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**Financial Cost of Security Staff Absenteeism in the University for
Development Studies: A Case Study of Wa Campus, Ghana**

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Abstract

Well-planned and implemented administrative policies and assignments of duties leads to betterment of institutions. Laid down procedures if adhered to can lead to increase in production, customer satisfaction and adherence to duties by the institutions' security staff. The research was to elicit the potential effects of security staff on UDS funds. A mixed, quantitative-qualitative, approach was used in the data collection on the security staff absenteeism at the Wa Campus of the UDS spanning a period of three months, which started from 1st March to 31st May, 2013. Managing the large number of students, cost of providing facilities for the main Campus at Bamahu and other satellite ones within the Wa Municipality and its fast-growing staff population formed the basis of selecting Wa Campus out the four for the study instead of any of the other three campuses in the University. A case study approach was adopted to unearth the economic cost of absenteeism. Key findings were: high incidence of security staff absenteeism, loss of working hours, loss of both students and staff motorbikes, cost of replacing stolen items such as projectors and other equipment in the lecture theatres and halls. Thorough investigation of applicants should be done before recruiting into the Campus security. Automatic time machines should be used for recording reporting and closing hours of security staff.

Keywords: absenteeism, financial cost, loss of property, university management, university security

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INTRODUCTION

Commitment to duties plays a very crucial role in organisations and institutional development. This is often seen in the practice of some organisations and institutions as a major component or core value explaining why staff absenteeism and lukewarm attitudes towards duties recipes for poor service delivery, general poor performance and low productivity are simply. Hence, successes of institutions are greatly dependent on the commitments of staff, right from the least to the highest with reference to their role play. In this sense, institutions are referred to as systems with sub-components or units which play interrelated roles from one unit or section to another. Similarly, these roles may be different from one another. For instance, the role of a cleaner carries much importance, yet it is different from that of a technician in the same setup. The technician by virtue of training plays equally an important but different role from that of a clerk who organises records or a nurse at the helm of health issues due to their professional backgrounds and place of work.

Considering security problems such as threats, cybercrime, physical attacks, psychological and general unsafe environment in which one lives or operates does not only result in loss of property and cost of replacing the lost items but can also necessitate heightened fears (Tylczak, 1990; Busisiwe, 2007; Sarah, 2013). Insecurity in institutions are sometimes attributed to poor security systems put in place by the affected institutions or lack of supervision of the staff assigned to protect and oversee the entity's security issues. The morale fiber of security decays when security absenteeism is not checked and controlled in institutions and organisations.

In most cases individuals are only quick to conclude that security absenteeism leads to loss of property and valuables. This stops short of the financial cost in estimating the value of services that are sometimes not rendered due to staff absenteeism. Elsewhere in the United States of America about 77% of workers' absenteeism of 94,000 workers across major occupations cost a total of \$84 billion

in relation to losses on production (Andrews, 2013; Green R. (2015). Andrews (2013) and Green R. (2015) further assert that unscheduled absenteeism costs roughly \$3,600 per head per year for hourly workers and \$2,650 of same for salary employees. Also, the “September Eleven” terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York did not only have effects on emotions, behaviour, immediate fold up of most organisations and business environs but also the international market, travels to the United States and other countries (Gans, 2020; Andrews, 2013). Andrews (2013) estimated that international travels to United States of America following “September Eleven” incident decreased by 6.8%.

In Ghana, little is known about the financial cost, arising from absenteeism in organisations except the study by Tetey (2002) which included University of Ghana as a sample. Tetey (2002) indicated that in Ghana, the vacancy rates for doctors increased from 43% to 47%, between 1998 and 2002, whilst that of registered nurses was 26% to 57% during the same period, mainly due to absenteeism. Today, the clarion call that emphasises increase in productivity, economy and rational utilization of human resources, necessitates the minimization of absenteeism for output maximization (Poornima, 2006). According to Poornima (2006), the challenges absenteeism **poses** to many managers of organisations and institutions are how to control it whilst avoiding mistrust, costly administration and system avoidance.

