

Exploring the Causes of Absenteeism and Its Impact on Academic Performance in Rural Schools: A Case Study of Jammu District

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the relationship between absenteeism and academic performance among students in rural schools of Jammu District. Using a mixed-method approach, the research examines the prevalence of absenteeism, its impact on academic outcomes, and the socio-economic and gender-based factors contributing to the phenomenon. The results indicate that higher absenteeism correlates with lower academic achievement, with girls performing marginally better than boys across categories. Insights from parents, teachers, and students highlight critical barriers, including socio-economic challenges and cultural norms. Recommendations for improving attendance and academic outcomes are provided.

Keywords: *absenteeism; academic performance; rural education; socio-economic factors; gender disparity.*

INTRODUCTION

Education, being considered one of the fundamental pillars of human resource development, plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' futures. When a child faces challenges with poor school performance and frequent absenteeism, the repercussions extend beyond the academic realm; it can also negatively impact their self-esteem and introduce stress into the lives of their parents, compounding the issue. In rural areas, where educational disparities are often more pronounced, children may struggle academically due to a myriad of factors such as underlying medical conditions, below-average intellectual capabilities, emotional disturbances, and unfavorable socio-cultural environments at home. Additionally, external aspects like the attitudes and conduct of faculty members, perceived academic expectations, the evolution of technology enabling greater access to information, and a lackadaisical attitude towards the importance of attending lectures can all contribute significantly to a student's performance levels. The intricacies of academic achievement do not solely rely on external elements, but also on internal dynamics and individual circumstances. This combination of internal and external factors creates a dynamic learning environment where the influence and impact of these variables continuously fluctuate, significantly altering the trajectory of a learner's academic journey.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Absenteeism can be defined as habitual failure to appear in classes and rate of occurrence of habitual absence from the school classes. Absenteeism, According to Casio (2003), is "Any failure of an Employee to report for or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of reason". Strickland (1998) writes that absenteeism is a period of not attending

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school. In education Institution, success is measured by academic performance or how well a student meets standards set out by local Government and the Institution itself.

Academic performance refers to how students deal with a study and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by teachers. Academic performance is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate your knowledge verbally or down on paper. Academic performance can be defined as overall development of personality beside the achievement in result such as mark scored as well as knowledge of the subjects including the completion of syllabus prescribed for the class.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Although a number of researches have been conducted on absenteeism and low achievement elsewhere, there is enough scope for similar studies in the region of Jammu, especially in its rural areas where low literacy and educational wastage and stagnation is large. Student absenteeism happens to be the most commonly occurring phenomena in our schools. Since education is a stupendous and a highly energy consuming task, it cannot be allowed to be plagued by factors that lead to poor output in the form of low student learning.

The study of the causes of absenteeism assumes significance on the context that if we come to know the factual reasons leading to absenteeism and low academic performance, counter measures to get rid of this problem can be planned and worked out. The study can be suggestive and lead to the initiation of measures to make education more effective to ensure realization of educational objectives, prevent wastage, dropouts, and ensure universal retention to improve the quality of education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of studies have been conducted in the field of student absenteeism and low performance. A review of the studies is interesting enough as it provides insights into the problem.

Shuts, (2000) found that there was a relationship between absenteeism and academic achievement. It was also found that the different levels of absenteeism were found to be basically the same for both male and female students.

Epstein and Sheldon, (2002) reveal that higher attendance is related to higher achievement for students of all background. Due to frequent absenteeism from school, children perform poorly which cause repetition which in turn makes children vulnerable to dropout and low academic performance.

Gillian and Gianni, (2002) revealed factors like socio economic status, family structure, type of school, absences, gender, ethnicity, housing type, geographical location cause absenteeism among students in rural areas which adversely affect their academic achievements.

Abdu-Aziz A.Binsaeed et.al, (2006) highlighted that absenteeism may contribute to low achievement, the reverse is also possible, where low achievers are more likely to absent themselves than high achievers.

