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Managerial Use of Disciplinary Measures and Absenteeism among Frontline Health Workers: The Moderating Roles of Job Resources and Job Demands

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Abstract

Whilst managers continue to leverage the use of disciplinary measures to improve employee work attendance behavior, its effectiveness remains under probe as voluntary employee absenteeism persist. Drawing on the deterrence theory of punishment and the job demands-resources model the study investigated contingency factors that influence the effectiveness of managerial use of disciplinary measures to reduce absenteeism among frontline health workers in Malawi. The study used a cross-sectional survey method, that recruited 475 frontline health workers as participants. To test all the hypotheses that were proposed in the study, PLS-SEM was used. The results revealed that managerial use of disciplinary measures had a direct negative effect on absenteeism ($\beta = -.15, p = .00$). The results indicated that managerial coaching had an insignificant moderating effect in the relationship between job demands and absenteeism ($\beta = -.02, p = .10$). The results indicated, however, that emotional job demands ($\beta = .20, p = .00$) and physical job demands ($\beta = .23, p = .00$) both had significant moderating effects in the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism. These findings imply that managerial use of disciplinary measures to reduce absenteeism is more effective on employees experiencing lower emotional and physical job demands as compared to those experiencing higher emotional and physical job demands.

Absenteeism simply defined refers to not showing up for scheduled work (Johns, 2008). Of most interest to researchers has been ‘voluntary absenteeism’ which represents discretion behavior, unapproved by the organization, where the employee chooses not to report for work (Avey et al., 2006). The issue of frontline health worker absenteeism remains a long-standing challenge worldwide (Agwu et al., 2020; Rantanen & Tuominen, 2011). This is the case because, from the perspective of hospitals, frontline health workers represent the most significant workforce. With COVID-19 already overwhelming the hospital workforce, the fight against this pandemic is significantly disadvantaged when there is absenteeism among frontline health workers (Famarzi et al., 2021). The health system in Malawi has become fragile under COVID-19 as the number of patients initially being handled by hospitals has skyrocketed. The absenteeism of frontline health workers during a pandemic reduces the efficacy of health care provision and impedes the quality of services as fewer workers are left on duty, resulting in work overload and/or interrupted service delivery (Kisakye et al., 2016; Leite et al., 2021). Hence, frontline health workers’ absenteeism not only results in a loss of man-hours and a loss of productivity but also triggers the potential loss of patient lives (Oche et al., 2018). That is why hospital managers, worldwide, have been continuously attempting to determine the best course of action(s) through which they can reduce the problem of absenteeism of frontline health workers (Kiwauka et al., 2011).

In general, managers invoke disciplinary measures as punishment on a per-employee basis whenever absenteeism becomes a problem at their institution (Kocakulah et al., 2016). Punishment represents the act of imposing a negative sanction on someone perceived to have violated a rule, norm, or expectation to deter future repeated violation(s) (Treviño, 1992). As part of their roles, managers make use of a variety of punishments depending on specific employee illicit behavior (Salvador, 2019). The use of disciplinary measures constitutes one of the most extensively utilized forms of punishment that managers rely on to mitigate employee illicit behavior (Andreoni et al., 2003; Wang & Murnighan, 2017). Managerial use of disciplinary measures plays a key role in ensuring that frontline health workers are present at work, which works to the benefit of improving the overall performance of the health system (Dejene et al., 2019).

But under what conditions are managerial use of disciplinary measures more effective? Scholars have over the past decades expanded the scope of literature from focusing on “which managerial punishments deter employee illicit behavior?” to focusing on “what contingency factors influence the effectiveness of managerial use of punishments to deter employee illicit behavior?”. Truly, the documentation of such contingency factors has, to a greater extent, helped to form a more complete and clearer picture of the mechanisms through which managerial use of punishments induces employee compliance behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2010). Noticeably, a few studies have set out to explore such contingency factors, with the examples of Sims and Szilagyi (1975), who in their study of 1100 hospital employees, found that “clarity of the leaders’ role” has implications on how employees easily accepted and quickly responded to punishments administered by their leaders. Perceptions of fairness concerning the punishment received have also been found to play a vital role in instigating the satisfaction of employees, which induces a more positive response (Ball et al., 1992; Butterfield et al., 1996). Furthermore, punishments that are perceived by employees to be fair in terms of distributive justice (i.e., the outcomes they receive are fair), procedural justice (i.e., the procedures that determine how the outcomes are administered are fair), and interactional justice (i.e., the treatment they receive from managers is fair) face minimal resentment and are hence more effective. Finally, Kobayashi and Kerbo (2009) in their study, involving Japanese and American workers, have also found evidence that culture (individualism-collectivism and looseness-tightness) matters as it accounts for the differences in punishment perceptions as well as the corresponding behavior modifications among employees.

