

## Examining and Determining the Effects of Presenteeism on Professional Productivity among Faculty Members of Universities in North Khorasan

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The present study aimed to examine and determine the effects of presenteeism on professional productivity among faculty members of universities in North Khorasan.

**Methods and Materials:** This study was conducted using an exploratory mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. In the qualitative phase, key dimensions of presenteeism were identified through a comprehensive review of the literature and semi-structured interviews with academic and executive experts who had at least ten years of professional experience and relevant scholarly publications. The extracted indicators were refined and screened using the fuzzy Delphi technique to achieve expert consensus. In the quantitative phase, the proposed model was validated using a survey method. The statistical population consisted of approximately 1,300 faculty members, from which a sample of 296 participants was selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie table (1972). Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire derived from the qualitative findings. The validity and reliability of the instrument were confirmed through content validity, construct validity, and internal consistency measures. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26 for preliminary analysis and Smart PLS version 3 for structural equation modeling.

**Findings:** The results of structural equation modeling indicated that presenteeism has a significant and strong effect on professional productivity ( $\beta = 0.679$ ,  $t = 16.177$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit indices ( $\chi^2/df = 2.79$ , CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.96, AGFI = 0.95, NFI = 0.97, NNFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.075), confirming the adequacy of the proposed structural model. These findings suggest that presenteeism is a key determinant of variations in professional productivity among faculty members.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that presenteeism significantly influences professional productivity among faculty members and represents a critical factor affecting academic performance and organizational effectiveness. Addressing the underlying causes of presenteeism can enhance both employee well-being and institutional productivity.

**Keywords:** Presenteeism, Professional Productivity, Faculty Members, Structural Equation Modeling, Higher Education, Organizational Performance

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary knowledge-based economies, professional productivity has emerged as a central determinant of organizational effectiveness, particularly within higher education institutions where intellectual capital constitutes the primary resource. Universities are increasingly expected to fulfill complex roles encompassing teaching, research, innovation, and community engagement, thereby placing substantial performance demands on faculty members. In this context, maintaining high levels of professional productivity is not only essential for institutional competitiveness but also for the broader socio-economic development of societies. However, a growing body of research indicates that various workplace phenomena can undermine employee productivity, among which presenteeism has received significant scholarly attention in recent years (Liu et al., 2025; Zhao et al., 2025).

Presenteeism, broadly defined as attending work despite physical or psychological health issues that hinder optimal performance, has evolved from a marginal concept into a critical concern within organizational and occupational health literature. Unlike absenteeism, which is more visible and measurable, presenteeism represents a hidden cost to organizations, often leading to reduced efficiency, impaired decision-making, and long-term health consequences for employees (Brown et al., 2011; Ferreira et al., 2019). The phenomenon is particularly relevant in academic environments, where faculty members frequently experience high workloads, role ambiguity, and pressure to meet performance metrics, all of which may encourage attendance even under suboptimal conditions. Consequently, understanding the dynamics of presenteeism and its implications for professional productivity has become an essential area of inquiry.

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that presenteeism is influenced by a wide range of organizational, psychological, and environmental factors. For instance, workplace stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion have been consistently identified as key predictors of presenteeism behavior, which in turn negatively affects work engagement and productivity (Gillet et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2025). Similarly, workplace incivility and interpersonal stressors have been shown to exacerbate presenteeism, particularly when employees lack adequate coping mechanisms or psychological resilience (Durmuş et al., 2024; Hasan et al., 2024). These findings highlight the complex interplay between individual well-

being and organizational context in shaping presenteeism outcomes.

In addition to psychosocial factors, organizational structures and leadership styles also play a crucial role in influencing presenteeism. Leadership behaviors that fail to support employee well-being or that emphasize performance over health can inadvertently encourage presenteeism, thereby undermining long-term productivity (Hinse & Mathieu, 2022). Moreover, organizational stress and job insecurity have been found to indirectly impact employee performance through the mediating role of presenteeism, suggesting that this phenomenon serves as a critical mechanism linking workplace conditions to productivity outcomes (Ersen et al., 2023; TÜZÜN & Şimşek, 2023). These insights underscore the importance of addressing both structural and behavioral factors in managing presenteeism within organizations.

