

Factors Leading to Absenteeism of Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Tandahimba District

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the factors leading to the absenteeism of teachers in public secondary schools in the Tandahimba district. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approach methods. Primary data was obtained using semi-structured the questionnaire which has both open and closed-ended questions; while secondary data was obtained through journals and books. The study was conducted in the Tandahimba district Mtwara region. The district has a population of 227,514 people, where the major economic activity in the district is cashew nuts growing this, is a dominant economic activity, however, the area also grows simsim but on a small scale. On a small scale, the area grows cassava and rice mainly for subsistence purposes. The district is divided into three administrative divisions and 30 administrative wards. The findings revealed that during the rainy season the rate of teacher absenteeism is high. Hence, the teacher from poor backgrounds and schools that are located far away from the tarmac roads do not necessarily cause teacher absenteeism. The study recommends that the government in collaboration with other education stakeholders should improve the working conditions especially by building teacher houses that are of high quality with water readily available and also electricity it could be solar power or hydro-electric power and also the encouraging the mobile phone networks to be located in areas where no access to such networks.

Keywords: *Absenteeism; Tandahimba District; Public Secondary Schools; Teachers, Tanzania*

1. Introduction

Education is a bed-rock to any nation in its development either socially, politically or economically. We cannot talk of the education system with a curriculum minus the implementers of the curriculum. Consequently, teachers play a great role in the attainment of educational goals in any given country. In this regard, teachers are responsible for high standards in education and high quality. When one talks about quality education with high standards, it is very hard to leave behind teachers since are the ones who transmit knowledge to the learners and help learners to gain knowledge and skills. In most cases teachers are to be role models to their students. This partly explains why teachers are the basic element in producing quality education of a nation. Teacher absenteeism is a global challenge and it has a negative implication on students like depriving learners an opportunity to learn.

Absenteeism is one of the challenges among many challenges facing many organizations in our contemporary world. Consequently, few organizations can claim that their workers do attend their respective works 100%. There are various forms of absenteeism practiced by employees such as, extended tea and lunch break, coming late to work and leaving very early contrary to the stipulated time, attending personal issues like businesses, sick family members, taking a long time to collect working tools, some workers forge illness. All these forms organizations take them as absenteeism practices. Literature shows that a large number of teachers and other educational administrators have been engaging in various undesirable practices across the world (Betweli, 2013) thus absenteeism in one of those undesirable practices. According to Chaudhury, et al.(2006), suggested that, absenteeism is caused by many factors like personal illness, a relative's sickness who has to be attended to, family conflicts, lack of job satisfaction leading to low morale, lack of personal competence, lack of friendly work group norms, poor leadership at the work place, lack of effective supervision and inspection of employees, assignment of other duties outside work place, bad weather conditions, union influence and poor working conditions. Whilst the identified factors are common in many organizations, employee challenges vary from one organization to another. This study therefore, will seek to establish reasons leading to teacher absenteeism in secondary schools and its effect on students' academic performance in Tandahimba district, Mtwara region.

Employers classify absenteeism in two main categories, such as legitimate absenteeism and illegitimate absenteeism. Whereby the former means providing substantial reasons to justify one's absence from performing his/her work such as permission and falling sick and the later refers to absenteeism that has no justification and no substantial reasons provided in trying to legitimize his/her absence from work. In most cases, the illegitimate absenteeism, poses a lot of problems to organizations, such as not meeting organizations' goals and objectives, overall production goes down and if there are any orders are delayed. Not only that but also the organizations make losses due to over paying workers who compensate the work of the absent workers. This also leads to loss of work to the employers who have been missing for a long time. The question is "why should one concern himself/herself with the problem of absenteeism?" This question presupposes that, there are demerits attached to the question of absenteeism. For example, Circadian (2005), observed that, unscheduled (illegal) absenteeism is a chronic problem for U.S. employers, conservatively costing \$3,600 per hourly employee per year, and \$2,650 per salaried employee per year. The majority of employers have limited ability to accurately and regularly track how much absenteeism is reducing their bottom line earnings. Studies indicate that absenteeism has a material effect on the bottom line of most companies, yet few managers really understand the magnitude of the problem at their company. The unscheduled (illegal) absenteeism rate in the U.S. hourly workforce is approximately 9%; almost one in ten workers is absent when he or she should be at work (Circadian, 2005). Consequently, there are considerable direct and indirect costs associated with absenteeism.

Bowers (2001), argues that when absenteeism rate in any organization exceeds 3%, the employer incurs huge costs. This partly explains why employers try by all means to come up with some measures to solve the problem of absenteeism. Studies conducted in the USA portrayed that teacher absences in the United States are around five percent, which is significantly lower than the absenteeism rates in developing countries, but compared to the absenteeism rates of United States workers in other occupations at less than three percent, the rate of teacher absences in the United States is fairly high (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007). In the developing world the rate of absenteeism among teachers is alarming, for example, the average teacher absence rate for Indonesia was estimated to be 20.1% in 2003, declining to 14.8% in 2008. However, the incidence of teacher absence was much higher in Papua in 2011 by 34% (ACDP, 2014). In Uganda studies have even drawn a conclusion on the most days when teachers practice absenteeism. Okurut (2012) citing (Banerjee, et al 2004), observed that teacher absenteeism in Uganda is widespread and unpredictable; widespread because, absences are not just concentrated among a few "ghost teachers"; and unpredictable because, they are as likely on Wednesday as on Friday. More recent studies based on unannounced school visits have also reported rates of teacher absence from school that fall within this range in Kenya 15%, Senegal 18%, Uganda 20%, and Tanzania 23% (ACDP, 2014). In this data, one can see clearly that Tanzania ranks the highest, followed by Uganda, followed by Senegal and the lowest is Kenya. Thus, the study on teacher absenteeism is very much needed in Tanzania so as to counteract the problem.

