

## Causes of Absenteeism from the Schools at Secondary Level

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**Abstract** *The study aimed at to find out different causes of students' absenteeism at secondary level in district Bannu, to sort out social, political and economic factors involved in the students' absenteeism at secondary level. All secondary level students' of district Bannu constituted population of the study. 100 students who frequently remained absent from the schools were conveniently selected as a sample of the study. Percentages have been used as statistical technique to analyze the data. Results of the study showed that most frequent causes of the absence of the students from the schools were their families' participation in social activities, students help their parents in their work, too much home work and too many tests and examinations. It was recommended that by the care and concentration of parents, children can be encouraged to go to school. Availability of the school building, furniture, adequate libraries and clean and healthy environment, introducing modern methods and techniques, keeping in view the interests and needs of the children, providing financial aid to the students who are unable to afford the educational expenses, teachers' sympathetic attitude are factors which can motivate and attract students towards schools.*

**Keywords:** *Students, interest, home work, examination, parents, social functions.*

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### 1. Introduction

Education is key to change and progress, therefore, Government of Pakistan has adopted this sector as one of the pillars for poverty reduction and benefit of masses. Government is fully committed to provide best Educational Facilities to its people within the minimum possible time. The reasons for Pakistan's low educational status are varied but one important factor is that Pakistan's educational system has been highly fragmented and segmented. It has, therefore, created some intractable problems in the optimal utilization of human resources under the given labor market condition. Existing National Education Policy 1998-2010 was formulated keeping in view the prevailing problems in the society. The Government has initiated major administrative reforms, such as Devolution of Power and Education Sector Reforms. Moreover, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFAs) are the International policy concerns announced in 2000, which need to be properly reflected in our Policy. As such, the Ministry of Education has taken in hand an exercise to review the National Education Policy (1998-2010) for its updating to bring it in line the current needs of the country (Govt. of Pakistan, 2005).

The negative attitude toward school may be the result of lack of relevancy in the school curriculum, teacher failure in motivational techniques, or community, group or family attitudes toward schooling. Such negative attitudes can be a serious obstacle to success in school, lack of orientation toward education seems to be considerable factor in the talent loss resulting from the dropping out of pupils who have a high potential (Nawaz, 2005).

According to Brubacher (1962) author of well know book on the Philosophies of Education, not only establishes the right of the state to make school attendance compulsory but also to do something more in order to carry out its social and political obligation. According to

him if the state has interest in establishing schools it has a corresponding right to compel attendance at school and to regulate child labor so that attendance will be possible. To ensure that children get to school, it may be provided transportation at public expense and to ensure the tools of instruction when they get there the state may provide children with free text books and supplies (Naz, 2005).

21<sup>st</sup> Century is the Century of advancement and technology. The importance of Education is increasing and is realized highly. The backward societies of the past are on the front rank of the world civilization on account of Education. They are now highly cultured, modern and polished, well aware of their rights and duties, their social interact is appraisable, mode of thinking is for the betterment of humanity and are in real sense the advocates of peace and love (Nawaz, 2005).

A number of verses in the Holy Quran induced the Muslims to devote their lives for the pursuit of knowledge. All those who possess knowledge and those who do not possess are equal? (Al-Quran). And he unto whom wisdom is given he truly hath received abundant good.

History proves beyond any possibility of doubt that no religion has ever given a stimulus to scientific progress similar to that of Islam. The encouragement which learning and scientific research received from Islamic Theology, resulted in the splendid cultural achievement in the days of Umayyad and the Abbasids and the Arabs rule in Spain (Asad, 1988).

As a developed country Pakistan faced the problems of illiteracy seriously and it is a big drag on the economic and social development. We have to meet this challenge of educating the people so that every individual can read thoughtfully, think honestly and participate cooperatively as an effective citizen of this country. According to the Commission on National Education the history of economical development of a country begins with the education of its citizens (Govt. of Pakistan, 1959).

Pakistan is an under developed country. Its literacy rate ranks 142<sup>nd</sup> on the world ranking order (Govt. of Pakistan, 2000). Besides its financial constraints, efforts have been made every year to enhance the budget allocation rate for Education sector, to raise the literacy rate, to make Education free and compulsory for all new schools and colleges are opened, basic facilities are provided. But despite these efforts the drop out is uncontrolled. At present out of total of 18million 5 to 9 years age children 12 million are in school. Total number of left out is approximately 6 million. Now it is expected that with the increase of number of primary schools the number of left outs will decrease to 4 million. Presently only half of the children who enroll in grade 1 complete primary education. Female completion rate is less (46 percent) than male, which is 54 percent (Govt. of Pakistan, 2003).

