

Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Causes of Absenteeism in Students at Secondary School Certificate Level in Baltistan

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ABSTRACT

Almost each and every country of the world has great concerns regarding absenteeism and finding ways to minimize or eradicate the phenomena. Absenteeism of students from schools is a serious issue, for all but specially in public sector. This study was conducted in Baltistan. Gilgit-Baltistan is one of the beautiful and charming places of the world which is situated in the northern side of Pakistan. Baltistan is known as one of the remotest regions of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Due to its geographic location, basic life necessities are not available to its population as compared to other cities of Pakistan. Baltistan is going through the developing phase with meager resources. Educational facilities are also very limited for school going population. In this study surveys were conducted to obtain the data. All public sector secondary schools were included in population. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to determine the sample of the study. Specific questionnaire was constructed and data was collected from 02 teachers of each sample school. For analyzing the data both descriptive and inferential statistic was applied. Major findings of the study revealed that due to unawareness of parents about education is major cause of this issue. Lack of provision of guidance & counseling services to students was also contributing in absenteeism. Other findings showed that there was no provision of extra time & motivation for weak students, no incentives, and culture of punishment causing and increasing this phenomenon. One to base of findings and conclusions, it is recommended that awareness seminars for parents may be arranged. It was also recommended that community may also play its vital role to address this issue and to reduce absenteeism. Teachers may also be given special instructions and punishment should be completely prohibited.

KEY WORDS: Secondary Education, Absenteeism, Remote Areas, Baltistan

INTRODUCTION

Baltistan is one of the most beautiful areas of Pakistan. Geographically it is consisting of ten thousand one hundred and eighteen square miles mountainous area between the Karakorum and the Himalaya Ranges in the extreme north of Pakistan is called Baltistan. This consists of Skardu, Khaplu, Shigar, Kharmang, Rongyul and Gultari valleys. Kashmir is situated in south, Ladakh and Poreeg (Kargil) is in east, Gilgit and Diamir valleys are in the west of Baltistan whereas the Karakorum Range separates it from Xinxiang province of China in the west. People of Baltistan are civilized and friendly but slightly backward. Literacy rate is low. One of the major factors responsible for low literacy rate and backwardness is the fewer number of education institutions. Moreover people of Baltistan are not that much aware of the importance of education. 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 [3]. For school community positive relationship to commune in the administration of secondary schools, there is needed to identify causes of absenteeism and lateness among secondary schools in Nigeria [4].

Baltistan is going through the developing phase with meager resources. Educational facilities are also very limited for school going population. The provision of these facilities i.e. availability of schools to the doorsteps of children has been addressed by public sector, private sector and NGOs as well. Attendance and retention of students is as necessary as provision of infrastructure, teachers and other facilities utilized in teaching learning process.

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In Baltistan region there are three well known sectors of educational institute are functional.

- a. Aga Khan Education Service Pakistan (AKESP)
- b. Private Education System
- c. Government (Public) Education System

a. Aga Khan Education Service Pakistan (AKESP)

There are 126 AKESP schools and eight hundred and twenty two teachers to teach 22141 students in these schools. AKESP's mission is to "enable many generations of students to acquire both knowledge and essential spiritual wisdom needed to balance that knowledge and enable their lives to attain the highest fulfillment." AKESP is mainly focusing girls' education with some enrolment of boys in the co-education classes. AKESP continues to work with the government and communities to develop the models of public/private partnership that play a vital role towards implementing the Education Sector Reforms of the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan.

b. Private sector

Private sector has emerged as the second largest education provider in Gilgit-Baltistan. The need for private schools was felt as a result of people's dissatisfaction with the quality of education in the government schools. Some private schools were also opened to provide children the much-needed access to education. However, the private sector is mainly focusing on the quality education. There has been significant growth in the share of education in the private sector during the last few decades. There has been visible increase in the number of schools, as well as the proportion of children enrolled in these schools. Private sector operates schools in all districts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

c. Government Education Sector

The largest education provider in Gilgit- Baltistan is Government Education Department. There are 1008 government schools in Gilgit-Baltistan, where 115176 students get education from 4946 teachers. For the closer and effective monitoring of schools, offices have been established in each district led by the deputy directors of education (DDEs). There are four directors of education to supervise and monitor the DDEs, they are: (i) the director education (academics), Gilgit, the director education, Baltistan, the director education, planning and development and the directress for the girls' schools in Gilgit Baltistan. The directors of education are accountable to the secretary education that provides the overall leadership to the institution.

