

Research Article

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2018.05.12.002>

Cause and possible solution to the problem of absenteeism on students' academic achievement: The case of Secondary Schools Addis Ababa., Ethiopia.

Messeret Assefa*

Associate Professor, College of Education and Behavioral Studies,
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Addis Abba University, Ethiopia

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cause of absenteeism and suggest a possible solution to the problem of absenteeism on students academic and school performance in selected secondary school in Addis Ababa. The relevant literature was reviewed to secure the methodology and the findings. The study adopted descriptive survey design and a mixed method approach. A combination of purposive and simple random sampling technique were applied to accommodate the variety of respondents from five different secondary school of Addis Abba. The study used questionnaires and interview schedules to collect primary data from 100 teachers, 250 students and five secondary school principals. The study was carried out in between February up to June, 2018. The findings shows that as the causes of absenteeism the lecture are not connected to my life, low parent education and negative attitude towards teachers are found to be the most rampant causes of absenteeism. This in turn leads to poor academic performance, students drop out, graduating half-baked students, poor curriculum coverage and loss of interest in learning and it affects the school image. The study also provides an effective solution to improve students' attendance. These strategies' include; promoting possible measure to students' absenteeism, parental involvement and participation, developing students' guidance and counseling program, encourage good communication among the school community, reward students with regular attendance. In conclusion, to curb the problem of student absenteeism principal,, teachers, students and families need to have a shared understanding of their children's education and work as cohorts to meet their anticipated goals.

Keywords

Cause of absenteeism,
problem of
Absenteeism,
Academic Performance,
Secondary schools.

1. Background

The past few decades have shown a wonderful growth in the provision of secondary school education in Ethiopia. Parallel to this, the secondary education subsector came up with a number of policy objectives set to facilities the expediency of secondary education both in its form and content. As such the policy objectives out lined in-depth by which secondary

school students acquire comprehensive knowledge and skills responsible to the emerging multifaceted needs of the society and the economy. The major policy objectives, in this context, included increasing access, equity in the provision of secondary school education, improving of quality of secondary education, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of secondary education services.

In this regard, ensuring better school attendance indicated to be one of the factors boosting higher academic achievement for students in all levels and for children of low income families in particular (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Accordingly, students with regular school attendance are found to have higher test scores compared to their counter parties exhibiting frequent absence (Loch Miller (2013). Attendance not only affects individual students but also can affect the learning environment of an entire school.

(Railsback, 2004). In her study, indicated that most students allude to the teacher attitude as one of the major cause for their frequent absenteeism and even dropout. Further she noted that, students also had negative things to say about their teacher failure to be accommodative of individual differences in students learning. Some students indicated that since classroom lessons are quite boring and lacks the rigor for vibrant interaction, learners feel de motivated to show up in classes regularly. In such a situation the students noted, "we will prefer making money on the street instead of going to school."

Still another cause of frequent student absenteeism are school related factors, which positively or negatively, shape student's commitment towards school attendance. In this regard, (Eastman et.al. 2007) observes awkward school attitude and rules against absenteeism are two of the major school related factors contributing to the problem of absenteeism. Furthermore, Robinson (2009) points out that in consistent school procedures vis-a-vis student attendance, often fail to bring about satisfactory results in curbing the trend of absenteeism.

Such inconstancy in school regulatory are lacking in the provision of clear messages as to the serious importance of attendance in the contest of student code of conduct. Accordingly, less stringent policies or lack of firmness in implementing existing policies sends a wrong message as to the importance of attendance, both for students and parents (Clarke, 2008). In addition to problems in academic performance, absenteeism entails long-term challenges in work discipline habits (Pehlivan, 2006). These long-term challenges potentially revealing in future work life may be manifested through unemployment or low income and inability to work at a regular job (Eastman et.al. 2007, Gentle-Genitty,2008), Thus, the more we know about the causes and challenges of absenteeism, the more we will be able to prevent them.

Increasing trend of absenteeism results in the likelihood of psychological problems of. depression or behavioral disorders on the part of students. Such psychological problems may be characterized by behavioral patterns such as involvements in violence inside and outside of the school teenage pregnancy, quitting school and acquiring harmful habits (Gothfied 2009, Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2012; Robinson, 2009; Gentle-Genitty, 2008; Jeter, 2011. From these findings one can safely conclude that absenteeism in young pupil learning in schools is one of the many predictors for academic failure as well as risky life style after school. Therefore, failure to take early measures on absenteeism will have far reaching repercussions ranging from academic future to school dropout.