Generally, staff absenteeism has been a major challenge to many organisations and their productivity, a worrying issue for economic growth and development as well as output maximisation to many employers (Roberts, 2004; Orrick, 2004; Levy *et al.*, 2004; Tonello, 2005; SAPA, 2006; Poornima, 2006). This explains why some scholars over the years have conducted varying studies on the causes and effects of staff absenteeism under specific work conditions in different environments, primarily to propose lasting solutions to curb the menace (Levy *et al.*, 2004; Tonello, 2005; Busisiwe, 2007). Thus, existing literature in the past have placed premium on the multifaceted causes of staff absenteeism that can no longer be limited to the already known working conditions, poor salary, training policies, management structures and organisational cultures (Orrick, 2004). Also, a greater proportion of existing collection of works, however, missed the economic aspects of the financial side – cash value. Prevailing literature also show that various attempts at the global level to find and implement lasting solutions to absenteeism yielded very insignificant results (Monks, 2000; Byron and Peterson, 2002; Minnaar, 2005). Although more is yet to be done at the global level, narrowing the issue to the Ghanaian situation, researchers and scholars are yet to direct more

efforts at quantifying the financial and economic value before settling on the concluding solutions of absenteeism in organisations.

Productive work-hours losses also occur when employees arrive late or close early from duties. In the Western and developed countries, productive hours lost through staff absenteeism are easily checked through software devices which record the lock in-and-out hours of staff on duty on a daily basis of the institution's life. Tettey *et al.* (2000), Levy *et al.* (2004), Tonello (2005) and Tettey (2006), to some extent agreed that absenteeism to a large extent is unavoidable but can only be managed. There are several factors stemming from the larger operational context of the organisation, environmental, social and individual explaining why absenteeism tends to be a universal phenomenon (Tettey *et al.*, 2000; Levy *et al.*, 2004; Tettey, 2006; Busisiwe, 2007). Also, factors such as physical, economic, socio-cultural and political among other things lead to absenteeism (Levy *et al.*, 2004; Tettey, 2006). These do not exclude the working conditions and management styles among others as noted by Busisiwe (2007) as causes of workers absenteeism which are organisational factors.

The individual causative factors come in when the issue of some security staff undertaking additional duties in other entities to the detriment of their permanent job (Tonello, 2005). By extension, the nature of absenteeism differs according to variations or different scholars' contextualisation of the organisational and individual security staff situation or behaviour (Levy, 2004; Busisiwe, 2007).

What is clear here is that research findings have not been conclusive on the exact set of organisational, institutional, social, individual, environmental, cultural and economic problems that are critical causes of absenteeism. In the Upper West Region of Ghana, social events such as funerals and marriage ceremonies are considered critical issues, so the principles of social reciprocity during which people reckon what others have done for them are duly acknowledged. This research was to investigate the possibility of situating absenteeism of security staff on any of them or emerging ones.

Findings on staff absenteeism indicated that much as employers expect workers to miss a certain number of working days, excessive absenteeism decreases productivity and often leave a greater impact on company finances, morale and other parameters (Folger, 2013). Folger (2013), however, did not neglect the other varying reasons of absenteeism which included authorised and compulsory cases which are classified as uncontrollable events.

Notably, the somehow underdeveloped situation of Ghana with reference to the use of automatic time cards and other devices for recording reporting and closing

hours of staff, has been and will continue to be a challenge in quantifying the impact of financial loss on organisations and institutions. On the whole, financial loss on organisations and institutions due to staff absenteeism is yet to find space particularly in Ghanaian academic institutions. This study is therefore contributing to unearth the financial loss the University for Development Studies (UDS) incurred for a period of March to May, 2013 due to absenteeism of just a subset of its employees who are the security staff of Wa Campus. The ensuing enquiries revolved around the frequency of security absenteeism, physical financial loss on the University, its implications and plausible solutions to remedy absenteeism among staff across the University and its satellite campuses.