Still, despite such notable attempts to examine contingency factors that influence the effectiveness of managerial use of punishment to deter illicit employee behavior, the researcher finds that no research is yet to clarify (1) if managerial use of disciplinary measures affects absenteeism, and (2) if job resources and demands act as contingency factors that intervene, as moderators, in the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism. The researcher builds on the deterrence theory of punishment to hypothesize that managerial use of disciplinary measures suppresses frontline health workers’ absenteeism. The researcher further integrates the job demands-resources model into the primary prediction of the deterrence theory of punishment to hypothesize that (1) managerial coaching, (2) emotional job demands, and (3) physical job demands all moderate the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and the absenteeism of frontline health workers.

Literature Review

In this section, relevant literature, as well as previous studies, are discussed. Specifically, managerial use of punishment, managerial coaching, emotional job demands, physical job demands, and frontline health workers in Malawi are discussed.

Managerial Use of Disciplinary Measures

The deterrence theory of punishment is a theoretical foundation that emphasizes the use of sanctions such as disciplinary measures to deter peoples’ illicit behavior (Ugrin et al., 2008). The deterrence theory of punishment poses it that people will obey regulations if punishment as a result of a violation is swift,

certain, and severe (Ellis, 2003; Lee, 2017; Parker & Grasmick, 1979). Under this theory, absenteeism is viewed as noncompliance with rules in the workplace and hence it is categorized as an illicit employee behavior (Kobayashi & Kerbo, 2009). Consequently, managers in an organizational context will administer reinforcing events, such as the use of disciplinary measures, that are contingent upon the identified illicit employee behavior (Sims & Szilagyi, 1975). Disciplinary measures refer to actions taken by managers to correct the behavior of employees, in response to a perceived misdemeanor or wrongdoing by the employees (Burks, 2010).

In the case of absenteeism, these disciplinary measures prescribe the standards of acceptable work attendance behavior and set the penalty for non-observance of those standards (Belita et al., 2013). Disciplinary measures are expected to improve work attendance by reducing the probability that employees will repeat their absenteeism behaviors. The function of control processes, such as managerial use of disciplinary measures, is to appeal to conformance to organizational requirements necessary for the achievement of organizational goals (Tannenbaum, 1968). Such control processes are necessary to establish some order out of the possible chaos that may emerge from multiple and often divergent interests (Baum & Youngblood 1975). Effective control mechanisms warrant the pursuit of organizational goals by delimiting employee counter-productive work behaviors (Tannenbaum, 1968) such as absenteeism. The practice of using disciplinary measures hence allows managers to act on voluntary-absent employees (Kisakye et al., 2016). Bearing in mind the proposition of the deterrence theory of punishment that certainty of punishment reduces the likelihood that a violation will be committed (Rajendran et al., 2018), the scholar expects a negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and frontline health workers' absenteeism. The researcher thus argues that when employees are certain that they will be disciplined by management as a result of their work absenteeism, they are unlikely to engage in deviant actions. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed;

H1: There is a negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism among frontline health workers.

Managerial Coaching

The job demands-resources model is a comprehensive framework that applies to all jobs, irrespective of their specific work demands and resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Right on the onset, the job demands-resources model distinguishes two sets of variables in any kind of job namely job resources and demands. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) conceptualize job resources as those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that either/or (1) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (2) are functional in achieving work goals; and (3) stimulate personal growth, learning, and development. In this way job resources foster employees to meet their goals and, as a result, employees become more committed to their job, because they derive fulfillment from it. Similarly, poor or lack of job resources precludes actual goal accomplishment, hence, causing failure and frustration which may lead to withdrawal from work due to reduced motivation or commitment (Bakker et al., 2003; Demerouti et al., 2001). An important narrative that therefore emerges is that in their own right all job resources have intrinsic and extrinsic motivational potential. Under the job demands-resources model, managerial coaching is classified as a job resource (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