Problem statement

This study was conducted at a junior high school and senior high school in California. The authors found that absenteeism was a significant problem in the school, but the organization, of the school was not designed to help eliminate the problem. As ubogu (2004) identified that illness, permitted leave, voluntary absenteeism, as common forms of absenteeism. The first factor discussed division of labor, pointed out the tendency of the school personnel to pass the responsibility for attendance policy enforcement back and forth among them, rather than taking direct responsibility for it. Another organizational, concern involved the classification of absenteeism as a problem. Most teachers and administrators resisted this classification because it involved direct enforcement of a compulsory attendance regulation. Teachers and administrators did not want to nay the professional or psychic price to do so the system of rewards and sanctions for teachers who did or did not enforce. Attendance policies were not very strong. Wright (1978) found statistically significant differences by location: urban schools had the lowest attendance rates, then suburban schools. The students also did not have a very strong system of rewards or sanctions presented to them. The authors also found major deficiencies in the schools policy making and training procedures.

Absenteeism not only disturbs the academic development of the student, but also effects the in-class planning of teachers [6]. Deprived economic situations of families also play a noteworthy role in absenteeism [5]. Many of the researchers reported that absenteeism is everywhere in their country [1] [2] [9] [10].

It is a general opinion of the elders that students do not attend their schools regularly and this situation is worst in public sector schools. As the researcher is a teacher in public sector and student of education, this phenomenon is directly related to his job and degree of M.A. Education. Researcher took

this phenomenon as his research study to explore intensity, root causes and possible measures to overcome this problem.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To find out the perceptions of teachers regarding causes of absenteeism of student at Secondary School Certificate (SSC) level in Baltistan.
2. To investigate the role of teacher in minimizing Absenteeism of their respective Students.
3. To find out the contribution of Head teacher for minimizing Absenteeism of Students at Secondary School Certificate Level.
4. To find out the cooperation and contribution from parents in minimizing Absenteeism of Students at Secondary School Certificate Level.
5. To give recommendation to reduce Absenteeism of students in Secondary School Certificate Level education in Baltistan.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study might be helpful for:

- Teachers, to locate the problems that are cause of absenteeism.
- Managers, to modify/ make necessary changes to ongoing practices.
- Parents, to play their role to minimize/ eradicate absenteeism of their children.
- Students, to get benefits from the findings and recommendations of the study.
- Curriculum Developers, to include more interesting activities as according to psychological needs of the students.

METHODOLOGY

Any research work can be fruitful only if conducted by proper method in a systematic manner. The investigator has adopted mix method that is qualitative and quantitative.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

Teachers of all 38 male and female secondary schools in public sector of district Skardu included in population of the study.

Table 1. Number of Schools in District Skardu

S.No	Tehsil	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Skardu	5	5	10
2	Gambaskardu	5	2	7
3	Roundu	4	1	5
4	Gultari	1	0	1
5	Kharmang	4	3	7
6	Shigar	5	3	8
Total		24	14	38

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

Researcher used Stratified sampling technique to select the sample of the study from given population. Stratified sampling will facilitate the researcher to identify and get data from sub groups in the population (Tehsils) as according to their proportion.

There are six Tehsils in Skardu District. (Skardu, Gamba Skardu, Roundu, Shigar, Gultari and Kharmang) Researcher divided these six Tehsils in to two groups that is A and B. Group A compresses Tehsil Skardu, Tehsil Gamba Skardu and Tehsil Roundu while Group B compresses of Tehsil Shigar, Tehsil Gultari and Tehsil Kharmang. Sample is taken as 40% of total available schools. Detail of sample school is given below in Table.

Table 2. Sample of the study

Group A				
S.No	Tehsil	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Skardu	2	2	4
2	Gamba Skardu	1	1	2
3	Roundu	1	1	2
Group B				
1	Gultari	1	0	1
2	Kharmang	2	1	3
3	Shigar	2	1	3

For the purpose of data collection Researcher contacted senior most Three (3) teachers of institutions as given/ nominated by school administration.

DATA COLLECTION

Researcher used only single tool for his study. Specific questionnaire for teachers of public schools are constructed to get their feedback regarding causes of absenteeism in students of Baltistan. For the purpose of data collection, researcher developed questionnaires for teachers utilizing three points rating scale, open ended and closes ended statement. The data was collected by researcher himself and as well as by the help of research assistant.

DELIMITATION

Keeping in view limited time and financial constraints, this study was delimited to all public sector secondary schools (Male/Female) in District Skardu.

