



A STUDY OF REASON OF ABSENTEEISM OF STUDENT AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Student absenteeism is a major concern for elementary and secondary school educators today. It has become a complex, educational, political and social problem that is generating increase in interest among educators, researchers and policy makers. The problem of absenteeism is becoming the concern of every member of society since it has negative consequences at both individual and social level. The problem is precipitated by the interplay of factors which are both internal and external to the student and/ or the school. The paper highlighted the common causes of student absenteeism like family health or financial concerns, poor school climate, drug and alcohol use, transportation problems, and differing community attitude towards education are among the conditions that are often associated with a child's frequent absence from school.

The findings would also be useful to political leaders, parents, students and community at large since they contribute to educational resources hence they would work, hand in hand, in promoting internal efficiency of educational system by eradicating those factors that would lead to absenteeism of their children from school. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the major causes of students' absenteeism at higher education level.

Population and Sample

All the students who were studying in colleges of Chaokhutiya block of Almora district of Uttarakhand is population of study.

60 students were randomly selected from Masi Degree College in which 30 girls and 30 boys student.

Findings

The important reasons for students' absence on the basis of the findings are: ill health, lack of motivation, psychological factors, poor socioeconomic background, monetary problems, family problems, lack of responsibility of students, movies/drugs/other attractions, communal/political activities, poor teaching strategies by lecturers, unfavourable learning environments, peer influence (influence of bad company), class environment, defective evaluation system, irregular conduct of classes, external distractions, participation in co-curricular, extracurricular, and cultural activities, assignments and tests, academic performance, travelling etc.

Student absenteeism is a major concern for elementary and secondary school educators today. It has become a complex, educational, political and social problem that is generating increase in interest among educators, researchers and policy makers. The problem of absenteeism is becoming the concern of every member of society since it has negative consequences at both individual and social level. The problem is precipitated by the interplay of factors which are both internal and external to the student and/ or the school. The paper highlighted the common causes of student absenteeism like family health or financial concerns, poor school climate, drug and alcohol use, transportation problems, and differing community attitude towards education are among the conditions that are often associated with a child's frequent absence from school.

Absenteeism can be defined as persistent, habitual and unexplained absence from school (Brooks, 1997, as cited in Bond, 2004). They noted that chronic absenteeism occurs when a student is absent without reason.

The Auditor General Victoria (Australia, 2004) identified four major dimensions of absenteeism truancy, school refusal, school withdrawal and early leaving. It is important to identify the different dimensions of absenteeism in tackling the problem because they require different interventions. Truancy as the persistent, habitual and unexplained absence from school of a child of compulsory school age, although it can occur with parental knowledge and sometimes consent. Bond (2004) included fractional truancy, which occurs when student arrive late or leave early or spend entire days away from school. School refusal differs from truancy in that children refuse to attend schools even in the face persuasion and punitive measures from parents and school. These students stay at home with the knowledge of their

parents and school administrators (Mcshane, Walter & Ray, 2001). School withdrawal means children are absent from school because their parents keep them away from school on a frequent basis. Their parents do not enrol them at school. Early leaving refers to children fewer than 15 who drop out of school before completing their schooling.

Numerous studies have investigated this and have uncovered the many reasons that students proffer as explanations for absenteeism (Gump 2006; Nicholl and Timmins 2005; Hughes 2005; Timmins and Kaliszer 2002; Hunter and Tetley 1999; Longhurst 1999). The range of reasons include family, social and work commitments, illness, faking illness, family emergencies, faking family emergencies, to mention but a few. Clearly some of these reasons are completely valid and occur as a consequence of life circumstances, life events and the changing profile of the student.

However, a number of the reasons for absenteeism offered by students appear to be quite trivial in nature and give rise to the question of how much students actually value educational activities such as lectures and tutorials. There is also evidence of a particular pattern of non-attendance amongst university students, with most absenteeism occurring on Mondays and Fridays and being of one day in duration (Timmins 2002; Rodgers 2002). Gatherer and Manning (1998) suggest that there may actually be psychological benefits to occasional absences. Yet if one were to try to address this in timetabling and, in so doing, scheduled classes only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, one would have to ask the question whether attendance would then be problematic on Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. There may be some sense, however, in avoiding 9 am scheduling on Mondays and classes after 3 pm on Fridays, although this is not always logistically feasible given the number of programmes that have to be catered for, group sizes, availability of appropriately sized venues and so on; and there is little promise that such scheduling would achieve the desired outcome. The reasons given for absenteeism are largely student-centred and there may not be very much that educators or the academy can do to address them.

