

Student Absenteeism – Causes, Remedies and Consequences

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Abstract

Absenteeism is the practice of regularly staying away from the work without any good reason. It is a serious issue and has to be taken care of to create a dynamic teaching and learning environment [4]. It has been observed that students are in a habit of missing classes which affects their career in a major way. Research shows that the average attention span of a student in classroom is only 15 minutes. Student psychology combined with various other factors has accentuated the issue of their absenteeism from classroom. Students who are not motivated end up missing classes frequently. As a result, this has become a crucial issue for educational institutions. Keeping this in mind, this research paper focuses on identifying the reasons leading to student absenteeism, its consequences for the students and educational institutions and strategies that can be adopted to combat absenteeism. It has been seen that the culture which prevails in the educational institution directly influences the issue of absenteeism.

Key Words

Authorized absenteeism, unauthorized absenteeism, willful absenteeism, organizational culture

1. INTRODUCTION:

There is a general thinking that students should have a multi dimensional and wholesome personality. We expect them to be extraordinary in their studies and equally good in extracurricular activities. Such traits of personality can develop in a conducive environment of learning. A student should generally be strongly attached to the institute. This bonding between the student and institute should grow deeper

with time. The essential ingredients of such environment are availability of excellent faculty, top-notch infrastructure facilities at the institute, maintenance of good discipline and adequate sports-cum-cultural facilities. In the conventional system of education, knowledge was assumed to follow a unilateral flow of ideas from top to bottom; it may not be true today. Well informed, dedicated students may suggest alternative methods which quite fit in. The problem of absenteeism in educational institutions arises due to the fact that some categories of students find themselves out of tune with the system.

1.1. Absenteeism: What ails the system?

The absence of students from lectures and tutorials has become one of the utmost encumbrances in accomplishment of objectives of educational institutions. It is a matter of concern because it can lead to inadequate learning on the part of those not present and a degree of agitation on the conduct of the classes for those who are present. Non-attendance has become a common problem to universities and colleges. It refers to the conduct of students not attending scheduled meetings in terms of classes, lectures, tutorials, workshops or seminars without prior consent from the faculty or against default college policy on absenteeism.

Student absence is a problem that extends much further than the university. It affects the student, the family and the community. In an environment of stiff competition for jobs, graduates should possess high integrity and capabilities to win themselves a secured career. As such absenteeism is detrimental to students' accomplishments, promotion, graduation, self-esteem, and employment.

potential.

Chronic absenteeism (frequent unexcused absence) is a strong predictor of adverse outcomes in adolescence, including academic failure, dropping out of school, substance abuse, gang involvement, and unlawful activity. Family health or financial concerns, poor institute climate, drug and alcohol use, transportation problems, and differing community attitudes towards education are among the conditions that are often associated with a student's frequent absence from the institute.

Many students are not mature and committed enough to realize what they are missing by not showing up for class. Creating knowledge and problem-solving skills across all types of students is a challenge. It is easy to get the high-tier, motivated students to attend class and learn, but bringing the rest is difficult. Professors will have to be proactive if they want less-motivated students to attend classes and reap the benefits thereof.

1.2. Types of Absenteeism:

In order to take up the issue of student absenteeism, it is important to understand the types of absenteeism first. The types of absenteeism have been explained below:

- **Authorized Absenteeism:**
It is referred to as the leave from study (with or without valid reason) whereby absence from the institute /college is granted by the requisite authorities.
- **Unauthorized absenteeism:**
In case of Unauthorized absenteeism, absence from the institute/college (with or without valid reason) is neither reported to the requisite authorities [3], nor permission is sought before availing one.
- **Willful absenteeism:**
Under willful absenteeism, a student absents himself from class at his own discretion, without any valid reason. This leads to consistent evasion of work.
- **Absenteeism originating from circumstances beyond control:**
In case a student faces such circumstances which cannot be regulated by him, such as sickness, diseases, accidents, etc, it is referred to as Absenteeism originating from circumstances beyond control. Typically, the student cannot be held responsible in such cases.

When we closely observed the issue at hand, we identified some important questions which need to be addressed.

1.3. Questions and issues creating uncertainty in the minds of students

Once teachers start identifying the types of absenteeism, it becomes important to think upon the following questions in the mind of students which reflect their disinterest in attending classes:

- i. I just want to pass in exams. Why should I attend classes?
- ii. If other students do not attend classes, then why should I?
- iii. Is there any reason to attend classes if I can study better at home?
- iv. If distraction during classes degrades my efficiency then is it not better to remain out of class anyhow?

