

Full Length Research Paper

Measures to Curb Absenteeism in Primary Schools in Iganga District

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ABSTRACT: This research looked at the strategies used to reduce absenteeism among students. The study used a cross-sectional methodology to collect data from 80 respondents, including five head teachers, 25 teachers, and 50 students from five primary schools. Purposive sampling was used for the head teachers who were directly included, and convenience sampling was used for the teachers and learners whose numbers were ascertained with the need to adhere to the COVID-19 standard operation procedure of not having too many respondents in one place at the same time. In addition, the study population was divided into instructors, head teachers, and learners using a stratified sampling technique. Questionnaires and a focus group discussion guide were used in the research. Background information was presented in summary graphs and charts, and findings were summarized in tables and then assessed using percentages in accordance with the objectives. Qualitative findings, on the other hand, were presented and analyzed thematically using verbatim. The findings revealed that absenteeism is common in primary schools in Bukoyo parish, as evidenced by the constant turnover of students, with the number of students attending school on Monday steadily decreasing as the week progresses. This pattern of occurrences has resulted in missed classes and a shortage of materials for assessments. Parents should take on primary responsibilities such as escorting students to school, punishing truants, and holding meetings and visits to students' homes to do extensive follow-up and keep parents informed about their children.

Keywords: Absenteeism, measures, primary schools' pupils, Iganga District

INTRODUCTION

According to Alison (2017), absenteeism is a pattern in which a student is routinely and frequently absent from school, especially without justification or permission to explain why he or she missed or missed school. A growing awareness of the importance of learner behavior and school atmosphere as determinants of academic performance, as well as a growing acknowledgment that schools have a role in fostering the "whole kid," has focused attention on indicators that go beyond traditional math and reading competence assessments. This idea has been enshrined by the enactment of Every Learner Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, which compels states to report a nontraditional measure of learner success (Chang, Hedy, Sundius, and Wiener, 2017). Most states in the United States of America have chosen to comply

with ESSA by using measures associated with learner absenteeism and particularly chronic absenteeism to respond to the question about how much missing school affects performance (Chang et al., 2017). Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2015 shows that about one in five learners missed three days of school or more in the month before they took the mathematics assessment. Native American learners were the most likely to have missed school, while Asian learners were rarely absent (Emma and Weiss, 2018).

Learner absenteeism determines their success or failure, respectively, in Pretoria, South Africa (Schmulian and Coetzee, 2011). This is because most learners require supervision by teachers to read or study something, as in the case of most Somaliland

universities. A Kenyan study identified a relationship between chronic absenteeism and learner literacy at the national level; higher rates of learner absenteeism are correlated with lower literacy scores at both the 8th and 12th grade.

By staying absent without good reason, learners develop a lack of interest in the education provided to them, and in such environments, teachers ask themselves questions such as "What is wrong with our schooling?" and "Is there anything distressing learners in class from schooling?" (Shute and Cooper, 2015). Therefore, absenteeism, whether at higher institutions, basic education, or even at the workplace, is an acute problem, and the cost of it destroys the country's quality of education (Chauke, 2012).

Educahatter (2010) notes that governments, school management teams, and communities have tried to come up with measures aimed at engaging learners and promoting active learning through roll-calls in classrooms; engaging parents to establish and respond to causes; among other measures. However, these have not led to a reduction in learners' absenteeism.

According to Bimbler et al. (2001), predictors of absenteeism and truancy can be found both inside and outside the school environment, manifesting as school conditions, home-based behavioral issues, psychological issues, family background, school-based behavioral issues, peer issues, and a lack of motivation or interest in school. Keaney (2008) notes that the causes of absenteeism are discussed in some of the recent reviews of literature regarding learner absenteeism, truancy, and school avoidance behavior, though quite limited information is available, especially in rural areas of countries like Uganda.

Lombardy (2011) conducted a study on the after effects of school absenteeism and linked it to poor school academic performance; failure to make positive follow-up of academic programs; losing close contacts with teachers; being sent out of school; detaching from good friends; and failure to attempt basic academic problems in subjects like mathematics, which require regular attendance.