Managerial coaching is a helping and facilitative process by managers that enables employees to acquire new skills and competences that enhance their effectiveness, development, and growth in the workplace. (Hamlin et al., 2009). High managerial coaching acts motivationally (Demerouti et al., 2001; Heslin et al., 2006) by making employees feel more supported, secure, and favored (Heijden & Spurk, 2019; Zhao et al., 2019). This fosters employees under high managerial coaching to easily align their thoughts and attitudes with their managers' expectations of them which puts them in a positive state of mind under which compliance with respective managerial reinforcement mechanisms, such as managerial use of disciplinary measures, is already amplified (Lin et al., 2016). The rich information and guidance that

employees under high managerial coaching receive make it easy for them to comprehensively grasp the rationale behind the prevailing managerial reinforcement mechanisms and as such, they develop more positive perceptions of the same (Rocereto et al., 2011). With such a clearer understanding as well as a more positive perception of existing managerial reinforcement mechanisms, employees under high managerial coaching are likely to respond more successfully to the same compared to their counterparts working under low managerial coaching. Such employees will easily accept the managerial reinforcements administered by their managers and quickly responded in an anticipated manner. Therefore, the researcher argues that high managerial coaching will strengthen the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and employee absenteeism. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed;

H2: Managerial coaching negatively moderates the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism of frontline health workers.

Emotional and Physical Job Demands

The health worker density in most developing countries is already well below that recommended by the World Health Organization of 3.5 health workers per 1000 population (Belita et al., 2013). In this context, frontline health workers' availability is also already undermined by the hiring freezes where only a few are recruited per year, which is way below the existing enormous demand for health services (Gross et al., 2010). Additionally, poor working conditions promote the rapid emigration of health workers from developing countries to developed countries (Eastwood et al., 2005; Naicker et al., 2009; Ogilvie et al., 2007). As a result, developing countries are challenged with declining human resource levels that make them struggle to keep pace with huge demands for services, particularly given population growth and high levels of infectious diseases (Palmer, 2006). Hence, in the developing country context, having fewer frontline health workers available at the workplace appears to be the new normal.

Job demands refer to those physical, social, or organizational job aspects that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are consequently associated with negative physiological and/or psychological effects (Moloney et al., 2017). Under the job demands-resources model, emotional job demands and physical job demands are classified as two different forms of job demands (Xanthopoulou, 2013). The model advances that the likelihood of strain is more extreme for employees working in environments where job demands are high (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). A high level of job demands consumes employee energy and resources which increases their vulnerability (Hobfoll, 2002). In this way, exhaustion becomes an inevitable long-term consequence of exposure to high job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001).

From the job demands-resources model proposition explained above, it is thus plausible to deduce that differences in the level of strain will exist between employees working under high versus low emotional job demands as well as those working under high versus low physical job demands. Such is the case because both these different categories of employees will require different sustained work efforts and as a result, they will differ in terms of both their level of energy and health impairment (Chen et al., 2017). Employees working under high job demands also have low levels of work engagement, job satisfaction, psychological well-being as well as high levels of stress (Hakanen et al., 2006; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Due to the state of employees working under high job demands (i.e. low energy, high strain, high health impairment, low work engagement, low job satisfaction, and high stress), they become more resentful hence raising a conflict with the objective of managerial use of disciplinary measures which, needless to say, strives better among obedient employees. The researcher, therefore, argues that managerial use of disciplinary measures to influence employee absenteeism will be more effective for such employees experiencing low job demands compared to their counterparts experiencing high job demands. Accordingly, two hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Emotional job demands moderate the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism of frontline health workers.