Once teachers understand the answers to these questions they will be able to provide logic and reasons to students in order to convince them to attend classes. So educational institutions should comprehend the causes, consequences and remedies of absenteeism. Only then they will be able to deal with the issue of absenteeism in a better way.

In many institutes and colleges absenteeism is a common problem and there are familiar reasons for students not attending the classes (for e.g. personal problems, peer pressure, etc.). In our quest to solve this problem we realize that the role of the institution and teacher is significant.

As students are supposed to communicate with teachers regularly, teachers can be expected to play an active and regular role in overcoming the problem of absenteeism

A teacher is a one who creates a warm learning experience, give a personalized touch to his teaching so that the students find themselves being nurtured with not only knowledge, but also with empowerment and emotional support. To master the art of teaching a teacher should be able to pass on knowledge to students and at the same time identify the elements of extraordinary relevance and those calling for improvement. At various points in time a teacher will find himself combining valuable features like honesty, integrity, courtesy, politeness, equity, cooperation, commitment, trust, respect, patience, friendliness, firmness and diligence. Without any of these, the art cannot be mastered by any individual, no matter how exceptionally intelligent.

There is no mathematical formula for a teacher to ensure that what he is doing is right and that the result of what he will do will be checked with the

help of a formula. This happens because the human factor involved all through the process of teaching makes the entire experience dynamic, ever changing and rich. Hence, it is important for teachers to consider what all are the factors which lend this quotient of dynamism to teaching.

After understanding basic nature of absenteeism problem, we can identify the reasons for or objectives behind conducting the research.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- i. To identify the factors which lead to student absenteeism
- ii. To understand the consequences of student absenteeism
- iii. To identify creative methodology for teaching in classrooms so as to reduce absenteeism
- iv. To give suggestions for reducing student absenteeism

3. IMPLEMENTATION:

Following is the implementation scheme used in our research:

3.1 Research design:

Descriptive Research: Descriptive research is preplanned and structured in design so the information collected can be statistically inferred on a population. The main idea behind using this type of research is to better define an opinion, attitude, or behavior held by a group of people on a given subject.

3.2 Sampling Plan:

- i. **Sample size:** For the analysis, we have taken the sample of 74 students
- ii. **Sampling technique:** For selecting the sample convenience sampling method has been used. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher [1].
- iii. **Sample area:** Sample area for research is colleges in Rohini
- iv. **Sample unit:** B tech and MBA students

3.3 Data collection methods: For conducting the research we have used both primary and secondary data.

- **Primary data:** Primary data for the purpose of this research has been collected with the help a Structured Questionnaire containing 4 open ended questions, 1 closed ended question and 5 closed ended statements.
- **Secondary data:** Internet

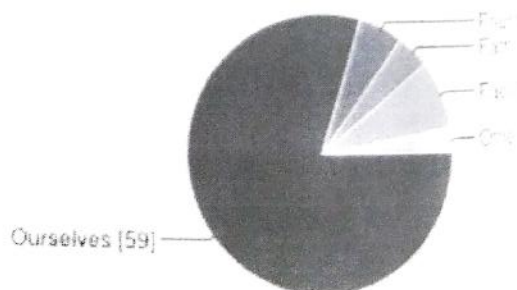
3.4 Tools and techniques used in analysis:

Percentage analysis through pie charts and bar graphs has been done.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

In this study responses have been taken from under graduate and post graduate students with a view to understand students' perception of absenteeism and related factors. 39 undergraduate and 35 post graduate students participated in this survey, providing some interesting as well as informative insights into student absenteeism.

- i. 47% respondents reveal that they believe absence from class can be without a valid reason
- ii. It is interesting to note that 79% respondents accept the responsibility for their absence from class. They believe that they themselves are responsible for managing absence from classes.