The National Center for Children in Poverty, (October 2007) released a comprehensive report titled 'A National Portrait of Chronic Absenteeism'. The findings were:-

- Almost 14% of kindergartners, 12% of first graders, 11% of third graders and 10% of fifth graders missed an average of 12 to 18 days a year.
- Over 11% of kindergartners, almost 9% of first graders, 6% of third graders and 5% of fifth graders are chronically absent from school missing at least 18 days or at least 10% of the school year.
- The greater the number of absences in kindergarten, the greater the number of absences in first grade. Over one-half of chronic absentees in kindergarten also were chronic absentees in first grade.
- Children who exhibited immature behaviors had higher absenteeism rates than children exhibiting mature behaviors.
- Children with high absenteeism rates are more likely to complain about school or claim to be sick in order to stay home.

Zimchek, (2009) grouped the causes of absenteeism which lead to low academic achievement into three categories like school related factors, family related factors and students related factors.

LevitaHidayat et.al, (2012) suggested that undergraduate students who spend more time in the classroom perform better academically than students with high rates of absenteeism.

Buehler, (2012) found that an average student with good attendance in 5th grade gradually approached the chronic absence line by the time he reached 10th grade and it adversely affected his academic achievement.

Kumar, Geelani&Bhat (2022) examined the human development of scheduled castes in Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on education and health disparities. Using secondary data from Census 2011, NFHS (2019–2020), and educational sources, it highlights literacy and health challenges faced by this marginalized group compared to others. The findings underscore the impact of the reservation system and the need for targeted interventions.

Ousar&Bhadra, (2022) studied that the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir severely disrupts lives, with border communities enduring violence, displacement, and trauma. Students face grave challenges, including school closures, disrupted learning, and psychological harm from ceasefire violations. Teachers and families struggle with safety concerns, while resilience becomes vital for well-being. Strategic policies and education reforms are essential to support children in these conflict zones.

Kousar, R., &Bhadra, S. (2022) School-going students of border conflict zone in Jammu region: In the contours of impact and adjustment with ceasefire violations. In Handbook of Health and Well-Being: Challenges, Strategies and Future Trends (pp. 203-231). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Rehman and Malik, (2023) investigated the causes of dropouts in Government Secondary Schools of Punjab, Pakistan, using a descriptive design. The study involved 32 teachers, 160 parents, and 160 dropout students from District Kasur. Key dropout causes included class repetition, mismanagement, lack of basic facilities, and communication gaps. The researchers recommend improving school conditions and launching parent awareness campaigns to reduce dropout rates.

Ahmad, (2023) examined the spatial diversity in educational progress across Haryana, using 2011 secondary data. Thirteen factors, including teacher-to-student ratio, literacy rates, and school/college density, were analyzed. Findings reveal that educational progress is uneven, with Mahendragarh and areas near the national capital showing advancement, while Mewat, Kaithal, and the northwest regions lag behind, with Mewat being the least developed.

Dutta, (2023) examined depression among 1,941 students across educational stages in West Bengal using the Beck Depression Inventory. Results revealed higher depression levels in higher education students compared to school students, with most school students showing minimal depression and higher education students showing mild depression. Significant relationships with depression were found, except for mothers' education and occupation.

Bailam, Sudershan, Younis, Arora, Kumar & Kumar (2024). Studied that the Mental health is vital for well-being, yet rural areas often face barriers to services and awareness. This study surveyed 1,016 adults in rural Jammu, revealing a 20.67% prevalence of psychiatric disorders, with alcohol dependence (12.30%) most common. Factors like age, marital status, education, and socioeconomic background significantly influenced risks. Targeted, context-specific interventions are essential for improved mental health outcomes.

Researches suggest that students who spend more time in the classroom perform better academically than students with high rates of absenteeism, however, more recent studies suggest that this relationship may be weaker than previously reported and that student performance may depend on several other influencing factors and not be entirely contingent on attendance.

Problem

Exploring the Causes of Absenteeism and Its Impact on Academic Performance in Rural Schools: A Case Study of Jammu District

Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To study the difference of absenteeism between girls and boys.
2. To study the difference between academic achievement of boys and girls with respect to absenteeism.
3. To identify the different causes of low academic performance.

Hypothesis

There is high degree of absenteeism among the students in rural area of Jammu district..

- 1) There is no significant difference between absenteeism of boys and girls.
- 2) There is no significant difference between academic achievement of boys and girls with respect to absenteeism.
- 3) The causes of absenteeism are also responsible for low academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study was conducted with a mixed-method approach involving a sample comprising of 220 students both boys and girls, 30 parents, and 30 teachers selected randomly from the Govt. High Schools in educational zones R.S Pura, Marh, Domana, Dansal and Bishnah, the rural sectors of Jammu district. Thus, the total sample of study was 280 as a whole comprising the students, parents and teachers.

