related to the presenteeism decision of the employees were determined. In the last stage, it was tried to find out what results could be predicted by continuing to work when unwell.

#### State of Not Being Unwell

As the starting point of presenteeism, attention was drawn to *psychological unwellness* and *physical unwellness* (Table 2).

Table 2

#### *The State of Being Unwell*

1. State of being unwell											
	1.1. Physical							1.2. Psychological			
Part.	Dia.	NSP	BP	Mig.	Ecz.	Art.	Ast.	SD	Depr.	Anx.	OCD
T1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	-	-
T2	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
T3	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
T4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
T5	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SA1	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	3	-	-	-
SA2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SA3	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
DH1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
DH2	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-
<i>f</i>	5	2	4	3	5	1	3	6	5	1	3
%	13.2	5.3	10.5	7.9	13.2	2.6	7.9	15.8	13.2	2.6	7.9
Physical unwell				<i>f</i>	23	%	60.5				
Psychological unwell				<i>f</i>	15	%	39.5				

Note. Dia=Diabetes; NSP=Neck and shoulder pain; BP=Blood pressure; Mig=Migraine; Ecz=Eczema; Art=Arthritis; Ast=Asthma; SD=Stress disorder; Depr=Depression; Anx=Anxiety; OCD=Obsessive compulsive disorder

First, the participants talked about physical health problems such as being diagnosed with diabetes, low back and neck disorders, blood pressure, migraine, eczema, arthritis, and asthma. One administrator explains this situation as follows:

*“We are getting older now, and naturally, different ailments emerge every day. I have ailments such as diabetes, blood pressure, hernia, and asthma. These diseases do not leave me. Now I have to live with them. Naturally, I take them with me when I go to school.”* (SA3)

As the second important starting point of presenteeism, the participants highlighted their psychological problems: stress disorder, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, etc. For example, a teacher expresses this situation in the e-mail he sent after the interview as follows:

*“...In the interview, I talked about my diabetes while talking about things that I didn’t feel well, but I also have an obsession problem called obsessive-compulsive disorder. This affects me more negatively than my diabetes. For a long time, I have not been as I want in classes. Both in my relationship with the students and while covering the subjects. I didn’t want to talk about this at school. I also get professional help...”* (T4)

### Keeping Working When You Are Unwell

The data shows that presenteeism is experienced at different intensities among teachers and school administrators. (Table 3). We used the categories *sometimes*, *often* and *very often* when describing the frequency with which participants experienced the presenteeism. None of the participants stated that they experience presenteeism *sometimes*. Participants indicated that they had this experience *very often* and *often*. One participant said, *“Often is an understatement. I do very often. My wife passed away recently too. I am experiencing stress disorder intensely.* (T1); another participant said, *...lately I have been getting depressed. I come to school when I am bad in a way I can say often.”* (DH2)

Table 3

#### *Continuing to Work When Unwell*

Part.	2. Keeping working when you are unwell		
	2.1. Sometimes	2.2. Often	2.3. Very often
T1	-	-	1
T2	-	1	-
T3	-	1	-
T4	-	-	1
T5	-	-	1
SA1	-	-	1
SA2	-	1	-
SA3	-	-	1
DH1	-	1	-
DH2	-	-	1

<i>f</i>	0	4	6
%	0	40.0	60.0

### Presenteeism Decision

The results reveal that the decision to work was made voluntarily and involuntarily, despite being unwell (Table 4). Therefore, two subcategories were created voluntary and involuntary presenteeism. In particular, some participants emphasised the factors of responsibility, conscientiousness, commitment to work, public service motivation, relaxation and religious duty and stated that they worked voluntarily despite not being well due to these factors. It can be said that having a sense of responsibility, not being able to fit into one's conscience to be absent, commitment to the work, caring about public service, to relax and seeing working as a form of worship lead employees to decide to work voluntarily despite feeling unwell. It was observed that these participants especially emphasised the sociological, psychological, and theological perception bases. In this regard, an administrator and a teacher used the following statements:

