

# Effect of Absenteeism of Teachers in Public Secondary Schools Towards Students' Academic Performance

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the effect of absenteeism of teachers in public secondary schools on students' academic performance. Primary data was obtained using a semi-structured questionnaire which has both open and closed-ended questions; while secondary data was obtained through journal and books. The study was conducted in the Tandahimba district Mtwara region. The district has a population of 227,514 people (URT, 2013). The study findings show that we can see clearly how teacher absence affects students' academic performance. On the other hand, this problem culminates in the differential performance of students who come from different levels of backgrounds. The study concludes that poor students in most cases underperform due to lack of money to pay for the extra lessons and the rich ones have the opportunity to pay for the extra lessons to compensate for the lost lessons in their schools due to teacher absenteeism.*

**Keywords:** Absenteeism; Public Secondary; Students; Academic Performances; Tandahimba

## 1. Introduction

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

This study adapted the theory of functionalism or sometimes known as structural functionalism. This theory attempts to explain why societies function the way they do by trying to explain social institutions as collective means to meet individual biological needs (Cragun & Cragun, 2006). The central concern of structural functionalism is to explain the apparent stability and internal cohesion of societies that are necessary to ensure continued existence overtime. 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), Nyangarika et al (2020b), In urban areas, teachers are finding ways of getting out of the classroom, even during lesson time (ibid.).

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 (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), Nyangarika et al (2020a), 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 equipment's, 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). Inadequacies in school inspection greatly lead to teacher absenteeism. For example, Table 4.2 illustrates the inadequacies of teacher inspection in primary schools Iganga district in Uganda.

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), Nyangarika et al (2020c), 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) 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 researcher collected data from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained using semi structured questionnaire which have both open and closed-ended questions; while secondary data was obtained. 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

The extent to which teacher absenteeism has an effect to students' academic performance. Responses are divided into three categories that is, teachers' responses, heads of school responses and the parents represented by the chairperson of the school board. But also the responses from DEO's interview are integrated. Therefore, to begin with the following table shows the summary of the responses of the heads of the school on the level to which teacher absenteeism has an effect on the students' academic performance in secondary schools in Tandahimba. The findings will show two tables one with the likert scale of strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) with five (5) items and the other table shows the extent in terms of rating against the statement whereby the highest score is one (1) and the lowest score is five (5).

**Table 4.1: A summary of heads of school on the effects of absenteeism to students**

Statement variables	N	M	SD
Teachers' absenteeism is associated with incompleteness of the syllabus.	9	1.1111	.33333
When there is high level of absenteeism students develop indiscipline characters/issues	9	1.2222	.44096
When there is teachers' absenteeism students lack moral support from teachers.	9	1.8889	.60093
Teachers' absenteeism is always associated with decadence of students.	9	1.8889	.33333
Teachers' absenteeism will cause performance differential among students, as some whose families are financially stable will seek other assistance outside the school programme and those without will remain depending on the school programme	9	1.1111	.33333

*Source: Field data (2016)*

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

Responses in Table 4.1 above show that teacher absenteeism is greatly associated with incompleteness of the syllabus at the mean of 1.1111 and also with differential performance of students at the mean rate of 1.1111. And none of the incidences were confirmed strongly disagree. This affirms that there is a great connection between teacher absenteeism in secondary schools and the effect of teacher absenteeism among students in academic performance. From the interview with the DEO it was revealed that teachers are curriculum implementers and interpreters minus which the syllabus of the given subject will not be accomplished due to teacher absenteeism and this will cause poor performance to students. But also will force student families who are financially strong to go for other assistance in order to compensate the lost subjects due to teacher absenteeism and those who are poor will not have a chance of compensating the lost subjects hence the performance will not be of the same level.

**Table 4.2 : A summary of heads of school on the effects of absenteeism to students**

Statement variables	N	M	SD
How is it that the teachers' absenteeism is most disastrous to students' academic performance	9	1.4444	.88192
How does teachers' absenteeism in a way cause students' absenteeism?	9	1.2222	.44096
How is the motivation and morale of students affected by teachers' absenteeism?	9	1.7778	.83333
How is the morale and motivation of the remaining teachers affected?	9	1.0000	.00000

Source: Field data (2016)

Note: N= 9 Sample size, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation. Effects of teacher absenteeism to students is based on 5 items that is, 1= Highest score, 2= High score, 3= Medium score 4= Low score and 5= Lowest score.