Teacher absenteeism is a very serious issue in most of the schools all over the world. Due to this challenge, the delivery of quality education is in critical situation since teachers are the key element in making the delivery of quality education. Studies have shown that teacher absenteeism is a global challenge mostly facing developing countries as compared to developed countries. Hubbell, (2008) observed that, in developing countries, the teacher absenteeism rate is above 40% while in developed countries it is as low as 10%. In Tanzania for example studies show that the country is still struggling with the challenge of absenteeism and few studies have been carried out on the issue. HakiElimu (2010) in its report analyzing the national budget of 2010/2011 observed that, Tanzania currently struggles with this phenomenon as many new teachers who are posted to remote areas do not report to work, transfer to urban schools, or quit their jobs in the first year, a trend costing the country Tsh. 511 million annually. This is what motivates the researcher to carry out a research based on the absenteeism of secondary school teachers and its effect on students' academic performance. Therefore, there is a need to carry out an investigation on causes of absenteeism of public secondary school teachers and the effect it has on the students' academic performance. The study will be conducted in Tandahimba because the problem exists and needs to be investigated upon so as to come up with suggestions on how to address the problem.

2. Material and Methods

Various scholars have conceptualized absenteeism in different ways and sometimes others use the word absence.

Bucknall and Wei (2006) define absenteeism as an employee's failure to report for work when scheduled to do so. With this definition, it does not include absence from work by prior arrangement, approved annual leave and

other statutory vacation days. Grewe (2005) observed that, according to the Swiss Conference of Educational Directors (EDK) there is no national definition of absenteeism. Consequently, the Swiss educational law (art 37, V VS & 17) defines absence as a missed lesson or school day without differentiating between unexcused absences. Absences are registered in school certificates. Other scholars view absenteeism as any failure to report for work as scheduled, regardless of reasons (Cascio & Boudreau, 2008). This definition presupposes that whether employee is not on the job as scheduled, he or she is absent, regardless of cause. From the definitions above, all authors have a typical characteristic and that is, referring absenteeism as a failure of a worker to report to job.

From the definitions above of absenteeism, we can deduce two types of absenteeism. Circadian (2005), identifies two types of absenteeism as elaborated below. *Unscheduled absenteeism* sometimes it is referred to as illegitimate or unproved or unplanned absenteeism for example, illness and death of a family member. An individual who falls under this category does not provide any substantial justification to his/her absence from performing his/her duties and responsibilities. In most cases, the illegitimate absenteeism, poses a lot of problems to organizations, such as not meeting organizations' goals and objectives, overall production go down and if there are any orders are delayed. *Scheduled absenteeism* sometimes is referred to legitimate, proved or planned absenteeism for example, permissions and leaves. An employee who falls under this category provides substantial justification to his/her failure from reporting to work. Absenteeism however does not mean only being at work but also it means arriving late at work contrary to the prescribed time, leaving early from work, extended breaks of tea and lunch, attending to private matters during working hours, extended toilet breaks, feigned illness (this comes with frequent visiting the clinic and doctors) and extended time to collect working tools.

IBIS/NNED (2010) defined Teacher absenteeism as teachers not available in school at the time of visits by the team. This includes teachers who have reported for work and have left for whatever reason before the arrival of the team and teachers yet to report to school.

Teacher absenteeism is defined in the study as any type of teacher absence from the classroom; it includes both personal and professional absences (Robinson, 2008). Personal absences are defined as a teacher initiated absence from the classroom. The teacher has made the decision to be absent for reasons such as personal illness, family illness, personal business, death in the family, or moving. Professional absences are defined as a school, district, or other governmental agency initiated absence from the classroom (Robinson, 2008).

Much attention has been focused on the attendance of children in schools and the impact that frequent student absences have on student learning, so much so that parents may face criminal sanctions if their children miss a certain number of days of school (Finlayson, 2009). However, the same attention needs to be focused on the attendance of teachers who are charged with the responsibility of teaching these children.

Reports have shown that teacher absenteeism is a global phenomenon. Consequently, it can have negative effects on an entire school system from lowering students' achievement and attendance to damaging the school reputations to broader economic losses (Haris van Keuren, 2009). Recognizing that teacher absenteeism affects the equity of education access for students and functions as a school-based determinant of their academic success, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights included teacher absences as a new item on its biennial Civil Rights Data Collection survey in 2009 (Miller, 2012). Teacher absenteeism drains school resources and increases administrative time spent on replacing classroom and managing attendance (Obeng-Denteh, Yeboah, Sam & Monkah, 2011). For example, researches have revealed that, some 10% to 24% of recurring primary education expenditures worldwide are lost to teacher absenteeism, including an estimated \$16 million in Ecuador and up to \$2 billion in India (World Bank, 2012, as cited in AfDB., 2013). In the United States alone, an estimated \$4 billion is tied up in compensating for teacher absenteeism (Miller, 2012). Hubbell, (2008) observed that, in developing countries, the teacher absenteeism rate is above 40% while in developed countries it is as low as 10%. For example, throughout the Pacific Region, teacher absenteeism is a pervasive problem and an area in long-standing need of improvement (Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). In 2011/12 elementary school teachers in the Federated States of Micronesia attended, on average, 90 percent of the school year, while secondary teachers attended 85 percent of the school year (Federated States of Micronesia, National Department of Education, 2012). In 2010 research conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund reported that many children in the Pacific Region, including in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, were not receiving the 850–1,000 hours of instruction per year required by law because of teacher absenteeism (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2010).