In Bulamagi Sub County, although teachers take roll-calls every day, most schools currently register high learner absenteeism resulting from unclear factors (Mugaya, 2013). The problem is to the effect that in many schools it is not realized because the number of learners continues to increase day by day, thus creating difficulty for school managers and teachers in recognizing it (Muhamood, 2014). Muhamood points out that in a school of 200 learners with 95 percent average daily attendance, 30 percent (or 60) of the learners could be missing nearly a month of school (i.e., chronically absent) over the course of a school year. However, most of the research attempts available do a lot to inform readers that learners' absenteeism is really a serious problem in schools. Besides, almost 34 percent of the available

information on absenteeism does not specifically explain the implications of learners' absenteeism on their academic performance.

Objectives

To establish the state of learners' absenteeism in primary schools in Bulamagi Sub County, Iganga District.

To analyze measures put in place to curb learners' absenteeism in primary schools in Bulamagi Sub County, Iganga District.

Literature review

The state of learners' absenteeism in primary schools

Absent from school: Going to school regularly is crucially important for a learner's education and social skills. Chronically absent learners are at a disadvantage both socially and academically. However, research available by Kaliisa (2010) shows that learners' absenteeism from school is a serious problem affecting primary schools throughout Africa. In Nigeria, for instance, the study reveals that close to a quarter of learners who attend elementary education disappear from school for several days without clear reasons.

In Eastern Uganda, Hamuuzza (2012) noticed that the rate of absenteeism is so high that there is no single school in the region that can register the positive attendance of learners in school on a regular basis. Therefore, unless stringent measures are put in place, absenteeism is likely to continue eating up the education system and particularly sustain the poor level of performance.

In certain areas, learners attend school but decide to be absent in classes. This is especially common in urban schools. Alison (2017)'s results on the rate of absenteeism in various parts of Africa demonstrated that almost 12 of the total learners declared absent are just absent from classrooms but present at the school compound. In other words, for unknown reasons, learners choose to come to school but fail to attend classes.

Another category of absenteeism is discussed in relation to the percentage of learners that attend examinations and tests. It has been discovered that in some schools, though few, learners do absent themselves from examinations. At certain points, they dodge tests on claims that they were not alerted in time so that they could become prepared to do the tests (Theodre, 2018).

In one study conducted in Southern Uganda, learner absenteeism was found to be at 43.6%, being higher among females (51%) than males (49%). Regarding the dates of absence, 10% of the learners were absent on Fridays, and they took advantage of parents' absence in

their homes (which often occurs on Fridays) to also be absent from school (Alice, Donlan, Prescott, Jonathan, and Zaff, 2016).

One report noted that learners' absenteeism in Jamaica is highest in some geographical locations of the island due to the harvest time in the agricultural sector (Inter-American Development Bank, 2006). Thompson (2008) noted that learner absenteeism is at its highest in the parishes of Clarendon, St. Catherine, and St. Mary.

More than 6.5 million students, or 13% of all students in the United States, are chronically absent. That figure includes 18 percent of all high school learners, or 3 million learners, and 11 percent of elementary school learners, or 3.5 million learners. In high school, 20 percent or more of black, Latino, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students, as well as multiracial students and those still learning English, are chronically absent (Lauren, 2016).

One report by the U.S. Department of Education (USED) identifies "chronic absenteeism" as a hidden educational crisis. In 2013-14, approximately 14% of learners nationwide were chronically absent, defined as missing 10% or more of school days, excused or unexplained, which corresponded to approximately 18 days of school missed per year in most states. Some cities have much higher rates, with Detroit topping the list with 57.3 percent of students chronically absent (Brian, Kelly, and Jacob, 2017).

In developing countries, approximately 72 million school-age learners in developing countries were not in school, with 35 million of these learners in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO 2008). In addition, research conducted in various developing countries suggests that the learners who are not in school are disproportionately female, impoverished, and rural, and in some instances, these learners are doubly disadvantaged if they are female and belong to poor families or if they are female and reside in rural areas. These learners are less likely to acquire the benefits of education as they transition into adulthood (Kazeem, Jensen, and Shannon, 2015).