Absenteeism is major and continuous administrative problem among secondary school students in developing countries. Since the problem is to 70% student home based, there is need for the student/parent to help identify and proffer solutions to this quality disturbing problems that could lead to students' dropout from school. Ubogu (2004) identified illness, permitted leave, voluntary absenteeism, as common forms of absenteeism. Identified causes of absenteeism include: illness, financial hardship, age, social class, geographical area, truancy and institutional influence. School related factors, such as; teachers' attitude, poor administration, high cost of education, illness due to weather condition such as cold, temperature grey days causes absenteeism among students. Harsh school rules and regulations could cause absenteeism i.e. corporal punishment; families where children prepare themselves for school and parent to work. Truancy among students is caused by school-related reasons. Bullied by school staff, boredom, dislike of teachers and avoidance of tests. These are without parents' knowledge (Susan Kirk 2003). School authorities authorized absence for ailments, medical and death in the family. Parent particularly in rural areas keep their children at home for domestic activities on market and community festival days. In crises areas, student absence from school for safety reasons. Unaccepted absence had a negative effect on peer relationship, which could cause absence. According to Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk (2003) teachers identified effects of

absenteeism on children are; academic underachievement which increases costs and wastage, difficulty in making friends which could lead to boredom, loss of confidence and engagement in premature sexual activity which could lead to pregnancy resulting in dropout and stress among young careers.

The society suffers as the children of school age hang around in the streets, intimidating other people and stealing properties of those who are in school and other place of work.

Absenteeism and lateness could be reduced by providing; free education, counseling, discipline relevant curriculum and social welfare seminal to students' .The use of electronic registration systems, truancy sweeps, contact with parents, and support for pupils with poor attendance and effective school administration by principals. (Davidson et al 2003) and (Ubogun 2004).

Absenteeism could results into poor academic achievement, lost of friends and partners, disruption in class when absentees return affect the behavior of other students, difficulty in keeping accurate records, reduced ability to meet instructional targets and damaged school reputation. For school community positive relationship to commune in the administration of secondary schools, there is need to identify causes of absenteeism and lateness among secondary schools in Nigeria (Oghuvbu 2002).

Absences are wasteful from a purely financial standpoint, because it costs the government or the management the same amount whether 100% or 85% boys are present. It is due to this reason in most of the states in USA funds to educational institutions are allocated on the average daily attendance of the boys. This has a very positive effect, in that; it keeps the institution alert in inculcating the habit of regular attendance among the boys (Naz, 2005).

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The aim of this study was to investigate the causes of absenteeism at secondary level in district Bannu.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out different causes of absenteeism at secondary level in district Bannu.
2. To sort out social, political and economic factors involved in the students absenteeism at secondary level.
3. To find remedies for those factors which deprive the students from further Education.
4. To suggest such efforts that may be helpful for the children to continue their Education.

## 4. Research Questions

1. What are the causes of absenteeism among secondary school students in Bannu?
2. What are the possible solutions to the problems of absenteeism among secondary school students?

**Table 1.** *Students' responses about causes of absenteeism*

S. No	Statement	Yes	No	Percentages	
				Yes	No
1	It is difficult for me to study because of my usual illness	37	33	52.9	47.1
2	I have failed many times because I am not interested in	25	45	35.7	64.3
3	I have either to take part in games or to watch the match	49	21	70	30

4	I am not interested in game and physical gymnasium.	27	43	38.6	61.4
5	I am weaker than my class fellows in study.	38	32	54.3	45.7
6	I help my parents in their work, usually.	53	17	75.7	24.3
7	I work and earn some money while remaining absent from	29	41	41.4	58.6
8	I have not book, note book and other materials.	30	40	42.9	57.1
9	There is always, illness in our home.	35	35	50	50
10	My parents forbid me to mingle with friends.	41	29	58.6	41.4
11	I have no money for paying fine, fund and admission.	35	35	50	50
12	I go with my parents towards the relatives living in other village for the sake of meeting or picnic.	30	40	42.9	57.1
13	There is no management of games and picnic in the school	40	30	57.1	42.9
14	I could not reply the questions of teacher in the class.	35	35	50	50
15	I come to school late and those who come late are punished.	35	35	50	50
16	Excessive homework is given and I could not complete it.	40	30	57.1	42.9
17	There hold tests and examination in plenty, for which the	41	29	58.6	41.4
18	It is difficult for me to pay fines due to poverty and there is plenty of it in the school.	27	43	38.6	61.4
19	The school teachers are dealing harshly and are punished on	40	30	57.1	42.9
20	I go to fair in the city or and village.	28	42	40	60
21	It is essential for us to participate in the marriage.	40	30	57.1	42.9
22	Class or school boys are poking me or my family members.	28	42	40	60
23	Some of my friends who don't go to school also abolish me to	40	30	57.1	42.9
24	I could not come to school due to religious festivals.	40	30	57.1	42.9
25	I could not come to school due to demise of my relatives.	51	19	72.1	27.14
26	School is far from my home when there is no vehicle in time I	40	30	57.1	42.9
27	I remain absent of school due to severe hotness, cold and	49	21	70	30
28	There is a stream in the way of school where is and it is	30	40	42.9	57.1
29	Whenever the school avenue is insecure due to dacoits or	49	21	70	30