The increasing prevalence of remote work and flexible work arrangements, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, has further complicated the dynamics of presenteeism. While remote work has been associated with reduced physical and psychological stress in some cases, it has also been linked to increased levels of presenteeism, as employees may feel compelled to remain constantly available and engaged despite health challenges (Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2024; Shimura et al., 2021). This shift has blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, thereby intensifying the risk of hidden productivity losses. In academic settings, where remote teaching and research activities have become more common, these dynamics warrant careful examination.

Furthermore, recent research has emphasized the role of psychological and cognitive factors in shaping presenteeism behavior. Constructs such as self-efficacy, mindfulness, and psychological detachment have been identified as significant predictors of employees' ability to manage work-related stress and maintain productivity (Liao et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2019). Employees with higher levels of self-efficacy are generally better equipped to cope with job demands and are less likely to engage in presenteeism, whereas those experiencing psychological distress or post-traumatic stress symptoms may exhibit higher levels of presenteeism, leading to diminished performance outcomes (Maurício & Laranjeira, 2023). These findings suggest that individual differences play a critical role in moderating the impact of workplace conditions on productivity.

Another important dimension of presenteeism relates to its bidirectional relationship with workplace dynamics. For

example, workplace bullying and negative social interactions not only contribute to presenteeism but may also be exacerbated by it, creating a cyclical pattern of declining well-being and productivity (Liu et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2024). This reciprocal relationship highlights the need for comprehensive organizational strategies that address both the causes and consequences of presenteeism. Additionally, the concept of safety climate has been linked to employee health and organizational performance, suggesting that supportive and health-oriented work environments can mitigate the adverse effects of presenteeism (Bronkhorst & Vermeeren, 2016).

Despite the extensive research on presenteeism in various sectors, there remains a relative paucity of studies focusing specifically on higher education institutions, particularly in developing regions. Faculty members operate in unique work environments characterized by intellectual autonomy, diverse role expectations, and varying levels of institutional support. These factors may influence the manifestation and impact of presenteeism in ways that differ from other occupational contexts. Therefore, there is a need for context-specific research that explores how presenteeism affects professional productivity among academic staff.

Moreover, the majority of existing studies have adopted either purely quantitative or qualitative approaches, limiting the ability to capture the full complexity of presenteeism phenomena. Mixed-methods research, which integrates qualitative insights with quantitative validation, offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of presenteeism and its implications. By combining exploratory and confirmatory approaches, such studies can provide deeper insights into the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that shape presenteeism behavior and its outcomes.

In light of these considerations, the present study seeks to address the existing research gap by adopting a mixed-methods approach to examine the effects of presenteeism on professional productivity among faculty members of universities in North Khorasan. By identifying the key dimensions of presenteeism and empirically testing their relationships with productivity outcomes, this study aims to contribute to both theoretical and practical understanding of this critical organizational phenomenon.

The aim of this study is to examine and determine the effects of presenteeism on professional productivity among faculty members of universities in North Khorasan.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was designed as an exploratory mixed-methods research in order to comprehensively investigate the effects of presenteeism on professional productivity among university faculty members. The research process was conducted in two sequential phases, including qualitative exploration followed by quantitative validation. In the initial phase, a qualitative approach was employed to identify the key indicators and dimensions of presenteeism within the academic context. This phase relied on an extensive review of relevant literature, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and existing theoretical frameworks. In addition, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted to capture in-depth perspectives and contextual insights regarding presenteeism among faculty members. The qualitative data were analyzed systematically, leading to the extraction of a set of primary indicators. To refine and screen these indicators, the fuzzy Delphi technique was applied, allowing for iterative consensus-building among experts and reducing subjectivity in the evaluation process. Following this stage, the proposed conceptual model was validated using partial least squares structural equation modeling through Smart PLS software. After establishing the validity of the model, the study proceeded to the quantitative phase, where empirical testing of the relationships among variables was conducted. Therefore, the study is methodologically categorized as a mixed-methods research integrating qualitative identification and quantitative validation.

The statistical population in the qualitative phase consisted of a purposive sample of experts, including academic scholars and experienced practitioners in higher education and organizational productivity. These experts were selected based on defined inclusion criteria, such as possessing at least ten years of professional or executive experience and having authored scientific publications in the form of books or peer-reviewed articles relevant to the research domain. Their expertise ensured the credibility and robustness of the identified indicators. In the quantitative phase, the population comprised faculty members from universities in North Khorasan, with an estimated total population size of approximately 1,300 individuals. To determine an appropriate sample size, the Morgan and Krejcie table (1972) was used, resulting in a sample of 296 participants selected through a random sampling method to ensure representativeness. Participation in the study was

voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to enhance the reliability of responses.