Learners behave according to their personal views of the world at any given moment, and to understand another's behavior, one may try to see the world through his or her eyes (Barton and Coley, 2009). Much of an individual's behavior is influenced by past experiences, which change over time and can make learning possible or difficult (Benard, 2004). By helping learners examine the broader implications of their behaviors, they can help weigh alternatives to their actions before they experience consequences. Perceptions change from moment to moment and those that relate to one's sense of identity command the greatest attention, which significantly influences behaviors. Individuals (learners) strive to behave in ways that are consistent with the views they hold of themselves (Adams and Barombarg, 2014). A learner who believes he or she is no good in school behaves in such a manner to reinforce the perception

and vice versa (DonovanKirk, 2008).

Transport was cited as a problem partly responsible for high learner absenteeism in the district. The majority (48.3%) of the sampled learners reside in a radius of between 2–5 kilometers, 27.9% within a radius of more than 5 kilometers, while 23.7% reside within a radius of less than 2 kilometers. 20% of students live more than 5 kilometers from their schools, walking long distances, getting tired, and sometimes failing to report on Mondays, especially if they left school late on Friday. 3.3% of the learners are absent for close to two days a month to collect their salaries because the nearest collection point (bank) is based in an urban center.

Measures to curb learners' absenteeism

There are various ways of curbing absenteeism to enhance the academic performance of learners in primary schools, including attendance monitoring. Effective monitoring helps educators and communities to effectively identify learners who are most at-risk of becoming chronically absent. This explains why researchers and policy-makers have increasingly focused on early-warning systems as an important measure in preventing learner absenteeism and truancy. Early-warning systems "use routinely available data housed at the school that are good predictors of whether a learner is likely to drop out of school (Heppen and Therriault, 2018).

Health-related efforts Reducing the transmission of common illnesses through aggressive hand washing programs and improving the quality of school ventilation are two valuable steps that schools and districts can take to improve learner attendance. Absenteeism due to common illnesses and health issues is largely confined to elementary-aged learners, with most research efforts focusing exclusively on this age group (Benbenisty and Astor, 2015).

The program included instruction on proper hygiene and hand washing by the classroom teacher; an age-appropriate video on the importance of hand washing; and a pamphlet distributed to learners with age-appropriate activities with a hand washing focus. The outcomes of the implementation of the "Buddies Hand Washing Program" showed a 50.6% decrease in absences in the test group compared to the control group. Similar results have been obtained using the same program in Detroit (McCargar, 2014).

Improving Respiratory Health through Improved Ventilation: School districts and school personnel can improve learner attendance by increasing classroom ventilation and taking steps to improve learner respiratory health. Given that asthma is one of the leading predictors of learner absences, improvements in classroom and school air quality have been closely associated with improvements in learner attendance (Alice et al., 2016). Schools can also improve attendance by ensuring that

maintenance medications for asthma, such as inhaled corticosteroids, are provided to learners on a regular basis. Halteman and colleagues (2014) conducted a randomized control trial with urban learners. Inhaled corticosteroids were provided to learners on a daily basis at school. The study reported that providing this medication resulted in fewer school absences and more days without symptoms (Attar-Schwartz, 2019).

Enhancing school culture and community: School culture is related to school avoidance behaviors as well as learner perceptions of the school. As stated previously, school-avoidance and refusal behavior have a noticeable effect on rates of chronic absenteeism and truancy (Kearney, 2018). The school's culture often serves as a catalyst for school avoidance behaviors. The presence of bullying, fights, discriminatory practices or language, as well as poor learner-teacher relationships, all contribute to the learner's reluctance to attend school. Research suggests that efforts to improve schools and communities should focus on teacher-learner relationships as well as the learning environment (Stewart, 2018).

Increasing Learner Engagement: Changing instructional practices and emphasizing greater personalization and learner engagement might also improve attendance as it results in increased levels of learner engagement. The literature on learner engagement indicates that there are five strategies classroom teachers can adopt to promote higher levels of learner engagement. First, teachers can work to promote learning that is relevant to the learners and the world that they live in. Second, teachers can improve learner engagement by introducing various forms of instructional technology. This includes computers, as well as scientific equipment, multi-media, internet resources, industrial tools, and other forms of portable communication equipment.