## 5. Findings of the Study

1. 52.9% students were agreed and 47.1% disagree to statement that it was difficult for them to study because of their usual illness.
2. 35.7% students were agreed and 63.3% disagreed to the statement that they failed many times because they were not interested in education.
3. 70% students were agreed and 30% were not agreed to the statement that they usually took part in games.

4. 38.6% students were agreed and 61.4% disagreed to the statement that they were not interested in games or any other physical gymnasium.
5. 54.3% students were agreed and 45.7% disagreed to the statement that they were weaker than their class fellows in study.
6. 75% students were agreed and only 24.3% were not agreed to the statement that they usually assisted their parents in their work.
7. 41.4% students were agreed and 58.6% were not agreed to the statement that they worked and earned some money while remained absent from the school.
8. 42.9% students were agreed and 57.1% were not agreed to the statement that they had not books or note books.
9. 50% students were agreed and 50% were not agreed to the statement they there is always illness in their homes.
10. 58.6% students were agreed while 41.4% not agreed to the statement that their parents forbade them to mingle with their friends.
11. 50% students were agreed and 50% disagreed to the statement that had no money for paying fine, funds or school admissions.
12. 42.9% students were agreed and 57.1% disagreed to the statement that they often went with their parents towards their relatives living in other village for sake of meeting or far picnic.
13. 57.1% students were agreed and while 42.9% disagreed to the statement that there was no management of games and picnic in the school.
14. 50% students were agreed and 50% disagreed to the statement that they could not replay the questions of teachers in the class.
15. 50% students were agreed and 50% disagreed to the statement that they came late to school and the late comers were punished.
16. 57.1% students were agreed while 42.9% disagreed to the statement that it was given excessive home work & they could not complete it.
17. 58.6% students were agreed and 41.4% disagreed to the statement that the preparation for plenty tests or examinations were difficult.
18. 38.6% students were agreed and 61.4% disagreed to the statement that they could not pay plenty fines due to poverty.
19. 57.1% students were agreed and 42.9% disagreed to the statement that the school teachers were dealing harshly and were punished on trivial mistakes.
20. 40% students were agreed and 60% disagreed to the statement that they went to the fairs in the city or in village.
21. 57.1% students were agreed while 42.9% disagreed to the statement that it was essential for them to participate in the marriages.
22. 40% students were agreed and 60% disagreed to the statement that class or school boys were poking them and their families.
23. 57.1% students were agreed while 42.9% disagreed to the statement that some of their friend who didn't go the school also abolishes them to go to school.
24. 57.1% students were agreed and 42.9% disagreed to the statement that they could not come to school due to religious festivals.
25. 72.1% students were agreed and 27.1% disagreed only that they could not come to school due to demise of their relatives.
26. 57.1% students were agreed and 42.9% disagreed to the statement that school was for away from their homes.
27. 70% students were agreed while only 30% disagreed to the statement that they often remained absent due to severe hotness, cold and raining.
28. 42.9% students were agreed and 57.1% disagreed to the statement that there was a stream in the way of school and they could not cross it.

29. 70% students were agreed and only 30% disagreed to the statement that when ever the school avenue was insecure due to dacoits and enemy then they remained absent from school.

## 6. Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn on the basis of the findings.

1. As for as the responses obtained from the students questionnaires were concerned, they showed that most frequent causes of their families participation in social functions like marriage etc, visiting of near & dear ones on the occasions of Eids & taking parts in certain religious ceremonies like Eid Mildad, Moharram etc. were the causes for the absence from the schools.
2. Next in importance was that the students helped their parents in their work. A considerable number of boys complained that their parents treated them very harshly & forbade them to mix with their friends.
3. Many students come to school late because of the fear of punishment they preferred absence to tardiness.
4. Many students complained that they were assigned too much homework and there were too many tests and examinations which made it difficult for them to prepare. Leaving aside the incidental factors the general conclusions are that most of the causes are related to the family and community and lastly to the school.