Needless to state, most if not all students are shown to be tempted to miss class sessions at one time or another. According to Teastey (2004), this general tendency, among students, to be un willing for class attendance and translate it in action is known as absenteeism. As to the push factors for absenteeism, Teasley identified numerous socio- economic and school- based factors such as family health, low income, poor school climate, drug and alcohol use, transportation problems, and community attitudes towards education.

Whereas based on field research, Pehlivan (2006) reported that the most common reason keeping students away from regular class attendance included boring class sessions, dislike of school and lessons, peer pressure and low expectation as to the all rounded (economic as well as intelligence) virtues from pursuing school education.

Whereas, Wilkins (2008) noted four pillars which play a crucial role in the motivation of students' school attendance school climate, academic environment, discipline and relationship with teachers. Within these general categories, one can find school absenteeism being associated with internalizing and externalizing behavior, family work, health and school environment (Ingul, Klockner, Silverman and Nordahh (2012) parents' low education level (Henry 2007) and students' negative attitude towards teachers Attwood, G., & Croll, P. (2006) Contrary to that, the higher the emotion as personality trait the less are student prone to miss class for this reason.

Many reasons can be cited for school absenteeism, the most important one is not liking the school: (Pehlivan, 2006), the feeling of not being secure at the school yard (e.g. because of tolerance for bullying. Often drive students away from school compound (Clark, 2008), Similarly Eastman et. al., 2007.; Gentle-Genitty 2008), argued that students conflict among peers and with teachers, experiencing bullying from other students, and sheer dislike of the teacher either because of his personality or the way he teaches are important causes of absenteeism. Still another major factor affecting the trend of school absenteeism was found out to be students feeling towards the school. Accordingly, a school environment is characterized by less feeling of student commitment in its overall interactions and undertakings. This would make students less interested to attend class, resulting in an increased sense of alienation among them on what constitutes students, commitment to their school. As such, in a school environment high level of perceived value, emotional commitment and sense of security among students increases attendance and participation. Furthermore, students engaging in fun episode and vibrant socializing with their peers outside of the school compound are also among the reason for absenteeism (Williams 2001). This reason may be a potent explanation why students sometimes remain absent when faced to deal with hard courses in class sessions (Clark 2008) or because they found the mode of delivery of some course lessons were monotonous and boring. On the other hand, (Genitty 2008, Eastman. 2007), noted the degree of respect that family has for school education to be one of the determinate factor for measuring students attitude towards the virtues of class attendance.

In this context, the claim that "the overriding parental responsibility in the education of their children is ensuring the latter's regular attendance of school" cannot be an overstatement. Not to mention the overall atmosphere that parental home bears a significant impact on children regular attendance and on their concern for active class participation. For this reason, lack of warm familiar approach and lack of persistency in the follow up of students' day to day learning experience is one of the most important push factors for school absenteeism (Penilivan, 2006). Families were in different about their children's school education. They, are often less concerned with the latter's class attendance, and of course, about their academic success of failure. Needless to state, such disinterested parents seldom move to help their children solve academic problems and show little appetite to attend parent- school meetings.

Accordingly, such families have less likelihood in investing parental effort for maintaining a disciplined child environment at home (Hallam Rogess, 2008). Illustrating this scenario, William (2001) claims that "As far as disciplining is concerned, today's high school students are controlled less than their parents were in the past". Besides the conspicuous absence of control and monitoring on the day to day school activities of their children some parents accept the former's excuses for missing classes in spite of the not so valid reason the students offer. By so doing, the parents, unfortunately, became complicit in the student's absenteeism.

According to (William 2000) students who have absenteeism problems generally suffer academically and socially. Similarly (Backer and Jansen 2000) indicated that absentee students suffer lower academic achievement and may do bad on test score. Last but not least, school- related factors have got influential role in shaping student's commitment towards school class attendance.

In this regard, Eastman et al, 2007) indicated that the role of school management's attitude and rules dealing with absenteeism as a contributing trend of absenteeism. Further explaining the awkward school rules and regulation, Robison (2009) observes that school procedures are inconsistent and do not produce meaningful results in reducing absenteeism. "Students are not receiving clear message from the school about the importance of attendance". Weak school policies; tolerant of pervasive absenteeism or lack of firmness in the implementation of existing policies contributes for increasing trend of school absenteeism (Clarke, 2008). In this vein, Walls, C. (2003) also indicated that inconsistency of policies, lack of meaningful results and poor school record keeping have overwhelming contribute for absenteeism. In the school climate where there is an alleged value system and emotional commitment, there will be a sense of belongingness. Thus, in such a school climate, students' attendance and partaking increases...