Third, Ramaley and Zia (2015) suggest that learners are most engaged in classrooms that are positive, challenging, and open. They refer to these classrooms as 'transparent learning climates', which describes conditions that promote risk-taking in learning. Fourth, classrooms that feature positive "peer-to-peer" relationships between learners and teachers promote improved learner engagement.

Scholars have also suggested that involving parents as part of the team working to improve learner attendance may be effective (Sheverbush et al., 2016). Sheverbush et al. (2014) specifically note the importance of emphasizing solutions that come from families as opposed to schools. Implementation of strategies aimed at developing family, school, and community partnerships has proven effective in increasing daily attendance rates as well as decreasing chronic absence.

Epstein and Sheldon (2014) identified key program elements in building partnerships to reduce absences, including: making home visits to families of chronically absent learners; rewarding learners for improved

attendance; establishing a contact person at school for parents to work with; calling home when learners are absent; conducting workshops for families about attendance; referring chronically absent learners to counselors; using a truant officer to work with problem learners and families.

Schools that focused on increasing attendance by implementing strategies with these key elements showed a more substantial increase in daily attendance rates from one year to the next for participating schools, as well as a two percent decrease in chronic absence. Furthermore, schools that provided after-school programs had higher increases in daily attendance and lower chronic absence rates than schools that did not provide after-school programs (Attar-Schwartz, 2019).

Court-Based and Law Enforcement Interventions: Court-based interventions have been shown to reduce the incidence of truancy (Mueller et al., 2016). These programs bring truant learners before a judge or representative of the juvenile justice system. In most cases, the judge or juvenile justice official informs the learner's parents of their child's attendance and works with the parents to develop an agreement between the parents and the court to improve the child's attendance. In some cases, these conversations provide opportunities to identify needed social and family support without which the learner has been unable to attend school (Bazemore et al., 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Research design

A cross-sectional design was adopted in this study. This type of design was combined with the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

Study area

The study was conducted in Bulamagi Sub County, specifically in five primary schools, namely; Canon Ibula primary school, CMS Parents Primary School, Bukoyo primary school, Walugogo primary school, and Bulowooza primary school.

Study population and sample size of the study

Participants included learners mainly from primary seven (10 per school), teachers (5 per school-including one class teacher) and head teachers of these schools. The learners were included because they are at the center of absenteeism as an unacceptable vice, while teachers forerun programs that either increase or reduce the vice, and head teachers are school managers, who are responsible for programs that favor teachers and learners to fulfill their roles in school. The table below shows the study population by category and sample size as

Table 1: Population and sample size of the study.

No	Category	Number per school	Number targeted
1.	Head teachers	1	5
2.	Teachers	5	25
3.	learners	10	50
	Total	16	80

included in the study. According to (Table 1), sixteen (16) respondents were considered for each school, combining head teachers, teachers, and primary six learners. The total sample used was 80 respondents. The sample size was obtained using purposive sampling for the head teachers, who were directly included, and convenience sampling for the teachers and learners, whose numbers were determined by the need to be mindful of the COVID-19 standard operation procedure of not having many respondents in one place at a time. In addition, a stratified sampling technique was used to categorize the study population into teachers, head teachers, and learners.

Instruments of data collection

An instrument of data collection refers to a tool or guide which contains questions or guidelines for the researcher and respondents to make meaningful research exercises without operating outside the topic. The study was conducted using two research instruments as follows:

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a tool of data collection containing questions set following the objectives of study (Wallace, 2012). This instrument is normally divided into sections, and each section covers one objective. This tool of data collection was used to obtain data from teachers and head teachers.

Focus group discussion guide

This tool is normally used to generate data through face-to-face interactions and an exchange of views with respondents. The FDG was used to obtain responses from learners. Learners were grouped into tens and each school had one FDG to which oral questions were asked and responses noted down, respectively.

Procedure to data collection

The first step was approval of the proposal by the assigned supervisor at Kampala University. The researcher received permission to go to the field from the supervisor. Respondents were briefed about the intentions of this study, especially raising assurance to them that it was purely academic and not intended for any other individual or group benefits.