Tools Used

- A self-prepared questionnaire to identify the causes of absenteeism for students of high school stage.
- Two questionnaires prepared for 1) Teachers and 2) Parents separately for identifying the causes of absenteeism for students of high school stage.
- Final result of students of 6th to 10th class from the school records to identify the students with low academic performance in rural schools of Jammu district.
- Attendance record of students of the selected schools for arriving at the magnitude of absenteeism.

After collecting the data on the incidence of absenteeism, its magnitude in different areas (0-10%, 10 to 20%, 20 to 30%, 30% & above absentee) was calculated. Data on academic performance of the students falling in the various categories was taken by collecting the marks obtained by the students in the final exams of the previous class. A comparative study on academic performance and incidence of absenteeism class wise and sex wise was conducted on a sample of 220 boys and girls. was done to find out the relationship between the two. This was followed by administering questionnaire on causes of absenteeism and low academic performance on a purposive random sample comprising of 100 students (50 boys and 50 girls) from the high absentee and low academic performance cases . A separate questionnaire for identifying the causes as perceived by parents and teachers was administered on the sample of teachers and parents (30 each). The data thus collected was analyzed. Finally the reasons for high incidence and low academic performance were arrived at.

Findings

A) Incidence Of Absenteeism

- 1) Only 4.93% students attended more than 90% of the total 221 school days.

- 2) That a whopping 95.07% of the students remained absent from school for 10% and above days proving that absenteeism is a very serious and grave problem in Govt. High Schools of the region under study.
- 3) That 39.78% students, i.e. 38.83% boys & 40.29% girls out of their respective number remain absent for 10 to 20% of the days.
- 4) That 31.41% students i.e. 35.9% boys and 35.14% girls out of their respective number remained absent for 20 to 30% of the school days.
- 5) That 19.89% students i.e. 18.88% boys and 20.43% girls out of their respective number remained absent for more than 30% of the school days.
- 6) That the problem of absenteeism was more or less similar in boys and girls and there was no significant impact of sex on the problem of absenteeism or attendance among them.

B) Table 1. Showing Comparison Of Different Magnitudes Of Absentees And Average Academic Performance Of Students

Academic Performance Table

	10 to 20% absentee				20 to 30% absentee				30% above absentee			
	No. of Boys	No. of Girls	Academic Av. Of Boys	Academic Av. Of Girls	Nos. of Boys	Nos. of Girls	Academic Av. Of Boys	Academic Av. Of Girls	Boys	Girls	Academic Av. Of Boys	Academic Av. Of Girls
6 th	10	10	55.84%	64.52%	08	08	47.9%	57.49%	04	04	44.19%	47.19%
7 th	10	10	56.41%	71.4%	08	08	64.45%	60.78%	04	04	34.15%	36.85%
8 th	10	10	59.72%	68.1%	08	08	53.62%	63.08%	04	04	54.12%	61.25%
9 th	10	10	53.8%	45.8%	08	08	45.%	50.62%	04	04	50.25%	53.25%
10 th	10	10	54.2%	54.39%	08	08	54.12%	58.2%	04	04	41.26%	44.25%
	Total		55.92%	62.42%	08	08	53.91%	57.49%	04	04	44.19%	47.9%
	50	50										