*“Because I couldn't fit my conscience even when I shouldn't be at school at times... I started my job with the awareness that education is the future of society and that this is the most important worship... I have duties and responsibilities and I love my job very much.” (SA2)*

*“...make sure there is no monetary value for the work we do. I take great pleasure in teaching students something. This is a social obligation. We must fulfil our debt to our nation and state in such situations (he talks about coming to work when he is not well). We must be altruistic. Let me say something like this; In these cases, I always say that my problems disappeared. I felt like I was cured.” (T3)*

Table 4

### Presenteeism Decision

1.3. Presenteeism decision											
Part.	3.1 Involuntary presenteeism					3.2. Voluntary presenteeism					
	AP	CP	SP	ED	WL	Resp.	Relax	Con.	CW	PSM	RD
T1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-
T2	2	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
T3	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	1	1	-
T4	1	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
T5	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	1
SA1	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
SA2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	2	1	2
SA3	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	-
DH1	1	-	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
DH2	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1
<i>f</i>	5	3	5	4	6	8	5	5	4	5	4

%	9.3%	5.6	9.3	7.4	11.1	14.8	9.3	9.3	7.4	9.3	7.4
Involuntary presenteeism			<i>f</i>	23	%	42.6					
Voluntary presenteeism			<i>f</i>	31	%	57.4					

Note: AP=Administrator pressure; CP=Colleague pressure; SP=Student pressure; ED=Economic difficulties; WL=Workload; Resp=Responsibility; Con=Conscientiousness; CW=Commitment to work; PSM=Public service motivation; RD=Religious duty

When the memoings about those who decided to volunteer when they were unwell were examined, it was observed that the participants were proud and considered such behaviour as self-sacrifice. For example, in the memoing of SA2, “...quite relieved. Opened his arms and began to give more details. Changed his sitting position and crossed his legs. Felt proud of himself as he talks about his experience. The initial tension is gone.” In the T3 memo, “in a self-satisfied and haughty mood describing experience with presenteeism. Constantly mentioned that this decision is a sacrifice and quite comfortable. Started to lean back, smiling, emphasising the importance of what he is doing.” notes were kept.

On the other hand, few participants stated that they work compulsorily and involuntarily although they are not well due to organisational pressure (administrator, colleague, and student), economic difficulties and workload factors. It is noteworthy that these participants hesitated to express their opinions during the interview and expressed this situation more easily in the messages they sent after the interview. They stated that they continue to work reluctantly when they are not well, citing the reasons for the interruption of their additional courses, especially when they are under organisational pressure, workload and absenteeism. A deputy headmistress made the following complaints during the interview and a teacher in the e-mail he sent after the interview:

“My salary is not enough. We have a hard time as a family during the vacation... So you understand. At these times (he is talking about when he is unwell ) I have to come to school so that my extra class is not interrupted.” (DH1)

“There is a perception at school that getting a report or permission is a crime. From students to teachers and administrators, everyone sees the teacher as a machine. Working in a science high school requires putting aside the human trait for them. You have to make up for the day you didn’t come to school in the same week because the students are preparing for the exams and the subjects must be trained and their questions solved. So being sick doesn’t mean anything. You have to go to school even if you are sick.” (T2)

The statements of those who decided to work reluctantly were generally in the form of complaints and whining. In the notes taken during the interview about these participants, it was observed that they generally are in a distressed mood and they saw this experience as a serious problem in their working life. For example, in the memoing of T2 “Stressed. Her brows furrowed and her voice rose. She took deep breaths and couldn’t speak because she gets so angry now and then.” notes were taken.