The researcher distributed questionnaires and collected data from various respondents. At the same time, the researcher made arrangements with class teachers to meet with learners in groups. The groups were selected in such a way that, out of the ten learners in a group per school, five were females and five were males. Each was given an opportunity to respond, though most of the responses were oral. The researcher made frequent follow-ups with the respondents to remind class teachers, teachers, and head teachers of the questionnaires in order to meet the period allowed to receive them back.

After data collection, the researcher screened the data for accuracy and computed it for analysis. This was done immediately after collecting the data.

After computing the data, the researcher interpreted the findings with close follow-up by the assigned supervisors to complete the book for submission.

Data presentation and analysis

Data presentation and analysis involves editing, coding, classification, and tabulation. Editing for consistency was done to see whether the answers to questions obtained from the respondents were consistent. Data from questionnaires were presented and analyzed numerically using frequency distribution tables, graphs, and pie charts, while qualitative findings were presented and analyzed descriptively to support numerical findings. Wherever applicable, verbatim was used to express the original views of respondents, especially those from the focus discussion.

Ethical considerations

The study was conducted according to the ethical values of the community. In the first case, the study was purely academic and only questions in line with the study objectives were used as a guide for investigations. To avoid diverting from the aim of the study, no issues outside the study topic were discussed. In addition, after compiling the report, questionnaires were burnt to avoid misuse of study data by other people who would possibly access the sheets. Each respondent was accorded equal respect to ensure that they gave good responses without any bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The background information of respondents was

investigated in terms of their age-set, gender type, and experience at work. Each of these was summarized in a graph showing percentage distribution.

Results on age-set of respondents

Figure 1 indicated that results were obtained from respondents (teachers and head teachers) who were defined by more than one age-set thus enriching the results. The age-set of respondents revealed that the three age-sets of respondents were represented differently, with the highest percentage of results (39%) showing respondents in the age-set of 30–39 years old, followed by 33 percent showing respondents in the age-set of 40 years and above (all the 3 head teachers belonged to this category). The final category had a 28 percent representation of teachers aged 20 to 29.

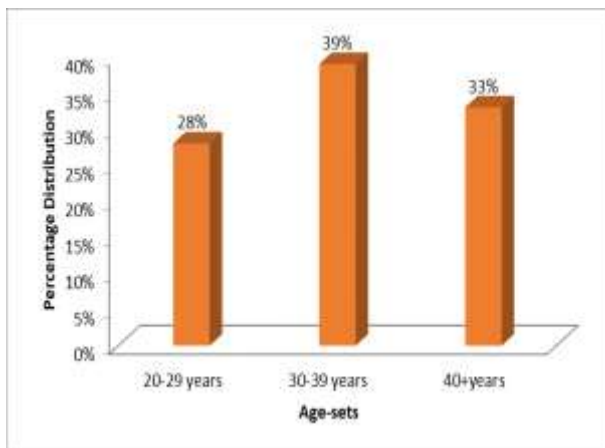


Figure 1: Percentage distribution of results by age-set

Gender type of respondents

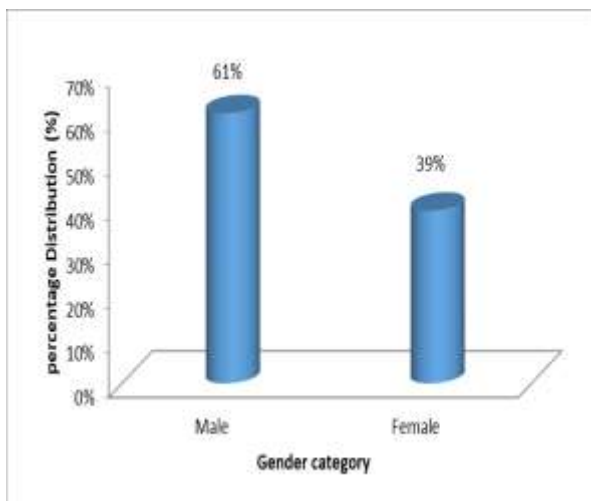


Figure 2: Gender type of respondents

Gender type was studied using two measures-male and female whereby each respondent was supposed to tick the category they belonged to. This led to obtained results from both genders as illustrated in (Figure 2). Figure 2 clearly illustrates that of the two category genders, male respondents received the highest percentage (61%) of responses, while female respondents received 39%. The ratio of males was discovered to be excessive since male teachers outnumbered female teachers on the staff lists of all five primary schools. The reasons for this were not looked into.