Graphical Representation

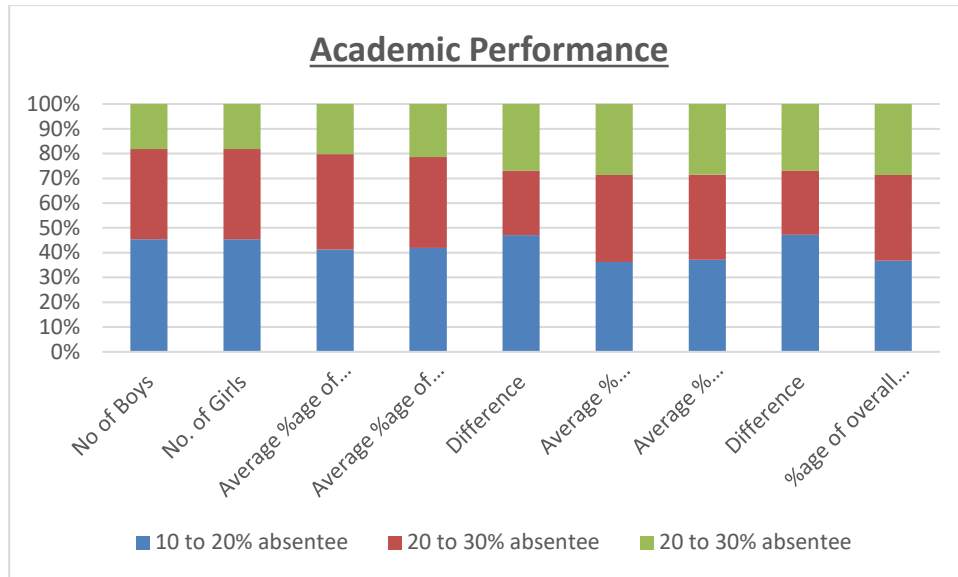


Table1.Reveals that

In class 6th The *academic performance average* of boys with **10 to 20% absentee** is **55.845** and that of girls is **64.52%**. Similarly, with the absentee of **20 to 30%**, the *average academic performance* of girls is **57.49**. Whereas the *academic performance average* of boys is **47.9%**; with above **30% absentee** the *academic performance average* of boys is **44.19%** and that of girls is **47.19%**.

In class 7th

The *academic performance average* of boys with the **absentee of 10 to 20%** is **56.41%** and that of girls is **71.4%**. Similarly, with the absentee of **20 to 30%** the *academic performance average* of boys is **64.45%** and that of girls is **60.78%**. Whereas the *academic performance average* of boys with **30% above absentee** is **34.15%** and that of girls is **36.85%**.

In class 8th

The *academic performance average* of boys with **10 to 20% absentee** is **59.72%** and of girls is **68.1%**. Similarly, the *academic average performance* of boys with absentee of **20 to 30%** is **53.625** and that of girls is **63.08%**. The *academic performance average* of boys with **30% and above absentee** is **54.12%** and that of girls is **61.25%**.

In class 9th

The *academic performance average* of boys with **10 to 20% absentee** is **53.8%** and that of girls is **45.8%**. Similarly, the *academic average performance* of boys with absentee of **20 to 30%** is **45%** and that of girls is **50.62%**. The *academic performance average* of boys with **30% and above absentee** is **50.25%** and that of girls is **53.25%**.

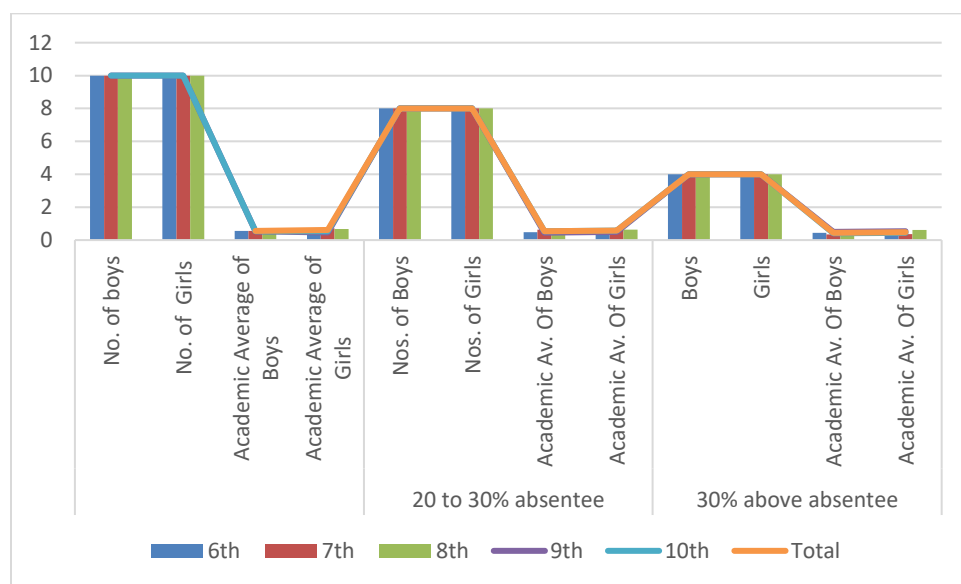
In class 10th

The *academic performance average* of boys with **10 to 20% absentee** is **54.2%** and that of girls is **54.39%**. Similarly, the *academic average performance* of boys with absentee of **20 to 30%** is **54.12%** and that of girls is **58.2%**. The *academic performance average* of boys with **30% and above absentee** is **41.26%** and that of girls is **44.25%**.

