



Research Article

QUALITATIVE STUDY ON ABSENTEEISM AMONG ADOLESCENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to examine the most influential factor responsible for the problem of absenteeism among adolescents. Participants were 250 secondary school students from Amritsar city. The findings of the study reveal that among the different factors, teacher factor has found to have maximum influential on absenteeism followed by the school climate. Not only this, attitude of students is very strong factor in influencing absenteeism. Home Environment, classmate factor and e-media factor are also responsible for this problem but not so much influencing as the other factors. Gender wise qualitative analysis of trend of absenteeism of class IX shows that gender does not influence absenteeism. So teachers should make the learning of their students an interesting and enjoyable experience by considering child psychology and providing conducive school climate.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the transitional period that emerges from childhood and merges to adulthood. It refers to the period of development and adjustment that begins at around age 10 and ends at around age 21. As per the Encyclopedia of Psychology (1996), "The period of adolescence of girls is generally thirteen to twenty years, whereas in the boys it is considered to be from fifteen to twenty one years, due to climate. During this period, the establishment of childhood goes away and revolutionary process of change starts. There is tide which begins to rise in the veins of youth of the age of eleven or twelve. If that can be taken at the flood and a new voyage begun and the strength and the flow of its current we think that it will only fortune (Hodow Committee, 1993). There are three stages of adolescence viz. early (10-14), middle (15-17) and late adolescence (18-21). Each stage has its own characteristics.

Adolescence is a critical stage where individuals want to enjoy their freedom. Adolescents are egoistic regarding themselves as the sole object of interest and the centre of the self sacrifice and devotion. They have varied interests, needs and desires. Some needs and desires are compatible with society which they fulfill by remaining within the boundaries of family and school. But some of their desires and expectations cannot be fulfilled by remaining in discipline.

Among such types include those who are not satisfied with their home conditions, those who lack social acceptance in the prestigious crowds of their schools and those who experience many problems characteristic of adolescence.

Many adolescents are motivated by a desire for independence from family restrictions, by a desire to increase their social acceptance by conforming to the pattern of behaviour set by leaders in the peer group or by a desire for adventure of school expectation. For fulfilling their needs, they have to break the boundaries of discipline and start remaining absent from the school. School children are inclined not to go to school or choose not to attend certain classes during the school hours (Davies and Lee, 2006). Absenteeism is a period of time when a student does not attend school (Teasley, 2004). School absenteeism is an alarming problem among secondary school students regardless of gender, race and religion. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) stated that the focus of student absenteeism ranges from early schooling until adolescent years.

Absenteeism in school is the habit of staying away from school without providing any genuine reason for not attending classes. It is a truant behavior that negatively affects the performance among students. It may indicate low performance of students, dissatisfaction with the school's services, lack of poor academic and non-academic structures or policies that influence or reinforce this behavior. Thus, absenteeism is a critical factor lurking within academic institutions and shaking their psychological and cognitive stability. Students who stay away from school without permission will not only be left behind in the learning process, but they indulge in bad activities like drug abuse, gangsterism, alcohol consumption, free sex, gambling and loitering etc.

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Attendance in school is important because students are more likely to succeed in academics when they attend school consistently (Pascopella, 2007) and successful in their future professional lives (Kearney and Graczyk, 2014). Absenteeism is one of the most basic indicators of to what extent the educational needs of students are met by schools. If the students are turning their back on the education they are provided, it means that we need to ask ourselves the questions of “What is wrong in this education?” and “Is something happening in our schools and classrooms that distract students from education?” (Shute and Cooper, 2015). It becomes difficult for teachers and students to build skills and progress if large numbers of students are frequently absent. In addition to falling behind in academics, students who are not in school on a regular basis are more likely to get into trouble with the law and cause problems in their communities (Hocking, 2008).

Ubogu (2004) identified illness, permitted leave, voluntary absenteeism as common forms of absenteeism. There are many factors that make children to stay away from school without permission. Some of these factors include influence of peers (Suseladery, 2004), fear of being bullied (Rumberger and Palardy, 2005), fear of teachers, dislike of certain subjects, thinking that they will fail (Thi, 1994), low self-esteem (Lotz and Lee, 1999) and no encouragement from parents or family problems (Yatim, 1999). Lack of libraries, sports facilities, challenging/interesting course work and curriculum (Williams,2000) and poor teaching skills, hunger (Wadesango and Machingambi, 2011) Issues related to the student's physical and mental health appears directly related to student attendance (Kearney, 2008). Annual colds, flu, and assorted other adulthood ailments clearly contribute to school absenteeism (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012). Mental health conditions like anxiety often manifest themselves in the form of school refusal or school avoidance behaviors (King and Bernstein, 2001). Besides these factors poverty, and family responsibilities keep the adolescents away from school (Balfanz and Byrnes, 2012).