Data collection in the quantitative phase was conducted using a researcher-developed questionnaire, which was designed based on the indicators extracted and validated during the qualitative phase. The questionnaire measured various dimensions of presenteeism and professional productivity using Likert-scale items to capture participants' perceptions and experiences. Prior to the main data collection, the instrument underwent rigorous evaluation to ensure its validity and reliability. Content validity was confirmed through expert review, while construct validity was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis within the partial least squares framework. Reliability was examined using internal consistency measures, including Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients. After finalizing the instrument, it was distributed among the selected sample, and data were collected in a structured manner.

Data analysis was carried out using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. In the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was applied to categorize and interpret the data obtained from literature and expert interviews. In the quantitative phase, structural equation modeling was employed to test the hypothesized relationships between presenteeism and professional productivity. SPSS version 26 was used for preliminary data analysis, including data

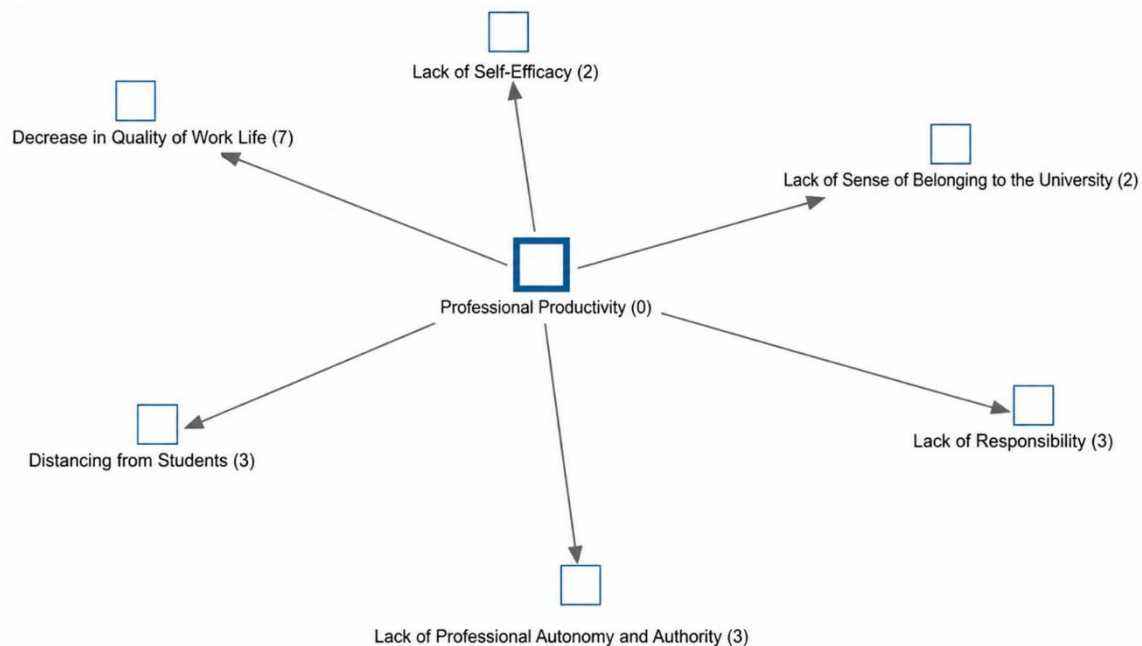
screening, descriptive statistics, and assumption testing. Smart PLS version 3 was utilized for evaluating both the measurement model and the structural model. Key indicators such as factor loadings, average variance extracted, composite reliability, and path coefficients were examined to assess the validity and explanatory power of the model. This integrated analytical approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how presenteeism influences professional productivity among faculty members.

### 3. Findings and Results

In the qualitative phase, data obtained from literature review and expert interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, leading to the identification of major dimensions associated with presenteeism and its consequences on professional productivity. The results revealed that presenteeism among faculty members manifests through several critical outcomes, including lack of self-efficacy, lack of sense of belonging to the university, lack of responsibility, lack of professional autonomy and authority, distancing from students, and decreased quality of work life. These dimensions collectively formed the conceptual basis of the research model.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Model of the Consequences of Presenteeism on Professional Productivity*