### Consequences of Presenteeism

While some participants emphasised the negative consequences of presenteeism, the other emphasised the positive results (Table 5). Therefore, the results of presenteeism are grouped under two subcategories: bad presenteeism and good presenteeism. The effects of bad presenteeism on participants were determined as stress, loss of performance distraction, work-family conflict, harms social relation and service quality. Some participants stated that the effects of bad presenteeism, also lead to absence in the future. A teacher and an administrator said:

*“Unfortunately, the results were generally negative. First of all, working while feeling bad is a stressful situation. You can’t focus your attention on what you’re doing. You can’t show your real performance in a job you can’t focus on... It has a reflection on the outside. For example, my daughter could not approach me during these tense times, I had problems with my wife.” (T4)*

*“In these cases, my situation (stress disorder) became more burdened. When I’m stressed, I became dermatitis that I have increased ... Caused chronic discomfort. When I have dermatitis attacks, I stay in itching, rash, rashes and cannot go to school. I have to get a report at these times ... You know a problem is not staying alone. My relations with my colleagues and even with my students deteriorated... Of course, I started to make mistakes in my work. Unfortunately, complaints about me and my work have increased.” (SA1)*

Table 5

#### Consequences of Presenteeism

1.4. Consequences of presenteeism												
Part.	1.4.1. Bad presenteeism							1.4.2. Good presenteeism				
	SA	Stress	LP	Dist.	W-FC	HSR	HSQ	SP	ISR	MJC	BS-C	EUS
T1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1
T2	-	1	-	3	1	1	1		-	-	-	-
T3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	2
T4	1	3	2	2	3	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
T5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	1
SA1	2	3	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
SA2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	3	1
SA3	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
DH1	-	1	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	2	-	-
DH2	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	4	1	-
<i>f</i>	4	10	5	8	5	3	8	6	2	10	6	5
<i>%</i>	5.6%	13.9	6.9	11.1	6.9	4.2	11.1	8.3	2.8	13.9	8.3	6.9
Bad presenteeism	<i>f</i> 43		<i>%</i> 59.7									
Good presenteeism	<i>f</i> 29		<i>%</i> 40.3									

Note: SA=Sickness absence; LP=Loss of performance; Dist=Distraction; W-FC=Work-family conflict; HSR=Harms social relations; HSQ=Harms service quality; SP=Spiritual peace; ISR=Improving social

relations; MJC=Maintaining job control; BS-C=Building self-confidence; EUS=Eliminating unwell situations

However, there were also findings that presenteeism predicts positive results. This kind of experience, which is considered good presenteeism, was stated by some participants as providing spiritual peace, improving social relations, maintaining job control, building self-confidence, and eliminating unwell situations. In particular, participants stated that when they work when they are not well, they receive appreciation from their managers and colleagues for fulfilling their duties. For this reason, they emphasised that they were happy, proud of themselves, and felt better. Participants used the following statements on this subject:

*“...No, don't consider it a necessity... Yes, essentially the sacrifice we make. There are things we can do for this state and nation, and I am doing it. I don't do it for anything in return... At such times, I experience a spiritual pleasure. I get so caught up in my lessons that I feel like I'm getting better.”* (T1)

*“Neither religion nor my conscience accept this, and getting a report is a burden. My colleagues will enter the empty class, they will be disturbed by the students of the empty class. My friends are also aware of this. They see this dedication. Relationships are naturally good too... The principal and deputy headmasters always appreciate me for this. I'd be lying if I said I'm not happy... Yes, it makes me proud to be appreciated.”* (T5)

*“...If I get permission, the work to be done will pile up. Some work needs to be done at certain times. Even though it is difficult, I overcome my job... You know, your work is under your control... Yes, I do not allow any disruption in my work... That is, I do not do it for this reason, but when positive feedback is received from the environment, one's self-confidence also increases.”* (DH2)

