Rethinking Work Schedule to Improve Employee Morale & Reduce Absenteeism by 50%

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AIM

To reduce ED Support Services PSAs' unplanned absenteeism by 50% within a year

BACKGROUND

High unplanned absenteeism rate was observed for our team of 3 ED Support Services PSAs handling TCU booking for ED discharged patients. This often led to last minute recall of staff, resulting in low morale for the team.
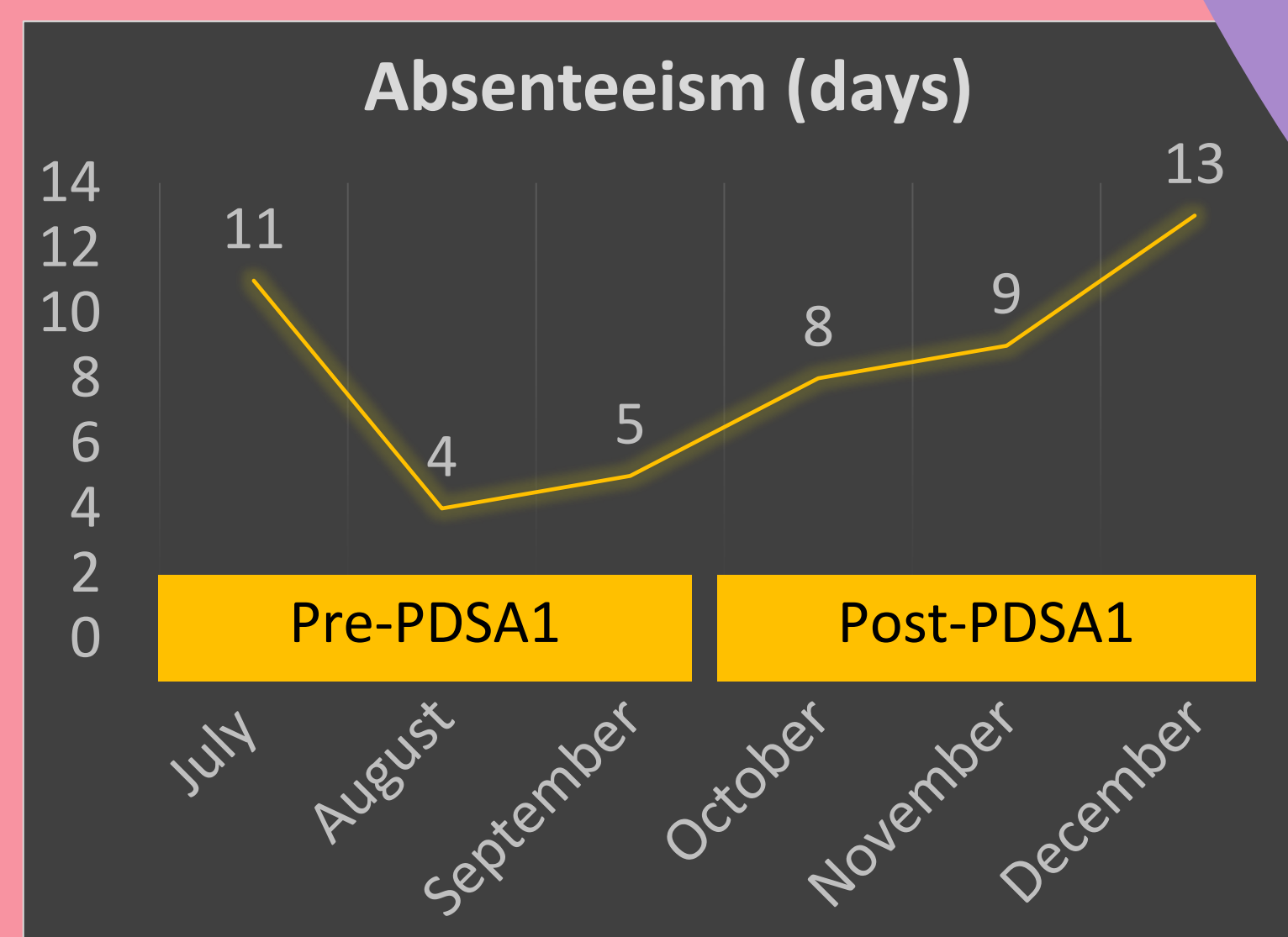
As the team is small, each absenteeism has great impact on the team. It was hard to recall staff back for duty during each absenteeism as the team is running on a 7-days/week schedule. This led to backlog of work, fatigue and stress for the team, and low morale and productivity.

METHODOLOGY

Several engagements with staff were conducted to understand the factors affecting staff well-being and high absenteeism.

PDSA 1

It was discovered through the initial engagements that the evening shift (12pm-9pm) was not meaningful as workload is generally low after office hours, but staff still has to stay back alone to clock the hours → the evening shift was removed. **Despite removal of the evening shift (PDSA1), unplanned absenteeism remained high.**

Absenteeism (days)

	Pre-PDSA1	Post-PDSA1
	July: 11, August: 4	September: 5, October: 8, November: 9, December: 13

PDSA2

Various work schedule options were then further explored.
The changing of work scheme from shift (4 weekdays & 1 weekend) to non-shift (5.5 day work-week including weekend/PH) was mooted and implemented from 1 Dec 2022.

Rationale for change:

Fulfils working hours required of non-shift staff and at same time ensuring sufficient manpower coverage throughout the week	This change allows staff to apply for 0.5 day leave (not applicable for shift work previously)	Less appealing for staff to take urgent leave on weekend/PH since they only need to work half-days

4 Weekdays + 1 weekend → 5 Weekdays + 0.5 weekend

Change of work scheme from shift to non-shift

PDSA2 resulted in significant improvement in reducing the number of unplanned absences per staff.

RESULTS

1) Average unplanned absences per staff:

30 days in 2022 –> **10 days** in 2023

Improvement: <u>66.7%</u>
Fewer unplanned absences, less disruption to operations

2) Total times staff recalled for coverage:

6 times in 2022 –> **1 time** in 2023

Improvement: <u>83.3%</u>
Fewer last minutes recall, less disruption to employee's personal/family life led to better staff morale

CONCLUSION

It is important to continuously engage staff, improve processes and systems to ensure a <u>fine balance</u> between organisational needs and staff satisfaction. It is not always the case that adding more manpower will solve operational issues. The change from shift to non-shift work scheme helps improve staff morale and productivity, and at the same time achieved <u>operational efficiency</u> with less unplanned absences, achieving a <u>win-win</u> for all.