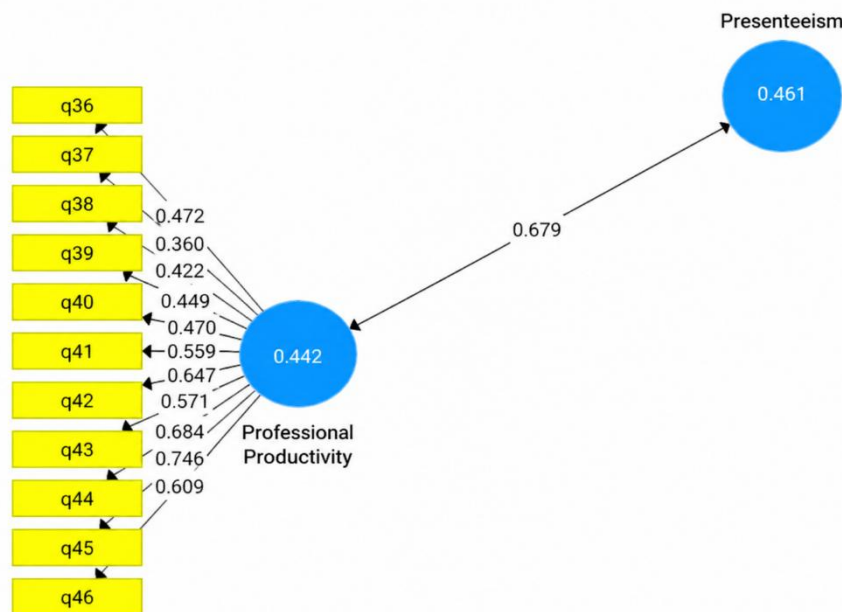
Following the identification of these dimensions, the fuzzy Delphi technique was applied to screen and validate the extracted indicators. The consensus among experts confirmed the relevance and adequacy of the identified components, which were then incorporated into the structural model. The qualitative findings thus provided a robust foundation for the subsequent quantitative analysis.

In the quantitative phase, structural equation modeling was employed to examine the relationships between

presenteeism and professional productivity. The measurement model evaluation indicated that all factor loadings were within acceptable ranges and statistically significant, confirming the reliability and validity of the constructs. Although the detailed loading values were initially presented in tabular form, they are summarized here as all indicators demonstrated acceptable convergent validity, with loadings generally exceeding the recommended threshold.

**Figure 2**

*Measurement Model of Professional Productivity and Presenteeism*



The structural model results demonstrated a significant direct effect of presenteeism on professional productivity. The standardized path coefficient between presenteeism and professional productivity was found to be 0.679, indicating

a strong and positive relationship. The significance level associated with this path was 16.177, which exceeds the critical threshold, confirming that the relationship is statistically significant.

**Table 1**

*Direct Path Coefficient of Presenteeism on Professional Productivity*

Dimension	Path Coefficient	Significance	Result	Rank
Professional Productivity	0.679	16.177	Significant	1

These findings indicate that presenteeism has a substantial and meaningful effect on professional productivity among faculty members, highlighting its critical role within the proposed model.

To further assess the adequacy of the structural model, several goodness-of-fit indices were examined. The results demonstrated that all fit indices were within acceptable ranges, indicating a well-fitting model. Specifically, the ratio

of chi-square to degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) was 2.79, which is below the threshold of 3, suggesting a good fit. Similarly, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.95, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) was 0.96, and the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) was 0.95, all exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.90. Additionally, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) were 0.97 and 0.96 respectively, further supporting the model's adequacy. The

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.075, which is below the acceptable threshold of 0.08, indicating an acceptable level of approximation error.