From the Table 4.2 informants were asked to tick against the statement of their choice by choosing from the highest score (1) to Lowest score (5). There is general consensus among heads of the school that teacher absenteeism affects the motivation of other teachers who do not practice absenteeism at a mean of 1.0000. This will eventually lead to poor academic performance of the students since teachers will not teach effectively and efficiently. This puts the completion of the syllabus in a peril situation. The agreement is also supported by statement variable statement 2 which shows that there is clear connection between teacher absenteeism and the truancy of students at a mean of 1.4444. One of the heads had this to say before indicating the level of the score: "When we teachers are absent; students will not come to school. Teachers have been given a responsibility to look after students, to ensure that they are learning and doing well in their exams both internally and externally. But if we teachers develop undesirable behaviors of being absent, then students also will be demoralized and will not attend their lessons. This in the long run will affect students' academic performance." From this comment we can see that academic performance greatly is influenced by the discipline of both students and their teachers.

**Table 4.3: Parents on the effects of absenteeism of teachers to students**

Statement variables	N	M	SD
Teachers' absenteeism is associated with incompleteness of the syllabus.	9	1.0000	.00000
When there is high level of absenteeism students develop indiscipline characters/issues	9	1.2222	.44096
When there is teachers' absenteeism students lack moral support from teachers.	9	1.2222	.44096
Teachers' absenteeism is always associated with decadence of students.	9	1.2222	.44096
Teachers' absenteeism will cause performance differential among students, as some whose families are financially stable will seek other assistance outside the school programme and those without will remain depending on the school programme	9	1.2222	.44096

Source: Field data (2016)

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

Parents through the chairperson also had their views on the effects of teacher absenteeism to the students in academic performance. Table 4.3 above shows that parents mostly preferred teacher absenteeism to be associated with the incompleteness of the syllabus at a mean of 1.0000 and none of the other statements were confirmed as strongly disagree. The rest of the statements came as the second preference to the respondents at a mean of 1.2222. This affirms that when teachers are absent it is an obvious case that the syllabus of the subjects will not be completed and this results into poor academic performance. One parent was quoted saying that: - "Apart from other factors that may contribute to poor academic performance of our children in secondary schools, teacher absence has a great influence also. Am saying this because as far as I know at the level of secondary school especially O' level; students may not be able to understand the subjects by themselves unless there is a teacher who will help in interpreting the subject. We parent consider teachers to be the guide of the students in the learning and teaching process. But if these guides are absent then who will guide our children?" This parent is recognizing the role of a teacher in helping students to perform well academically by maintaining discipline of the highest level.

**Table 4.4: Parents on the effects of absenteeism of teachers to students**

Statement variables	N	M	SD
How is it that the teachers' absenteeism is most disastrous to students' academic performance	9	1.0000	.00000
How does teachers' absenteeism in a way cause students' absenteeism?	9	1.0000	.00000
How is the motivation and morale of students affected by teachers' absenteeism?	9	1.5556	.72648
How is the morale and motivation of the remaining teachers affected?	9	1.6667	1.00000

Source: Field data (2016)

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

The results in Table 4.4 above show that teacher absenteeism is more disastrous to student academic performance and also teacher absenteeism causes truancy of students. The respondents preferred the two statements at a mean of 1.0000. This is a direct association of the parents to teachers' absenteeism with poor academic performance of the students. There was no incidence of the lowest score in the responses. One parent had this to say: - "Last month I did not go to work and my grandchild did not go to school. Then I asked her why you haven't gone to school today? She told me that since last week our mathematics teacher is not coming to class we do not know why as a class and today we have mathematics. I better go to attend tuition in the evening I will have compensated the lost lessons today." This parent is trying to justify that when teachers are absent this makes also students not to go to school as expected. This is especially with the subject teacher and students categorically will prefer to attend extra studies commonly known as tuition.

**Table 4.5: Teachers on the effects of absenteeism of teachers to students**

Statement variables	N	M	SD
Teachers' absenteeism is associated with incompleteness of the syllabus.	36	2.0000	1.54919
When there is high level of absenteeism students develop indiscipline characters/issues	36	1.8056	1.26083
When there is teachers' absenteeism students lack moral support from teachers.	36	1.8889	1.00791
Teachers' absenteeism is always associated with decadence of students.	36	1.7778	.98883
Teachers' absenteeism will cause performance differential among students, as some whose families are financially stable will seek other assistance outside the school programme and those without will remain depending on the school programme	36	1.2500	.55420

Source: Field data (2016)

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

The DEO also expressed his feelings on the problem when the researcher was interviewing him when asked on whether teacher absenteeism affects students' academic performance: - *"It is something we should fight against because. If we do not fight it the end product is to have a society that is not educated and learned. Actually people who are affected are our children in their academic performance. The syllabus will not be completed and given with our economic status many students may not afford to go for tuition."* Still up to this point the role of the teacher is seen in making sure that the students perform well in their academic endeavors.

