



STUDENTS ABSENTEEISM: A MAJOR PROBLEM

Dr. Aradhana Gokhale
Assistant Professor,
Guru Nanak College of Education and Research, Bhandup.

ABSTRACT

In today's world of LPG, absenteeism is becoming a major problem at all levels of education. Students do not want to go to schools and colleges for various reasons. This article will emphasize the multiple causes of absenteeism and remedies to overcome these causes, which will develop an excellence and quality of education.

KEYWORDS: Absenteeism, Students, Causes, and Measures.



INTRODUCTION

An institution is a place of importance for students for their all-round development. It also develops their knowledge, attitude, interest, understanding, skills, and aptitude to groom their personality. Schools and colleges provide a learning environment for the students and are equipped with human resources, material resources, time as a resource, financial resources, and the curriculum, syllabus, vision, and mission of an institution. When a student goes to the institution regularly, he/she develops himself or herself. But if he or she does not go to school or college regularly, he/she performs poorly in examinations, class participation becomes affected, and he/she does not develop in all aspects. Unfortunately, students have developed a negative attitude towards schools, colleges, and professional institutions. Absenteeism is becoming a major problem at all levels of education. Students do not want to go to schools, colleges, and professional courses because of various reasons.

Absenteeism in school means a student frequently not attending classes or being absent from school, which includes both excused and unexcused absences and can significantly impact their academic progress due to missed instruction and learning opportunities. The students who do not attend the institutions consistently and lectures are known as absentees. It means the act of not attending school regularly. It also states that a student's persistent non-attendance is mostly deliberate and unplanned. It also states the insolvency of a student to attend the classes when he/she is arranged to study. Absenteeism refers to the absence of the student from the school or college. It goes beyond any absence related to things like occasional sickness, vacations, and other personal reasons. Absenteeism is a state when a student holds him or her distant from the school without informing. The level of absenteeism changes like month, shift, and day. Absenteeism in an institution is the routine of residing away from an institution without an actual reason.

TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM FOR STUDENTS

Following are the various types of absenteeism:

- Complete Absence: This refers to a situation where a child is admitted and enrolled in a school but does not come to school at all. There is a complete lack of presence in the school.
- Absence for a long period: A student remains absent from school continuously for a long period with or without the permission of school authorities. The reasons for such absenteeism vary from student to student.
- Irregular, short Absence: A student does not attend school punctually, may arrive late in the class in the morning or after recess, or be absent for 2-3 days in a stretch. It is not a very serious form of absence.
- Truancy or bunking off: This means skipping class work and school periods and running away from school without the school authorities' permission.

CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM

The following are the main causes for absenteeism:

1. Components related to home background

- Poverty: Poverty is one of the components that leads to absenteeism among the students. Due to poverty, parents find it difficult to pay the expenses of the education of their children.
- Illiteracy: Illiteracy and ignorance of parents are affecting the all-round development of the students, and they are deprived of the benefits of education.
- Negative Attitude: Undesirable, negative, or different parental attitudes towards education are causing absenteeism among the students.
- Supplement parental income: If families are poor or income is low, then students need to work and earn to supplement their parental income.
- Gender Discrimination: Mostly in the rural areas, the girl child is required to look after younger siblings as no one is there to take care. A female girl child sometimes has to do the local responsibilities like mopping, cooking, and gazing household work, which avoids them going to the institution. Due to this absenteeism in the institution.
- Events: Unfortunate occasions, demises, fights, unexpected visitors, weddings in the family, etc., which also lead to little absences in the institution.
- Pampered: Children who get extra pocket money from their families do not attend the classes because they require time to use the finance in leisure activities.
- Basic needs: When basic needs are not fulfilled at home, such as food, clothing, and shelter, education is usually ignored.
- Tuition/Private Coaching: Due to competition in the field of education, students who can afford it go for coaching classes, thinking that they require additional guidance, which affects absence in the institution.

2. Components concerned with student

- Attitude: Unfair or destructive thinking of a student towards education, school, teachers, curriculum, or peers causes absenteeism.
- Exam Phobia: Students feel difficulties in studies and have examination phobia.
- Lack of Interest: Students lack interest or laziness in the study, which results in difficulty in content grasping, due to which students avoid going to school.
- Inability to cope with the curriculum: Students who can't cope with the curriculum avoid going to school due to an inferiority complex.
- Students' strike: Sometimes, students go on strike on valid grounds like the teacher being partial, not teaching properly, or not teaching at all, or infrastructural problems, etc., causing absenteeism.
- Truancy: Truancy—either individual or group or bunking the classes—is a common cause of absenteeism.