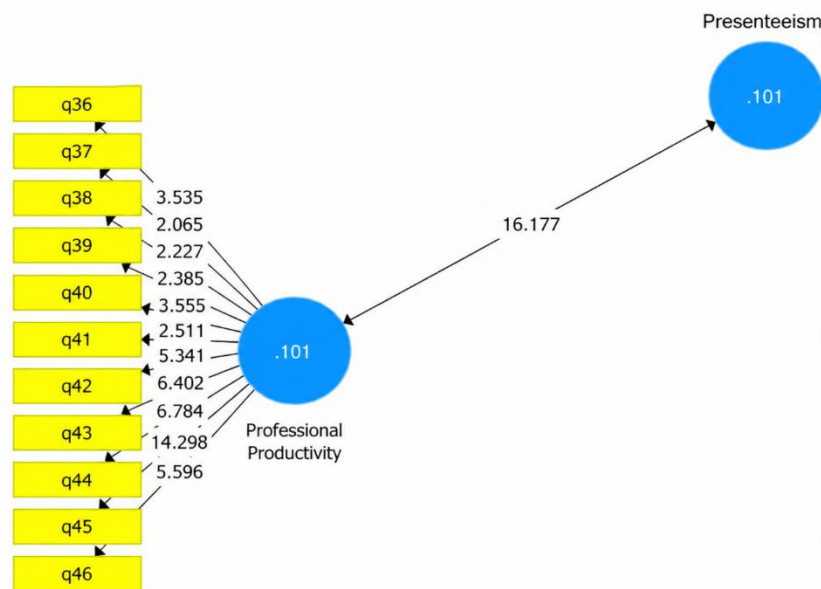
**Table 2**

*Goodness-of-Fit Indices of the Structural Model*

Fit Index	Acceptable Range	Obtained Value	Result
$\chi^2/df$	< 3	2.79	Acceptable
CFI	> 0.90	0.95	Acceptable
GFI	> 0.90	0.96	Acceptable
AGFI	> 0.90	0.95	Acceptable
NFI	> 0.90	0.97	Acceptable
NNFI	> 0.90	0.96	Acceptable
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.075	Acceptable

**Figure 3**

*Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficients*



Overall, the quantitative findings confirm the validity of the proposed model and demonstrate that presenteeism significantly influences professional productivity among faculty members. The strong model fit indices further support the robustness and explanatory power of the structural relationships identified in this study.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine and determine the effects of presenteeism on professional productivity among faculty members of universities in North Khorasan using a mixed-methods approach. The findings from both qualitative and quantitative phases provide a coherent and

comprehensive understanding of how presenteeism operates as a critical determinant of professional productivity. The qualitative results identified several key consequences associated with presenteeism, including lack of self-efficacy, reduced sense of belonging to the university, diminished responsibility, lack of professional autonomy and authority, distancing from students, and decreased quality of work life. These dimensions collectively reflect a multifaceted erosion of both individual and organizational functioning. The quantitative findings further substantiated these insights by demonstrating a significant and strong relationship between presenteeism and professional

productivity, as evidenced by a high path coefficient and strong model fit indices.

The significant positive relationship identified between presenteeism and professional productivity requires careful interpretation within the conceptual framework of constrained productivity. Although the statistical model indicates a strong association, it reflects the extent to which presenteeism contributes to variations in professional productivity, often in a negative or limiting manner. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that presenteeism, despite maintaining physical attendance, leads to reduced cognitive efficiency, impaired decision-making, and decreased work quality (Brown et al., 2011; Ferreira et al., 2019). In academic settings, where intellectual engagement and creativity are essential, even minor reductions in cognitive functioning can significantly impact teaching effectiveness, research output, and student engagement. Therefore, the observed relationship underscores the hidden costs of presenteeism in higher education environments.

The qualitative findings regarding lack of self-efficacy as a consequence of presenteeism are strongly supported by existing literature emphasizing the role of psychological resources in workplace performance. Studies have shown that individuals with lower self-efficacy are more likely to experience stress and reduced coping capacity, which in turn increases the likelihood of presenteeism and decreases productivity (Tang et al., 2019). In the context of faculty members, diminished self-efficacy may manifest as reduced confidence in teaching or research capabilities, ultimately affecting academic performance. Similarly, the identified reduction in sense of belonging to the university reflects broader organizational disengagement, which has been linked to presenteeism in prior studies. For instance, workplace incivility and lack of supportive organizational climates have been shown to increase presenteeism while reducing employees' emotional attachment to their organizations (Durmuş et al., 2024; Hasan et al., 2024).

Another important finding relates to the reduction in responsibility and professional autonomy among faculty members experiencing presenteeism. These outcomes suggest that presenteeism not only affects individual performance but also undermines intrinsic motivation and professional identity. This is consistent with research indicating that organizational stress and job insecurity can indirectly reduce performance through the mediating role of presenteeism (Ersen et al., 2023; TÜZÜN & Şimşek, 2023). When faculty members feel constrained or unsupported, they

may adopt passive coping strategies, including presenteeism, which further diminishes their sense of agency and responsibility. Additionally, leadership practices play a crucial role in shaping these outcomes, as unsupportive or performance-driven leadership styles have been associated with increased presenteeism and reduced employee well-being (Hinse & Mathieu, 2022).