Efficiency and effectiveness of security staff in any organisation stem from their capabilities, availability, regularity at post and commitment to duties which play a vital and more significant role (Ivancevich, 1998; Verespej, 1999). The rhetorical question however is, 'how do staff in UDS regard their duties?'. However, this focus is on security staff as a starting point. The purpose however is not to create scenes or situations for victimization, humiliation, etc, whatsoever but in view of the vital role they play. For instance, Buffy's (2014) work on attendance at the Centre for Comprehensive School Reform and Implementation, and the Aviation Industry in South Africa and Canada (Nicole, 2013) are typical examples that further justify this case study. As stated earlier, with the exception of Tetey *et al.* (2000) and Tetey (2006) studies on "The Need for Intellectual and Attitudinal Reconfiguration and Africa's Options: Return, Retention or Diaspora" which covered some African universities including University of Ghana, very little research work especially on the financial loss has been done in the Ghanaian academic institutions. This work, therefore, becomes a niche to specifically look at the financial loss on institutions due to security staff absenteeism with reference to Wa Campus of UDS.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. investigate how frequently security staff of Wa Campus of UDS absent themselves from duty; and
2. determine the hourly, daily and financial loss of their absenteeism from duty.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

This research was conducted at the Wa Campus which was established in 2002. The Campus houses two faculties and a School- Faculty of Integrated Development Studies (FIDS), Faculty of Planning and Land Management (FPLM)

and the School of Business and Law (SBL). In all the Campus has thirteen academic departments, a staff strength of 312, and student population of 12,001 (UDS, 2014) and covers a land mass of 3,336 acres (336 hectares). It is also known as the permanent site of the University.

The Faculty of Integrated Development Studies (FIDS) was relocated from Navrongo Campus in the Upper East Region to Sombo (Old Campus and now hosts the School of Business and Law -SBL) a suburb of the Wa Municipality in 2002 and later moved to Bamahu still within the Wa Municipality in 2008.

The University itself was established in May, 1992 by the PNDC Law 279 to blaze a new trail in higher education in Ghana and effectively combine academic work with field practical training, provide constructive and meaningful interaction between communities and the outside world for the total development of Northern Ghana in particular and Ghana in the larger context (UDS, 2014). It has four main Campuses: Tamale, Nyankpala, Wa and Navrongo Campus.

Study Design and Data Collection

Social issues are and will continue to take the posture of varied phenomena which are difficult to capture for investigation at a glance (Tang, 2020; Bacho, 2001). That is human beings by nature will change their attitude when fully aware that they are being investigated. Hence, a mixed, quantitative-qualitative, approach was used in the data collection on the security staff absenteeism at the Wa Campus of the UDS spanning a period of three months, which started from March to May 2013.

The quantitative approach of the data collection focused on the 29-security staff who were the research target and have also been the unit of analyzing the security staff absenteeism in the entire study. However, qualitative data was randomly sources from 94 out of the 312 staff and 120 out of the 400 resident students. Wa Campus had a total of 12,001 students comprising resident and non-resident at the time of the study. Six out of the 13 Heads of Department were also randomly selected as key informants. These respondents (94 staff, 120 students and six (6) Heads of Department) were only interviewed to help validate the responses from the 29-security staff who were the research target. The Head of the Campus Security Unit provided useful information on security staff absenteeism and number of times Management queried absentee security staff in the Wa Campus. The refined process, quantitative-qualitative mix is supported by other social science researchers (Twumasi, 2001; Barbour, 2008), with Bacho (2001:80) arguing "it is safer to rely on social research situation that could lean more towards one or the other without ignoring completely the other".

Creswell (2003) describes a research process as a descriptive study design with conditions or interrelationships that exist, opinions that hold, processes that are going on, effects that are evident and trends that are developing. Alongside was the explanatory aspect which focuses on the “why” questions, describing the extent of economic losses the security staff absenteeism had caused the University. The descriptive aspect was considered suitable because the objectives of the study were basically to describe financial loss of absenteeism caused by some of the security staff of the UDS. Also, it was to ascertain the frequency of security staff absenteeism in terms of its occurrence and calculate the financial and economic implications to the UDS.

Finally, the two major sources of gathering existing data for the review in this study were primary and secondary sources. The primary data source embodied the various responses gathered through the use of the questionnaire and interview guides. Literature on absenteeism among other things was sourced from books, academic journals, the internet, books, magazines and other earlier research works on the subject matter to form the secondary sources.