ANALYSIS

Table 3. Frequency of each item

S. No	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1	Teacher's behavior is the cause of absenteeism of students from school.	23.3	50.0	26.7
2	Absenteeism of students from school is due to the domestic activities.	23.3	60.0	16.7
3	Reason of absenteeism of students is the long distance of school.	16.7	26.7	56.7
4	Lack of facilities at school is the cause of absenteeism of students from school.	30.0	40.0	30.0
5	You think that workload at school keep students away from classes.	13.3	36.7	50.0
6	Physical health of students affect their punctuality.	33.3	56.7	10.0
7	Cause of absenteeism of students may be the Head teacher's behavior.	3.3	26.7	70.0
8	Students cannot attain the classes regularly due to peer behavior.	16.7	50.0	33.3
9	Lack of awareness of education by parents is the cause of irregularity of students.	63.3	26.7	10.0
10	Absenteeism is due to the combinations of subjects opted is not as according to students aptitude.	13.3	33.3	53.3
11	Excess of luxuries from family keep students away from school.	26.7	46.7	26.7
12	Community participation can reduce student's absenteeism.	56.7	40.0	3.3
13	You regularly inform parents about student's performance.	33.3	40.0	26.7
14	You provide incentives to punctual students.	30.0	56.7	13.3
15	You inform head teacher about student's performance?	53.3	43.3	3.3
16	In staff formal meeting you highlight absenteeism of students as serious issue.	43.3	53.3	3.3
17	You provide guiding and counseling session for students who remain absent.	30.0	40.0	30.0
18	Performance of students can affect by absenteeism.	50.0	40.0	10.0
19	You are providing additional lectures for absent students.	13.3	43.3	43.3
20	Punishment can reduce student's absenteeism.	30.0	63.3	6.7

Table 4. Suggestions from Teachers to reduce Student’s Absenteeism

S. No	Responses	f	%	Ranking
1	Give awareness to the Parents about education.	26	86.7%	1
2	Inform Parents about their kid’s performance on regular bases.	23	77.7%	2
3	Provide guiding and counseling session.	22	73.3%	3
4	Avoid punishment	18	60.0%	4
5	Make classroom environment friendly for students.	17	56.7%	5
6	Involve community in school matters.	15	50.0%	6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 of analysis showed that majority of the teachers strongly agreed or agreed while the remaining few teachers disagree by the statement. The cumulative percentage of strongly agreed and agreed is 73.3% so it is proved that teacher’s behavior affected the regularity of the students. Next the result of the statement that work load at school is cause of absenteeism. Different sample with different frequency that is Half sample strongly agreed and agreed only while other half sample disagreed by the statement .Here work load at school means the homework, Class work and patron of examination etc. 50% favor and 50 % oppose the statement .So it is very difficult to decide that it may a cause or not a cause of absenteeism. Next when researcher asked to the study samples that “is the physical health of students’ cause of absenteeism? Collectively majority of the sample agreed the statement. So it clearly describes that the statement is very true and one of the major cause of absenteeism of students from their classes at secondary level. Maximum sample disagreed the statement which showing the result that head teachers behavior is not the cause of absenteeism of students for school. It is comes to know that Lack of awareness of education by parents may be a cause of absenteeism of students from school because majority of the teachers strongly agreed, while only few teachers disagreed by the statement. The cumulative percentage on positive response is 90 %.

Combination of opted subject is not according students aptitude is the cause of students’ absenteeism because maximum teachers are in favor of this statement. This result shows that the subject opted by the parents or teachers or students which is not according to their interest is a serious issues which reduce the interest of students about studies. Similarly, majority of the sample was in the favor of the statement that excess of luxuries from family is the cause of absenteeism of students from school. The cumulative percentage of agreed sample because 73.3 %. It means that when the students get excess of luxuries during school life its put negative impact on their studies so we can easily describe that excess of luxuries by family is one of the key cause of student’s absenteeism.

Majority of the teachers are in the favor of the statement that reward can reduce student absenteeism. According to table cumulative person in favor of the statement is 93.3%. It is very easy to say for the researcher that reward can reduce student absenteeism from school at secondary level. On the other hand we can say that school environment and teacher’s behavior is directly impact on student’s performance. Reward increases the interest of student towards study. Punishment cannot reduce student absenteeism. Here majority of the studied sample disagreed by giving their arguments in oppose of the statement. It comes to know during data collection and by data analyze that punishment can’t reduce students absenteeism from school. But few teachers were in the favor of the statement that at some time and some contacts punishment can be help full to make students regular for their studies. Finally, majority of sample said that maximum teachers are in favor of punishment by fine. So it is described that majority of the teachers punished there students by giving financial penalty when they become absent from school.

CONCLUSION

Teacher’s behavior is the causes of absenteeism of students from school at secondary level. Because Baltistan is one of the remotest areas of Pakistan, there is lack of facilities for students in public sector schools. The physical health of students is also a cause of absenteeism at secondary level. Maximum teachers thought that reward can reduce student’s absenteeism while few of them are in the favor of punishment to reduce student’s absenteeism. They think that punishment by giving them a financial penalty can help to reduce student’s absenteeism from school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One to base of conclusions the following some recommendation and suggestion are writing down to reduce students absenteeism from school.

- Give awareness to parents about education.
- Teachers should provide healthy and friendly environment for students.
- The parents should also manage time to see whether their children's completed the home task assigned to them by their teachers.
- All the social agencies and the members of the society or community should release the importance of education for their children.
- Due to long distance from schools students remain absent. This factor should be resolve by providing them better transport facilities and setting up of boardinghouses for those students who are coming from far area.

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