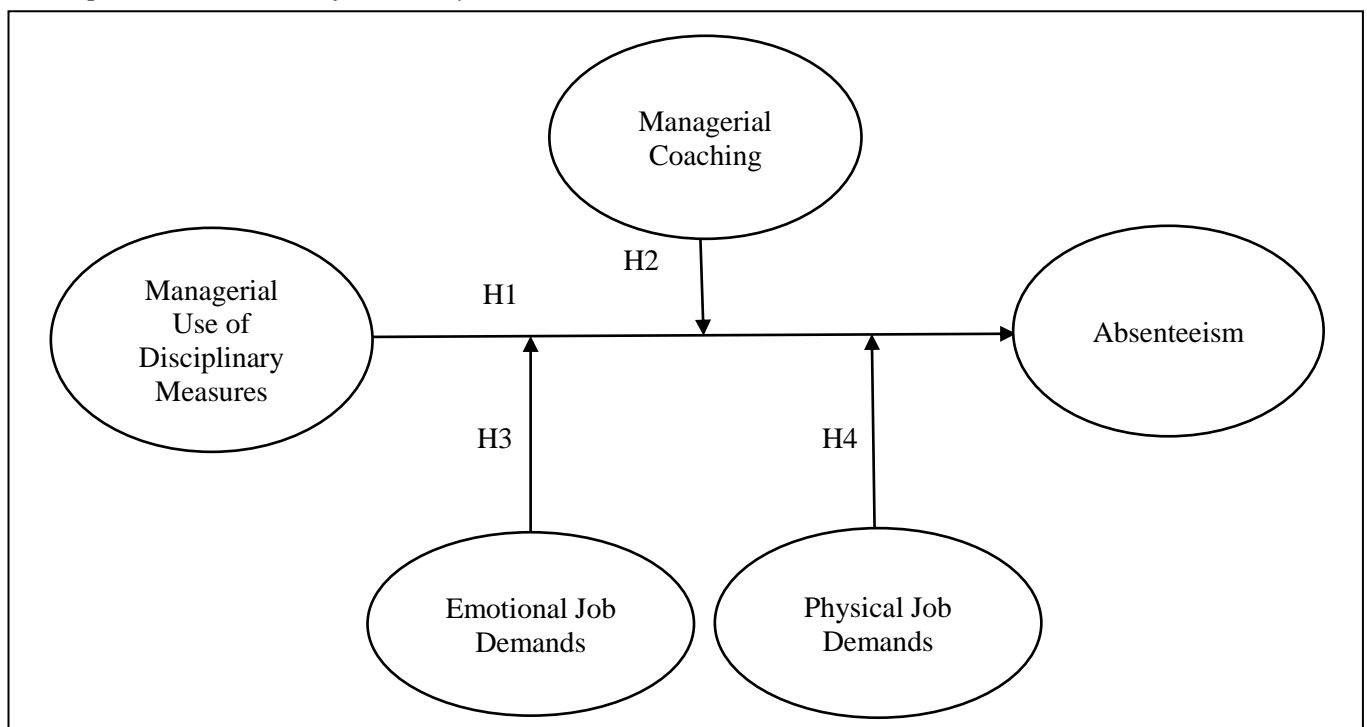
H4: Physical job demands moderate the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism of frontline health workers.

Frontline Health Workers in Malawi

Frontline health workers are the first and often the only point of contact to the health care system for millions of people in Malawi. They deliver a range of lifesaving interventions to prevent not only illness but death and disability (Billings et al., 2021). This category of health workers includes clinicians, physicians, nurses, lab technicians, and midwives. Previous research has already pointed out that in the low-income country context, such as Malawi, managerial utilization of absenteeism-related negative reinforcements, such as disciplinary measures, is weaker and less efficient (Chaudhury et al., 2006; Khanna et al., 2005; Meyer & Peng, 2005) even with the availability of clearly stipulated official rules (Wright et al., 2005; Gelbuda et al., 2008). Furthermore, Malawi has fewer frontline health workers per 1000 population even though the burden of diseases among the population is high (Kombe et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2017; Richard et al., 2016). This itself makes frontline health workers in such a context prone to continuous physical and emotional pressures that could potentially jeopardize the effectiveness of employing managerial reinforcements to achieve desired employee work attendance behaviors. Malawi has a healthcare system that can best be described as inherently already fragile and sub-optimal which makes the problem of absenteeism among frontline health workers a grave concern (Mfinanga et al., 2017). The current research thus interrogates the interplay between managerial use of disciplinary measures and frontline health workers' work-environment attributes (i.e. managerial coaching, emotional job demands, and physical job demands) to predict their absenteeism in Malawi to generate more accurate contextualized empirical results (De Reuver et al., 2019; Snejina, 2011; Xu & Meyer, 2012). Figure 1 presents the proposed study framework which summarizes all the study hypotheses.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Method

Participants

The population of this study was frontline health workers from the largest three central hospitals in Malawi. Data was collected by using a convenient nonprobability-sampling method in which participants were sampled simply because they were convenient sources of data for the research (Lancaster, 2005). A total of 486 frontline health workers participated in the study between August 2021 and January 2022. Table 1 presents the descriptive characteristics of all the study participants. After data screening, 11 incomplete responses were discarded, thus reducing the responses for processing to 475. Approval was sought from the University of Malawi to conduct the current research. Clearance was granted by the health services authority ascertaining that the study would cause no harm to the concerned frontline health workers (EC:2021/32).