The questionnaire covered the following areas: respondents’ background information, causes and frequency of security staff absenteeism as well as remedies and proposed strategies to improve the security sector. A student was selected from each of the halls to help administer the questionnaire especially in the six halls on campus. Night patrols by one of the researchers were implored mostly between 6:00 pm and 10:00 pm to observe how these security staff handed over or took over from their colleagues and what time they reported to work at the following duty points: FIDS Annex, CMB Guest House, Main Security Gate, Bamahu Campus, House of Chiefs, Pavilions 1, 2, and 3, 36 Units Block and the lecture theatres. There were also dawn swops by the researcher to see whether some security staff vacated their duty posts between 11 pm and 4 am.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS-IBM) Version 16 was used in analysing the data collected from the field to ascertain the quantum of financial loss due to absenteeism and management implications on the University. The results are presented in tables and narratives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Frequency of Security Staff Absenteeism

Embedded in the research objective was to ascertain the frequency of security staff absenteeism in terms of its occurrence and to also calculate the financial and economic implications on the University. Table 1 presents details of number of

times in a week security staff absented themselves from duties. It indicates that almost half, i.e. 45% of security staff absented themselves twice a week. Those who absented work consecutively for two (2) times a week constituted almost one-quarter (24%). In percentage terms, 45% (13) of the respondents indicated that security staff absented duties twice a week without permission. During the Focus Groups discussions, some respondents were quick to add that repetitive boredom, inadequate supervision, physically unpleasant workplaces were the leading causes of security staff absenteeism. Again, poor working conditions, improper scheduling of duties and family problems accounted for staff absenteeism.

Table 1: Number of Times Security Staff Absent Themselves from Duties

Number of Times/Week	Number of Security Staff	Percentage (%)
Once a week	4	14
Twice a week	13	45
Three times a week	7	24
Several days/times a week	5	17
Total	29	100

Causes of Security Staff Absenteeism

The three main and leading causes of absenteeism at the Wa Campus were drunkenness (32.8%), long working hours (18.8%) and inadequate supervision (15.6%) as shown in Table 2. Absenteeism was rampant at weekends which mostly resulted from ceremonial events. Meanwhile, reasons associated with the drinking habit of some of these security staff were attendance of funerals, wedding and naming ceremonies where they often got drunk before reporting to work especially those on night shift. Some of these security staff reported to work late or sometimes not at all.

Table 2: Causes of Security Staff Absenteeism

Causes of absenteeism	Responses	Percentage (%)
Drunkenness	21	32.8
Poor working conditions	7	10.9
Long working hours	12	18.8
Inadequate motivation	1	1.6
Inadequate supervision	10	15.6
Supervisors/security persons poor relationship	3	4.7
Family problems	3	4.7
Peer pressure	7	10.9
Total	64	100

Physical Working Days, Hours and Financial Losses to the University

The calculations on physical working days, hours and financial losses the University incurred through security staff absenteeism as showed in Tables 3, 4 and 5 are illustrated below Table 5 under subheadings a. b. and c with their ensuing narratives.

Table 3: Researcher's Night Patrols for March, 2013

S/N	Duty Point	No. of S.P.	4/03/13	11/03/13	18/03/13	24/03/13	27/03/13	hours worked
1	Auditorium	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
2	Jubilee Hall	1	X	X	X	X	X	0
3	Cardinal Dery	1	√	√	X	√	√	48
4	Royal Hall	1	√	X	X	X	X	12
5	Limann Hall	1	√	X	X	X	X	12
6	Spanish Lab	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
7	Hall 1&2	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
8	Upper West	1	X	X	√	√	√	36
9	Pavilions	2	1	1	1	1	1	60
10	36 Unit Block	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
11	FELBS Annex	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
12	House of Chiefs	1	NP	NP	X	NP	X	0
13	CMB G.H.	1	X	X	X	X	X	0

14	FIDS Annex	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
SUMMARY								
Expected	Man/Hours	of	180	180	180	180	180	900
Work								
Actual	Man/Hours	Worked	120	96	96	108	108	468
Man/Hours	Absent/Lost		60	84	84	72	72	372
Expected	Man/Days	of Work	15	15	15	15	15	75
Actual	Man/Days	Worked	10	8	8	9	9	44
Man/Days	Absent/Lost		5	7	7	6	6	31