World Bank (2004) revealed that the national average absence rate for secondary school teachers was lower than that of primary school teachers except for Bangladesh where the rate of absenteeism for secondary school teachers was 2% higher than the primary rate. In Mongolia teacher absence rate in rural areas was 16% and only

5% in urban areas (Glewwe & Kremer, 2006). Other studies conducted by Glewwe and Kremer (2006) established that, teacher absenteeism in Kenya varies from one region to another where the rate ranges from 20% to 28.4% of the time. They also argued that 12.4% of teachers were in school but not in the class teaching. In Tanzania, HakiElimu (2010) reported that, teacher absenteeism is a major problem in Tanzania as well as developing countries. The report revealed that 10% of primary school teachers were absent and in secondary schools, teacher absenteeism was 13% on average. In some schools visited, 70% of the teachers weren't present consequently, it is costing a country over a Tsh. 58.7 billion per year.

Ivatts (2010) argues that there are multifarious causes of teacher absenteeism which vary from one country to another and from one region to another. In this study therefore, these causes will be discussed under three broad categories. That is to say, personal based causes (Illness of teachers and their respective family members, job dissatisfaction, age of teachers, lack of profession competence of teachers and family conflicts), school based causes (Leadership style of the heads of the school, poor infrastructure and equipments, high pupil-teacher ratio, inadequate supervision and inadequate in-service training programs) and environmental based causes (Political interventions, location of the schools, poverty of the community and weather conditions). These may include the following, illness of teachers and their respective family members, job dissatisfaction, age of teachers, lack of profession competence of teachers and family conflicts. Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio (2015) observed that teachers in emergent nations commonly take on secondary employment to supplement their income. Stakeholders in Malawi reported that teacher absenteeism is a major problem for the region because teachers cannot afford to live on their teaching salary alone (Kadzamira, 2006). In urban areas, teachers are finding ways of getting out of the classroom, even during lesson time.

The GOM/UNDP (2002) study reported that the major reasons for absenteeism amongst public servants were due to personal sickness, attending to sick family members and funerals. This is in concurrence with other research data on HIV/AIDS study found personal sickness, funeral attendance and attending to sick family members to be the most common reasons given for teacher absenteeism Nyangarika et al (2020b), (Kadzamira et al 2001). According to Ervasti, et al. (2012), female teachers are absent more frequently than male teachers due to more family demanding responsibilities. However, Rosenblatt & Shirom (2005), argue that male teachers are absent more than their female counterparts who have few outside workplace responsibilities that are likely to take them away from the school. A research conducted by Tao, (2013) revealed that teachers in Tanzania acknowledged that they had even left school during the teaching day to look for other work. This comes as a result of dissatisfaction of the teaching job. Abadzi (2009) cited in Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio (2015) opines that in emergent nations teacher professional levels (related to level of education and credentialing) and age-related seniority contribute to high absence rates. This is in agreement with the study conducted in Indonesia whereby, highly educated teachers and headmasters exhibited higher absence rates than grade teachers (for example, teachers who teach subjects other than physical education and religion) (Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). According to Alcazar, et al (2004) observed that teachers trained in pedagogy are more professionally qualified and motivated than those teachers who studied other subjects and therefore they have low absence rate. This explains why teachers who lack professional competence are more absent than their counterparts. Under normal circumstances, whenever there is a family conflict, which may lead to court cases or may cause injury, such a teacher will be absent from teaching in order to create time for resolving the conflicts in his/her family.

These are school related characteristics that are likely to contribute to teacher absenteeism in schools. They include the following Leadership style of the heads of the school, poor infrastructure and equipments, high pupil-teacher ratio, inadequate supervision and inadequate in-service training programs. Studies have revealed that private schools have lower teacher absenteeism rates than public schools. Taking an example in Nigeria it was found out that in Lagos State private schools had higher rates of teaching activity and lower teacher absenteeism than public schools (Tooley, Dixon, & Olaniyan, 2005 as cited in Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). Tooley, Dixon and Olaniyan (2005) described government school conditions such as overpopulated classrooms, high student poverty, and poor school planning that likely contribute to higher absence rates among public school teachers.

Facilities in government primary schools in Calcutta were reported 'by no means satisfactory' (Tooley, Dixon and Olaniyan (2005) quoting (Nambissan, 2003.20); of 11 primary schools only two had safe drinking water for the children, nine had a general toilet, and only five had a playground. Listing major problems in their schools, head teachers included the lack of electricity, space and furniture. This also may lead to teacher absenteeism to respective schools especially in government schools. . A study of a nationally representative sample of government primary schools in Bangladesh found that 81% had water, 39% electricity, 97% toilets, 76% a playground and only 0.4% a library, while the average pupil- teacher ratio was 69:1 (Tooley, Dixon and

Olaniyan, 2005). The same study was reported in India the Probe Team in India found that out of 162 government primary schools, 59% had no functional water supply, 89% had no toilets, and only 23% had a library, 48% a playground. The average pupil teacher ratio was 68:1 (The Probe Team, 1999).

The reasons for poor attendance in India can be related to the power or influence teachers carry at their schools, based on factors such as professional background, position, and personal characteristics (Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). This in most cases comes with the heads of school not involving their teachers in decision making, an act which demotivates teachers and hence absenteeism. Contrary to schools with good leadership styles spearheaded by the heads, the rate of teacher absenteeism is low. Keung (2008) argues that, Teacher Participation in decision-making is one of the recommendations of school-based management and one of the key characteristics of an effective school. It identifies the decision domains in which teachers contribute most effectively and it takes into account teachers' perceptions of their job satisfaction, commitment and workload.