- Phobic Adolescence: In the teenage stage, phobia is developed within the students as a result of physical changes in the body, like the growth of pimples, turbulent emotions, periods, etc.
- Diseases: Diseases cause absenteeism among the students. For example, asthma requires proper care and concern by the students to remain away from dust; therefore, students do not go to the school.
- Entertainment: Cinemas, hotels, and malls divert the attention of the students from attending school.
- Distractions: In this digital age, students are distracted because of tabs, smartphones, etc., which stimulates them to stay at home.
- Physical Health Condition: Students who suffer from permanent health issues do not attend classes. Unhygienic consuming ways among students additionally deteriorate the health condition.
- Psychological Health Condition: Like physical health, it can be a legal cause for absenteeism, so can Psychological Health Condition. The adolescence stage is a sensitive stage, with students coping with problems extending from educational tensions to individual and familial problems.
- Psychological Issues: Students may have problems like dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, autism, or any other psychological problems.

3. Components concerned with school

- Teacher attitude: The attitude used by teachers may not be comprehended by the students, which may direct students to lose interest in school. Punishing for attendance policy has a negative impact on students attendance too.
- Lack of Physical Resources: Inadequate sports facilities, libraries, proper school buildings and rooms, toilets, blackboards, equipment, etc., is an obstacle for student attendance in the school.
- Unconducive, uncongenial school environment: If an unconducive, uncongenial school environment means not being away from noise and air pollution, then it causes absenteeism.
- Harsh disciplinary measures: Overly harsh, exact disciplinary measures and discrepancy in allocating with regulation violations.
- Methods and procedures: Dull teaching methods or defective evaluation procedures cause absenteeism.
- Lack of motivation: Unhealthy relationships, issues with teachers' confidence, and absence of reinforcement among teachers cause absenteeism among the students.
- Frequent absenteeism: Frequent absenteeism or turnover among teachers causes absenteeism.
- Location of the school: Unfavorable site of the school or inappropriate timings and timetable.
- Lack of transport facilities: Absence of transport facilities by the school is one of the causes of absenteeism.
- Lack of Qualified Teachers: Dull character of teachers, insufficient number of teachers in the school, absence of competent teachers in the school.
- Mistreatment: Most of the students feel insecure by seniors or colleagues, due to which students might remain absent in the school.

4. Components concerned with Local Community

- Absence of Schools and Colleges: Absence of schools and colleges in the locality within walking distance causes absenteeism within the school or colleges.
- Inadequate transport facilities: Inadequate transport facilities in rural areas cause absenteeism.
- Man-Made Disasters: War, riots, bomb blasts, strikes affecting transport and communication, civil strikes, communal tensions, etc. cause absenteeism.
- Unsafe for Girl Child: Some girl students feel unsafe on the way to schools located in remote areas.

5. Components concerned with Nature

- Natural disasters: Natural disasters like floods, famines, droughts, earthquakes, excessive heat and cold, fires, heavy rains, etc. cause absenteeism.

MEASURES TO CONTROL ABSENTEEISM FOR STUDENTS

Measures for improving a school's attendance should deal with students, their parents, the community, teachers, and the school itself. Some of these measures are as follows:

- **Involve family:** If the child is remaining absent for a number of days, family members should be informed promptly. PTA meetings or regular meetings should be conducted for solving the problems of the student. Keep informing the parents about students' development.
- **Identify their home-related problems:** To help parents identify their home-related problems, if any, which hinder their child's attendance in school, and if possible, help them to identify remedies and solutions.
- **Guidance and counselling:** Students should be provided guidance and counselling, if necessary. This will involve making necessary contacts with parents.
- **Facilities:** Providing milk, mid-day meals, and free health checkups to students in the school, which will reduce absenteeism.
- **Curriculum:** The curriculum should be such that it fulfills the needs of the larger community. Including a vocational component in the syllabus and implementing it. Differentiated curricula for gifted, average, and below-average students should be developed and implemented.
- **Maintaining Stationery Banks:** Economically backward students should be provided uniforms, free books, stipends, scholarships, etc. For economically disadvantaged sections of society, education should be made as inexpensive as possible.
- **Improve school infrastructural facilities:** The community's help should be sought to develop and improve school infrastructural facilities.
- **Teaching methods:** Student-centered teaching methods should be used in schools to ensure students' active participation and to maintain interest in learning. The instructional process should be individualized.
- **Promote co-curricular and extracurricular activities:** A wide range of co-curricular activities should be provided to students for their affective and motor development as well as developing in them a sense of affiliation and loyalty towards the school.
- **Role Model:** Teachers should present before their students a model behavior from which students can learn habits like punctuality, regularity, and sincerity.
- **Create a conducive and cordial climate:** A proper climate should be created in the school to reduce staff turnover and enhance teachers' motivation and morale. The teacher should be motivated by the principal to abstain from rearranging absences from school.
- **School buildings and timings:** School buildings should be maintained regularly and should look attractive. School timings should be adjusted to the needs of the students and parents.
- **Use of Audio-visual Aids:** Appropriate use of audio-visual aids should be made while teaching.
- **Qualified staff:** Schools should make every possible effort to maintain and acquire a well-qualified staff in adequate numbers.
- **Needs and problems:** Teachers should attempt to understand a child's needs and problems and help him/her to adjust to the school environment.
- **Constructive feedback:** Constructive feedback should be given to students and parents regularly concerning students' progress.
- **Identifying the main problem:** By discussing with students, teachers can find the problem behind frequent absences. Prepared with the understanding about the students, teachers can discover the conclusions to a greater extent efficiently and effectively.
- **Clarify attendance expectations:** telephonic, regular, and prompt contact to the parents/guardians. Exactly inform attendance rules and regulations to students and their family members through the institutional website, handbook of the students, or in the meetings like PTA or others. Check the discipline aspects and monitor the student's development regularly.
- **Motivation:** Schools should equally give importance to recognizing the positive behavior of the student. Remember that positive motivation leaves a permanent impact on the development of the student. It encourages a positive environment as well as increases student-teacher relationships.

Implement awards for outstanding attendance in smaller classes and give assignments instead of punishments. Those who are having less attendance and also showcase the regular attendance sheet in the classroom can have a visual impact of their attendance.

- Positive environment: Schools are a second home for the students. Therefore, teachers provide a safe space for students. Academic performance and change in behavior of students can lead to absenteeism issues. Therefore, teachers should maintain a positive environment with students like Students should feel emotionally and physically secure so that they will not be absent in the school.
- Organizing the 'Super Mom' Contest: A prize on a monthly basis can be given to the mothers who send their children regularly to the school.
- Awards and Honours: Various awards and honours to students for motivating them to attend the class regularly. Examples: most regular student of the month award, writer of the month award, speaker of the month award, singer/dancer/artist of the month award, etc.
- Organizing Alumni Association: They are very useful in some activities like plantation, decoration, school functions, online teaching, etc.
- Arranging Guest Lectures: Experts, professionals, or skilled persons can be invited for various topics of their field and interest. Like cleanliness, use of a first aid kit, motivational speeches, medical doctors, etc.
- Edutaining: It is a combination of two words, 'educating and entertaining.'. We need to educate in a joyful way so that maximum learning will take place.
- Study material in SIMSIM form: Abbreviation stands for S—simple, I—inspiring, M—melodious, S—short, I—intelligent, and M—memorable manner.
- Showing educational short films, cartoon films, and educational slides on a computer or laptop.
- Use of AIDAS: A—Attracting Attention; I—Interest; D—Developing Desire to Know; A—Activity-Based Learning; S—Satisfaction Level of Students.
- Use of IEP: Individualized Educational Program as per the need and interest of the students.
- Effective use of social media: Use of Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and Google+.
- Innovation to ensure quality education—Presenting abstract concepts in a concrete style, Presentation in the form of stories, introducing the topic with animated videos or short movies, Use of the ELPS Technique in Mathematics, arranging educational tours, Effective use of full forms competition, pronunciation competition, syntax competition, spell-out competition, KBC Game, pooling of words technique, Issuing of monthly newspapers and educational mobile apps.

In conclusion, actively dealing with the basic demands of students can considerably reduce the absenteeism. Regular school attendance increases educational results and successive results in higher standards and the workplace. Nurturing a positive culture and developing a desire to be highly qualified is the basis to reduce absenteeism.

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