The working experience of respondents

Job experience was determined by the number of years a respondent had worked as a professional teacher by the time this survey was completed. The respondents were given three employment periods to choose from: less than one year, one to five years, and more than five years. The data obtained to this effect is depicted in (Figure 3). Figure 3 demonstrates that by the time this study was done in October of 2017, 67 percent of all respondents from whom data was obtained had been in service for more than five years.

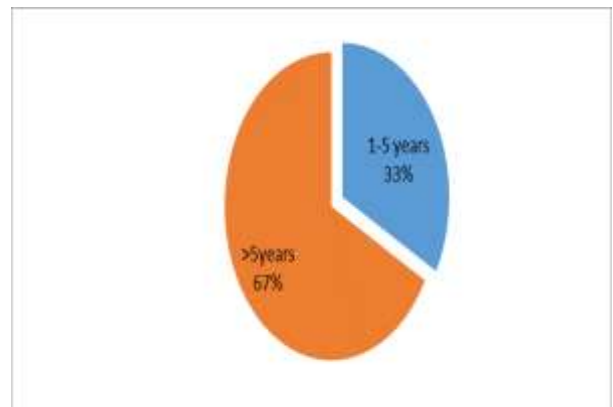


Figure 3: Percentage distribution of results by working experience.

Presentation of results about the state of absenteeism in selected primary schools

The study question "What is the situation of learners' absenteeism in primary schools in Bukoyo Parish, Bulamagi Sub County, Iganga District?" is answered in this subsection.

The notification concerning the status of absenteeism was given for two years, with term II being picked at random. Class teachers were in charge of answering this question, and they were given the responsibility of comparing roll-calls in registers and then calculating the average attendance rate for each day of the week based on regular attendance. Table 2 depicts the average level

Table 2: State of learners' absenteeism in term II 2018 for selected p/s

School Name	No. of learners	Average Number Present on various days				
		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
School A	162	121	109	117	125	120
School B	153	142	145	143	145	Below 140
School C	77	35	32	42	31	Less than 50
School D	208	171	163	154	153	162
School E	153	142	138	136	133	144

Table 3: An average rate of absenteeism in term II 2019 for selected p/s

School Name	No. of learners	Numbers normally present on various days				
		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
School A	182	171	163	165	161	Below 170
School B	174	164	168	168	167	151
School C	64	52	50	50	48	43
School D	80	52	56	40	49	40
School E	198	162	156	150	143	160

of absenteeism in the five primary schools in Bukoyo Parish, Bulamagi Sub County, as of term II. The trend of absenteeism in all five primary schools, as shown in (Table 2), demonstrates that as the days of the week progressed, learners' absenteeism grew, detracting from the total number of students registered. In reality, there hasn't been a single day since Monday when learners have attended to the full number of students who are meant to be in class.

In school A, a total of 162 students were enrolled in primary seven in 2018. On Mondays, an average of 41 students were absent, while on Fridays, an average of 42 students were absent. The average rate of absenteeism for School B, on the other hand, was not as high as it was for the other two schools, A and C. Table 3 shows that the overall number of primary seven students registered by schools A and B grew somewhat in 2019. Absenteeism, on the other hand, persisted, despite the fact that the average number of pupils absent on weekdays had reduced dramatically. On Mondays, an average of 11 students from school A were absent, and the difference between 2018 and 2019 is not significant for the other days of the week. The same may be said of schools' B and C. However, when compared to 2018, the number of candidates registered in school C decreased slightly in 2019.

The trend in absenteeism for all five primary schools shows that as the week progressed, learners' attendance decreased, reducing the total number of students registered. The findings show that no one day, beginning on Monday, has had a total attendance of learners. This is in accordance with studies published by Kaliisa (2010), which indicate that student absenteeism is a severe problem affecting elementary schools across Africa. In Nigeria, for example, the survey found that about a quarter of elementary school students miss multiple day of school for no apparent reason.