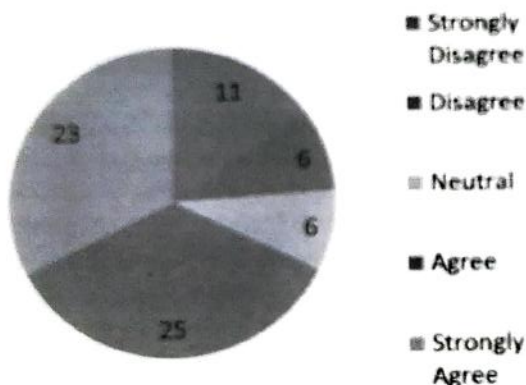


- iii. A very small proportion of 7% says that they lack the basic skills that enable them to learn. Though a small number, but it is important to attend to this issue as poor knowledge of basic skills might reduce the

self confidence of these respondents and demotivate them from attending classes at times.

- iv. 48% respondents find it difficult to stick to their routine when they are emotionally upset. This is an important factor affecting students, also because they are vulnerable during this phase of life. As a result they will miss classes when emotionally upset.
- v. Negative events in the lives of 36% respondents interfere with their learning.
- vi. 64% respondents miss classes of subjects which are not of their interest.

Number of Respondents



- vii. 60% respondents believe that absence from class will affect their academic performance.
- viii. 54% respondents disagree with the fact that their liking of the instructor can be a factor in determining if they will attend a class or not. To the contrary, 30% respondents say that they miss class if they do not like the instructor.
- ix. Only 33% respondents say that they do not miss classes if their friends insist.

5. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

- i. Sometimes biasness on the part of students.
- ii. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling and hence the results

are expected to vary if different sample is taken

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

- i. The habit of informed leave should be inculcated in educational institutions to create accountability on part of students.
- ii. As some students lack the basic skills to interact in a group which leads to habit of not being at the institution without a valid reason. To avoid such problems, grooming and development sessions should be organized.
- iii. As some students are emotionally weak which makes it difficult for them to stick to their routine, counseling should be provided in order to ensure emotional support.
- iv. Sometimes absenteeism is due to peer pressure, to overcome this group tasks should be assigned in order to ensure total participation willingly and wholeheartedly.
- v. Some students don't attend classes due to less interest in the subject. So to improve attendance technology should be introduced and integrated in classrooms to make lectures more interesting and creative.
- vi. Students have the perception that self study is suffice to attain good marks. But through self study and not attending classes they can get only average marks not excellence and to remove this perceptual error, special lectures on career development and motivation should be organized as a part of their curriculum so that their academic performance does not suffer.
- vii. Students are not expected to miss their classes only because of their like or dislike towards the instructor.
- viii. There should be awards for the regular students.
- ix. Message about student being absent for more than one week without prior intimation should be conveyed to the parents.
- x. Extracurricular activities should be there in the colleges so that students feel enthusiastic.
- xi. Internal marks weightage should be there for the regular students in the classes.
- xii. In colleges some guest lectures should be inculcated as a culture to boost the confidence of the students.
- xiii. Parents should not pamper the students for not attending classes; they should understand the value of education.

- xiv. For overcoming the problem of absenteeism and making teaching effective there should be a culture in an educational organization. Key elements that contribute to a college or university's culture include mission and goals of the institution, governance structure and leadership style of administrators, curricular structure and academic standards, student and faculty characteristics, student-faculty relations and physical surroundings. The characteristics of each element and their interactions with each other create a unique culture for each college/university.

7. CONCLUSION:

Student absenteeism is a significant problem which many colleges are facing now a days and can be solved with the efforts of students themselves, institute, teachers and parents altogether. Improving student attendance involves a blend of techniques. Focusing class methodology of academic topics through real-world exercises engages committed, high-tier students and makes them keen to attend lectures. Students should be motivated to attend lectures to take advantage of the unique learning opportunity provided by their professors. Based on our research we can find out the reasons responsible for absenteeism of students i.e. friends, family, lack of confidence e.t.c. This problem has to be handled cautiously; otherwise it will affect the academic performance of the students, their career growth and the institute as well. To manage absenteeism problem in professional institutions, motivation should be provided to students to ensure their attendance. Effective communication should take place between the students and the institute in order to introduce the system of informed leave. Not reporting on part of students should lead to penalties. Students should be made aware of consequences of not meeting the attendance criteria. Moreover, creative and innovative methodology should be inculcated as part of the institute culture. It is an essential step in an organization's journey to becoming a safe, high reliability organization that provides a supportive and nurturing environment. It is bound to create a workplace that enables everyone to engage wholeheartedly in their work, in order to bring about permanent positive change. It is therefore important for students, parents, institute and teachers to understand their role and responsibility in managing absenteeism.

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