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the experience of presenteeism by education workers. Understanding what presenteeism is, why it occurs and what consequences it can predict is critical to ensuring the well-being of educators, their ideal performance, and creating a healthy working life. Four themes were created in this study, which was analysed from a holistic perspective. The first theme was about what could be the starting point of presenteeism. Some participants stated their physical unwellness (illness) just as stated in the literature (Aronsson et al., 2000; Dudenhöffer et al., 2017; Kinman & Wray, 2018). These participants stated that they work despite being sick, which is called sickness presenteeism in the literature. Some participants also stated that they work despite their unwell psychological conditions such as stress disorder, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and anxiety. The analysis showed that some negative situations in their private lives and compelling factors in the working environment, such as organisational pressure and job demands, negatively affected their psychological well-being and continued to work despite these difficulties. This situation coincides with the data that educators experience intense psychological disorders, as stated in some studies (Johnson et al., 2005; Stansfeld et al., 2011). Employees who engage in demanding activities such as training that cause high levels of stress (Perez-Nebra et al., 2020) may experience worsening of their existing psychological disorders

as well as various psychological disorders. Because of these disorders, the frequency of experiencing presenteeism may increase.

The second theme that emerged was about how often presenteeism was experienced. Participants were presented with three options regarding the frequency of this experience (sometimes, often, and very often), and none of the participants expressed the *sometimes* option. Revealed results showed that presenteeism is a phenomenon experienced *very often* and *often* in this population, which is similar to other studies in the literature (Aronsson et al., 2000; Cho et al., 2016; Ferreira & Martinez, 2012).

In the third theme, the reality behind the presenteeism decision was tried to be determined. Some of the participants stated that they took this decision reluctantly (involuntary presenteeism) due to workload, organisational pressures and economic difficulties, as in previous studies (Aronsson & Gustafsson, 2005; Baker-McClearn et al., 2010; Hansen & Andersen, 2008; Holland & Collins, 2018; Johansson & Lundberg, 2004; Johns, 2011; Rebmann et al., 2016; Ruhle & Süß, 2020). These compelling factors for educators (Dudenhöffer et al., 2017) can make them reluctant to work despite psychological or physical disorders. The involuntary presenteeism form can be considered a situation that should be especially avoided due to its compelling nature. This form, considered a human resources problem for employees (Firms et al., 2006), requires effective organisational and humane measures to be taken.

In addition, for some participants, the decision to presenteeism is a preferred situation (voluntary presenteeism). The data showed that the presenteeism decision was taken using the participants' will, such as conscience, responsibility, religious duty, work commitment, public service motivation, and relaxation in the working life of the participants. Educators stated that they decided to work voluntarily and self-sacrificingly even though they were not suitable for work, due to the meaning and mission attributed to education, to be useful to students, and to adopt the educational task to a high degree. This situation reveals that sociological, psychological, and theological elements can be effective in the decision of presenteeism.

In the last theme, it is tried to determine the results that presenteeism can predict. While presenteeism was a negative phenomenon for some participants (bad presenteeism), it was an organisational reality with positive results for some participants (good presenteeism). It is rare to find such a detailed, comprehensive, and original explanation. The literature mostly shows the negative consequences of presenteeism (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Deery et al., 2014; Gómez et al., 2022; Lui et al., 2022; Rainbow et al., 2021; Roe, 2003; Whitehouse, 2005). Our data reveals that presenteeism can predict negative consequences such as stress, loss of performance, and distraction. Participants stated that presenteeism damaged the social relations and service quality within the organisation and caused work-family conflict. Some participants stated that presenteeism worsened their unwellness and resulted in absenteeism in the short and medium term.