Problem Statement

There are many factors that affect student academic performance directly and indirectly at the secondary schools. Absenteeism has been cited as detrimental to academic performance. Therefore, the cause of absenteeism on student's performance should be searched. Then the researcher on this study would like to seek a possible solution to the causes of

absenteeism based on the following research basic questions:

Basic research questions

1. What are the causes of absenteeism in the selected secondary schools in Addis Ababa?
2. What are the main possible solutions that contribute to the improvement of absenteeism?

2. Objectives

1. To examine the causes of absenteeism among the selected secondary schools in Addis Ababa?
2. To identify possible solutions to the causes of indiscipline in the selected secondary schools in Addis Ababa

3. Methodology

Design of the study

The study was done based on a descriptive survey research design. Because it is believed that it helps the researcher to collect current information in order to answer the research questions. The design was found appropriate and allowed the assessment of subsequent relationships between explaining variables and explanation of the topic. It also facilitates to have general understanding of the problem by studying the current status, nature of the prevailing conditions and trends through relevant and precise information.

The study employed quantitative and qualitative approach. This approach assisted to generate comprehensive data using different instrument from different sources. Thus, data collection also involves gathering both quantitative as well as qualitative information.

4. Data Sources

The task of data collection begins after a research problem has been defined and research design has been set out. While deciding about the method of data collection to be used for the study, the researcher kept in mind two types of data viz., primary and secondary Kothari (2004). According to Kothari, primary data are those which are collected a fresh and for the first time and thus happen to be original in character. On the other hand, the secondary data are those which

have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process (Kothari, 2004). Thus, the secondary sources of data were obtained from documents. To get first hand information, the researcher used primary source of data which were obtained from the following respondents: principals, teachers and students., business models, conceptual paradigms, academic research and consultancy projects.

5. Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling technique lays down the number of subjects to be included in the sample. According to Kothari (2004) sampling technique refers to a procedure that the researcher would adopt to select items for the sample. Thus, in Addis Ababa city administration, there are ten sub cities, out of this ten sub cities five sub cities were selected by using simple random sampling theuniques and out of five sub cities five secondary schools were again selected by using simple random sampling theuniques.

These were Agazian, Yekatit 12, Yekatit 23, Abyot keres and Bole secondary schools from Government secondary schools in Addis Ababa city administration. They were selected by using simple random sampling techniques included in the sample. Simple random sampling technique was used for it gave the samples equal chance of being selected for all five secondary schools.

After the five sample secondary schools had been identified using simple random sampling technique, the principals were selected by using purposive sampling techniques. While the Teaching staffs and the students were selected using simple random sampling techniques. Thus, a total of 250 students (50 students from each sample school) and 100 teachers from the same sample schools were selected by using simple random sampling technique based on lottery system.

6. Data Gathering Instruments

Questionnaire

To collect primary data, questionnaires were developed for principals, teachers and students. The questionnaire contains mainly closed-ended and open-ended questions. It is an appropriate instrument to obtain variety of opinions within a relatively short period of time (Best and Khan, 2003). Depending on

the type of question items, the respondents were asked to respond to each item on a five point-scale i.e.-strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree.

The questionnaire was first constructed in English and later translated in to local language “Amharic” for the purpose of clarity, to avoid language barriers and to make them understandable by the respondents. The questionnaire consisted different parts that address different issues like school based, family issues and personal issues.

7. Interviews

The researcher developed semi-structured interview questions to obtain qualitative information from secondary school principals to gather detailed information.

8. Focus Group Discussion

This technique was employed to acquire the necessary data from secondary schools teachers and students. Hence, five focused group discussions were organized where six participants were involved in each FGD. Taking their limited knowledge and understanding in to consideration, the researcher prepared a discussion guide on six simple but relevant issues. Other unstructured and specific questions on the basis of their oral report also emanated.

9. Pilot Study

The draft questionnaires have been first administered to 15 teachers and 30 students of the non-sampled group. After it had been filled by these respondents, the validity of each questionnaire was examined item by item to detect unclear ideas and statements. The questionnaires were pre-tested in non-sampled secondary schools to check for the consistency of the results when administered on the subjects. Furthermore, reliability approximation for total closed-ended items was calculated using SPSS version 23, in order to know the internal consistency of the questionnaire. As a result, the reliability approximation for the total items using Cronbach alpha were found to be 0.721 for teachers and 0.784 for students' closed- ended items. Finally, based on the feedback from the pilot test, some items were improved and the final copies of the questionnaires were distributed to 100 teachers and 250 students' respondents.