Table 1

Characteristics of the Study Participants (n = 475)

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	255	53.7%
	Female	220	46.3%
Age	<25 years	92	19.37%
	25–29 years	28	5.90%
	30–34 years	41	8.63%
	35–39 years	119	25.05%
	40–44 years	129	27.16%
	45–49 years	47	9.90%
	>50 years	19	4.00%
Designation	Nurse	225	47.37%
	Clinician	133	28.00%
	Physician	97	20.42%
	Others	20	4.21%
Tenure	<5 years	208	43.79%
	5–9 years	166	34.95%
	>10 years	101	21.26%

Procedure

The participants were informed of the aims of the research and then guaranteed the anonymity of their answers as well as the researcher's compliance with the ethical standards of confidentiality in the data processing. The study questionnaires were distributed through the emails of frontline health workers as provided by the human resources departments. A series of control questions were included to detect random or incongruent answers so that they could be discarded from data analysis.

Instruments

All instruments employed in this study were based on previous studies to reduce the chances of instrumentation errors. To establish convergent and discriminant validity, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for all the study variables. Table 2 describes the study instruments in more detail.

Construct Reliability and Validity

Table 3 shows that Cronbach alphas, as well as composite reliabilities for all the study variables constructs, were above 0.7. This means that all the study constructs were reliable and valid. Table 4 shows the correlation of all study variables.

Common Method Bias

The current study design is cross-sectional; hence, it may suffer from common method bias (Min et al., 2016; Podsakoff et al., 2003; 2012). To rule out common method bias, the researcher conducted Harman's single factor test in SPSS (Harman, 1976). This test explains that common method bias is present when only one factor emerges or when one factor accounts for more than 50% of the variance associated with all items that are loaded simultaneously in factor analysis (Harman, 1976). The outcome of the factor analysis for the current study's items revealed that no single factor accounted for more than 50% of the variance of all the items once simultaneously loaded together in factor analysis. This led to the conclusion that there was no common method bias in the dataset.

Table 2
Study Instruments

Name	Description	Source
Managerial Use of Disciplinary Measures	Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale the extent to which managers in their organizations use disciplinary measures in response to employee absenteeism. One question was asked.	Bergkvist (2015)
Absenteeism	Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale their voluntary absenteeism behavior. A total of five questions were asked.	Paget et al. (1998)
Managerial Coaching	Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale the extent of managerial coaching that they experience at work. A total of five questions were asked.	Xanthopoulou et al. (2009)
Emotional Job Demands	Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how emotionally demanding their jobs were. A total of five questions were asked.	Xanthopoulou et al. (2013)
Physical Job Demands	Respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how physically demanding their jobs were. A total of five questions were asked.	Xanthopoulou et al. (2009)

Table 3
Construct Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
MDM ¹	1	1	1	1
AB ²	.93	.95	.95	.79
MC ³	.87	.94	.89	.62
EJD ⁴	.89	.91	.92	.65
PJD ⁵	.90	.95	.93	.72

Note. ¹Managerial Use of Disciplinary Measures, ²Absenteeism, ³Managerial Coaching, ⁴Emotional Job Demands, ⁵Physical Job Demands

Table 4
Correlations for Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. MDM	1	-.30**	-.27*	-.20*	.13*
2. AB	-.30**	1	.63**	.57**	-.08
3. MC	-.27*	.63**	1	.74**	-.10*
4. EJD	-.20*	.57**	.74**	1	-.42**
5. PJD	.13*	-.08	-.10*	-.42**	1