In India teachers were less likely to be absent at schools that were inspected regularly (Kremer et al., 2005 as cited by Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). It is believed that one of the strategies to curb teacher absenteeism is use of inspections (Yiga & Wandega, 2010), Nyangarika et al (2020c). Inadequacies in school inspection greatly lead to teacher absenteeism.

Basically, teachers who teach schools closer to the educational offices, the rate of absenteeism is very low as compared to teachers who teach far away from the educational offices. More so experience shows that, a school that has strong monitoring system like class journals and teacher attendance register cases of absenteeism are minimal as compared to schools which do not have such strong monitoring systems. According to Glewwe & Kremer (2006), when teachers are assigned other duties outside the school for example taking students for games, drama, music, science congress, teachers are kept out of classrooms thereby increasing absenteeism rate unlike those other teachers who are not assigned such duties. Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, (2015) argued that the need to attend workshops or meetings was a frequent reason for teacher absenteeism in the Pacific Region, which may suggest difficulty in planning for professional development opportunities or for teachers to fulfill other professional duties. This means the surroundings of the schools greatly influence teacher absence in many parts of the world. These causes may include, political interventions, location of the schools, poverty of the community and weather conditions to mention few among many causes.

In Papua and West Papua, Indonesia, school location is a significant factor in absence rates among administrators and teachers. Geographically, principals from urban schools had the highest attendance rates (67 percent), followed by principals from the easy-to-access lowland district schools (59 percent); principals from the highland district schools had the lowest (Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). Studies show that teachers in India were less likely to be absent when their school was located closer to a paved road (Kremer et al., 2005 as cited by Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). On the other, much as living close to paved roads may make it easier for teachers to reach school, it also makes leaving school in the middle of the day easier and affordable (Usman & Suryadarma, 2007). Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, (2015) observed that in Nigeria teachers in urban schools had slightly lower absentee rates than teachers in rural schools, which was attributed to more regular school supervision and higher visibility of inspectors in urban locations. Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, (2015) argued that teacher's commuting distance to school may have positive or negative effects on absenteeism rates. In Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru, and Uganda teachers local to the school community tended to be absent less often than those who commuted from outside the community (Alcázar et al., 2006).

Geographically, absence is concentrated in poor and remote schools: Teachers at public schools in higher-poverty districts are absent twice as often as other public school teachers, and for teachers at remote public schools (measured by distance to a paved road), absence rates are two and a half times those of other public school teachers (ibid.). A research carried out in Peru indicated that public school teachers' absence rates are significantly higher on Mondays and Tuesdays than on Wednesdays and Thursdays (Alcázar et al., 2006). Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, (2015) opine that environmental factors such as hurricanes and other aggressive weather patterns, which can lead to flooding and infrastructure damage in low-lying islands and atolls, contribute to teacher absenteeism in the Pacific Region. In Tanzania lack of access to food, clean water, sanitation, and access to a hospital has been a reason for teacher absence. Teachers agreed that hunger constrained their capacity to teach, as did poor water resulting from inadequate infrastructure (substandard water tanks and latrines), which leads to sickness and disease (Tao, 2013). Poverty may increase absence through a variety of mechanisms; for example, it may reduce the power of communities to hold teachers accountable in a principal-agent framework, or it may worsen work conditions and lower teachers' intrinsic motivation (Alcázar et al., 2006).

Alcazar, et al. (2004), observed that teachers having a local origin have lower absenteeism rate than those from other communities. However, experience shows that teachers who come from the same area where they are working from have absenteeism rate than those who come far away from where they are working from. This is in concurrence with what Hubbell (2008) observed and said, indigenous teachers tend to be more absent than the non-indigenous teachers. This is because the indigenous teachers being near home have many personal activities that require their attention from time to time compared to non-indigenous teachers who are far from their home. In Kenya, schools in the areas affected by 2007/2008 post-election violence were closed because of teachers' absenteeism since many had run away for their safety. More so, scholars have observed that Bruno (2002) cited in Brown and Arnell (2012) purports that "when there is a high teacher absence, it tends to lower the morale of remaining teachers resulting in high teacher turnover." Other teachers tend to feel more burdened because they may have to plan for the teacher who is absent (Brown and Arnell, 2012), in addition to teacher morale, urban teachers tend to become frustrated with poor resource allocations in their schools [...].

Rates of employee absences and the effects of absences on productivity are topics of conversation in many organizations in many countries of our contemporary world. One reason is that high rates of employee absence may signal weak management and poor labor-management relation (Miller, Murnane & Willet, 2007). In today's world, many students in schools struggle to read. Brown and Arnell (2012), Nyangarika et al (2020a) argued that as many teachers and community leaders will attest, reading failure has exacted a huge long-term consequence for children's self-esteem and becoming productive citizens and lifelong learners. Therefore, teacher presence in schools does matter and there is no doubt that teacher absence has an effect on the achievements of the students (Miller, Murnane & Willet, 2007). However, this does not come from nowhere but it has a source, Dorward (2000) cited in Brown and Arnell (2012), intimated that teacher absenteeism has a direct impact on student achievement. Current trends of teacher absenteeism seriously disrupt the learning environment of the classroom.