Absenteeism have effects on students, teachers, other students and school. Irregular, inconsistent attendance is a contributing factor of poor academic achievement, lack of participation in school programs, negative teacher/student relationships, discipline problems, delayed graduation, and school dropout (Smith and Williams, 2007), career problems, poor social skills (Reid, 2005), have negative perceptions regarding school (Raymond, 2008), miss out on assignments and as a result, they are more likely to underachieve or perform poorly (Reid, 2005). It also influences the in-class planning of teachers and at the same time the motivations of the other students in the class (Thornton, Darmody and McCoy, 2013). All of these factors lower the motivation in students to learn; therefore they hang around at other places or loitering.

So absenteeism among students is a perennial problem. The problems of absenteeism begin in primary school and continue 13 into secondary school, which makes early intervention necessary to try to prevent students from continuing on this path throughout their educational experiences (Reid, 2005). A major problem facing schools is how to effectively deal with student absenteeism and truancy (DeSocio, VanCura, Nelson, Hewitt, Kitzman, and Cole 2007).

In order to prevent and correct serious attendance problems, school need to change the way they structured, improves the

quality of the courses and intensity personal relationships between teachers and students (Epstein and Sheldon, 2002).It is an alarming problem for administrators, teachers, parents, and the society, in general, as well as for the students, in particular. Absenteeism affects student’s ability to achieve high in examinations or result in wastage and dropout. Students who have spent time in attending lectures or classes have a significant effect on their classroom performance. Keeping in view the effects of absenteeism on students, investigator felt to undertook this study and try to find out root cause of absenteeism among IX class students and the remedies for the student’s absenteeism.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The present study is aimed at ‘Qualitative study on absenteeism among Adolescent students’.

Research Design

Qualitative survey was employed for the study.

Sample of Study

The sample comprised of 250 adolescent students of ninth class, randomly selected from the Government schools of Amritsar city.

Tool Used

Self constructed questionnaire on absenteeism was used to collect the data.

Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative Study of Absenteeism among Adolescents (N=250)

For the qualitative analysis of trend of absenteeism among adolescent students of class IX, self constructed questionnaire on Absenteeism was administered. The factors responsible for absenteeism on each type were pooled and transformed into percentages which have been depicted through the pie diagram. As per the study, the root cause of absenteeism is found to be Teacher Factor (TF). Out of total 250 students, 32% of students are absent because of TF (vide table 1). 32% of TF (vide table 1) contributes to the absenteeism among adolescents. Followed by teacher factor’, 21% of students absent because of School Environment Factor (SEF) The table 1 further shows that students remain absent due to their own will i.e. 15% of students remain absent due to Student factor (SF). Besides these factors, Home Environment Factor (HEF), Classmate Factor (CMF), e-Media Factor (EMF) also led the students to remain absent from school. The results are shown in table 1 and figure 1.

Table 1 Showing the percentage of different factors responsible for absenteeism for the total sample (N=250) of IX class

Factor →	TF	SEF	SF	HEF	CMF	EMF
N ↓						
Total (250)	32	21	15	10.27	10.16	10.06

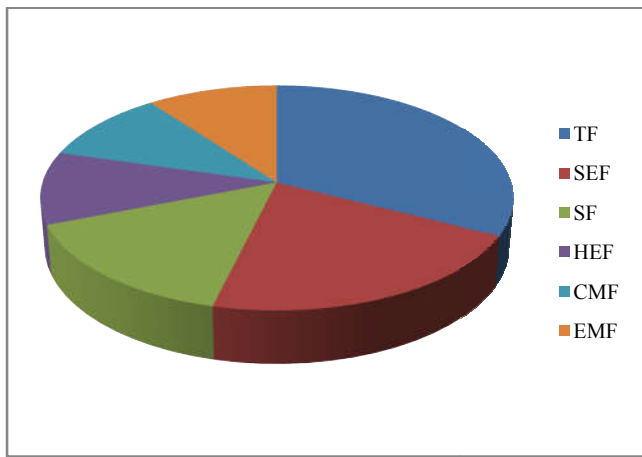


Figure 1 Showing the percentage of different rates of factors responsible for absenteeism for the total sample (N=250)

