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Time management: presenteeism versus management-by-objectives

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Abstract

Purpose – This study examined the actual productive hours of employees from the service sector in Ghana.

Design/methodology/approach – This study adopted an exploratory cross-sectional survey design. The purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to identify the service organizations and recruited 520 employees in Accra for the study. Specifically, these respondents were workers from banks, insurance companies, auditing firms and oil and gas companies. The data were analyzed using frequencies and other descriptive statistics.

Findings – Results showed poor time management among the study organizations. It was reported that although most workers report to work as early as 6:30 a.m., they wait until 8:30 a.m. to commence the day's work schedule. In addition, they start thinking of break at least 15 min before actual break time which decreases productivity. In addition, employees reported spending at least 30 min on break. They also added that, they start clearing the desks about 15 min before actual closing time and leave the office at exactly 5:00 p.m.

Practical Implications – This study shows that the physical presence of workers does not necessarily mean they are working. The study proposes an alternative way to increase productivity rather than relying on physical presence of the workers.

Originality/value – This study is among the few that empirically sought to explore the actual time that workers use in a day at work. Thus, it measured actual productive hours of service employees in Ghana.

Keywords Presenteeism, Service industry, Time management, Exploratory survey, Management-by-objectives

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Time is the most essential resource for the optimal execution of all organizational activities (Adu-Oppong *et al.*, 2014). A delicate resource cannot be saved but only spent. Invariably, once misused, it can never be regained. Indeed, the management of time is a valuable resource to both organizations in search for business improvement and individuals looking for ways to spend their time.

Nwaiwu (2000) defined time as the interval between the beginning and the end of an operation. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary also defined time as a period either long or short, during which an individual undertakes an activity or an activity occurs. Hissom (2009) conceptualized management as the organizational process that comprises planning strategically, objectives setting, deploying the human and financial assets needed to achieve objectives and measuring results.

Time management is the act or skill of efficiently and effectively allocating, organizing and coordinating available periods to various activities for the attainment of set goals or



objectives whether at the individual or organizational level (Adu-Oppong *et al.*, 2014). The management of time commences with the commitment to change. According to Reynolds (2008), time management can be achieved if goals are set and all future work is prioritized based on the movement of both individuals and organization towards meeting them. The value of time management lies in the fact that people have too many activities they need to undertake but not enough time for the things that they want to do. Time management helps identify needs and wants in terms of their importance, and matches them with other resources. The process brings about orderliness, enabling one to be more productive and fulfilled (Adejo, 2012).

In Ghana, many managers are facing the challenge of ensuring effective time management. To resolve this challenge, many organizations have resorted to strict enforcement of time schedules for reporting, lunch breaks and closing for employees without recourse to employee productivity/output. Anecdotally, these strict time schedules have resulted in the growing phenomenon of presenteeism. Presenteeism, according to Gilbreath and Karimi (2012), occurs when employees are physically present at work but mentally absent. In other words, employees are at work but their cognitive energies are not devoted to their work. In some instances, they go through the motions of work with their attention focused elsewhere.

There is a pervasive agreement that presenteeism leads to enormous aggregate loss relative to absenteeism: "On the face of it, this suggests an iceberg effect in which the more visible portion of work loss (absenteeism) is dwarfed by that portion beneath the surface (presenteeism)" (Johns, 2010: 530). This implies that productive losses from presenteeism are possibly higher than the obvious (absenteeism) but little is accounted for.

This present study sought to examine the time spent on productive work *vis-à-vis* idle time spent at the work place, and to determine alternatives to presenteeism for managers in their quest to manage time effectively. Specifically, the study brings to the fore actual productive hours expended towards work by Ghanaian workers in the face of strict time schedules as well as highlights the hours lost to unproductive activities during working hours. Consequently, the study will help identify ways of reducing the productive time loss that goes unnoticed by managers, but has negative effect on productivity.

1.1 Presenteeism

Presenteeism is the loss in productivity when workers are on the job, but not performing at their best (Willingham, 2008). Johns (2010) maintains that presenteeism is a recent subject of interest unlike absenteeism. Presenteeism has been defined in various ways by various authors, attending work, as opposed to being absent (Smith, 1970). Working elevated hours, thus putting in 'face time' even when unfit (Simpson, 1998); Exhibiting excellent attendance (Canfield and Soash, 1955); and reduced productivity at work because of health problems or other events that distract one from full productivity, for example, office politics (Hummer *et al.*, 2002). Johns (2010) adopts the definition of presenteeism as attending work while ill. He further maintains that certain organizational policies and cultures foster presenteeism at the workplace. Organizational policies concerning pay, sick pay, attendance control, downsizing, and permanency of employment have all been suggested to foster presenteeism (Johns, 2010: 524).