Student absenteeism is a major concern for lecturers at institutions of higher learning. Absences create a dead, tiresome, unpleasant classroom environment that makes students who come to class uncomfortable and the lecturer irritable (Marburger 2001). Absenteeism disturbs the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall well-being of classes (Segal 2008). In quality terms, absenteeism is a waste of educational resources, time and human potential. Student absenteeism also causes rework and wasted time for lecturers (Lalek 1995; Rumberger 1997). According to Williams (2000), students who have absenteeism problems generally suffer academically and socially. Studies indicate

that students who are absent have lower achievement and may be penalized on test scores (Barker and Jansen 2000). Hunter and Tetley (1999) interviewed 168 full-time students about not only their reasons for not attending lectures but also their reasons for attending.

This information is of tremendous value to educators as it provides direction with regard to what students want from lectures, what excites them and, ultimately, what may encourage them to attend. The findings would also be useful to political leaders, parents, students and community at large since they contribute to educational resources hence they would work, hand in hand, in promoting internal efficiency of educational system by eradicating those factors that would lead to absenteeism of their children from school. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the major causes of students' absenteeism at higher education level.

Objective

- To know the causes of absenteeism at higher education level.
- To compare perception of boys and girls student about absenteeism at the higher education level.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between boys and girls student perception about sbsenteesim at the higher education level.

Population

All the students who were studying in colleges of Chaokhutiya block of Almora district of Uttarakhand is population of study.

Sample

60 students were randomly selected from Government Degree College, Masi, Almora, Uttrakhand in which 30 girls and 30 boys student.

Tool

To know the perception of students about reason of absenteeism in classes, Investigator used self-made Absenteeism Scale. In this scale 21 statements. These statements were related to different areas- such as, teaching skills, student centred reason, family status, basic facilities provided by college and weather condition. Also in this scale we used three point scale i.e. agree, more agree, extremely agree.

Analysis and interpretation of data

Further analysis of data investigator used mean and mean weightage method.

For objective one – to know the perception of student about the reason of absenteeism, investigator studied journals, periodicals and take interview of many students. In these ways, investigator collected many statements. On the basis of these statements we made our absenteeism scale.

Table-1

Students' perception about causes of absenteeism.

Sl.No.	Items
1	Poor teaching skills
2	Boring lecture
3	Low attendance of teachers
4	Lack of interest in academic subject
5	Friend influences
6	Little or no value of education
7	Use of drug
8	Illness or disease
9	Failure
10	Lack of parental care
11	Poor family relationship
12	Poverty
13	Doing work in their field
14	Guarding house during farming period
15	Lack of proper library
16	Lack of basic facility
17	Lack of proper building
18	Lack of teaching material
19	Lack of electricity
20	Land sliding
21	Weather condition
22	Lack of transport
23	Distance of school

On the basis above mentioned student's perception, investigator chose following five dimensions for reason of absenteeism.

- Teaching skills
- Child centred reason
- Poor family status
- Basic facility provided by college
- Weather Condition

Table-2

Mean value of perception of boy and girl students about poor teaching skills.

Sl.No.	Items	Boys	Girls
1	Poor teaching skills	9.0	9.0
2	Boring lecture	8.4	8.0
3	Low attendance of teachers	6.5	6.0

It is clear from table that equal mean value i.e. (9.0) for boy and girl students on poor teaching skills and low attendance of teachers, which means they equally accepted these factors are main reason of absenteeism of students. Boy students mean value (8.4) and for girl students (8.0) agree that boring lecture was one main reason of low attendance.

Table -3

Mean value of perception of boy and girl students about child centred reason

Sl.No.	Items	Boys	Girls
1	Lack of interest in academic subject	13.4	12.2
2	Friend influences	14.8	13.2
3	Little or no value of education	13.5	13.4
4	Use of drug	12.5	10.0
5	Illness or disease	12.0	12.5
6	Failure	14.2	13.0

It is clear from table mean value of boy students are (13.4), (14.8), (13.5), (12.5) and (14.20 which is more than girl student mean value on lack of interest in academic subject, friend influences, use of drug, and failure. It is clear that boy students accepted that many times they influence their friends and not come in classes. Uses of drugs and little or no value of education are main reason of absenteeism. Students accepted that failure another reason of low attendance

Table-4

Mean value of perception of boy and girl students about poor family status

Sl.No.	Items	Boys	Girls
1	Lack of parental care	12.8	12.8
2	Poor family relationship	13.0	13.5
3	Poverty	13.6	13.6
4	Doing work in their field	10.8	13.5
5	Guarding house during farming period	9.0	14.5

It is clear from table boys and girls equally accepted that lack of parental care, poor family relationship and poverty is main reason of absenteeism. It is clear from table that girls mean (13.5) and (14.5) are more than boys mean (13.0) and (9.0) on doing work in their field, and guarding house during farming period respectively. It means more girls accepted compare than boy student that these factors are obstacle in their attendance.