## 7. Recommendations and Suggestions

The following are some of the suggestions for the improvement of the situation.

### 7.1 *The School Must Be a Place of Interest*

The school building, furniture, facilities of co-curricular activities, adequate libraries and reading rooms, clean and healthy environment do play an important role in attracting the students. With all these facilities and attractions the school becomes a place of interest rather than of aversion

### 7.2 *Improvement in Methods of Teaching*

If instruction is imparted by means of modern methods and techniques keeping in view the interests, and needs of the students there is no reasons why there will not be any improvement in the attitude of the students toward studies and the school and their attendance. The old methods of lecturing, subjecting the students to arduous exercises and meaningless drill and memorizing of useless items of instruction have no place in the modern school because instead of attracting the students such methods repel them from the school environment. Motivation of students through field-trips, the use of films, film-strips, records, television, radio and any other audio-visual aids should at least now be realized by our teachers.

### 7.3 *Curriculums and Subject Matter*

Curriculum should be framed in accordance with the capacities and needs of the students. The subject matter must be related to their lives. It should be presented in an interesting manner. In selection of certain specialized courses only interests and abilities of the students should be kept in view rather than the wishes of the students or their parents, because wrong choices at the school stage not only lead to the students' failure but are also detrimental to the society. In support of item No. 1,2 and 3 the Education commission after discussing the introduction of

compulsory education, have rightly observed that: the retention power of the school itself must be improved by making it more attractive to its pupils through better teaching methods and through offering a curriculum more clearly related to national community and individual needs and interests.

#### *7.4 Removing Sickness*

Parents, teachers, health officers, administrators and other health organizations can control sickness by emphasizing upon school students to maintain a high standard of cleanliness and health. Physical check up must be carried out as many times in a year as possible. Health education should be a prominent feature of the school programme. These measures will not only check the absences but will improve the over all health of the school pupils.

#### *7.5 Removing the Distance Factor*

If the students come to school from distant place with out any organized transportation arrangement, their studies will automatically be aversely affected. Providing them with better transport services, and setting up of school hostels with low expenses can control this factor. A responsible community can do a lot in this regard.

#### *7.6 Removal of Financial Difficulties*

Some boys have to assist their parents or they themselves are bread earners, some cannot afford the payment of fees and funds, purchase of schoolbooks and stationery. All social organizations and agencies and well to do people should provide assistance to such students in the form of food, clothing, books and stipends etc., students of to day will active members of the society tomorrow. If proper attention is given to their development, they will be helpful for the society; otherwise they will be a liability.

#### *7.7 Duties of Parents*

The duties of parents do not end when they get their sons admitted in the schools. They must provide basic amenities to their children, should often visit the school to discuss matters of mutual interest with the teachers, should see that the boys do not stay away from the school on account of some miner excuses, should not ask them to assist them in their work during school hours, should pay proper attention to the payment of school dues, purchase of books and provide them with school uniform. They should also find time to see whether their boys have completed homework assigned to them or not.

#### *7.8 Duties of the Community*

All members of the society and the social agencies should realize the importance of education for children. When ever they see a boy outside the school on days other than holidays they should make enquiries and if possible assist the school in attacking the problem. A slight positive approach on the part of the community can do miracles. The managers of cinema houses and fairs and exhibitions should also co-operate the school by seeing that school boys do not attend the fairs or exhibitions during the school hours.

#### *7.9 Failure Should Be Reduced*

A large numbers of boys either fail or are detained or demoted every year.

This produces a very bad effect on failing students. This point has been realized by the commission on National Education and have recommended that this practices be reduced to the minimum because all such repeaters create a lot of disciplinary problems when they loss interest in studies. The school should positively work to remove their weaknesses. In this connection the following extract from the education commission's Report is work quoting: -

Promotion of children by age rather than by results is now common in the primary schools of advanced countries. Unless such a measure is adopted progressively in our schools (with the rare exception for the very retarded child) we risk clogging the first two classes with backward and overage children, once compulsion is introduced and having few or no places free for the new comers.

#### 7.10 Attitude of Teachers

Teachers should leave aside their harsh attitude. Punishments should be reduced. Arbitrary punishments will no explanation of the connection between the fault and the punishment are very harmful, imposition of fines should be restricted to only severe cases and with the knowledge that the student will be able to pay such fines. Teachers should assign homework according to fixed schedule so that the boys are not over-burdened.

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