The finding related to distancing from students is particularly significant in the academic context, as it directly affects the quality of education and student outcomes. Presenteeism may reduce faculty members' emotional availability and engagement in teaching, leading to weaker student-teacher relationships. This aligns with research indicating that psychological distress and emotional exhaustion can impair interpersonal interactions and reduce work engagement (Gillet et al., 2019). Furthermore, the identified decrease in quality of work life highlights the broader impact of presenteeism on employee well-being. Studies have consistently shown that presenteeism is associated with higher levels of psychological distress, lower job satisfaction, and reduced overall well-being (Maurício & Laranjeira, 2023). These findings emphasize that presenteeism is not merely an individual behavior but a systemic issue affecting multiple dimensions of organizational health.

The strong structural relationship between presenteeism and professional productivity identified in this study is further supported by recent empirical evidence highlighting the mediating role of psychological and social factors. For example, burnout has been identified as a key mediator linking stress to presenteeism, which in turn affects productivity outcomes (Zhao et al., 2025). Similarly, perceived social support has been shown to buffer the negative effects of work-family conflict on presenteeism, suggesting that supportive environments can mitigate productivity losses (Wu et al., 2024). These findings indicate that the impact of presenteeism is not deterministic but can be influenced by organizational and interpersonal factors.

The role of modern work arrangements, particularly remote work, provides additional context for interpreting the findings. While remote work has been associated with reduced physical strain, it has also been linked to increased presenteeism due to blurred boundaries between work and personal life (Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2024; Shimura et al., 2021). In academic settings, where remote teaching and research have become more prevalent, faculty members may feel compelled to remain continuously engaged, even when experiencing health issues. This dynamic may exacerbate the

negative effects of presenteeism on professional productivity, as individuals are less likely to take necessary breaks or seek support.

Furthermore, the bidirectional relationship between workplace dynamics and presenteeism identified in previous studies provides a broader perspective on the findings. Workplace bullying and negative interpersonal interactions not only increase presenteeism but are also reinforced by it, creating a cycle of declining well-being and performance (Liu et al., 2025). In the context of universities, where collaboration and collegiality are essential, such dynamics can have far-reaching consequences for organizational culture and effectiveness. Additionally, the concept of safety climate highlights the importance of organizational environments that prioritize employee health and well-being in reducing presenteeism and enhancing productivity (Bronkhorst & Vermeeren, 2016).

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of the significant impact of presenteeism on professional productivity within the academic context. The integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches allows for a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms through which presenteeism affects faculty performance. By identifying both individual and organizational factors associated with presenteeism, this study offers valuable insights for developing targeted interventions aimed at improving productivity and well-being among faculty members.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional nature of the quantitative phase limits the ability to establish causal relationships between presenteeism and professional productivity. Although structural equation modeling provides insights into relationships among variables, longitudinal studies would be more effective in capturing temporal dynamics. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, as participants may underreport or overreport their experiences of presenteeism and productivity. Third, the study was conducted within a specific geographical and institutional context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or types of universities. Additionally, the complexity of presenteeism as a construct means that some contextual or cultural factors may not have been fully captured in the model.

Future research should consider adopting longitudinal designs to better understand the causal relationships and temporal evolution of presenteeism and its impact on

professional productivity. Expanding the scope of research to include multiple universities across different regions and cultural contexts would enhance the generalizability of findings. Researchers may also explore the role of additional moderating and mediating variables, such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and technological factors, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of presenteeism. Furthermore, qualitative studies focusing on in-depth experiences of faculty members could offer richer insights into the subjective dimensions of presenteeism. Integrating physiological or behavioral measures alongside self-reported data could also improve the accuracy and robustness of findings.

From a practical perspective, university administrators and policymakers should prioritize the development of supportive work environments that reduce the occurrence and impact of presenteeism. This includes promoting a healthy organizational culture that values employee well-being alongside performance outcomes. Providing access to mental health resources, stress management programs, and flexible work arrangements can help faculty members manage work-related pressures more effectively. Leadership development programs that emphasize supportive and empathetic management styles can also play a crucial role in mitigating presenteeism. Additionally, institutions should consider implementing policies that encourage employees to take necessary leave when unwell, thereby reducing the long-term costs associated with presenteeism. By addressing both individual and organizational factors, universities can enhance professional productivity while ensuring the well-being of their faculty members.

### Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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We hereby thank all participants for agreeing to record the interview and participate in the research.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

## Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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