10. Data Collection Procedures

Review of related literature in advance to get information from what has been done in relation to the problem was made. Latter data gathering instrument were prepared. The questionnaires were prepared in local language Amharic for the purpose of clarity and to make easy understanding by the respondents. On the other hand, researcher got an introduction letter from Addis Ababa University department of curriculum and instruction and thereafter applied for a research permit from the city government of Addis Ababa education bureau. Once the permit was granted, the investigator booked appointments with the sample school principals to visit and administer the questionnaire. The researcher visited each of the schools and administered the questionnaire.

The respondents were guaranteed of confidentiality after which they were given enough time to fill in the questionnaire, after which the researcher collected the filled questionnaire.

Interview and FGD dates were agreed upon and carried out at an appropriate dates. Nonetheless, the questionnaire was administered to both pilot and main study with care. The administration was carried out by the researcher himself. The teachers and the students were given the questionnaire and they filled the question by themselves. For the student's respondents, however, the researcher translated the English version of the structured questionnaires into local language Amharic and filled. The semi-structured interviews were held with principals and the researcher took notes.

11. Method of Data Analysis

The collected data by different tools were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively and quantitatively. The data obtained from the teachers and students of each sample school obtained through questionnaires, interview and FGD. Data were tabulated and analyzed using mean and SD on a series of tables. The data collected through interview from principals and focus group discussion from teachers and students were analyzed qualitatively. This has been done by the help of descriptive statements and through in depth explanation based on the response of the respondents.

As a result, the following tasks were carried out step by step. Initially the researcher organized and prepared the data for analysis. This involved: Transcribing interviews and FGD discussion outcomes typing up field notes, sorting and arranging the data in three different types depending on the sources of the information.

The next task was reading through all the data so as to obtain a general sense of information. The code was recorded on the interview sheet for principals ^{1, 2, 3,4,5} whereas for FGDs teachers ^{6,7,8,9,10} and for FGDs, students ^{11,12,13,14,15}. Coding the process of organizing the materials in to chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information, (Creswell, 2009). Then after, the acquired information was narrated. Finally, interpretations and the findings were compared with information obtain from the literature. The quantitative data were revised, coded, tabulated and analyzed.

12. Ethical Considerations

A written letter from curriculum and instruction department was secured. Thereafter, the researcher took the letter to the Addis Ababa city administration education bureau to get approval for collecting the actual data. Further, the researcher addressed orally an informed consent to both teacher and student respondents before starting data collection. The informed consent form was prepared based on the ethical principles of confidentiality, privacy and used only for the research purpose.

14. Result and Discussion

Six teachers and seven students who volunteered in the five schools failed to complete their questionnaires; properly and thus were dropped from the study. The final sample considered in the study consists of 98 teachers and 241 students yielded a 97.2%. response rate.

Table 1 School based issues

No	Items	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
1	Absenteeism affects student academic achievement	98	4.3367	1.10242	241	3.7261	1.12902
2	The lecture is not connected to my future life	98	3.6122	1.10885	241	3.5104	1.19412
3	Rules and regulations are punitive not rehabilitated	98	3.4082	1.34576	241	4.1618	.85802

As can be seen from table 1 above, the mean and SD secures for item1 (Absenteeism affects student academic achievement) were teachers mean 4.3367 and SD 1.10242 and students mean 3.7261 and SD 1.12902 respectively. This shows that both teacher and student respondents felt that absenteeism affects student academic achievement. What follows is insight from principal interviewees, teacher and student FGD.

Teacher FGD₆ participants claimed that, as far as regulating student behavior they have little or no say on the challenges thereof. They provided abundant evidence on how the education bureau interferes on affairs of the school management. According to these teachers, the education bureau does not give room to discipline their students. In the majority of the cases the education bureau overturns decisions on disciplinary issues without a thorough investigation on

the merits of the case. All this resulted in the demotivation of these teachers to follow –up student attendance.

According to principal interviewees₃, absenteeism negatively affects student academic achievement. This is because, missing class sessions by the student entail missing important concepts and tasks given by their respective teachers.

Corroborating this claim one student who participated in student FGD₁₃ has the following to say:

“I used to be good in class room discussions. After being absent for five days from class, I felt frustrated to comment a single word in class discussions thereafter. This situation gave me a hard lesson that absence from class sessions even for a single day will significantly affect student performance.”

Item 2 (The lecture is not connected to my future life). The mean and SD scores of teacher and student respondents in relation to item 2 (table1) were teachers mean 3.6122 and SD 1.10885 and students mean 3.5104 and SD 1, 19412 respectively. This reveals that there was agreement between teacher and student respondents that lecture was not connected to students.