According to a 2006 study in North Carolina, rural, urban, and suburban districts were analyzed and it was determined that each 10 days of teacher absence reduced "student achievement by one or two percent of a standard deviation (Brown & Arnell, 2012). Teacher absences may also negatively impact student achievement in less direct ways. For example, teacher absences may inhibit attempts by school faculties to implement consistent instructional practices across classrooms and grades (Miller, Murnane & Willet, 2007). Mbonambi (2002) intimated that in an extreme case the impact of teacher absenteeism is evident in those learners who roam around the streets during school hours. Consequently, the absence of teachers results to students' misbehaviors such as truancy, a decline in students' performance and being disrespectful to his/ her elders. Studies reveal that, when teachers are not in classrooms, the opportunities for students to learn are curtailed (Clofelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2009: 28). Consequently, teachers who are absent, schools try to replace them with less experienced and unqualified teachers something that greatly impact students' achievement negatively. Studies like this are rare because it is extraordinarily difficult to detect the effect of teacher absenteeism on student performance since there are so many other factors that can impact student learning (Finlayson, 2009). However much it is hard to detect and attribute students' failure to teacher absenteeism, this problem is immense and greatly affect students' performance, since teachers are the implementers of the curriculum such that minus teachers, teaching cannot easily take place.

3. Methods

The study used mixed approach sometimes known as triangulation method. According to Tichapondwa (2013) when using mixed method, the research combines both quantitative method that collects numeric data (numbers) and qualitative method that collects texts (words) data. The method was seen as the most appropriate; it aimed at exploring the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of educational stakeholders on teachers' absenteeism and its effect on students' academic performance among public secondary school teachers in Tandahimba district. The study was conducted in Tandahimba district Mtwara region. The district has a population of 227,514 people (URT, 2013). The major economic activity in the district is cashew nuts growing this is a dominant economic activity, however the area also grows simsim but on a small scale. On a small scale the area grows cassava and rice mainly for subsistence purposes. The district is divided into three (3) administrative divisions and 30 administrative wards.

4. Results

Like in the preceding analysis and presentations here the respondents were required to tick against the statement of their choice. There are five (5) items that the respondents were required to use against each statement. These

items range from strongly agree represented by number one (1) to disagree represented by number five (5). This means the lower the scale the stronger the answer and the higher the scale the lesser the answer. Respondents in this category are teachers, heads of schools and parents presented by chairperson of the board of the school. Findings in Table 4.1 above show the extent to which the heads of the school agree that environmental factors contribute towards teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Tandahimba district. Out of the nine (9) variable statements, 6 were identified as strongly agree this is equivalent to 66.67% of the total statements. The rest is making up to 33.33% of the variable statements that ranged from agree to neutral. Several factors are attributed to teacher absenteeism in secondary schools.

Table 4.1: Heads of school on environmental factors

Statement variables	N	M	SD
Bad geographical location of schools cause teacher absenteeism as compared to schools located in good areas	9	1.1111	.33333
Schools near tarmac roads have low rate of teacher absenteeism than those located far away from the tarmac roads	9	3.1111	1.05409
Schools located in remote areas register high levels of absenteeism of teachers than schools in trading and semi-urban centers	9	1.0000	.00000
Teacher absenteeism is higher during rainy seasons than when it is shining	9	1.2222	.44096
Teachers who come from poor background are more absent than those from well-off background	9	3.8889	.78174
Schools located far from education offices tend to have teachers who are always absent	9	1.4444	.52705
Lack of access to food, clean water, sanitation, and access to a hospital cause teacher absenteeism	9	1.8889	.92796
Teachers from the same working areas have absenteeism rate than their compatriots	9	2.7778	1.64148
Poor allocation of resources cause teacher absenteeism	9	1.7778	.97183

Source: Field data (2016)

Note: N= 9 Sample size, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation. Environmental based factors that cause teacher absenteeism is based on 5 items that is, 1= Strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral 4= Strongly disagree and 5= Disagree.

Among which are the environmental factors. Geographical location was pointed out by the heads of school as the causative to teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. To explain this further head of the school from school X had this to say: - "In this district there are schools that are located in remote areas to the extent that some of the teachers always miss their classes. You find that in a week a teacher goes to work four times in a week which means there are days that is missing to go school."

Table 4.2: Parent on environmental factors

Statement variables	N	M	SD
Bad geographical location of schools cause teacher absenteeism as compared to schools located in good areas	9	1.1111	.33333
Schools near tarmac roads have low rate of teacher absenteeism than those located far away from the tarmac roads	9	3.1111	1.05409
Schools located in remote areas register high levels of absenteeism of teachers than schools in trading and semi-urban centers	9	1.0000	.00000
Teacher absenteeism is higher during rainy seasons than when it is shining	9	1.2222	.44096
Teachers who come from poor background are more absent than those from well-off background	9	3.8889	.78174
Schools located far from education offices tend to have teachers who are always absent	9	1.4444	.52705
Lack of access to food, clean water, sanitation, and access to a hospital cause teacher absenteeism	9	1.8889	.92796
Teachers from the same working areas have absenteeism rate than their compatriots	9	2.7778	1.64148

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Note: N= 9 Sample size, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation. Environmental based factors that cause teacher absenteeism is based on 5 items that is, 1= Strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral 4= Strongly disagree and 5= Disagree.

The implication is that if per week only a teacher attends 4 days this means that he/she misses one (1) day per week and if calculated in a month these are four (4) days. This trend if goes further it means in a year this particular teacher will be missing big chunks of days that is, 48 days in a year. Bad geographical location of the school makes it impossible to even allocation and distribution of resources. There are schools that are located more than 35 kilometers from the town and the roads to such places are almost impassable. From what the heads amplified is that even going to buy teaching and learning materials and bringing them is difficult. This kind of situation demotivates teachers since sometime there are no teaching and learning materials hence teachers will start practicing absenteeism.

