

ABSENTEEISM IN THE PRINTING INDUSTRY: A GREEK CASE STUDY.

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Occupational risks that are present in a printing industry are related to risks from mechanical equipment, exposure to chemicals, dust, noise, shift working, VDU work, high intensity work, etc. Occupational accidents and diseases, that are the consequence of exposure to these risks, have been described in the literature and are most often related to injury of the fingers, musculoskeletal disorders, dermatitis, hearing loss, asthma and effects on the CNS.

Absence due to sickness was recorded for a number of 260 men and women working in a printing industry in Athens, for a period of one year in 2003. Demographic and working conditions data were also collected. Indicators of absence and occupational accident frequency and severity were calculated. Frequency distribution of absence spells, duration of absence days and absent workers for each diagnostic category were also calculated. At last the correlation between absence from work and demographic-working data was examined.

The results of this study revealed increased absence frequency of the workers in the specific industry, while the severity of absence was limited to a level that reflected satisfying working conditions. Musculoskeletal and respiratory problems were the most frequent disease categories that resulted to employees' absence from work. As to occupational accidents, moderate frequency and low severity were observed at the particular industry, compared to other productive sectors mainly in Greece.

The examination of possible correlation between absence from work and demographic data, with the use of logistic regression, indicated that there was no association between absence and age, gender, specialty, sector of work, education, work experience and nationality of workers in the particular industry. Likewise gender of workers did not have an effect on the duration of absence that occurred due to a health problem. On the contrary there was a positive correlation between the duration of absence and the workers' age.

The limitations of this study are related to limited data for comparisons, because of the diversity of methods and indicators that are used by researchers as well as the small sample and the short study period used.

Monitoring of absenteeism can be used by employers, employees and OHS specialists as a non-specific tool to locate groups of workers at risk as well as the adoption of a common methodology to monitor it.