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Results

To test all the hypotheses that were proposed in the study, PLS-SEM is used. The researcher followed the recommended practices when reporting PLS results as laid out by Chin (2010) as well as Ringle et al. (2015). Table 5 presents the path coefficients, *t*-statistics, and the *p*-values of the hypothesized relationships.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that managerial use of disciplinary measures is negatively associated with absenteeism of frontline health workers. The results of the analysis reveal a negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and the absenteeism of frontline health workers ($\beta = -.15, p = .00$). This result means that there is strong statistical support for Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 predicted that managerial coaching negatively moderates the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism of frontline health workers. The outcome of the analysis reveals an insignificant result for the proposed interaction effect ($\beta = -.02, p = .10$). This means that hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Table 5
Path Coefficients, Standard Deviations, t-Statistics, and p-Values

Hypotheses	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>p</i> -values
MDM ¹ → AB ²	-.15	.04	3.96	.00
MC ³ → AB	-.13	.08	2.18	.03
EJD ⁴ → AB	.21	.06	3.33	.00
PJD ⁵ → AB	.44	.07	7.19	.00
MDM × MC → AB	-.02	.05	0.34	.73
MDM × EJD → AB	.20	.05	3.85	.00
MDM × PJD → AB	.23	.06	3.90	.00

Note. ¹Managerial Use of Disciplinary Measures, ²Absenteeism, ³Managerial Coaching, ⁴Emotional Job Demands, ⁵Physical Job Demands

Hypothesis 3 predicted that emotional job demands positively moderate the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism of frontline health workers. The results of the analysis show that there is a significant interaction effect ($\beta = .20, p = .00$). This gives strong statistical support to Hypothesis 3. Figure 2 is a graphical plot for this interaction effect which shows that the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism was stronger for frontline health workers who reported experiencing lower emotional job demands compared to those who reported experiencing higher emotional job demands.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that physical job demands positively moderate the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism of frontline health workers. The results of the analysis reveal a significant interaction effect ($\beta = .23, p = .00$). Hypothesis 4 is thus supported. Figure 3 is a graphical plot of this interaction effect which shows that the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism was stronger for frontline health workers who reported being under lower physical job demands compared to those who reported being under higher physical job demands.

Figure 2
Moderating Effect of Emotional Job Demands in the Relationship between Managerial Use of Disciplinary Measures and Absenteeism among Frontline Health Workers