The definitions of presenteeism indicate an emphasis on employees' physical presence at the workplace and a decline in productivity or performance of employees because of ill health and/or other problems. In a study by Aronsson and Gustafsson (2005) in Sweden, they found that 37 per cent of respondents reported attending work while sick more than once. In a later study by Aronsson and Gustafsson (2005) 53 per cent made the same

declaration, (38 per cent 2-5 times and 15 per cent more than five times). The response format consisted of never, once, 2-5 times, or over 5 times; in the past 12 months (Johns, 2010). Presenteeism has serious implications for organizations. From an organizational viewpoint, Hemp (2004 cited in Johns, 2010) opines that the relative invisibility of presenteeism compared to absenteeism makes its management an important source of competitive advantage. Ozminkowski *et al.* (2003) iterate that the consequences of presenteeism in measuring productivity losses are always challenging to assess. Hence, the concept and effects of presenteeism in an organization cannot be overemphasized, and it is imperative for organizations who want to remain successful and competitive to devise mechanisms to counter the adverse effects of presenteeism, especially in this era of increasing globalization and competition.

Literature is vexed with enormous evidence as to what necessitates presenteeism. Caverley *et al.* (2007) and Hansen and Andersen (2008) have all indicated that job insecurity has the tendency of driving employees to work even when sick. In addition, an argument has been made for people working in jobs that require high physical, cognitive and social context to always be present to help maintain their performance on the job (Demerouti *et al.*, 2009). Again, Bergström *et al.* (2009) posit that health care occupations require workers to continue working when they are indisposed. Simpson (1998) maintains that individuals are inclined to be always present and stay longer hours at work so that they can get promotions, rewards and new job opportunities. In sum, organizational cultures that cherish, acknowledge and reward long hours at work breeds the culture of presenteeism.

1.2 Advantages of management by objective

Thomson (1998) highlights three potential advantages of management by objectives (MBO). First, MBO has the potential of allowing managers to gain the commitment of subordinates since the goals and objectives are not imposed on them but rather they are set because of consensus between managers and subordinates. Second, MBO allows managers to gain better control and coordination toward goal accomplishment, by having a clearer picture of who is doing what and how the parts all fit together. Finally, MBO has the potential of allowing managers to gain an increased ability to help subordinates develop by being able to see their strengths and weakness in operation on a specific objective as well as teaching subordinates to anticipate change and be proactive.

Lindberg and Wilson (2011) conducted a longitudinal study of ten years interval to determine how well MBO has been implemented in upper secondary schools in Sweden and its impact on student performance and school effectiveness. It was found that the implementation of MBO had declined comparatively overtime. In addition, they found that the effects of MBO on student performance had reduced overtime, probably because of the decline in its implementation. However, the implementation of MBO was found to have reduced teachers' stress.

1.3 Management by objectives

MBO, initially used by Peter Drucker in 1954, refers to:

A process or system designed for supervisory managers in which a manager and his or her subordinate sit down and jointly set specific objectives to be accomplished within a set time frame and for which the subordinate is then held directly responsible (Thomson, 1998: 1).

MBO is a process of agreeing upon objectives within an organization so that management and employees agree to the objectives and understand what they are in the organization (Drucker, 1954). Thomson (1998) further reiterates that the MBO approach brings some form

of dialogue into the process of passing plans and objectives from one organizational level to another. A superior brings specific goals and measures into a meeting with a subordinate. The subordinate also brings specific objectives and measures that he or she considers contributory to better accomplishment of the job. Collectively, they come up with specific goals, measures of achievement, and time frames in which the subordinate commits to the accomplishment of those goals. The subordinate is then held responsible for the accomplishment of the goals.

MBOs in practice ranges from assessing the level of formalization and structures within organizations to identifying the degree of autonomy given to workers in goal setting. Thus, MBO in some organizations is a formal management system with precise review scheduling, set evaluation techniques, and specific formats in which objectives and measures must be presented for review and discussion. MBO in other organizations may be so informal as to be described simply as “we get together and decide what we’ve done and what we’re going to do” (Thomson, 1998: 2).

