



ACADEMIA EUROPAEA

The Academy of Europe

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION APPLICATION

Title: Investigating effect of Obesity on work absenteeism

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Category: From Science to Society

Problem (max. 50 words):

Obesity is a major public health issue in Europe, linked to a wide range of chronic conditions. It also contributes significantly to increased work absenteeism and reduced productivity, creating both health and economic burdens.

Unmet Need (max. 50 words):

While the health impacts of obesity are well-documented, its effect on work absenteeism across Europe remains underexplored. There is a need for EU-wide data to quantify this relationship and inform workplace health strategies.

Project Description (max. 200 words):

This project investigates the relationship between obesity and work absenteeism in Europe, using data from the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS). The analysis compares the frequency and duration of health-related work absences among obese, overweight, and normal-weight individuals across multiple European countries. By incorporating variables such as body mass index (BMI), chronic comorbidities, and self-reported absence due to illness, the project aims to quantify obesity-attributable productivity loss. In addition to establishing a link between excess weight and absenteeism, the study will explore whether specific occupational sectors or socioeconomic groups are disproportionately affected. The research applies the human capital approach to estimate economic losses linked to obesity-related absences. The results will inform public health and labor policies, supporting investment in preventive strategies (e.g., workplace wellness programs, health education, and dietary interventions) to reduce obesity rates and their economic impact.

Ultimately, the project bridges the gap between public health and labor economics, providing actionable insights for policymakers and employers to promote healthier workforces and more sustainable healthcare and social systems.

Hypothesis (25 words):

Workers with obesity have higher absenteeism compared to those with normal weight.

Implication for Practice (50 words):

Results may guide employers and policymakers to invest in preventive measures—like nutrition programs and physical activity initiatives—to reduce obesity-related absenteeism. Evidence-based interventions can improve employee well-being, reduce costs, and increase workforce sustainability.

Implication for Research (50 words):

This study lays the foundation for broader investigations into the economic consequences of obesity. It encourages cross-disciplinary research linking public health, labor economics, and social policy to evaluate cost-effective prevention strategies and support workplace health promotion across the EU.