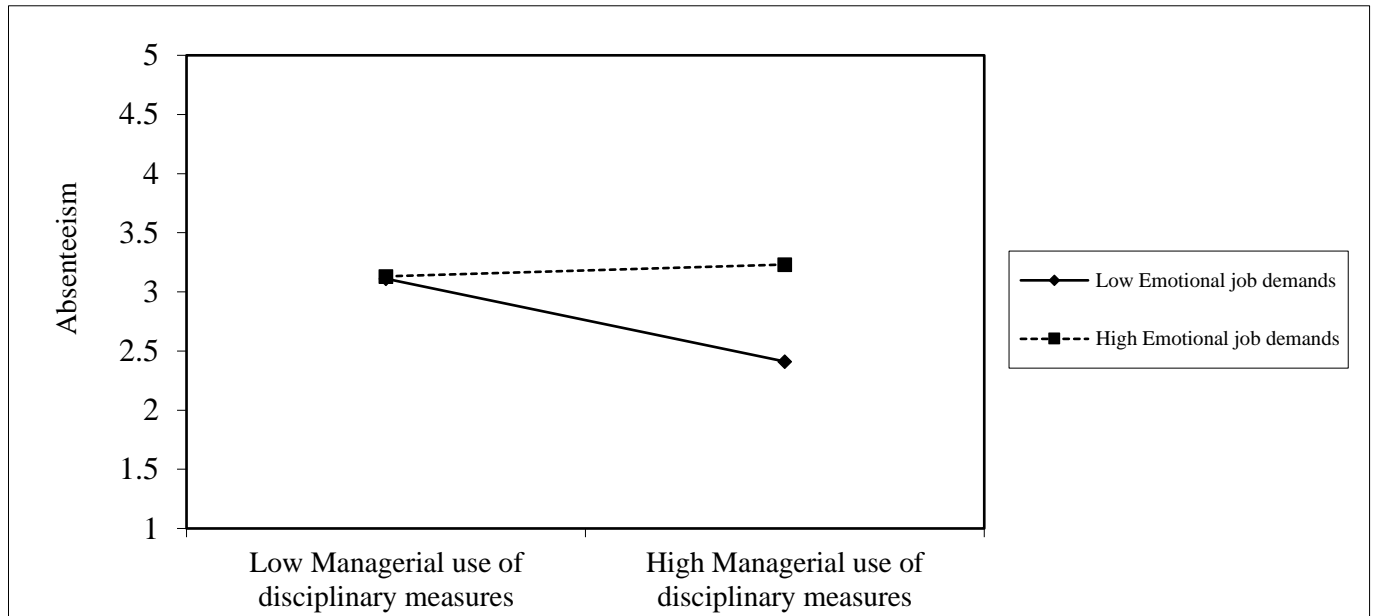
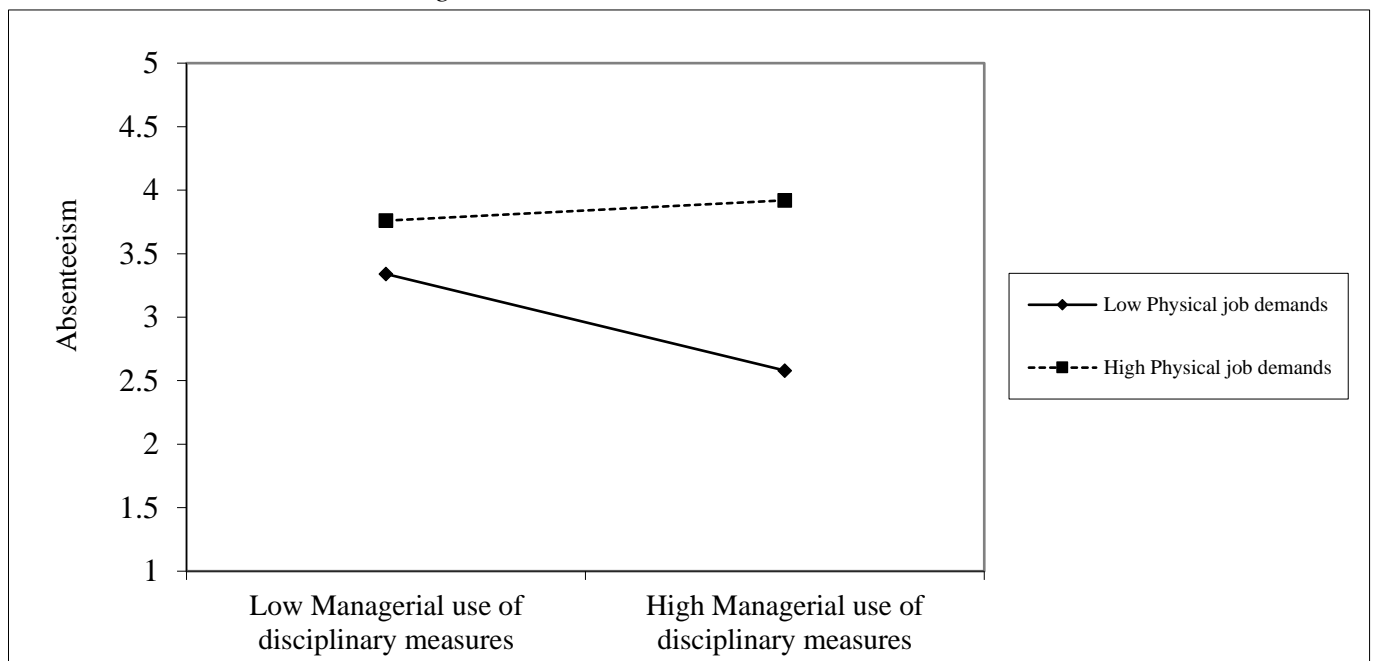


Figure 3
Moderating Effect of Physical Job Demands in the Relationship between Managerial Use of Disciplinary Measures and Absenteeism among Frontline Health Workers



Discussion and Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism of frontline health workers. The results of the study revealed that there is a negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism among frontline health workers. This means that the more management uses absenteeism-related disciplinary measures the lower the absenteeism among frontline health workers. The support for this relationship has been found in other studies such as Deery et al. (1995) and Kambunga et al. (2018).

Secondarily, the study investigated the moderating role of managerial coaching in the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism among frontline health workers. The results showed that there were no significant differences regarding how managerial use of disciplinary measures negatively influences absenteeism when frontline health workers experiencing high managerial coaching are compared to those experiencing low managerial coaching. This means that managerial use of disciplinary measures to reduce absenteeism is equally effective for both groups of employees (i.e. frontline health workers who reported experiencing high managerial coaching and those who reported experiencing low managerial coaching).