1.4 Theoretical framework – the goal-setting theory

Feather (1990, cited in Lindberg and Wilson, 2011) asserted that the goal-setting theory is one of the dominant motivational theories in the study of organizational behavior. Locke (1991a) maintains that goals influence action by affecting intensity, duration, and direction of actions. However, Lindberg and Wilson (2011) iterates that, goals are needed to direct attention and to energize actions, since it is not enough to ask people to do their best. The Goal-setting theory argues that, motivation and performance are higher when individuals set specific goals, when goals are difficult but accepted, and when there is a feedback on performance (Locke and Latham, 2006). Erez and Zidon (1984, as cited in Armstrong, 2006) stressed the need for acceptance of and commitment to goals, thus, as long as they are agreed, demanding goals lead to better performance than easy ones.

To enhance the performance of individuals, specific goals must be set for specific individuals and for specific contexts. These goals must be challenging and acceptable. Armstrong (2006) posits that Goal theory is in line with the 1960s concept of MBOs. He further maintains that MBOs, however, often failed because it was enforced bureaucratically without gaining the real support of those involved. In addition, managers do not acquire the skills in practicing it, and are unaware of the significance of the processes of agreement, reinforcement and feedback. In inference, MBOs failed because of how it was approached but not because it was an inefficient model in itself. Thus, with requisite knowledge and skills on how to practice MBOs, individuals and organizations stand to benefit a great deal from it.

2. Method

2.1 Research design

This study adopted an exploratory survey design; relied heavily on the quantitative techniques in its data collection and extraction. This method was appropriate because being an important study to provide empirical support for a particular style of management (MBO) the researchers wanted, as much as possible, to attain objective responses from the employees. Thus to provide some validity and clarity through an in-depth investigation of objective indices of time management and behavioral measures of presenteeism, a more quantitative approach was used to ascertain the average amount of time that was lost to activities unrelated to work.

2.2 Population/sample

The target group consisted of formal workers in selected private and public organizations in the central business district of Ghana's capital city; Accra, who were also Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) students at the University of Ghana Business School, University of Ghana. The purposive sampling technique was first used to select all workers in formal employment after which the convenience sampling technique was used to select employees who were willing to participate in the study. The sample was made up of 520 employees from different organizations and establishments (both public and private) located in the central business district of the nation's capital, Accra. These respondents worked in various institutions in the service industry in the country. However, majority of them worked in banks, insurance companies, auditing firms and oil and gas companies. Furthermore, the context of the study is Ghana because the country is now dominated by the service industry where concepts such as job autonomy, empowerment and job control are common; thus, the issue of effective time management becomes key and essential in such an industry since humans constitute the main labor force unlike the manufacturing companies. Hence, the choice of Ghana as the context of study.

2.3 Procedure

Applying the quantitative method, self-designed questionnaires were administered to select employees from different organizations to respond. The questions centered on issues of time utilization and management at the workplace. Three research assistants were employed and trained to assist in the data collection. This was done by taking them through how to approach and seek the consent of respondents before administering the questionnaire.

2.4 Analysis of data

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and other measures of central tendencies. This approach was adopted because of the nature of the data collected. It allowed for the presentation of results empirically obtained from respondents without any alteration or interference.

3. Results

In all, 520 respondents made up of 280 (53.8 per cent) males and 240 (46.2 per cent) females of different positions from Ghana's public and private organizations took part in the study. All the respondents had been with their respective organizations for at least 1 year, with the least number of years being 1 year, whereas the most was 28 years.

3.1 Official reporting time

[Table AI](#) Presents the official time respondents indicated they are expected by their organizations to report to work. From the table, 272 (52.3 per cent) of the respondents indicated that they report to work at 8:00 a.m. Again, 176 (33.8 per cent) indicated that their official time for reporting to work is before 8:00 a.m., 56 (10.8 per cent) respondents said they are supposed to officially report at 8:30 a.m., whereas 16 (3.1 per cent) respondents said their official reporting time is 9:00 a.m. It is clear from the times presented in [Table AI](#) that, most of the respondents' reporting times are within the officially recognized time to report to work in Ghana, which is between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

3.2 Time respondents report at work

The researchers further found out the time respondents report to work. [Table AII](#) shows the pattern of response from participants.

