

ABSENTEEISM IN DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ELDORET EAST
DISTRICT: PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES TO
LEARNING OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

A student that is not regular in school is most likely to experience learning problems. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place without the coming together of the teacher and the learners. Learners thrive in the school environment where knowledge acquisition is facilitated by interaction between the learners as well as between the learners and teachers. The Government of Kenya has made several efforts to increase participation from among the poor and make secondary education more affordable. One of the most recent steps was the introduction of the tuition waiver fund in 2008. School administrators monitor student attendance and have the challenge of providing instructional leadership for enhanced academic achievement of learners through increased participation at school. The study determined patterns in school attendance, absenteeism levels, its major causes, and impact on test scores in day secondary schools. Causal comparative study design was utilized in which the academic scores of the regular attendance students were compared to that of chronic absentees. The study population consisted of day secondary school students of Eldoret East district of Rift valley province of Kenya. A purposive sample of three hundred and ten students was chosen from eight randomly selected day schools. Investigation was done using a document analysis checklist; interview schedules for school principals; and class teachers' and students' questionnaires. Qualitative data was coded and ordered by use of matrices into identified themes and patterns. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations and variance. Data was presented by use of pie and sequence charts, tables, bar graphs and scatter plots. A comparison in the test scores of the regular attendance and the chronic absentee groups was done using the means. The significance of the difference in performance between the two groups was done using ANOVA at the ninety-five confidence level. Findings show that students who absent themselves more have lowered academic achievement in spite of attempts by teachers to cover for lost time. This study show that chronic student absenteeism cases do exist in day secondary schools. It also shows that chronic student absenteeism does negatively impact on academic achievement. The findings of this study have implications for government of Kenya policy makers who need to come up with attendance policy and ensure that funds provided under the Free Day Secondary Education are not underutilized. School management needs to make school attendance policies and implement them at the school level to enhance student school attendance. The findings will be useful to parents, teachers, and counselors. The study recommends that the ministry of education provide adequate and timely lunch funds to needy students in day secondary schools to avoid disruption of classes. Further, that the ministry sets attendance targets for all schools and place schools with chronic absenteeism rates of more than ten percent under special surveillance.