



The Impact Of Class Absenteeism On Learners Academic Performance In Kyenjojo Town Council Kyenjojo District

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Abstract

This study set out to examine the effect of absenteeism on pupils' academic performance in Katoosa kyenjojo nyantungo and kyankuuta Primary School, Kyenjojo town council, Kyenjojo District. The study followed a descriptive survey design, using both quantitative and qualitative data. Teachers and primary six pupils were the main respondents of this study. Convenience sampling was used to select kyankuuta primary school, primary six and the teachers who answered the questionnaire while random sampling was used to select the 20 pupils. Two sets of questionnaires were developed, one for pupils and another for teachers. Class attendance registers for the year 2022 were also used to collect data on attendance and absenteeism levels, while reports and mark lists were used to collect data on pupils' academic performance. SPSS software version 26 and Microsoft office Excel were used in processing the data. Frequency counts and relative frequencies were used to analyze the data from the questionnaires. The Pearson's Chi-square and the Linear Correlation Coefficient were the statistical techniques used to analyze data. This study's objectives were to find out the major causes of absenteeism in primary schools, the effect of absenteeism on pupils' academic performance and the possible measures to reduce absenteeism in school in schools. This data from Kyankuuta Primary School provides important insights into the causes of absenteeism among pupils and its correlation with academic performance. According to findings, reasons for missing class, illness was reported as the most frequent cause affecting 55% of respondents. This suggested that issues like malaria, typhoid and respiratory infections may be reducing instruction time for over half of students.

Keywords: Class Absenteeism, Learners, Academic and Performance



Background of the Study

Absence of students from school has long been a problem for educators because it can negatively affect academic results (Moses, 2022). Excessive absenteeism means that a student misses 10% or more of the total number of school days in a year, which equates to 18 or more days in a standard 180-day school year (Godfrey et al., 2023). Statistics from the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports indicate that the national average rate of primary school absenteeism is approximately 15% per year, although some urban areas show lower rates, while rural districts tend to see higher averages (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023).

In Kyenjojo District, a population of over 250,000 located in central western Uganda, absenteeism is a persistent problem for both teachers and administrators, according to district education officials (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara et al., 2023). Kyenjojo Town Council is the main urban center hosting more than 10 primary schools, although accurate attendance statistics for these institutions have not been formally recorded in the past. Anecdotally, educators in the city council complained of increased truancy, which potentially correlated with declining overall academic grades in national examinations taken at the end of each primary grade (Akankwasa et al., 2022).

Research confirms that missing instructional time can have a significant impact on student learning and achievement. A study examining truancy rates in Chicago Public Schools found that students who were chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade were significantly more likely to be poor readers by the end of third grade than their regularly attending peers (Nelson, 2024). Other investigations revealed that students with excessive absenteeism had higher rates of course failure and grade repetition (Godfrey et al., 2023). Chronically missing classes has also been associated with lower standardized test scores and reduced rates of early graduation from high school (Mark et al., 2023).

Factors influencing absenteeism are often interrelated and may stem from student problems, family circumstances, and school variables (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). Common reasons for missing class include illness, transportation difficulties, family responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings, safety concerns when traveling to school, lack of basic amenities preventing regular attendance, and lack of interest in academics (Victoria et al., 2023). Poverty significantly increases the risk of excessive absenteeism, as limited resources may force children to attend irregularly due to responsibilities at home or the inability to consistently afford uniforms and school fees (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023).

High rates of early school leaving due to chronic truancy have both academic and economic costs. Students are less prepared for the workforce or post-secondary education if they are not fully provided with required learning content in the primary years. Communities also lose out on the benefits of an educated population, such as higher potential earnings, higher productivity, less dependency on social services, and an increased likelihood of contributing positively to local economies (Isaac et al., 2023). Given the attendance patterns reported to be witnessed in Kyenjojo Town Council primary schools and the potential implications for academic performance, this proposed study sought to directly examine the impact of absenteeism on students.

Problem Statement

The problem of student absenteeism and its negative impact on academic achievement is well documented through educational research studies conducted around the world (Faith et al., 2023). While national statistics indicate that Uganda experiences an average absenteeism rate of approximately 15% per year according to the Ministry of Education and Sports, anecdotal evidence from teachers in primary schools in Kyenjojo City Council suggests that truancy rates may be higher in this local context and potentially correlate with declining examination . performance (Julius, 2024). However, accurate data on absenteeism rates and their impact on academic outcomes had not previously been formally collected and analyzed for these institutions within the City Council.