On Mondays, an average of 41 students were absent, while on Fridays, an average of 42 students were absent. The average rate of absenteeism for School B, on the other hand, was not as high as it was for the other two schools, A and C. These findings are consistent with data from Eastern Uganda, where Hamuza (2012) discovered that absenteeism is so prevalent that no single school in the region can consistently record the positive attendance of students. As a result, unless drastic steps are taken, absenteeism will continue to wreak havoc on the educational system, particularly in terms of maintaining low levels of performance.

In certain locations, students attend school but choose to skip courses. This is particularly prevalent in urban schools. The findings of Alison (2017) on the rate of absenteeism in various parts of Africa revealed that nearly a quarter of all students deemed missing are just absent from classrooms but present on the school grounds. In other words, students opt to come to school but do not attend lessons for unknown reasons.

According to Lauren (2016), more than 6.5 million pupils in the United States are chronically absent, accounting for 13% of all students. This includes 18% of all high school students, or 3 million students, and 11% of elementary school students, or 3.5 million students. At least 20% of black, Latino, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander pupils, as well as multiracial kids and English learners, are chronically absent in high school.

Measures put in place to curb absenteeism of pupils

The last particular goal was to define or identify the strategies in place in Bulamagi Sub County to reduce pupil absence in elementary schools. This was supposed to lead to suggestions for how to improve academic achievement in the future.

Table 4: Measures put in place to curb absenteeism.

No	Factor	True	False
1.	Community should get involved	44%	56%
2.	Parents and teachers should issue warnings	33%	67%
3.	Escorting children to school	44%	56%
4.	Equipping schools with all necessary resources	61%	39%
5.	Constructing more classrooms	22%	78%
6.	Teachers to visit homes of pupils	61%	39%
7.	Holding meetings in schools	61%	39%

This part addressed the question, "What actions have been implemented to reduce pupil absenteeism in selected elementary schools?" The results are listed in the (Table 4). Table 4 shows how instructors and head teachers responded freely to the numerous alternatives presented to them regarding how to reduce absenteeism and later see an improvement in academic achievement. Only three of the seven hypotheses in (Table 4) were fundamental in understanding measurements. These included providing all required resources to schools, teachers visiting students' homes, and having meetings in schools.

Other measures to curb absenteeism in schools as given by teachers and head teachers of selected primary schools

- (a) There should be enough security and protection for the pupils, so they aren't taken advantage of by peers
- (b) The school system should be premised on a curriculum, with quality indicators, and performance monitoring systems of all stages.
- (c) Establish sound, reasonable attendance policies to set clear standards and high expectations for students
- (d) Create a positive school climate
- (e) Increase engagement and personalization with students and families through family involvement
- (f) Create a culturally responsive environment
- (g) Educate parents about the risk factors for youth absenteeism and truancy, including gang involvement, violence and other anti-social behaviors
- (h) Increase monitoring of attendance and inform parents about the importance of attendance when pupils begin to show absenteeism behaviours
- (i) Asking children for their home phone number, as well as any relevant cell phone numbers

Further measures to curb absenteeism as given by pupils

- a) Parents must beat children who want to stay home
- b) Making roll calls every day and in the morning, afternoon and evening
- c) Teachers need to make sure all pupils are around
- d) Pupils must know that absenteeism is a crime

- e) Punishing parents who give children much work
- f) Schools must allow us go home early in order to come early tomorrow
- g) We want to eat food at school
- h) Parents buy for us bicycles
- i) Giving gifts to pupils who come to school early
- j) Stop beating pupils who come to school late
- k) Reduce on the punishments
- l) Teachers must be friendly
- m) Head masters must tell teachers not to be tough
- n) Schools must give us books, shoes and pens to use because people at home are poor

According to the findings, teachers and head teachers freely responded to the various options given to them concerning ways of curbing absenteeism and later observed improvement in the academic performance of learners. In a related study, Heppen and Therriault (2018) noticed that effective monitoring helps educators and communities effectively identify learners who are most at-risk of becoming chronically absent. This explains why researchers and policy-makers have increasingly focused on early-warning systems as an important measure in preventing learner absenteeism and truancy. Early-warning systems "use routinely available data housed at the school that are good predictors of whether a learner is likely to drop out of school."