As shown in [Table AII](#), respondents who reported to work between 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. were 152 (29.2 per cent). Those who indicated that they report to work between 7:01 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. were 160 (30.8 per cent), those who indicated 7:31 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. as their reporting time were 112 (21.5 per cent), respondents who report to work between 8:31 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. were 72 (13.9 per cent), while 24 (4.6 per cent) indicated that they report to work after 9:00 a.m. The results from the table shows that, most respondents (424, representing 81.5 per cent) report to work earlier than the officially recognized time for reporting to work in Ghana (8:30 a.m.).

3.3 Official time to start work

What happens when workers report to work this early? Are they supposed to start work or supposed to wait? This was also investigated and the results shown below in [Table AIII](#).

Results from [Table AIII](#) show that all respondents who reported before the start time wait until 8:30 a.m. or beyond to start work. From the results, 464 respondents (representing 89.2 per cent of the respondents) said they start work at 8:30 a.m. The rest of the respondents constituting 56 (10.8 per cent) indicated times between 8:45 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. as start times for work. This means that, when workers report to work as early as 6:30 a.m., they wait till it is 8:30 a.m. or beyond for their work to be recognized.

3.4 Time taken to settle down at work

When workers start work at 8:30 a.m., how long does it take them to settle down to “real” work? [Table AIV](#) indicates how long it takes them to settle to work.

Most of the respondents indicated that they take some few minutes to settle down to work when they report. From the [Table AIV](#), 360 (69.2 per cent) respondents indicated it takes them 5-10 min to settle down to work when they report, 128 (24.6 per cent) respondents said it takes them 11-15 min to settle down to work, 8 (1.5 per cent) respondents said it takes 16-20 min, whereas 24 (4.7 per cent) stated it takes 21-30 min to settle down. Whatever the number of minutes it takes respondent to settle down, it is an empirical fact that respondents do not start work right away when they arrive at work, but take some time to settle. This means that, the usual hours of work would be reduced by a number of minutes. This time taken to settle down is spent on a number of activities respondents do outside official work. For instance, workers would check their mails, use the social media they have subscribed to, relax, pray, read the newspapers, among other things, when they report to work before officially starting the day’s work.

3.5 Time spent on counter-productive work in between official breaks

Aside these activities before settling to work, workers on several occasions spend some extra time in-between official breaks; these breaks include lunch break, meetings and so on. [Table AV](#) presents some information to this effect.

According to the results from [Table AV](#), 232 (44.6 per cent) respondents indicated that they spend about 5min in-between official breaks. In total, 128 (24.6 per cent) respondents said they spend about 10 min, 64 (12.3 per cent) said they spend about 15 minutes in-between official breaks and 40 (7.7 per cent) spend 20 and 30 min between breaks, with only 16 (3.1 per cent), indicating that they spend about 25 min. Again, in this case, whichever number of minutes is spent, whether little or large still reduces productive time, which could affect productivity.

3.6 Time spent thinking about break before the actual break time

Meanwhile respondents start thinking of break at least 5 min to the actual or official break time at work. [Table AVI](#) provides evidence.

The response in [Table AVI](#) shows that some workers start thinking of break 1 hour to the actual break time. All the respondents start thinking of break at least 15 min to usual break time. For instance, 312 (60.0 per cent) respondents indicated that they start thinking of break 15 min to time, 144 (27.7 per cent) respondents indicated that they have break thoughts 30 min to time, 24 (4.6 per cent) said 45 min to time and finally, 40 (7.7 per cent) said 1 h to time.

3.7 Time taken to return from break outside actual break duration

[Table AVII](#) shows the time respondents take to return from official breaks after the actual duration of break has elapsed.

Respondents indicated that it takes them at least 30 min to return from break. From the results, 272 (52.3 per cent) respondents said they take 30 min to return from break, 88 (17.0 per cent) indicated that it takes them 45 min to return from break, 152 (29.2 per cent) said it takes them 1 h to return from break, whereas only 8 (1.5 per cent) said it takes them 1 h 30 min to return from break.

3.8 Time taken to settle to work after break

Results from [Table AVIII](#) show that, 400 (76.9 per cent) respondents take 10 min to settle to work after lunch break, 96 (18.5 per cent) respondents take 15 min to settle to work after lunch break, whereas 24 (4.6 per cent) respondents take 45 min to settle down to work after lunch break. They usually engage in activities like chatting with friends, relaxing for a while and checking mails.

3.9 Time for closing

Respondents indicated the time they officially close from work. This is shown in [Table AIX](#).