Parents also had a hand in giving their perception on the environmental factors as contributing factors to teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. The findings above in Table 4.2 vividly show the responses. Respondents were required to give a tick against the statement of their choice and the statements were 9 and 66.67% were ticked to be strongly agreed upon as the factors from environmental category attributed to teacher absenteeism in secondary school. 22.22% of the responses, parents were neutral on the statements that contribute towards teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. And the 11.12% was ticked as agreed to be the factor contributing towards teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. One parent amplified this when asked on how far is lack of food and clean water can cause teacher absenteeism: - "Our district has a problem of clean water and sometimes teachers absent themselves in search for water. Rains start raining in the late November up to late April of the following year. Before it starts raining there is a real problem of water since most of the sources of water are dried up due to heavy sunshine. Months from May to October we experience drought every year." This is in line with what the DEO stated when he was interviewed: - "In this district there is no reliable source of water, and the flow of water is so problematic to the extent that some of our teachers do not like residing near the school settings in fear of not accessing to clean water, something that is paramount to sustain life of an individual. This sometimes causes teacher absenteeism for those who are married and have kids. Unlike those who are single they don't need to cook they can eat to 'mama lische' and washing their cloths can hire a person to wash for them." In this situation it is clear that teacher absenteeism can be attributed to lack of clean water. As it has already been presented when discussing on the category of school factors, schools that are located near the educational offices there is a general consensus that such schools register low rate of absenteeism because teachers are always alert fearing any officer from the office to make a surprise visit to the school.

Table 4.3: Teachers on environmental based factors

Statement variables	N	M	SD
Bad geographical location of schools cause teacher absenteeism as compared to schools located in good areas	36	1.2778	.74108
Schools near tarmac roads have low rate of teacher absenteeism than those located far away from the tarmac roads	36	2.6944	.98036
Schools located in remote areas register high levels of absenteeism of teachers than schools in trading and semi-urban centers	36	1.2778	.97427
Teacher absenteeism is higher during rainy seasons than when it is shining	36	1.0000	.00000
Teachers who come from poor background are more absent than those from well-off background	36	3.8889	.52251
Schools located far from education offices tend to have teachers who are always absent	36	2.0000	1.14642
Lack of access to food, clean water, sanitation, and access to a hospital cause teacher absenteeism	36	1.6667	.63246
Teachers from the same working areas have absenteeism rate than their compatriots	36	2.2778	1.23314
Poor allocation of resources cause teacher absenteeism	36	1.7778	1.09834

Source: Field data (2016)

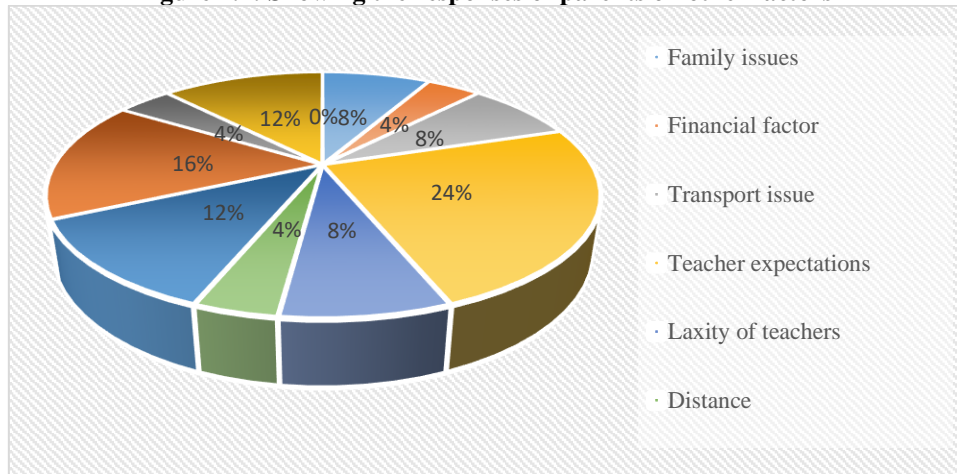
Note: N= 36 Sample size, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation. Environmental based factors that cause teacher absenteeism is based on 5 items that is, 1= Strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral 4= Strongly disagree and 5= Disagree

As it is shown above Table 4.3 teachers also had their opinion regarding teacher absenteeism in the category of environmental factors as the causatives to teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. Findings show that out of 9 responses five responses were at the mean of 1 (strongly agree) and this is equal to 55.56% of the total responses. Whereas out of 9 responses three (3) were rated at a mean of 2 (agree) and this is equal to 33.33% of the total responses. This is concluded by 11.11% as the remaining response out of the total responses. From the presentation in the preceding sentences it is vivid that environmental factors contribute towards teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. During data collection the researcher encountered a number of respondents stressing more on the point of one of the environmental factors to be a cause to their absence in schools. One of the teachers from school Y had this to say to the researcher: - *“During the rainy season here in Tandahimba roads are impassable. It can rain from morning to evening and by the time it stops raining you find it is already too late to work. Therefore, what I do is just sleep till it stops raining, I cannot risk my life going to work. Moreover, my working station is 25 kilometers away from the town. I don’t have a car; I don’t have a motor bike. I only use public means sometimes I get a lift from my friend. So what I can assure is that here in Tandahimba, come the rainy season sincerely speaking many of whom reside far away from schools do not attend in their working stations.”* In an interview with the DEO amplified more when it comes to the rainy season in the district and had this to say: - *“It is a total disaster when it rains here the soil is clay in nature. There are some areas that one cannot go when it rains even if you have a car the roads are sleeper and almost impassable. This in a way makes it difficult for some of the educational officers to go and visit schools, to see the progress of the schools and the teachers. We always wait till the time of heavy rains are over then we start visiting.”*