According to the study, there was a need to equip schools with all the necessary resources to prevent teachers from sending learners out of class. Scholars have also suggested that it may be effective to engage parents as part of the team working in support of improved learner attendance (Sheverbush et al., 2016). Sheverbush et al. (2014) specifically note the importance of emphasizing solutions that come from families as opposed to schools. Implementation of strategies aimed at developing family, school, and community partnerships has proven effective in increasing daily attendance rates as well as decreasing chronic absence.

Teachers' visiting homes of learners was yet another way of improving performance. This is related to Kearney's (2018) study that indicated that enhancing school culture and community: School culture is related to school avoidance behaviors as well as learner perceptions of the school.

As stated previously, school-avoidance and refusal behavior have a noticeable effect on rates of chronic

absenteeism and truancy. Epstein and Sheldon (2014) identified key program elements in building partnerships to reduce absences, including: making home visits to families of chronically absent learners; rewarding learners for improved attendance; establishing a contact person at school for parents to work with; calling home when learners are absent; conducting workshops for families about attendance; referring chronically absent learners to counselors; using a truant officer to work with problem learners and families.

Finally, this can be done through holding meetings in schools. This corresponds to Ramaley and Zia (2015) advocating that increasing learner engagement: changing instructional practices and emphasizing greater personalization and learner engagement might also improve attendance as it results in increased levels of learner engagement. The literature on learner engagement indicates that there are five strategies classroom teachers can adopt to promote higher levels of learner engagement. Ramaley and Zia (2015) suggest that learners are most engaged in classrooms that are positive, challenging, and open. They refer to these classrooms' as 'transparent learning climates', which describes conditions that promote risk-taking in learning. Fourth, classrooms that feature positive "peer-to-peer" relationships between learners and teachers promote improved learner engagement.

Conclusion

From the study, it was shown that learner absenteeism is a severe problem in primary schools in Bukoyo Parish, Bulamagi Sub County, as seen by the constant turnover of students in classes, especially when weekly days were tracked. Learners do not value their education as much as they should, and strict procedures must be implemented or devised to address this problem. As previously said, reducing learner absenteeism necessitates joint efforts across stakeholders. It was determined that parents should fulfill their primary responsibilities, which include escorting students to school and punishing truants, and that schools should have meetings and visit the homes of these students to do extensive follow-ups and keep parents informed about their children.

Recommendations to the study

A number of issues have been found for which these recommendations are apt. First, schools need to do a close and regular follow-up of learners to find out what causes persistent absenteeism and collaborate with parents to iron out such issues. Further, the government should increase funding to cover most of the scholastic materials that may not be accessible to certain learners who come from impoverished family backgrounds to keep them in school.

Teachers of mathematics need to adjust to the simplest approaches to teaching so as to boost the morale of learners and register high turn-ups in mathematics classes.

Peer issues, whereby one child might influence another to either not go to school or dodge classes, must be fought by making learners watch-dogs for each other.

At one point, learners mentioned that teachers, at certain points, tend to threaten these learners with punishments when they either go late to school or when they perform poorly. I recommend that this should end so that learners can stay in a positive environment.

Teachers also stated at a certain point that there are families that give a lot of money to learners and that these learners end up spending it outside without bothering about attending school. For this recommendation, I have two suggestions: parents may reduce the amount of money they give to learners, or else, they can even monitor learners' regular attendance in school through friends.

Without forgetting, it would also be important for parents to store teachers' contacts and vice versa in order to make follow-ups of learners' attendance behaviors.

Gaps which might need further studies

Due to time constraints and resources, the following parts were not covered and thus need attention:

- The variations in school attendance by gender
- The effect of parental negligence on the regular attendance of learners at school
- Assessing the effect of the school environment on learners' regular attendance in schools
- ways in which the relationship between teachers and learners influences regular attendance.

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