Legend: √= Security Staff Present, X= Security Staff Absent, NP = No Patrols, RL= Security Staff Reported and Left

Table 4: Researcher's Night Patrols for April 2013

S/ N	Duty Point	No. of S.P.	4/04/ 13	11/04/ 13	18/04/ 13	24/04/ 13	29/04/ 13	hours worke d
1	Auditorium	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
2	Jubilee Hall	1	√	√	√	X	X	36
3	Cardinal Dery	1	√	RL	RL	√	X	24
4	Royal Hall	1	√	√	X	X	X	24
5	Limann Hall	1	√	X	X	X	X	12
6	Spanish Lab	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
7	Hall 1&2	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
8	Upper West Hall	1	X	√	√	NP	X	24
9	Pavilions 1, 2 & 3	2	1	1	1	1	X	48
10	36 Unit Block	2	1	1	1	X	1	48
11	FELBS Annex	1	√	√	√	NP	√	48
12	House of Chiefs	1	X	X	√	RL	√	24
13	CMB G.H.	1	√	√	RL	X	X	24
14	FIDS Annex	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
SUMMARY								
Expected	Man/Hours	of Work	192	192	192	192	192	960
Actual	Man/Hours	Worked	144	132	120	72	84	552
Man/Hours	Absent/Lost		48	60	72	120	108	408
Expected	Man/Days	of Work	16	16	16	16	16	80
Actual	Man/Days	Worked	12	11	10	6	7	46
Man/Days	Absent/Lost		4	5	6	10	9	34

Legend: √= Security Guard Present, X= Security Staff Absent, NP = No Patrols, RL= Security Staff Reported and Left

Table 5: Researcher's Night Patrols for May, 2013

S/N	Duty Point	No. of S.P.	02/05/13	11/05/13	15/05/13	27/05/13	30/05/13	Hours worked
1	Auditorium	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
2	Jubilee Hall	1	X	X	√	X	X	12
3	Cardinal Dery	1	X	√	√	X	X	24
4	Royal Hall	1	√	√	X	X	X	24
5	Limann Hall	1	X	X	X	√	√	24
6	Spanish Lab	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
7	Hall 1&2	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
8	Upper West Hall	1	X	X	√	√	√	36
9	Pavilions 1, 2 & 3	2	1	1	1	1	1	60
10	36 Unit Block	2	1	1	1	1	1	60
11	FELBS Annex	1	√	√	√	√	√	60
12	House of Chiefs	1	√	X	X	X	X	12
13	CMB G.H.	1	X	X	X	X	X	0
14	FIDS Annex	1	√	√	√	√	√	60

SUMMARY

Expected Hours of Work	192	192	192	192	192	960
Actual Hours Worked	108	108	120	108	108	552
Man/Hours Absent/Lost	84	84	72	84	84	408
Expected Man/Days of Work	16	16	16	16	16	80
Actual Man/Days Worked	9	9	10	9	9	46
Man/Days Absent/Lost	7	7	6	7	7	34

Legend: √= Security Guard Present, X= Security Staff Absent, NP = No Patrols, RL= Security Guard Reported and Left

a. Physical Working Days (5) Lost in April, 2013

- Number of expected Days per security staff in a week were 80 = X.
- Number of actual Days worked per security staff were 46 = Y.
- Number of Days loss per security staff is 34 = Z.
- Therefore, X-Y = Z implies working days loss
- Hence, 80 - 46 = 34 days

b. Hourly loss to the University

- Expected hours worked for five days in 12 hours by 16 security staff assigned to 14 duty posts were 960 = A
- Number of security staff who reported on 2nd May, 2013 and hours worked implies 9 security staff x 12 hours = 108 hours
- Number of security staff who reported on 11th May, 2013 and hours worked implies 9 security staff x 12 hours = 108 hours
- Number of security staff who reported on 15th May, 2013 and hours worked implies 10 security staff x 12 hours = 120 hours
- Number of security staff who reported on 27th May 2013 and hours worked implies 9 security staff x 12 hours = 108 hours
- Number of security staff who reported on 30th May, 2013 and hours worked implies 9 security staff x 12 hours = 108 hours
- Total actual hours worked were 552 hours = B