DISCUSSION

From the Table 1, it is clear that Teacher Factor is found to be the most influential factor related to absenteeism with Mean 27.11 and SD 8.57. 32% of absenteeism is teacher oriented. It is because that teachers are the role model for the students but if their teaching is not effective and interesting i.e. their teaching style does not matches with the learning style of students and if their behavior is very rude towards students in the classroom then there will not be a congenial environment in class and students will remain absent from classroom. The results are in line with the findings of Pehlivan (2006) who found that the major reason given by students for non-attendance at lecture or school were bored at school, dislike of school and lessons and lack of expectations about education. Followed by the Teacher Factor, the other factors which led to the students' absenteeism from class are School Environment Factor (SEF) with Mean 18.01 and SD 5.82. The reason for this factor is that students feel school environment boring because of longer school working hours and less activities being organized by school make them feel school environment burdensome. Simons, Hwang, Fitzgerald, Kielb, and Lin (2010) found that there are an association between absenteeism of student and unfavorable school setting conditions.

Another factor that is responsible for absenteeism among students is Student Factor (SF) with Mean 12.99 and SD 4.34. The main reason for this factor is at this stage of adolescence students want to remain awake till late at night in order to perform various activities which entertain them so they get late for school in the morning. Another main reason for this factor is that their poor performance in tests/exams also discourage them due to it they want to remain absent from school. The findings are supported by the study of Watkins and Watkins (1994) who found that student absenteeism was predicted by academic failure, low school effort and previous grades.

The remaining three factors i.e. Home Environment Factor (HEF) with Mean 8.59 and SD 2.96, Class-mate Factor (CMF) with Mean 8.50 and SD 3.06 and E-Media Factor (EMF) with Mean 8.41 and SD 3.13 are having least influence on absenteeism. At this stage, adolescents wants to enjoy the freedom and do whatever they want to do so they indulge in various bad activities and remain absent from school. Parents do not take care of their wards and also do not have time to take interest in the studies of their children. The unhealthy relationships with their class-mates make the students to

remain absent from school for a longer period of time. Ingul, Klöckner, Silverman, and Nordahl (2012) found that school absenteeism associated with internalizing and externalizing behavior, family work and health, and school environment. In another study, Henry (2007) has noted that parents' education levels contribute to students' absenteeism. Peers are also found to have influenced students absenting themselves from school by the study conducted by Shubari (2000). In order to reduce their stress due to physical, emotional, mental changes at the stage of adolescence, game parlors are the favorite places for students; so they use e-media to entertain themselves and do not like to go to school for study.

Gender Wise Qualitative Analysis

For gender wise qualitative analysis of trend of absenteeism of class IX, self constructed questionnaire on Absenteeism was administered. The factors responsible for absenteeism on each type were pooled and transformed into percentages which have been depicted in the table 2 and figure 2 (a) and 2 (b).

Table 2 Showing the percentage of different factors responsible for absenteeism for the girls (N=125) and boys (N=125) of IX class.

Factor	TF	SEF	SF	HEF	CMF	EMF
Girls (125)	32	21	15	10.22	10.16	10.14
Boys (125)	32	21	15	10.32	10.17	9.0

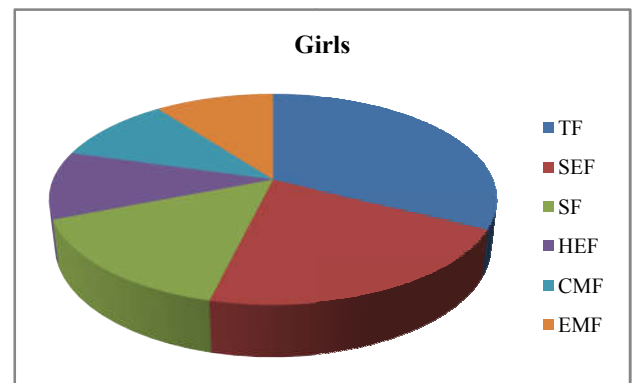


Figure 2 a Showing the percentage of different rates of factors responsible for absenteeism for the total girls (N=125).