The problem of teacher absenteeism has got side effects to students' academic performance in secondary school in Tandahimba district. The results in the Table 4.5 show that performance differential among students some of which are financially stable and others are unstable and also high level of teacher absenteeism students develop indiscipline traits were mostly preferred by the respondents at a mean of 1.2500 and 1.7778 respectively as the dominant effects of teacher absenteeism to students. Also at the mean of 2.0000 responses show that absenteeism of teacher results into incompleteness of the syllabus. The respondents believe that the absence of teachers will greatly affect the students' academic performance. To explain the effects to students in academic performance one teacher was quoted saying this: - *"Teachers are entrusted to students by the government and the community at large by us teachers being absent and not teaching them accordingly it will affect them dearly. First of all, their discipline will decline and this may result to students not attending classes. Students will be truants and also the syllabus will not be covered hence costing students in their final examinations."* This shows how much teachers play a great role in making sure that students are taught properly and have attended their classes and lessons a process that has its culmination in good performance.

**Table 4.6 : Teachers on the effects of absenteeism of teachers to students**

Statement variables	N	M	SD
How is it that the teachers' absenteeism is most disastrous to students' academic performance	36	1.3611	.83333
How does teachers' absenteeism in a way cause students' absenteeism?	36	1.6944	1.39016
How is the motivation and morale of students affected by teachers' absenteeism?	36	1.6389	1.26836
How is the morale and motivation of the remaining teachers affected?	36	1.6389	1.39699

*Source: Field data (2016)*

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

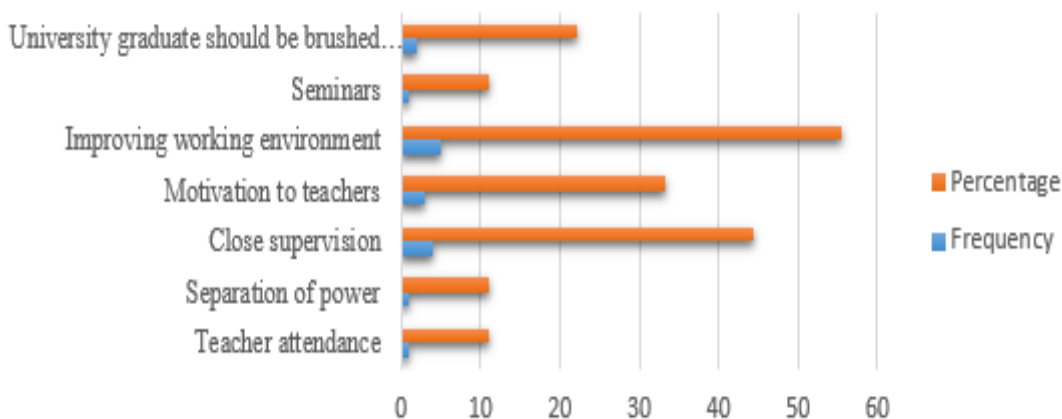
In Table 4.6 above findings show that the respondents pointed out that teacher absenteeism is disastrous to academic performance of the students in secondary schools at mean of 1.3611. At the mean of 1.6389 respondents pointed out that teacher morale and motivation of the remaining teachers are affected due to absenteeism of their colleagues. Eventually the performance of both teachers and students in the academic field will be greatly affected. One of the teachers when asked to state the extent she had this to comment before making a tick; *"Look here my friend we are human beings and we feel pain when our colleagues do not come to working especially with the unknown reasons. I personally feel demoralized and feel like not to teach in that particular day and this habit greatly affects students' performance. A good example is our mathematics teacher he often does not attend and has no proper reasons not to attend. When you look at the syllabus he has covered a quarter of the intended outcomes. Do you expect this class to perform better? No way and no miracle will save this class but only the particular teacher should reform himself and start teaching accordingly. This explains why our students also hate mathematics."* The concern raised stresses the point of showing how teacher absences can lead to poor academic performance in secondary schools of Tandahimba district.