[Table AIX](#) represents the official time for closing as well as the time respondents' close from work. According to the results, workers start closing from 3:30 p.m. as indicated in the table. Most of the respondents (432, representing 83.0 per cent) indicated that they close from work at 5:00 p.m. However, workers do not wait until it is closing before they start clearing their tables. [Table AX](#) below represents the time that respondents start clearing their tables, before the official closing time

3.10 Time respondents start clearing table

Although most respondents indicated they closed at 5:00 p.m., there was no justification to the effect that they logged off at exactly 5:00 p.m. Respondents took different times to start clearing their tables so that at exactly 5:00 p.m. they leave the premises. For instance, 424 (81.5 per cent) respondents indicated that they start clearing their tables 15 min to closing, whereas 64 (12.3 per cent) said they start clearing their table 30 min to closing; 16 (3.1 per cent) of the respondents said they start clearing their tables 45 min. Likewise, 16 (3.1 per cent) of the respondents said they start clearing their tables 1 h to time.

4. Discussion

It is glaring from the data analyzed above that, there are many activities that go on during the day's working hours, which reduce productive hours. The results from the analysis of data indicates that time is spent on counter-productive things at work during productive hours. This leaves the number of productive hours short of what is desired in the day. For instance,

Table AIII presents the official time workers are supposed to start work – this depends on the organization since different times have been indicated as the official time to start work. However, as presented in Table IV, it takes workers at least between 5-10 min and at most 30 min to settle down for the day's job. In reality, it should take at least 10 min for one to settle for the day's job to begin. So, if it is assumed that everyday a worker takes 10 min out of the official 8 hours for work to settle down, then it means that, in a week, each employee takes 50 min to only settle down to work. However, as indicated in Table IV, some take more than 10 min in a day to settle to work after reporting. If on average, it takes 30 min to settle down to work in a day, that alone takes 150 (2 h 30 min) min in a week out of the 40 h of work.

In addition to the time spent beyond the official break hours, workers most of the time, spend some more time in-between breaks (Table V). For instance, times spent using the washroom, receiving calls, chatting and so on. If it is assumed that 10 min is spent, it will amount to 50 min a week.

Further, before break, most of the respondents indicated that, they start having break thoughts 15 min to time (Table VI). Although some indicated 30 min, 45 min and even an hour. Assuming on the average 15 min was spent on break thoughts; it also amounts to 75 min per week of five working days. Meanwhile once break thought comes up, effective work is disrupted. Again, it takes respondents at least 30 min (Table VII) to return from break – this is even the earliest time respondents' return from break, since some take more than an hour. The 30 min multiplied by the 5 working days is 150 min and when this is added to the 75 min spent in-between breaks, it amounts to 225 min. Again, when respondents return from break, it takes at least 10 min (Table VIII) to settle down to work, and that is even the least time. 10 min multiplied by the 5 working days will amount to 50 min and if this is added to the time for break thoughts and time spent in returning from break, it amounts to 275 min out of the 40 h of work in a week.

Most of the respondents indicated that the official time for closing is 5:00 p.m. However, they usually start clearing their tables at least 15 min to closing time. If this is also multiplied by the 5 working days, a time of 75 min is lost to clearing of table every week. Not to talk of those who have other activities or duties to carry out outside normal work schedule like going for their wards from school before the close of work, doing food/household shopping among others. Now, if we combine the time taken to settle to work after reporting (150 min); time spent in-between breaks (50 min); time spent on break thoughts, return from break and settle down to work after break (275 min); and time spent on clearing the table before closing (75 min) in a week, a total of 550 min (9 h, 10 min) of time out of the 40 h of productive work in a week is lost.

Further analysis indicates that, in a day, almost 2 h of productive time is lost without work. This analysis comes without other possible issues that might give rise to waste of productive time at the work place. The question is that, if in a week, more than 9 h of productive time is lost, what is the fate of productivity?

Management and managers need to adopt a management system that can ensure increased productivity without recourse to loss of these productive hours. This therefore calls for effective time management strategies. As opined by Adejo (2012), time is an essential resource; it is irrecoverable, limited and dynamic. Irrecoverable because every minute spent is gone forever, limited because only 24 h exist in a day and dynamic because it is never static (Adejo, 2012). Time management is the organization of tasks or events by first estimating how much time a task will take to be completed, when it must be completed, and then adjusting events that would interfere with its completion (North, 2004). It means therefore that, as revealed by this study, managers need to sit and estimate the real time that

is spent on productive work in order for an adjustment to be made concerning achieving the best productive time.