In this regard, student FGD₁₅ participants said that, they do not feel that the curriculum in use is suitable to meet their future academic and social needs. They complained that the materials taught are mere copy paste from other documents and that the teachers simply lecture from it verbatim. Unfortunately, this situation forced us to be preoccupied with memorization of the material without understanding of the subject matter only to pass the exams. That is why we feel vindicated to be absent from class sessions and to read the same material at home.

Student FGD₁₂ further noted that, some teachers, teaching approach is so poor that they don't feel it necessary to follow the didactic approach in their teaching. This in turn contributes to absenteeism. Still the other lecturer came late and get out early giving us little time for discussion, pose questions to clarify issues that are not clear. On the other hand, if the lecture is prolonged one and lacking participation students became bored and prefer not to come to classes regularly.

Student FGD₁₁ participants further claimed that the text book are simply a copy of foreign literature. According to them teachers simply narrate the plain words of the book without connecting it to real life situation. Further, to make their point the students explained as follows:

"We see our older siblings attend classes regularly at the university and graduated with a bachelor degree. Unfortunately however, they proved to be ineffective

in the management of their work as per their training." This situation compelled the students to be indifference on the virtues of regular class attendance.

The statistical figures vies-a-vi item 3 (rules and regulation are punitive not rehabilitative) were teachers mean 3.6122 and SD 1.10885 and students mean 4.1618 and SD 85802 respectively. This shows that both teachers and students considered that the punitive nature of rules and regulations are contributing factor for student absenteeism.

In this regard, student FGD₁₄ discussants suggested that school rules and regulations are not corrective of student indiscipline. Instead, the students' noted, the rules and regulations being punitive they push students to be absent from the class. In this regard, students complained of teachers punishing late comers to kneel down and force them to walk in their knees all the way from the school gate up to the classroom. "Such a punishment pushes us to remain absent and in case of repeated punishment we will drop out of the school altogether". On the other hand, student FGD₁₂ indicated that the application of rules and regulations lack fairness. According to the students, our teachers are not empathetic to the honest concern of the absent students; they simply rush to mistreat such a student in front of his /her classmates. Thus, in order to avoid a feeling of embarrassment in subsequent sessions students opt to remain absent.

On the other hand, teacher FGD₈ participants noted that when they get back to the class, students with poor attendance experience a loss of confidence. This is because; they are unable to cope up with their fellow colleagues. Similarly, (Moore, 2003) indicated that lots of students have of the opinion that regular attendance should pay off with some credit in academic success. Thus if they do not receive some credit, their attendance rate drops.

Table 2 Family issues

No	Items	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
1	Family's need student to work	98	3.9796	.95226	241	3.5104	1.19412
2	Low parent education level	98	4.3469	.47844	241	3.9087	.96175
3	Low socioeconomic status	98	3.9796	1.18391	241	3.7718	1.22890

As Shown in Table 2, the figures for item 1 (family's need student to work) shows that teachers mean 3.9796 and SD .95.226 while students mean 3.5104 and SD 1.19412 respectively. From this, one can

conclude that teachers and students were in agreement that family requires students to work during school hours.

In this regard, principal interviewee₁ claimed that parents' low socioeconomic level made them unable to cover children school costs. Because of this, parents send their school children to work thereby making the student frequently absent.

As can be seen from item 2 of table 2, teacher and student respondents were asked to give response as to the impact of low parental education level on student absenteeism. The responses revealed that teachers mean to be 4.3469 and SD 47844 while that of students mean 3.9087 and SD 96175 respectively. This shows that both teacher and student respondents strongly believe that low parental education is a significant contributor for student absenteeism. The following are remarks from principal interviewee and teacher FGD₇ participants.

According to principal interviewee, "Some of the parents' education level was so low that most of them cannot read and write. For this reason, most parents were not in a position to support their children in their academic pursuit"

On the other hand, teacher FGD₉ participants indicated that "On account of lack of awareness as to the virtues of education, parents did not send their children to school. Even when they commit their children for school education, they seldom follow-up the children on their assignments".

In relation to item 3 (table 2), teacher and student respondents were asked to give their perception on low socio-economic status vis-à-vis absenteeism. The responses thus given by teachers and students resulted in mean score of 3.9796 and SD 1.18391 for teachers and mean 3.7718 and SD 1.22890 for students respectively. This proves that teacher and student respondents were in agreement that low socio economic status was a contributing factor for student absenteeism. The following are insights from teacher FGD, principal interviewee and from my own (researches field observation).