The measures that can be used to mitigate the problem of teacher absenteeism in secondary schools. Respondents were allowed to propose more than one measure. Consequently, teachers, heads of school, DEO and the parents presented by the chairperson of the board of the school gave their views on the measures to mitigate the problem of absenteeism of teachers in secondary schools in Tandahimba district. The data are categorized in three groups that is the group of parents, group of teachers and the group of heads of the school. The presentation is done on the basis of the use of the bar charts that display frequencies and the percentages. Figure 4.1,4.2 and 4.3 portray the responses of the informants. Therefore, Figure 4.1 below displays the responses of the heads of the school on the proposed measures to mitigate the problem of teacher absenteeism in secondary school in Tandahimba district.



Figure 4.1 above shows the level of proposed measures by the heads of the schools on how to curb the problem of teacher absenteeism in secondary schools in Tandahimba district. Seven measures were proposed but among them the dominant measure seen as important and which can reduce teacher absenteeism is improving working environment at 55.56%. This is followed by close supervision at 44.44% and motivation to teachers also plays a big role in mitigating the problem of teacher absenteeism and it is 33.33%. To make a justification of the above findings one of the heads had this to comment: - *“Working conditions for us teachers are not favorable social basic needs are scarce such as availability of water supply and also electricity. Therefore, the government should at least improve on this area of making sure that water supply in our schools is available and also electricity. This will attract our teachers to be near the school and will not reside far away from their respective schools.”* Another head at school X had the following comment made: - *“Teachers need to be motivated like those who are working in hard environment like ours, should be given hardship allowances not to mention the increase of the salary.”*

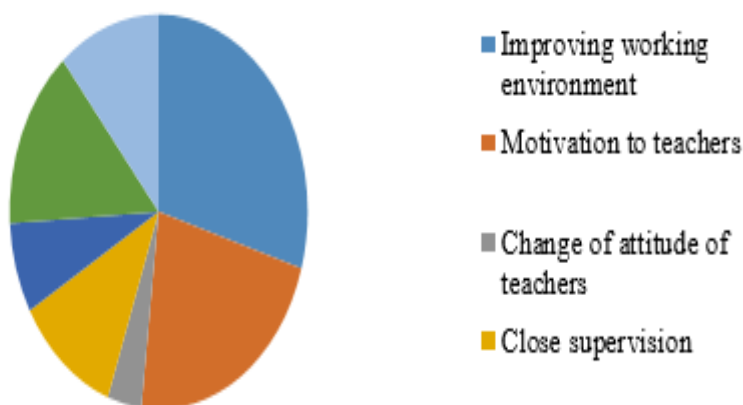
**Figure 4.1: Proposed measures by the heads of the school**



Source: Field data (2016)

Close supervision is also stressed and some of the heads who proposed this believe strongly that if supervision is done accordingly the rate of teacher absenteeism can be reduced. Here they meant the supervision of the heads of the school in collaboration with their administrative assistants like deputy heads and academic and teachers on duty. But also this should be extended to the DEO and his/her co-workers in the department of the education since the DEO is the head should be the engineer and the source of encouraging his/her subordinates to carry out a strict supervision.

**Figure 4.2: Proposed measures by the parents/chairperson of the school board of the school**

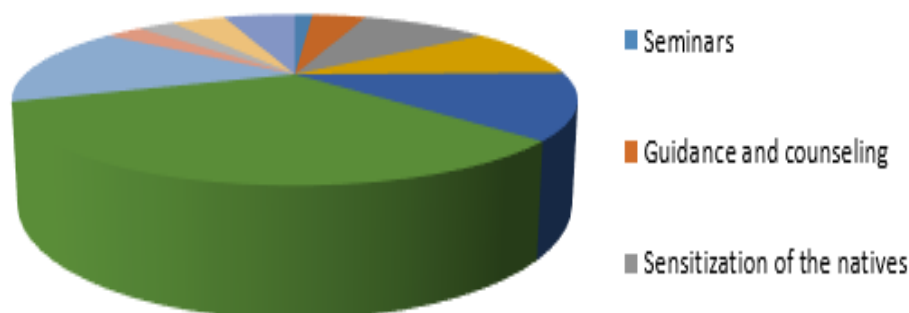


Source: Field data (2016)