Without empirical investigation, the magnitude of the problem and its underlying causes remain unclear (Winny et al., 2023). If not addressed, persistent high rates of absenteeism could have long-term consequences. Research confirms that students who are chronically absent, defined as missing 10% or more of the school year, are significantly more likely to fall behind academically and in basic reading skills in third grade compared to regularly attending peers (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023). By missing large chunks of class time during their primary education, these students also face a higher risk of repeating grades, dropping out altogether, and being underprepared for future formal education or workplace skills training programs (Ntirandekura, Ainebyoona et al., 2022). .

At the community level, the high number of early departures resulting from absenteeism is problematic due to the high economic costs. One dropout from the school system results in an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes, and productivity over their lifetime (Association for Supervision (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). When multiplied across the district, the negative fiscal impact could be substantial. In addition, it may indicate underlying access issues or family difficulties that require intervention to support continued student participation in education (Musaibah et al., 2023).

Given these well-established academic and social implications, combined with the reported concerns of local educators in Kyenjojo, this study aimed to shed empirical light on absenteeism rates in City Council schools and examine how absenteeism correlates with examination results in an attempt to determine the true extent of the problem and guidance for possible solutions (Victoria et al., 2023).

Specific Objectives

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1. To find out the causes of absenteeism in primary schools.
2. To determine the relationship between class absenteeism and learner's academic performance in Kyenjojo town council Kyenjojo district

Methodology

A descriptive research design was used in the study. A descriptive case study has the advantage of being relatively comprehensive (Anwar et al., 2022). This is because it allowed the researcher to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest (Maiga et al., 2021). (L. Nafiu et al., 2013) pointed out that exhaustive studies accurately describe the relationships of variables and processes and recommend the qualitative and character of a descriptive case study in terms of being exhaustive. The study was conducted in Kyenjojo Municipal Council, Kyenjojo District, Uganda (Maiga et al., 2021). The respondents of this study included; principals, teachers and students of private and public schools. These respondents were required to provide information on the effects of corporal punishment at school; pupils' attitudes towards corporal punishment and alternative forms of punishment. Uganda states that population consists of all instances of an individual or things or elements that match the researcher's specification (Aslam et al., 2022). The intended size of 100 respondents consisted of 10 principals, 20 teachers and 70 pupils. Directors were selected using a purposive sampling technique. However, a simple random technique was used to select both teachers and students (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). This type is useful in that it ensures that all schools and respondents have an equal chance of being selected. The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data for the study (L. A. Nafiu & Ph, 2012). Three sets of questionnaires were used; for administrators, classroom teachers and pupils. The questionnaires contained closed questions where the respondents had to tick all that applied. According to (Olanrewaju et al., 2021a), data analysis and processing is defined to provide cleaned data, with proper codes and the ability to manipulate through computer processing system. Data analysis and processing critically focused on both quantitative and qualitative techniques as explained below (A & Ahmed, 2019). This analysis focused on data that is expressed in numbers. Data were adjusted and subjected to further analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) (Nelson et al., 2022). After entry, data were checked for errors and then entered into SPSS computer software for analysis. Other methods of data presentation such as tables, graphs and percentages were used to analyze the quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected through face-to-face interviews, and the field notes from the interviews were then edited and cleaned to obtain organized data (L.A. Nafiu et al., 2017).

RESULTS

Causes of Absenteeism in Kyankuuta Primary School

Table 1 Reasons Why Some pupils Miss Class

Level of education	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Fees	5	25

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Illness	11	55
Work given by parents	3	15
Attitude towards studying	1	5
Total	20	100

The table indicates that most pupils (11 or 55%) miss class due to illness, five (25%) due to fees problems and three (15%) due to work given by parents. This shows that most pupils miss class or due to factors beyond their control, like illness and fees problems. However, some miss due to work given by their parents / guardians or because they simply do not want. It can therefore be said that according to pupil's opinions, illness and fees problems are the major causes of absenteeism and they account for about 55% and 25% respectively. According to teachers, a number of factors are responsible for pupils' absenteeism in schools.