Principal interviewee₁ participant complained that, "Despite our effort in offering the needed advice (academic and school norms) parents didn't follow-up their kids at home. Father, often leaves his home early in the morning to work as a porter, while mother leaves to vend on the streets at the same time. So at home, students will have no one to follow up their academic activities and go out to fool around looking for leftover food in the hotel area".

For this reason, they came to school not doing their assignments and in most cases miss classes fearing admonishment from their respective teachers. In support of this scenario, Henry (2007) has noted that parents' education levels contribute to students' absenteeism. When we ask parents they are not helping their children to do assignments and follow-up the overall pursuit of their children schooling? In this connection they replied that, "We don't know anything about their academic affairs, all our concern is to fill their stomach running all day long". In this connection, principal interviewee₄ indicated that "Some students family were economically poor and not able to differ even the most basics of necessities so much so that, an average of 15 students a day were fainted because they came to school without having breakfast".

In one of the episode in my data collection session during lunch break, I was going around the school yard and many of the students were having their lunch. But I saw a young boy standing alone. I asked his grade level, grade 10 he replied. Thereafter, I asked him, why not he eats his lunch before it gets late to the class. He said that, "I have got five brothers and we will have breakfast on shift bases- that each of us having a breakfast once in a week, while lunch and dinner in one meal when we all five of us get back home after school". These siblings account vividly explains economic hardships as one of the major factors affecting the smooth cascade of the teaching learning process and more importantly the academic performance of students.

Table 3 Personal issues

No	Items	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
1	Social skills are low	96	3.8958	1.20069	241	3.7552	1.28218
2	Peer Influence	98	4.1327	1.04178	241	3.6017	1.25126
3	Negative attitudes towards teachers	98	4.2347	.99277	241	3.8755	1.26535

The response of teachers and students in relation to table 3 item 1 (Social skills are low) teachers revealed that, mean 3.7552 and SD 1.28218 and students mean 3.7552 and SD 1.28218 respectively. This shows that both teacher and student respondents consider low level of social skill as contributing factor for student absenteeism.

In this regard, principal interviewee₂ stated that "Those students with frequent record of absence were shown to have low social skills. When they get back to school after a long period of absence, they suffer a missing link from school social life. This in turn makes them quite aloof in their interaction with fellow students thereby pushing them to remain absent further".

Whereas, explaining on the lack of empathy towards their problem, absentee students participating in student FGD₁₃ has the following to say:

"As we get back to school after a long absence we feel detached from the school social life. In the mean time, the school community, the principal, the teachers, and even fellow friends suspect us for all the wrong deeds in the school. In spite of such negative attitude from the school, we remain absent. Since our parents have no income to fulfill our basic needs, we are often forced to engage in some menial jobs like loading and unloading goods from vehicles. Though, such struggle to make our ends met are the very reason which keep us from school, no one in the school community is willing to put his feet in our shoes. How can we come to school without eating a breakfast and compete with friends coming with extra pocket money?"

On the other hand, emphasizing the different social life among students (which itself is a result of differing income levels) one principal interviewee₅ stated the following:

"As there are poor students, there are also students, boasting to have a good income. Here interesting to mention my experience with one student. One day I was counseling a notorious absentee student on how to improve his position. So while I was giving him a piece of advice, he interrupted me in the middle and said thank you very much for your advice. By the way, how much is your salary? Look at your shoes and mine. You know, my shoes cost ten times of yours. Believe me just in two days business I can get your monthly salary. Even my brother who graduated with a bachelor degree is waiting my support".

Finally, one of the student FGD₁₄ participant's surprised us by saying that "My brother graduated in physics with a bachelor degree two years ago, but he was assigned to teach at grade 2 level. He was always complaining about his job. Infarct, he was not alone in that subdued feeling. As time goes on I realized that our school teachers' were also dissatisfied with their job.. Nonetheless, the school community in general has no Idea that our absence was not mere indolence, but to get our daily subsistence. They are far from understanding the reality at the ground." (Lannegrandet.al. (2012) stated that students feel an overwhelming sense of alienation once they come back to school after long absence. Further (Pehlivan 2006) emphasized that, absentee students can set a bad precedent, in such a way that encouraging other students to be absent too.

As shown in table 3 item 2 above students and teachers were asked to give their response on whether peer influence is a contributing factor for absenteeism, the responses in statistical terms were represented by teacher mean 4.1327 and SD 1.04178 and students mean 3.6017 and SD 1.25126 respectively. This shows that both teacher and student respondents were in agreement that peer influence was a contributing factor to student absenteeism.