Therefore, approximated hours lost (C) through security staff absenteeism in the above 5 days implying $A - B = C$

Hence, 960 hours – 552 hours = 408 hours

c. Financial Losses to the University in May, 2013

Number of security staff expected at the 14 duty posts = 16 (R)

Approximated basic rate per security staff at time of research = GH¢ 404.00 (S)

Lost to the University = T

Therefore,

If the University paid a total sum of GH¢ 6,464.00 to 16 security staff at basic rate of GH¢ 404.00 for 20 working days per month, then approximated the daily mark was GH¢ 20.20. In a week the University paid GH¢ 1616 (20.20 x 80) to 16 security staff for the expected total 80 days of work. This means that each staff had worked for 5 days in that week. However, due to the absence of some staff in the monitored week the total working days of all the 16-security staff was 46. The University should have spent GH¢ 928.20 (20.20 x 46) on the 16-security staff who worked for 46 days instead of GH¢1616 meant for 80 days of work per month. Therefore, in sum, the University paid GH¢ 687.80 in the monitored week to security staff for no work done. It can be concluded that on the average the University loses about GH¢ 35,765.60 (GH¢ 687.80 x 52 weeks) annually through security staff absenteeism.

Besides the above financial loss, the issue of absenteeism also breeds high insecurity, frequent theft cases such as loss of bicycles, motor cycles and some projectors and computers from lecture theatres which continue to affect both

administrative and academic work in various ways. The monetary, hourly and days lost could equally be linked to the fact that some of these security staff who acquired some vocations, trades among others had often outwitted Management to undertake an additional unofficial work elsewhere. Such security staff also did not only report to work late from their 'unofficial duties' but also sometimes tired and slept throughout in the case of those scheduled for night duties.

Occurrences of theft and other impacts with reference to working time and days lost due to security staff absenteeism were quantified financially on the Wa Campus. One may argue that the shortage of security staff also opens up opportunities for theft which ultimately leads to financial losses since stolen properties must be replaced for continuity of official and academic work.

Similarly, the University also lost an estimated days per security staff of 34 working days in a period of five days accruing from the 26-security staff absenteeism. Translating this into monetary terms, the University paid approximately GH¢ 38,784 to truant security staff in May 2013 within five working days. thus, an amount of GH¢ 232,704 was lost due to security staff absenteeism for an estimated five working days. In terms of hourly loss, the University suffered approximately 408 hours in every five days in the same month of May, 2013 due to absenteeism affecting income, productivity, service delivery and client satisfaction. It also reflects poorly on the integrity, honesty and work ethos of security staff. Thus, overall confidence of fellow employees, supervisors and employers to such absentee staff diminishes. Most of the absenteeism cases in the Wa Campus were unannounced and therefore such absentee staff could not be replaced immediately on the daily basis.

CONCLUSION

The Wa Campus security staff absenteeism causes are multifaceted which include social issues, drunkenness, poor supervision coming from the managerial aspect, economic and frequent visits to their former trades and individuals with the farming activities. The findings of this study served as a source document for Management decision making and contribute to knowledge in causes and financial implication of security staff absenteeism on the Campus and other beneficiary institutions. To curb staff absenteeism varying suggestions, continue to emerge such as: The idea of constituting and mandating a disciplinary committee to investigate cases of absenteeism and recommend appropriate disciplinary actions for implementation at the campuses level and then notify Management is yet another appropriate suggested measure. As successful elimination or reduction of absenteeism depends on many factors including

building a committed management team with required strategies for effective implementation. Also, attendance records should be monitored regularly by supervisors to ensure that employees are not only present at work but also deliver. Therefore, managing absenteeism in the University should be a collective approach from all angles with supervisors on the lead, followed by staff, students and security staff themselves.

Management should also consider recruiting retired personnel from the forces such as prison, military and police officers who have gained years of experience in security issues and management to understand the effects of security duties in the University. Finally, if staff annual leaves are granted as and when due it will serve as resting periods to avoid continuous work that breeds constant report for casual leaves to either solve urgent or family problems.

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