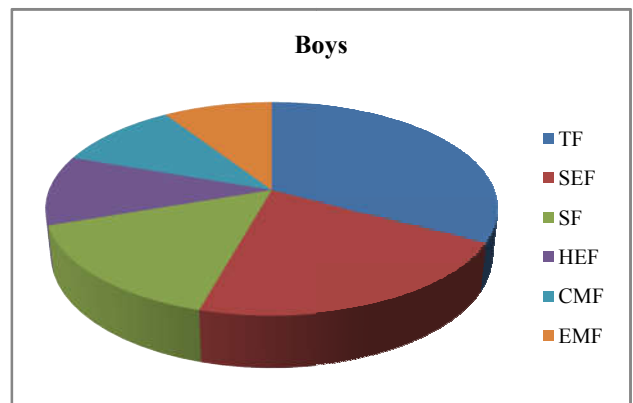


Figure 2 b Showing the percentage of different rates of factors responsible for absenteeism for the total boys (N=125).

From the table 2, it is clear that root cause of absenteeism in both boys and girls is teacher factor. All other factors are also responsible for absenteeism. The results are in consistent with the total sample (N=250). But table 2 further reveals that in both boys and girls, percentage of students who remain absent

is almost same with minor differences. These differences may be due to error chance. So to further identify whether these factors are contributing significantly in boys and girls, a score range was used. To investigate gender wise contribution of these factors towards absenteeism, Mean and SD of each of the factor was calculated.

In order to further investigate contribution of these factors towards absenteeism among IX class boys and girls, Mean and SD of each of the factor was calculated. The results are shown in the table 3.

Table 3 Showing the Mean and SD of each of the factor contributing toward absenteeism among IX Class boys and girls.

Factors	Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value
Student Factor	Boys	6.54	2.14	0.32785
	Girls	6.459	2.20	5
Class-mate Factor	Boys	4.266	1.567	0.10332
	Girls	4.24	1.506	3
Teacher Factor	Boys	13.57	4.25	0.05534
	Girls	13.54	4.32	7
School Environment Factor	Boys	9.032	2.84	0.13579
	Girls	8.983	2.983	7
Home Environment Factor	Boys	4.33	1.496	0.37390
	Girls	4.26	1.47	9
Media Factor	Boys	4.185	1.58	0.25257
	Girls	4.233	1.55	

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

Table 3 reveals that there is no gender difference among adolescents of IX class with respect to absenteeism. It means that both girls and boys remain absent due to factor discussed above. Gender does not influence absenteeism. The above results are in line with the findings of Ambalan (2014) who found difference between boys and girls to the absenteeism.

Remedies

In order to solve the problem of absenteeism, following recommendations should be followed:

1. Teachers are said to be the role model for students so it is the duty to make the learning of their students an interesting and joyful experience. For it they should match their teaching style with the learning style of students. Besides this, they should be punctual, polite as well as sympathetic in order to develop healthy relations with their students.
2. School is an institution where students spend much of their time. School Climate play an important role to develop habit among students to regularly come to school. School climate should be congenial and longer working hours should be avoided. Time-table of the school should be framed in such a way, that students can get quality education in optimum period of time. Norms of the school should be flexible enough so as to organize adequate number of co-curricular activities as well as PT meets from time to time.
3. Education provided to students in class related to various areas of discipline should be according to their mental level, age, interests, aptitude, and previous knowledge in order to make the teaching effective in classroom. By doing so they cannot feel sleepy and always be ready to learn new knowledge with curiosity.
4. Education of every child directly depends on the home environment and attitude of their parents towards

studies. So, it should be the duty of parents to become aware about the role of studies in the future growth of their child. They should be more interested in all the activities of the school as well as studies of their child. They should regularly send their children to school and allow the PT meets.

5. Relationship with the class-mates plays an important role in order to develop various social qualities such as cooperativeness, we-feeling, kindness, friendliness and leadership ability. So it should be the duty of the teacher to develop healthy relationship between all the class-mates in order to make class environment conducive and comfortable for students.
6. No doubt; nowadays, e-media plays an important role to educate the students. But teacher should try to relate it to the studies so that they can make qualitative use of it for their studies.

Educational Implications

From the research findings, it is clear that:

1. There is an immediate need for the school's authorities to review the current attendance policies.
2. The teachers need to have a clear understanding about their role in responding to student attendance concerns and deliberating their teaching duties.
3. A leadership approach should be followed and allow students and families to interact with school authorities and share their issues. Teachers and school authorities must respond to and support the true issues.
4. Teachers must look at all the classroom interactions that are taking place between classmates. By doing so she can easily come to know about classroom environment.
5. Warmth friendliness, An understanding is the teacher trait that are related to students attitude to keep the students in the classes, teacher should continue to be warmth and friendly.
6. School authorities must plan and monitor curricular as well as co-curricular activities carefully. As these are keys to keep students in the school.
7. School authorities must engross the students in stimulating activities.

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