Furthermore, the study also investigated the moderating role of emotional job demands in the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism among frontline health workers. The results showed that there were significant differences regarding how managerial use of disciplinary measures negatively influences absenteeism when frontline health workers experiencing high emotional job demands are compared to those experiencing low emotional job demands. The graphical plot (i.e. slope) capturing the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism was steeper for frontline health workers who reported experiencing low emotional job demands compared to those who reported experiencing high emotional job demands. This implies that managerial use of disciplinary measures to reduce absenteeism is more effective for employees working under low emotional job demands compared to those working under high emotional job demands.

Lastly, the study also investigated the moderating role of physical job demands in the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism among frontline health workers. The results indicated that there were significant differences regarding how managerial use of disciplinary measures negatively influences absenteeism when frontline health workers experiencing high physical job demands are compared to those experiencing low physical job demands. The graphical plot (i.e. slope) capturing the negative relationship between managerial use of disciplinary measures and absenteeism was steeper for frontline health workers who reported experiencing low physical job demands compared to those who reported experiencing high physical job demands. This implies that managerial use of disciplinary measures to reduce absenteeism is more effective for employees working under low physical job demands compared to those working under high physical job demands.

With the above findings, the current study, thus, has important theoretical implications. In terms of theoretical implications, the current study contributes to the literature on the deterrence theory of punishment in several ways. First, the study demonstrates how managerial use of disciplinary measures negatively relates to absenteeism among frontline health workers. Although prior studies have already found that managerial punishments mitigate employee counter-productive behaviors in general (Morgan et al., 2018), investigations of its effects on the population of frontline health workers' absenteeism have been unexpectedly scarce. The findings, therefore, provide further support for the view that managerial use of punishment drives employees to comply with expected workplace attendance. Furthermore, the research integrates the deterrence theory of punishment with the job demand-resource model to explain how these two unique theories interact in a way that helps to predict absenteeism among frontline health workers. The findings reveal that the effect of managerial use of disciplinary measures on absenteeism is contingent on

the work-environment characteristics of employees in terms of emotional and physical job demands. Previous scholars have debated why managerial use of disciplinary measures yields different outcomes across different people (Chaudhuri & Paichayontvijit, 2017; Kobayashi & Kerbo, 2016). To this end, the research contributes to this debate by proposing that, in the case of absenteeism among frontline health workers, such variations in the effectiveness of managerial use of disciplinary measures should be attributed to differences in work-environment characteristics in the form of emotional and physical job demands.

Behavioral Science Implications

The findings provide valuable practical insights into how hospital managers can improve the effectiveness of using disciplinary measures to reduce the absenteeism of frontline health workers. The findings provide evidence that psychological and physiological processes, induced by high emotional and physical job demands, play critical roles in suppressing the effectiveness of managerial use of disciplinary measures to mitigate employee absenteeism. By considering the findings from this study, hospital managers will now understand why the effectiveness of using disciplinary measures to reduce absenteeism varies among various members of the frontline health workforce. In consequence, hospital managers can thus consistently modify the frontline health workers' work-environment characteristics to minimize the associated emotional and physical job demands as this would improve the efficacy of managerial use of disciplinary measures to reduce frontline health workers' absenteeism.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

It is important to recognize the limitations of this study as well as the directions for future research. The study's first limitation is that it utilizes only managerial coaching, emotional job demands, and physical job demands, as factors from the job demands-resources model, to examine contingency factors that moderate the effect of managerial use of disciplinary measures on frontline health workers' absenteeism. In reality, they also embrace other forms of job resources and job demands beyond the ones incorporated into the study. As such, future empirical research should also try to test for other job resources and job demands aside from the ones examined in the current study to check if they also act as contingency factors that influence the effectiveness of managerial use of disciplinary measures to reduce employee absenteeism. Finally, the study utilizes a cross-sectional survey. This data-collection approach may suffer from common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003; 2012). The researcher chose this approach owing to the difficulty of collecting data from frontline health workers in two periods due to their busy work schedules. Further studies could be conducted using a longitudinal design to mitigate the aforementioned limitations.

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