The researcher had a chance of meeting another teacher who stays within the vicinity of the school but he was trying to give the experience of his colleagues who stay outside the locality of the school and this is what he told me: - *“In our school we are 15 teachers but there is only one house for a teacher and the head of the school is the one living in that house. Me I was lucky to get a room in the neighboring village. But the majority of the teaching staff lives in Tandahimba town; when it rains few of them actually turn to working. Sometimes it rains consecutively and when it stops it is around 12 noon now how do you expect a teacher from Tanadahimba faraway about 30 kilometers to come to school? That is why one sees it logical not to come to work because of the rains. However, we have to appreciate there are teachers who actually know what it means to be a teacher by all means they make efforts and come.”* From such kind of comment, we can see clearly that there is a close relationship between rainy season and lack of teacher houses as the cause of teacher absenteeism in secondary school in Tandahimba. From the three tables that is, Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 respectively we can conclude and say that there emerged environmental factors that are very strong in contributing to teacher absenteeism in secondary school. These factors are common in all three categories of the respondents that are teachers, parents and heads of school have pointed out that geographical location, the remoteness of the area, rainy season, people working in their home district and poor allocation of resources. These statements appear in common from both respondents.

Apart from personal, school and environmental factors, the respondents that is teachers, DEO, parents and heads of school were required to list and explain any other factors that were not listed in the statement variables in the tables above. The findings on this section will be presented by using figures that is bar charts and are presented by the following figures that is Figure 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 respectively.

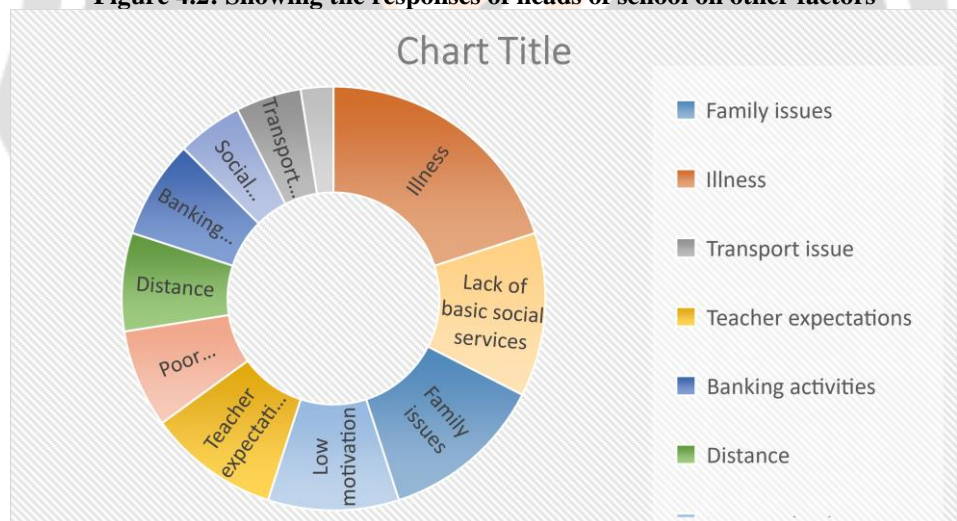
Figure 4.1: Showing the responses of parents on other factors



Source: Field data (2016)

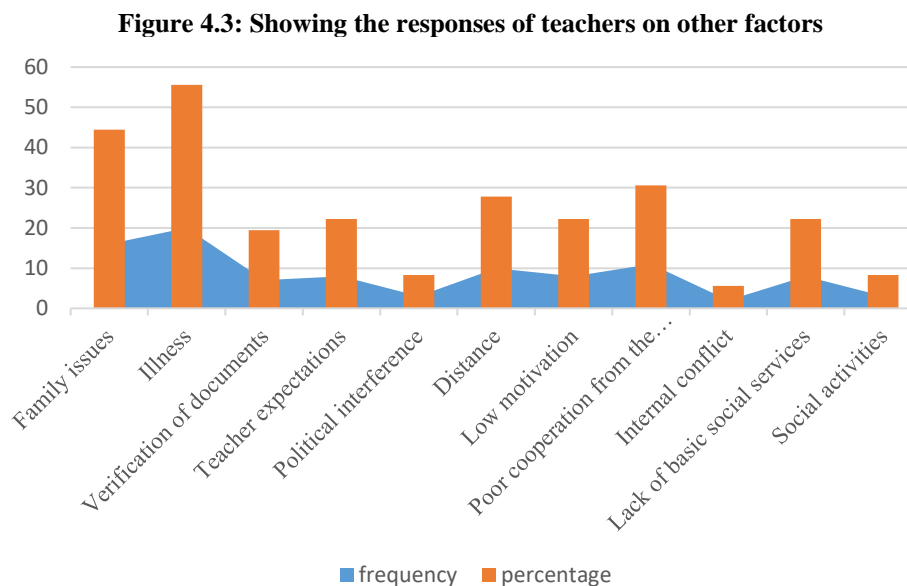
Figure 4.1 above shows the responses of the respondents when were asked to list any other factors that contribute to teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Tandahimba. As it is shown, 66.6% of the total respondents on the category of parents stressed that teacher expectations were the dominant factor contributing to teacher absenteeism. While poor cooperation from the community came second that is about 45% followed closely by lack of basic social needs like water and electricity 33.33% and low motivation to teachers was also on the 33.333%. Whereas transport and laxity/laziness of teachers tied on the 22.22%. Lastly distance of the working station, internal conflict and financial factor tied at 11.11%.