In this sense, bad presenteeism, which predicts negative results, may prevent the formation of a positive and supportive school environment. In particular, its negative relationship with mood can damage communication with both students and staff and limit functional participation in the educational process. It can harm the management

processes by preventing school administrators from exhibiting healthy management behaviour. For teachers, failure in classroom management may lead to a loss of ability to be a correct model for students and lead to a non-pedagogical guidance process. In addition, this form of presenteeism, which may cause psychological problems and learning difficulties for students, requires organisational precautions. However, the participants very clearly describe the results such as spiritual peace, self-confidence, healthy relationships, job control, and recovery. Some teachers and school administrators who experienced presenteeism stated that they experienced a high level of spiritual satisfaction as a result of the decision of presenteeism within the framework of public service motivation and a religious necessity. A few of the participants, who continued to work instead of staying at home, stated that they were relieved and well. They stated that this behaviour gained appreciation from their colleagues, improving their relationships and strengthening their self-confidence. Especially those who have a heavy workload also stated that they provide work controls. Good presenteeism, which foresees such outputs that are valuable for both educational institutions and educators, such as spiritual satisfaction, job satisfaction, recovery, self-confidence, healthy relationships, and job control, can be considered an organisational opportunity. Good presenteeism, which allows employees to prove their commitment to the job and the organisation may also lead to other important results in the development of production and organisational climate.

### **Implications**

In this study, presenteeism has been evaluated as a process, and we revealed what the phenomenon is, why it occurs, and its possible consequences. Therefore, a comprehensive and holistic view has been adopted rather than a reductionist perspective. We included physical and psychological well-being as the starting points for presenteeism. Thus, it was seen that presenteeism was experienced more than expected. The research results show that participants experience physical and psychological unwellness. Contrary to the common belief that the presenteeism decision was made because of the compelling elements of the working environment, such as organisational pressure, economic difficulties, and workload, we have determined that this decision can also be made voluntarily due to individual factors, such as sense of responsibility, conscience, commitment to work, public service motivation, to relax and religious sensitivities. Finally, we found that presenteeism is defined as *good presenteeism* rather than a fearful process with only bad consequences, and in some cases, it has positive results. Therefore, the experience of presenteeism should be evaluated considering its positive and negative effects on organisations and employees. In this sense, policies for presenteeism should be developed according to the situation of the employee. Employees should not be forced to work in unwell situations that they cannot tolerate. It should eliminate the compelling elements that may cause them to work. Considering the fact that voluntary presenteeism predicts positive results, an appropriate organisational climate and culture can be created for employees to experience voluntary presenteeism.

In our view, this study contributes to the literature on several issues. In particular, the data we obtained regarding voluntary presenteeism and good presenteeism can be considered valuable. In the future, longitudinal studies on the

subject can be carried out in different cultural structures and service sectors. In addition, empirical studies on this situation we encounter in EWs can better explain the issue. In this study, we only examined participants in Türkiye. The study of comparative presenteeism in different cultural structures may be important in the future.

Although this research was conducted with various strategies, it has some limitations inherent in qualitative research, such as the small size of the study group, the potential of participants to hide critical information, and evaluator subjectivity. As researchers, we conducted the interviews and are confident that our findings are valid, verifiable, and based on scientific processes. However, the brevity of the interviews can be considered a limitation, especially during the data collection process, as both the researchers and the participants experienced the threat of contamination during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, our data represent participants' subjective interpretations of unwellness, continuing to work in the case of unwellness, and the outcomes this process will predict, so the results cannot be generalised.

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### **Statement of Responsibility**

Alper Uslukaya; Conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation, writing-original draft, and visualization. Zulfu Demirtas; Conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, data curation, writing-original draft, visualization, supervision, and project administration. Muslim Alanoglu; Methodology, data curation, writing-review&editing, and writing-original draft.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Zulfu Demirtas completed his undergraduate and graduate studies in the field of educational administration. He worked as a classroom teacher and education inspector. In Turkey, Firat University Faculty of Education in educational administration science serves. He has articles, books, and book chapters published in the field of educational administration. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational silence, organizational culture are among the main topics of study.

Muslim Alanoglu is a Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration. His interest areas are school leadership- principal training and creating effective schools. He publishes research in educational leadership, teacher training, the principal training and the usage of technology in education.

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