Figure 4.2 above shows the responses of the parents as represented by the chairperson of the school board. Findings show that by properly improving the working environment of teachers it will reduce the problem of teacher absenteeism by 88.89%, followed closely by motivation to teachers 66.67% and also followed by guidance and counseling of the teachers 44.44% especially on the true meaning of teaching profession. The analysis has indicated that the change of teacher attitude towards certain areas in the country has negligible prevalence of teacher absenteeism rate 11.11%. During the interview with the DEO the following was commented on improving the working environment of teachers: - *“The environment we are talking here to be improved is building of teacher houses especially. Most of my teachers do not reside in their working areas, are here in town this is because of limited teacher houses. The requirements of this district in terms of teacher houses are high we have only 81 houses and yet the number of teachers is 423 even if they stay in a pair to share the available houses still not enough thus, it is important to improve this.”* Parents in their general views also stressed the point of improving the environment by making sure that the basic social needs like water, electrical power and networks for easy communication should be made available. Otherwise if not done we shall continue experiencing the same problem over years to come. On further explanation of teacher motivation one parent had this to say: - *“The government should first of all increase the salary of teachers. Timely payment is needed to be done not to delay their salaries this demotivates them and the working morale is lowered hence absenteeism problem. But also services like banks should be extended in areas where they are not this reduce the problem of teachers to seek for permission to go and attend banking activities.”* It can be deduced that by improving the working conditions and motivating teachers coupled with the close supervision the problem of teacher absenteeism can be reduced to a big extent.

Results in Figure 4.3 above show that respondents pointed out that the most dominant measure to be taken into account by the responsible authorities is the improving of the working environment at a rate of 66.67%, the second preferred measure is the provision of the basic needs such as water, electricity and cell-phone network for easy communication 30.56% and motivation to teachers 25% was the other proposed measure to be taken into account in a serious way. Sensitization of the natives on the importance of the education and also close supervision were at a rate of 19.44% both. Further the results have shown that seminars, teacher attendance and university graduates to be brushed on the teaching ethics were at a rate of below 10% this means that they have negligible prevalence of teacher absenteeism of secondary school teachers in Tandahimba district.

**Figure 4.3: Proposed measures by the teachers**



*Source: Field data (2016)*

The teacher absenteeism has a great effect to students' academic performance. Respondents believed that when teachers are absent there is a likelihood of the syllabus of the subjects being taught to be incomplete and hence this leads to poor academic performance. Other studies indicate that 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). Also on the same view, 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. Other studies went further to show that when teachers are absent in classrooms, there is a certain percent that is reduced to the achievement of the students. This is vivid in the study carried out in the United States of America whereby a study in 2006 conducted 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).

The findings show it clearly how teacher absence affects students' academic performance. On the other hand, this problem culminates to differential performance of students who come from different levels of back grounds. The poor in most cases underperform due to lack of money to pay for the extra lessons and the rich ones have the opportunity to pay for the extra lessons to compensate the lost lessons in their schools due to teacher absenteeism. Informants told me that not only students are affected in their academic performance but also in terms of morals students are greatly affected. One parent commented that we consider teachers to be the 'port' that cooks our children but when they are absent no close follow up hence our children will not be cooked in a way that is expected. The raised concern here by the parent is of disciplinary matters and this concern is in line with what this scholar had found in one of the studies. 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. It is obvious when teachers are absent students are curtailed from learning opportunities.

Informants were required also to propose the measures that can be used to mitigate the problem of teacher absenteeism of secondary schools in Tandahimba district. Consequently, teachers, heads of school, parents and the DEO gave what they thought to be the solution to the problem. Most of the responses from the findings show that both informants are very much concerned with the improvement of the working conditions as it is reflected in Figure 4.1,4.2 and 4.3. Respondents at a rate of 69.33% believed that if the working environment/conditions are improved teacher absenteeism will be greatly solved. The improvements referred here are the construction of teacher houses because the available ones are not enough, construction of classrooms and administration blocks for teachers and toilets. On the other hand, motivation to teachers was another measure that was amplified by the respondents in the study about 41.33%. The motivation here is to deal with the increment of the salary to teachers, providing incentives like teaching allowances to teachers who are working in unfavorable areas but also to timely release the salary of the teachers. One of the respondents argued that teachers also need to be recognized by their leaders for their achievements this will help in uplifting the morale of teachers and they will feel a sense of being appreciated by their leaders (DEO and heads of the schools in particular).

## 5. Conclusions

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: - In order to reduce the teacher absenteeism there is a need to readdress the effects of school, personal and environment factors on teacher absenteeism by teachers themselves and the relevant government authorities; There is a need for regular supervision by the entrusted authorities to do the supervisory activities like the WEOs, DEO office and heads of the schools. Where necessary the introduction of CCTV cameras will be of great help so that the monitoring is done in order to mitigate the problem.

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