C) **Table 2. Showing Comparative Absentee Behavior And Academic Performance**

On the basis of Attendance absentee percentage	No. of Boys	No. of Girls	Average %age of absentee boys	Average %age of absentee girls	Difference	Average % performance of absentee boys	Average % performance of absentee girls	Difference	%age of overall average performance of targeted group
10 to 20% absentee	50	50	38.64%	40.16%	6.5%	55.92%	62.42%	3.25%	59.17%
20 to 30% absentee	40	40	35.88%	35.11%	3.58%	53.91%	57.49%	1.79%	55.7%
30% and above absentee	20	20	18.96%	20.43%	3.71%	44.19%	47.9%	1.85%	46.05%

Graphical Representation



Following inferences can therefore be drawn from the above table.

1. Absenteeism adversely affects academic performance. The more a student remains absent, the less is his/her academic performance, diminishing or decreasing average performance percentage bear testimony to this fact.
2. That the girls have fared well over boys in all the three category of absentee student’s study sample and there is visible difference in academic performance between boys and girls in all the three category of absenteeism.

Thus, Girls seem to have better results across classes 6th to 10th with 30% and above absentee behavior in spite of the fact that they are supposed to help their mothers in domestic jobs. Perhaps, the findings indicate that probably, their stay at home gives them greater time for self study as compared to boys of their respective classes who work outside home jobs for supporting their families.

D) Causes Of Absenteeism And Low Academic Performance

- (1) It is clear from the study that majority of students in Govt. High Schools in educational zones R.S Pura, Marh, Domana, Damsal and Bishnah are SC/ST and backward class.

- (2) That majority of parents are either illiterate or with education qualification of middle standard and are hence unable to help their children studying in 6th to 10th class. Hence, illiteracy and low education level of parents can be identified as a major cause of low performance and absenteeism.
- (3) That majority of parents are low income group with mothers primarily confined to household work and fathers in farming and labour work. Low socio economic status therefore seems to be another major reason for the problem of low academic performance and absenteeism.
- (4) That mostly the students in Govt. High School of Jammu rural are about two kms away from school. Non availability of schools within walk-able distance happens to be the cause of low academic performance and absenteeism among the students.
- (5) That majority of students come to school on foot and spends 1 to 2 hours to and fro from school and the distance of school from home is another cause of low academic performance and absenteeism.
- (6) Parental attitude was highly positive in favour of boys than that of girls. Hence, negative parental attitude towards girls' education happens to be a major factor for low academic performance and absenteeism among girls.
- (7) The engagement of girls in household chores (helping their parents) is twice as compared to that of boys. Hence pre-occupation at home with household chores can be identified as another reason for their low academic performance and high absenteeism among girls.

RESULT OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference between the absenteeism of girls and boys..
2. There is significant difference between academic achievement of boys and girls with respect to absenteeism.
3. There are various causes of absenteeism which are responsible for low academic achievement.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study was carried out under the following restriction:-

1. The present study was confined to 220 students of Jammu District.
2. The study was limited to only five educational Zones of Jammu District.
3. Only Govt. School of rural areas were taken into consideration.
4. Only High Absentee and lower academic performance students were taken into consideration for the study.
5. In the present study no other variable was introduced due to paucity of time and resources.

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Dr. Dwivedi has an impressive academic portfolio, having participated in and presented research papers at numerous national and international seminars and conferences. Her scholarly contributions include the authorship of two books and more than 20 book chapters focusing on education, pedagogy, and English studies. She has also published extensively in reputed national and international journals. Moreover, she has edited two books and holds one international and one national patent to her credit.

An active member of several professional and scientific organizations in education and English language and literature, Dr. Dwivedi also serves as a member of the editorial boards and a peer reviewer for esteemed journals. Her academic pursuits and professional engagements reflect her unwavering commitment to advancing knowledge and fostering innovation in her field.