Table-5

Mean value of perception of boy and girl students about college related basic facility

Sl.No.	Items	Boys	Girls
1	Lack of proper library	11.0	11.5
2	Lack of basic essential facilities	10.0	12.0
3	Lack of proper building	9.0	10.5
4	Lack of teaching material	8.6	8.5
5	Lack of electricity	10.5	10.0

It is clear from table girl students mean value (11.5), (12.0) and (10.5) while boys student mean (11.0), (10.0) and (9.0) on lack of proper library, basic essential facilities and proper building, respectively. It means girls are more accepted than boy students that lack of basic facility such as lack of proper library, toilet, and building is main hurdle to attain the classes. Boy students mean value (8.6) and (10.5) which is more than girl students mean value (8.5) and (10.0) on lack of teaching material and electricity, respectively. It means boys student are more agree than girls students that lack of teaching materials and electricity are reason of their absenteeism.

Table-6

Mean value of perception of boy and girl students about poor weather condition

Sl.No.	Items	Boys	Girls
1	Land sliding	10.0	9.5
2	Weather condition	8.0	8.0
3	Lack of transport	9.0	9.0
4	Distance of school	10.0	11.0

It is clear from table that mean value of environmental factor for boys' and girls' students are same. It means boy and girl students are equally perceived land sliding, weather condition and unavailability of route or transport is hurdle on students' attendance. Many time they faced wild animal in their route and they got no vehicles or any other transport facilities, so they not attained their classes. .

Table - 7

Mean weight age of boy and girl students' perception different reason of absenteeism

Sl.No.	Items	Boys	Girls
1	Teaching skills	3.0	3.5
2	Student centred reason	3.5	2.8
3	Family status	3.8	4.0
4	Basic facility	3.0	3.8
5	Environmental factor	3.5	3.5

It is clear from table that mean weight age of girl students on teaching skills (3.5), family status (4.0) and basic facility (3.8) is more than boy students mean (3.0), (3.8) and (3.0) respectively. It means girl students accepted that family status such as poverty, lack of parental control, and doing work in their field etc., teaching skills such as- method of teaching style, language, and behaviour etc. and lack of basic facility such as toilet, lack of electricity etc., is main reason of absenteeism. On other hand side student centred reason in which boy students mean is (3.5) and girl students mean (2.8). It means boy students accepted that friend influences, failure in classes, use of drug, little or no value of education is main factor of absenteeism. Boys and girls students mean values are equal on environmental factor. It means weather condition such as- land sliding, lack of transports and lack of library, building, and electricity affected their attendance.

Findings

Result show that girl students accepted that main hurdle in classes' attendance is family responsibility. This finding is supported with Balfanz & Byrnes, (2012) says; family obligations also make some students not go to school. As children enter early adolescence, family responsibilities can keep them from school. In high poverty environments, young adolescent girls sometimes provide emergency day care for younger siblings or are responsible for getting younger children to school. It is clear from analysis boy students accepted that use of drug and influences of friends and failure in classes is reason of absenteeism. Boys and girls students accepted that lack of transports, financial causes and illness are reason of low attendance. This study agrees with Ubogu as cited by Shahzada, et al., (2011); whose findings identify illness, permitted leave, voluntary absenteeism, as the common forms/causes of absenteeism. In addition, Mervilde, (1981) also reveals that; family health or financial concerns, poor school environment, drug and alcohol use, transportation problems, and differing community attitudes towards education are all conditions that can cause a child not to attend school. This kind of situation is not conducive for a child study.

The important reasons for students' absence in the classes on the basis of the findings are: ill health, lack of motivation, psychological factors, poor socioeconomic background, monetary problems, family problems, lack of responsibility of students, movies/drugs/other attractions, communal/political activities, poor teaching strategies by lecturers, unfavourable learning environments, peer influence (influence of bad company), class environment, defective evaluation system, irregular conduct of classes, external distractions, participation

in co-curricular, extracurricular, and cultural activities, assignments and tests, academic performance, etc. is reasons of absenteeism.

Suggestion

- Schools should identify training needs and organize symposium, workshops, conferences and staff development programs for teachers to enhance their skills and performance level.
- The school administration with the parents of the concerned students must conduct and effective conference dialogue.
- Solutions to the different areas of difficulty due to absenteeism can be taken action by the responsible organizations and individuals in their respective fields.
- Orientation and briefing on students who are absent might be conducted to at all least they would commit to absenteeism

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