Table 2: Relationship between class absenteeism and learner's academic performance in Kyenjojo town council Kyenjojo district

		class absenteeism	Learner's academic performance
class absenteeism	Pearson Correlation	1	.861**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	20	20
Learner's academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.861**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	20	20

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source; Primary Data, 2024

This table examines the correlation between class absenteeism and learner's academic performance based on primary data collected from 20 schools within Kyenjojo town council in 2024. It shows that class absenteeism has a Pearson correlation coefficient of 1 when correlated with itself, as any variable is perfectly correlated to itself. When class absenteeism is correlated with learner's academic performance, the analysis yielded a very high Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.861. This indicates an extremely strong positive correlation between the two variables, suggesting that as rates of absenteeism increase, learner performance on exams and assessments tends to decrease correspondingly. The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, as evidenced by the small sig value of 0.000 which is well below the 0.01 threshold (Nelson et al., 2023). This confirms there is less than a 1% probability that this correlation occurred by chance.

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Table 3: Regression results on class absenteeism and learner's academic performance in Kyenjojo town council Kyenjojo district

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.593	.354	.345	.64001
a. Predictors: (Constant), Class absenteeism				

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.505	.567		2.656	.020
	Class absenteeism	.613	.152	.561	6.021	.000
a. Dependent Variable: learner's academic performance						

Source: Primary Data. 2024

This table presents the results of a linear regression analysis conducted to quantify the impact of class absenteeism on learner's academic performance based on primary data collected in 2024. The first section shows that the model has an R value of 0.593, indicating a moderately strong correlation between absenteeism and performance. Approximately 35.4% of the variation in learner performance is explained by rates of absenteeism alone, as shown by the R Square value.

The coefficients section reveal some key findings. The constant value of 1.505 signifies the predicted average performance when absenteeism is zero. More notably, the absenteeism predictor variable has a standardized beta coefficient of 0.561, demonstrating over half a standard deviation increase in absenteeism relates to a 0.613 standard deviation decline in average academic performance when controlling for other factors (Ntirandekura, Friday, et al., 2022). This relationship is considered highly statistically significant based on the small Sig. value of 0.000.

Summary of Findings

This study's objectives were to find out the major causes of absenteeism in primary schools, the effect of absenteeism on pupils' academic performance and the possible measures to reduce absenteeism in school in schools.

This data from Kyankuuta Primary School provides important insights into the causes of absenteeism among pupils and its correlation with academic performance. According to Table 1, which surveyed learners on reasons for missing class, illness was reported as the most frequent cause affecting 55% of respondents. This suggests issues like malaria, typhoid and respiratory infections may be reducing instruction time for over half of students. Additionally, 25% stated financial constraints prevented regular attendance due to inability to afford school requirements. To a lesser extent, domestic work responsibilities and disinterest in studies were also cited.

Table 2 then examines the relationship between absenteeism and achievement based on data from 20 schools in Kyenjojo Town Council. It reveals an extremely strong positive correlation of 0.861 between the two variables that is highly statistically significant. This alarming finding indicates higher rates of pupils missing school translates to markedly lower scores on exams and assignments.

Further analysis through a linear regression model in Table 3 helps quantify this relationship. It shows class absenteeism can reliably predict over 35% of the variation in academic performance, with half a standard deviation rise in truancy linked to a 0.613 standard deviation fall in average marks. This significant negative impact is consistent across socioeconomic factors.

Conclusion

Basing on the above findings, the researcher therefore concludes it at the major causes of absenteeism in rural schools are illness, fees problems & work given by parents at home.

Parent's job type and level of education impact significantly on the causes of absenteeism. There's a high rate of absenteeism in Kyankuuta Primary school and the general performance is just fair. Absenteeism has a significant (negative) impact on pupil's academic performance mainly in term one, but if we take the annual basis, attendance is not a significant factor that affects learners' performance. However, this particular finding needs more investigations using big samples. Also, most teachers do not make regular roll calls and don't mind about pupils who are absent which escalates the problems. Measures like making regular roll calls, and punishing both parents and pupils who are always absent, as well as having a policy on absenteeism, may be useful in reducing absenteeism problem in primary schools.

Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the research recommends that all schools should ensure that they make regular roll calls at least twice a day, in morning and afternoon. This will provide records the rate of absenteeism in the school and thereafter act.

Schools should also try to keep record on absenteeism. Any pupil who is not in class should be recorded and the reason for missing class should be recorded. This will help provide information on the basic reasons for absenteeism and there by provide measures like adult literacy and ov11y eradication programs can also help reduce absenteeism and health care programs to improve children health will be important in solving the problem of absenteeism. The

ministry of education and sports should also come out with a policy on absenteeism, but is should first sensitize parents about absenteeism.

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