For instance, MBO could be one of the most effective ways to manage time effectively for higher productivity in the organization. MBOs is in line with the goal-setting theory (Armstrong, 2006), where performance is seen to be enhanced when managers and workers set clear, agreed, specific, measurable, challenging goals. Furthermore, the goal-setting theory holds that the individuals must be committed to achieving those goals, and this has the potential of enhancing the individual productivity and performance of individuals. According to Medibank Research Series (2011), by investing in strategies and programs that support the health and wellbeing of employees, businesses can work towards minimizing the impact of presenteeism and improving productivity in the workplace. The absence of MBO is the result of people recognizing the feeling that one must show up for work even when sick or too stressed to be productive. What happens then is that, the individual shows up for work, but does not work. High job demands will evoke pressure on employees to attend work while employees actually feel sick, stressed or psychologically unstable, which can be viewed, from the self-regulation perspective, as an attempt to avoid performance decrements. It will therefore be of no use signing a register which indicates the time an employee shows up for work but there is nothing to show what work that worker does for the day. However, the sign-in register should be complemented greatly by adopting MBOs; managers should set daily goals with each employee, specifying the required results of the tasks as well as the expected time of completion of daily tasks. Furthermore, these daily tasks should be integrated into overall organizational goals since the purpose of every organization is to meet its objectives and attain its goals. Consequently, productive hours will be utilized in attaining organizational goals instead of focusing on the workers just being at work. This MBOs could also be a good measure of work and productivity of each employee as they will be assessed based on tasks that they have adequately completed in relation to specified period. Furthermore, managers who practice MBOs may gain the benefits of subordinates' commitment to meeting objectives, gaining better control and coordination toward goal accomplishment. In addition, it serves as a form for increased ability to help subordinates develop by being able to see their strengths and weakness in operation on a specific objective as well as teaching subordinates to anticipate change and be proactive (Thomson, 1998), which can increase the productivity.

4.1 Conclusion

Findings showed poor time management amongst the study organizations. Although most workers reports to work as early as 6:30 a.m., they have to wait until 8:30 a.m. to commence the day's work schedule. In most organizations, 8:30 a.m. is purported to be the official "ritualistic" time for work to begin. Meanwhile, workers report to work so early in lieu of escaping the morning's rush traffic. Furthermore, the worker who reported as early as 6:30 a.m. waits until 5:00 p.m. before closing. This implies that, employees' presence at work is paramount and not necessarily, his or her productivity. The challenge of reporting early to work and getting home late as experienced by respondents is a glaringly recipe for stress and its accompanying health implications.

The effective management of time through MBOs will improve staff productivity, make scheduling of jobs easier, enable staff to perform tasks at their highest skill level, help staff to prioritize and accomplish important task and record and guide the organization toward achieving its set goals.

4.2 Recommendations

The result of the study indicated that, many productive hours are lost in the week, which has implications for overall organizational performance. The following recommendations were made; As much as it will be a good practice for workers to show up to work at a particular time every day, it would be prudent that managers lay emphasis on MBO. With MBO, formal objective setting and appraisal meetings should be held on a regular basis to ensure the attainment of organizational goals.

Management is not about getting more things done in a day, but getting the most important things done in a day (Adejo, 2012). It is therefore recommended that, management in the various organizations should set their priorities for the day and make sure that it is achieved. This is possible through a transparent goal setting process with employees and resourcing them to deliver on the agreed outcomes.

Considering that some employees report to work very early (as early as 6:30 a.m.) and still have to leave at the official closing time (5:00 p.m.), it is important that the flexi-time system of work, which is also goal/objective driven is considered among employees who do not play customer facing roles to allow for the achievement of goals. Thus, with the flexible scheduling of work, the nature of operation becomes goal driven other than the sheer presence of employees (presenteeism). Emphasis with this approach is placed on goal attainment. For instance, if an individual gets to work at 6:30 a.m., he or she needs not wait until 8:30 a.m. to start work. Once there is an agreed goal that will be measured at an agreed time, he or she will be guided on how to use the time.

Management should also consider telecommuting. By telecommuting, workers whose work could be done without necessarily being present in the office all the time could be provided with the necessary materials they would need for work and be allowed to work from locations of their choice without necessarily being present at work all the time. Again, goal-oriented management is the basic premise here. These workers may come to the office from time to time to give reports on progress of work.