Figure 4.2: Showing the responses of heads of school on other factors



Source: Field data (2016)

Figure 4.2 shows that teacher illness among teachers is the main factor of teacher absenteeism 88% while internal conflicts among teachers themselves has insignificant effect 11% on teacher absenteeism. The dominant factor is followed closely by the lack of basic social services like water and electricity and family issues all at 55.56% respectively. Then 45% is for the expectations of the new employed teachers. Teachers also were asked to state the reasons for their absence and it turned out that about 55% of the responses indicated that illness to be the dominant factor contributing to teacher absenteeism as indicated in Figure 4.3. Coupled with illness is the factor of family issues at 45% of the responses. On the other hand, internal conflicts among the teaching staff and political interference were found out to be less insignificant contributing to teacher absenteeism. While the former is at 5.56% the latter is at 8.33%.



Source: Field data (2016)

Documents that were analyzed were class journals sometimes known as classroom teacher attendance register. File for teacher permission/leaves and the daily teacher attendance register that teachers always sign when reporting to work in the morning and when leaving their working stations. All schools that were in a sample size had readily available daily attendance register for teachers that is 100% but 7 (77.78%) of the available registers were up to date and 2 (22.22%) were not up to date. On the other hand, class journals that teachers' sign when they attend the lessons were also readily available 8 (88.89%) and 1 (11.11%) was not available. However, 6 (66.67%) of class journals were up to date and 3 (33.33%) were not up to date. Lastly it was the file for teacher permission of which its availability was 9 (100%). Likewise, as it has been discussed before environmental factors also have a hand in the absenteeism of teachers in secondary school in Tandahimba district. Respondents argued that bad geographical location of the schools as portrayed in Table 4.1, Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 at the mean of 1.1111, 1.1111 and 1.2778 respectively greatly contribute to teacher absenteeism. This is in agreement with the previous studies done by other researchers on the same issue where by the findings have shown that principals from urban schools had the highest attendance rates (67 percent), followed by principals from the easy-to-access lowland district schools (59 percent); principals from the highland district schools had the lowest (Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, 2015). Similarly, schools located in remote areas register high rate of absenteeism as compared to those schools that are located in urban and semi-urban areas. This is in concurrence with the study done in Nigeria found out that teachers in urban schools had slightly lower absentee rates than teachers in rural schools, which was attributed to more regular school supervision and higher visibility of inspectors in urban locations.

On the other hand, I found out that during rainy season in Tandahimba teachers register more absenteeism as compared to time when rains stop raining. The data obtained in Table 4.1, Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 the factor is indicated by the mean of 1.2222, 1.2222 and 1.0000 respectively show vividly how rainy season influence teacher absenteeism in the district. A research conducted by Lee, Goodman, Dandapani & Kekahio, (2015) opined that environmental factors such as hurricanes and other aggressive weather patterns, which can lead to flooding and infrastructure damage in low-lying islands and atolls, contribute to teacher absenteeism in the Pacific Region. Similarly, the study reflected the previous study conducted concerning the factor of lack of access to food, clean water and sanitation whereby it was amplified by the respondents that the district lacks clean and secure water. Sources of water are very rare and far this makes teachers sometimes to search for water and neglecting their duty of teaching. Given that water is life we cannot ignore that fact that due to lack of clean and secure water people will be at peace. This is in line with the study conducted in Tanzania teachers agreed that hunger constrained their capacity to teach, as did poor water resulting from inadequate infrastructure (substandard water tanks and latrines), which leads to sickness and disease (Tao, 2013).

5. Conclusions

Based on the objectives and the results of the findings several conclusions have been made. They are as follows: -Concerning how personal factors cause teacher absenteeism, it was found out those teachers running their own businesses, family conflicts, the use of the available various types of leaves, young teachers are more absent than their compatriots, drug and substance abuse influence the absence of teachers in the district of Tandahimba. On the other hand, underperforming teachers and experienced teachers are fewer causatives to teacher absenteeism. Apart from school, personal and environmental factors, there are other factors that are related to absenteeism of teachers like illness, high expectations of the teachers, low motivation, poor working environment, family issues, inadequate basic social needs and poor cooperation from the community contribute towards teacher absenteeism. However, laxity, distance of the district, internal conflicts and political interference do not necessarily influence teacher absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism has an effect towards low achievement of the students. It makes teachers not to complete the syllabus, causes differential performances among students and a decline in discipline is inevitable. Also due to teacher absenteeism, the remaining teachers' morale is greatly affected. Through improving the working environment conditions, close and strict supervision, motivation and also counseling and guidance can control and mitigate the problem of teacher absenteeism in public secondary schools in Tandahimba. From the aforementioned conclusions the study is recommending the following: - Since the problem is not for only Tandahimba district, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology should design programs for counseling and guidance to teachers on how to deal with the challenges of absenteeism. This can be included in the school calendar and when the in-service trainings are done can be incorporated; Teachers who are poorly remunerated the government should on a quick action review their salaries. Also give them teaching allowances so as to maintain those who always go for personal businesses; Regular checkup and quick treatment to teachers should be given a priority by the government. This can be done in collaboration with Social security funds such that medical checkup for teachers can be regularly conducted whenever required and when appropriate.

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