

**DEVELOPMENT OF AN ABSENTEEISM INDEX
FOR TEA PLANTATION WORKERS**

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ABSTRACT

One of the key economic indicators of the Sri Lankan tea industry, namely the privatized large-scale plantation or estate is afflicted with low productivity and high cost of production which resulted for continuous low profit margins. Chronic absenteeism has major impact on labor productivity and cost, while workforce continuity and industry viability are threatened by out-migration for better conditions and a more fulfilling life outside the tea sector. Measuring absenteeism is important for planning manpower requirements for production scheduling and to identify the productivity loss due to absenteeism, extent of absenteeism, frequency of absenteeism and concentration of absenteeism in Tea plantations. It demands the importance of the absenteeism index for an estate which facilitates the forecasting of the absenteeism. This has been based to conduct the research. Telbedde estate of Balangoda Plantations was selected to conduct the research. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire. Recorded primary data for twelve years were collected to develop the absenteeism index. Regression analysis and descriptive analysis were employed to analyze the collected data. Resulted absenteeism indices for separate divisions explain the pattern of absenteeism in the estate throughout the year. Productivity loss due to absenteeism per worker was calculated as 3.44. Participation index explains the extent of absenteeism and for the considered three months period it was calculated as 0.3827. Frequency of absenteeism was calculated as 118.5 per 100 employees per year. Largest divisions with high number of workers recorded higher rates of absenteeism. Most of the workers in the estate were absent for more than seven working days.