On the other hand, the responses from student FGD₁₁ indicated that, "Some of the absentees came to school with a lot of pocket money on the other hand, those of us who came to class with empty pocket feel inferiority complex when faced with the merriment of those with extra money. Accordingly we are eager to make money out in the streets, for this reason we avoid coming to school" As to the adverse effects of absenteeism, principal interviewee₃ commented that "When students return back to school after a period of absenteeism, they fail out of coping with the school environment. Because of this, they gradually develop apathy towards schooling. This apathetic situation deepens as the absentee students see the progress made by their class mate, in dealing with the varied and multiple classes room activities given by their respective teachers". Finally when the absentees fail to comprehend the successive lessons, they will frustrate and continue to remain absent from class.

As indicated in table 3 item 3, teachers and students were asked to respond to the item negative attitude towards teacher vis-à-vis absenteeism. The response thereof shown that teachers mean 4.2343 and SD 99277 students mean to be 3.8755 and SD 1.26535

respectively. From these fugues one can conclude that both teacher and student respondents feel that negative attitude towards teachers was a contributing factor for student absenteeism.

In this regard students FGD₁₄ stated that “Some teachers shun applying student – centered teaching method most of the time. Their lectures are boring and at times irrelevant as they talk about their personal stories during the course of their lecture.

Some teachers are not concerned about their student development; they ignore individual difference in their class undertaking. Further, they patronize and embarrass us in front of our classmates we then often choose to remain absent.

Further, students FGD₁₂ participants, complained that some teachers use abusive terms “They say, for example, you are non sense; son of a bitch! You are wastage. You do not understand why should I waste my time for nothing. The teacher rather than acting as a role model for us, why they are opting to insult us? Because of this, we avoid coming to school regularly and opt to remain absent”.

Findings on the causes to the problem of absenteeism

The quantitative findings of the study revealed that respondents shared similar views on the cause to the problem of absenteeism on student’s academic achievements: The responses further showed that:

1. The findings of study identified that students who have peer influence, low social skills and negative attitudes towards teacher are more likely to have school absenteeism.
2. Findings also showed that students, whose parents have low educational level, low socio economic status and whose family's needs student to work are more likely to have high level of school absenteeism.
3. Findings are also indicated that students’ academic achievement, lectures which is not connected to students future life and rules and regulations which is not rehabilitated one were affected by absenteeism, which in turn, predicted future work absenteeism.

Findings on the possible solutions to the problem of absenteeism

Open ended questions were asked for both teachers and students to indicate for possible solution to the problem of absenteeism on student’s academic achievements. To this end, the following salient findings were indicated:

1. Secondary school management should reward in morning flag ceremony excellent or improved attendees, something like book, pen etc.
2. A school feeding program should be launched in order to support those students who are absent due to daily food subsistence to encourage poor attendees to come to school. This can be done in collaboration with stakeholders.
3. In order to curb the problem of absenteeism the secondary school management should establish a working relationship with the parents. The school should also, remind parents that they have legal, psychological, sociological and cultural responsibilities to support their own children attendance.
4. Secondary schools should understand the cause of student absenteeism’ and work on good attendance. As a result of this possible solution of the problem of absenteeism could be put in place.
5. Teachers' had to sign on each of subject exercise book of the students at every lesson and this has to be endorsed by their respective parents. Based on the major findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:-

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of school, family, and personal issues on students’ absenteeism. In addition, this study provides possible solutions for the problem of absenteeism. The problem is impetuous by interaction of an array of factors which are both internal and external to the students and or the school.

Key among the problems that ascend to absenteeism are the lecture is not connected to my future life, rules and regulations are punitive not rehabilitated one, family's need student to work for their daily subsistence, low socio economic status, and peer influence as well as un conducive interpersonal relations between students and lecturers.

The problem of student absenteeism is gaining much attention from educators, researchers and policy makers as it is not just an educational problem but also a social and political issue with huge social costs. Therefore, this study advocates that in order to address the problem of absenteeism in any meaningful way, efforts should be directed in particular at the secondary schools level and the community in general in the context of Ethiopia's secondary schools. In light of the findings of the study, the researcher identified the following major recommendations:

Recommendations

In this regard, based on the results of the research, three salient points are suggested:


1. Secondary schools should focus on increasing students' attendance in order to reduce student absenteeism.
2. Students' positive relationship with teachers will increase commitment to the school and will play a role in the reduction of absenteeism.

Parents of students' should be informed about the significance of good attendance for achieving success and for providing protection for risk factors not only in school life but also in the future work life.