Organizations cannot control time, but can control what they do with time. Emphasis should therefore be laid on the importance of good time management; thus, objective management is an appropriate strategy to adopt if effective time management is to be achieved.

4.3 Limitations of the study

This study, like any other, is not devoid of limitations. As a study conducted in Ghana, the findings cannot be generalized to cover other countries since conditions in other countries may differ from that of Ghana. In addition, the findings of the study can only be applicable to the service sector where most of the respondents were coming from. Indeed, in the service sector, where many idealistic concepts like job autonomy, empowerment and job control applies; setting objectives with employees is not just plausible but also possible. However, in a manufacturing set up where machines are automated requiring employees to work to the speed of machines, employees cannot have the laxity of time to decide when and how to work but to go according to the regimental schedules of organizations. Thus, the application of the MBO system of management is limited to some sector of operation. Being an exploratory study, an initial qualitative approach to understand the phenomenon before a much more objective quantitative approach would have been an ideal approach and would have further enhanced the robustness of the findings.

4.4 Recommendations for future studies

Being an exploratory and thus the first of its kind in Ghana, this study paves the way for further studies. Future studies are recommended into finding out the extent to which MBOs

will help curb counter-productive work during working hours. In addition, studies could delve into other measures apart from MBOs that could help reduce the effect of presenteeism in organizations in Ghana and the world at large. Moreover, similar studies that employ the mixed method design, as well as the use of more sophisticated statistical analytical tools are recommended. Further similar studies are also recommended to be undertaken in other sectors of the Ghanaian economy other than the service sector. Finally, similar studies could look at comparing findings in the public sector with that of the public sector in the country.

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Table AI.
Official reporting
time

Time (hrs.)	Frequency	(%)
6:00 a.m.	24	4.6
6:30 a.m.	16	3.1
7:00 a.m.	64	12.3
7:30 a.m.	64	12.3
7:45 a.m.	8	1.5
8:00 a.m.	272	52.3
8:30 a.m.	56	10.8
9:00 a.m.	16	3.1
Total	520	100.0

Table AII.
Time respondent
reports at work

Time (hrs.)	Frequency	(%)
6:30-7:00 a.m.	152	29.2
7:01-7:30 a.m.	160	30.8
7:31-8:00 a.m.	112	21.5
8:30-9:00 a.m.	72	13.9
After 9:00 a.m.	24	4.6
Total	520	100.0

Table AIII.
Official time to start
work

Time (in hrs.)	Frequency	(%)
8:30 a.m.	464	89.2
8:45 a.m.	16	3.1
9:00 a.m.	24	4.6
9:30 a.m.	8	1.5
100 a.m.	8	1.5
Total	520	100.0

Table AIV.
Time taken to settle
down at work

Time (in minutes)	Frequency	(%)
5-10 min	360	69.2
11-15 min	128	24.6
16-20 min	8	1.5
21-30 min	24	4.7
Total	520	100.0

Time (in minutes)	Frequency	(%)
5 min	232	44.6
10 min	128	24.6
15 min	64	12.3
20 min	40	7.7
25 min	16	3.1
30 min	40	7.7
Total	520	100.0

Table AV.
Time spent on
counter-productive
work in between
official breaks

Time (in hours and minutes)	Frequency	(%)
1 h to time	40	7.7
45 min to time	24	4.6
30 min to time	144	27.7
15 min to time	312	60.0
Total	520	100.0

Table AVI.
Time spent thinking
about break before
the actual break time

Time (in hours)	Frequency	(%)
30 min	272	52.3
45 min	88	17.0
1 h	152	29.2
1 h 30 min	8	1.5
Total	520	100.0

Table AVII.
Time taken to return
from break

Time (in minutes)	Frequency	(%)
10 min	400	76.9
15 min	96	18.5
45 min	24	4.6
Total	520	100.0

Table AVIII.
Time taken to settle
at work after lunch
break

	Time (in hours)	Frequency	(%)
Table AIX. Time respondent closes from work	3:30 p.m.	24	4.6
	4:00 p.m.	32	6.2
	4:30 p.m.	32	6.2
	5:00 p.m.	432	83.0
	Total	520	100.0

	Time (in hours)	Frequency	(%)
Table AX. Time respondent starts clearing table	1 h to time	16	3.1
	45 min to time	16	3.1
	30 min to time	64	12.3
	15 min to time	424	81.5
	Total	520	100.0

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