References

- Attwood, G., & Croll, P. (2006). Truancy in secondary school pupils: Prevalence, trajectories and pupil perspectives. *Research Papers in Education, 21*, 467-484.
- Best, J. and Kahn, J. (2003). *Research in education*, 9th ed. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India.
- Balfanz, R. & Byrnes, V. (2012). Chronic absenteeism: summarizing what we know from Nationally available data. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Center for Social Organization of Schools
- Barker D, Jansen J 2000. Using groups to reduce elementary school absenteeism. *Social Work in Education, 22*: 46-53.
- Clark, J. G. (2008). Examining truancy board effectiveness in countering student absenteeism in grades K-5 in three title I schools in Northeast Tennessee. *Doctoral Dissertation*, East Tennessee State University, UMI Number: 3308020
- Crewell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed Approaches*. (3rd Ed) London: Sage publication Inc.
- Eastman, G.; Cooney, S. M.; O'Connor, C., & Small, S. A. (2007). Finding effective solutions to truancy. *Research To Practice Series, 5*, University of Wisconsin.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2002). Present and accounted for: Improving student attendance through family and community involvement. *Journal of Educational Research, 95*(5), 308-318. Retrieved on April 04, 2014. [www.siaaus.com/.../Present and Accounted For Improving Student](http://www.siaaus.com/.../Present_and_Accounted_For_Improving_Student)
- Hallam, S; Rogers, L; (2008) Improving behaviour and attendance at school. Open University Press:
- Gentle-Genitty, C. S. (2008). Impact of schools' social bonding on chronic truancy: perceptions of middle school principals. *Doctoral Dissertation*, Indiana University, UMI Number: 3344573.
- Gottfried, M. A. (2009). Excused versus unexcused: how student absences in elementary school affect academic achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 31*(4), 392-415
- Henry, K. L. (2007). Who's skipping school: Characteristics of truants in 8th and 10th grade? *Journal of School Health, 77*(1), 29-35.
- Ingul, J. M., Klöckner, C. A., Silverman, W. K., & Nordahl, H. M. (2012). Adolescent school absenteeism: Modelling social and individual risk factors. *Child Adolescent Mental Health, 17*(2), 93-100.
- Kothari, C. R (2004). *Research Methodology; Methods and Techniques*, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi
- Lannegrand-Willems, L.; Cosnefroy, O., & Lecigne, A. (2012). Prediction of various degrees of vocational secondary school absenteeism: Importance of the organization of the educational system. *School Psychology International, 33*(3), 294-307.
- Loch miller, C. R. (2013). Improving Student Attendance in Indiana's Schools: Synthesis of Existing Research Related to Student Absenteeism and Effective, Research- Based Interventions. Center for Evaluation & Education Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp>
- Moore, R. (2003) Helping students succeed in introductory biology classes: Does improving students' attendance also improve their grades? *Bioscience, 29*, 17-25.
- Pehlivan, Z. (2006). *Resmi genel liselerde ö renci devamsızlı ı ve buna dönük okul yönetimi politikaları (Ankara ili ö rne i)* [The absenteeism at state secondary schools and related school management policies (Ankara Case)]. (Doctoral

- dissertation, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey). Retrieved from <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>
- Railsback, J. (2004). *Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies from Research and Practice*. Portland:Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Robinson, L. B. (2009). High school students' perceptions of supports for and barriers to completion of the stay in school truancy prevention program. *Doctoral dissertation*, Sam Houton State University. UMI Number: 3371325
- Teasley M L 2004. Absenteeism and truancy. *Children and Schools*, 26: 117-127.
- Walls, C. (2003). New approaches to truancy prevention in urban schools. *ERIC Digest*. <http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-2/truancy.html>
- Williams LL 2000 Student absenteeism and truancy. Technologies and interventions to reduce chronic problems among school-age. *Journal of Children*, 7: 23-34.
- William Silvert (2001) modelling as a discipline, *International Journal of General Systems*, 30:3, 261-282, DOI: [10.1080/03081070108960709](https://doi.org/10.1080/03081070108960709)
- Wilkins, J. (2008). School characteristics that influence student attendance: Experiences of students in a school avoidance program. *The High School Journal*, 91(3), 12–24.

Access this Article in Online	
	Website: www.ijarm.com
	Subject: Education
Quick Response Code	
DOI: 10.22192/ijamr.2018.05.12.002	

How to cite this article:

Messeret Assefa. (2018). Cause and possible solution to the problem of absenteeism on students' academic achievement: The case of Secondary Schools Addis Ababa., Ethiopia. *Int. J. Adv. Multidiscip. Res.* 5(12): 8-19.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22192/ijamr.2018.05.12.002>