



A Study on Causes and Structural Effects of Student Absenteeism with Reference to Vignan University, Andhra Pradesh, India.

KEYWORDS

Absenteeism, University, Andhra Pradesh, Students

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ABSTRACT *The aim of the study was to investigate the extent of student absenteeism in Vignan University in India, explore the reasons why student absent themselves from classes and examine the implications of student absenteeism. The study adopted the mixed methodology and used a survey research design as the operational framework for data gathering. Data were collected by self administered questionnaires and interviews with two hundred students from the vignan university in South India. The study revealed that student absenteeism is rampant in the university under study due to reasons such as: lack of subject interest, poor teaching strategies by lecturers, unfavorable learning environment, too much socialization, part-time jobs to augment meager bursaries granted by various sponsors and poor relations with the lecturers. The study also found an inverse relationship between student absenteeism and course performance.*

Introduction:-

Student absenteeism is a major concern for lecturers at institutions of higher learning. Absences create a dead, unpleasant classroom environment that makes students who come to class uncomfortable and the lecturer irritable. Absenteeism disturbs the dynamic teaching-learning environment and adversely affects the overall well-being of classes. Absenteeism is a waste of educational resources, time and human potential. Lecturers who spend class time re-teaching lessons take instructional time away from students who attend class regularly, and the extra time spent going over absentee homework and class assignments takes time away from lecturer planning periods and time needed to provide individual assistance. When students are absent from class, they miss valuable information resulting from peer-lecturer interaction and the benefits of the specific examples lecturers use to clarify difficult concepts.

It is important to note that a primary issue of chronic absenteeism is not that there is no excuse provided, but rather, the excuse is not a valid one. Students who have absenteeism problems generally suffer academically and socially. Studies indicate that students who are absent have lower achievement and may be penalized on test scores. The implications of absenteeism are felt outside the classroom as well. Continued loss of instruction or poor academic achievement among students with high absenteeism are essential characteristics of students who later detained from the course, it indicate that acts of delinquency are more frequent among students who exhibit low grade. The hypothesis that class attendance is likely to be correlated with student learning has been investigated empirically in education literature. The difference in performance between a student who attends regularly and one who attends sporadically is about a full letter grade.

When students perceive that lecturers do not care enough to follow up on absences, their motivation for attendance is not high. Interestingly, a converse view of compulsory attendance is provided by as contributing to and furthering the absentee problem. Studies indicate that absenteeism is caused by a number of factors such as lack of interesting and challenging curriculum; a desire for hedonistic activities with peers; negative self-image and self esteem, lack of subject interest, lack of personal interest in studies, the mental capacity of a student does not match with the course opted, the poor teaching skills of a lecturer also keep away students from school, lack of confidence in a lecturer, inadequate rela-

tions between a student and their lecturer and distance to university. It is therefore against this background that this empirical study sought to investigate the causes and effects of student absenteeism in Vignan University in the Republic of India.

Research objectives

To identify the causes of student absenteeism in university of higher learning.

To analyze the effects of absenteeism on the student life.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. A quantitative approach was adopted in order to allow the researcher to gather more precise and quantifiable information on the causes and effects of absenteeism. The qualitative methodology was also appropriate to this study because it allowed the researchers to get the data directly from the subjects themselves by sitting with the respondents and hear their views, voices, perceptions and expectations in detail. The main instrument that was used to solicit for information was the questionnaire. Self administered questionnaires with open-ended and closed questions were used for data collection.

Data Analysis

In order to get to the bottom of the problem, this study sought to isolate major factors that give rise to this problem. The findings of the study thus revolved around the following categories.

1. Incidence of Absenteeism

All the respondents reported that they had missed classes several times during the semester in which the study was conducted. From these figures it became abundantly clear that the problem of student absenteeism was a critical issue at the university in which the study was conducted. This, in some way could be a major reason why student general performance and throughput rate is very low.

2. Non-attendance Due to Part-time Jobs or Other Work-related Commitments

When asked whether they have part-time jobs that they perform concurrently with their studies, sixty-five percent of the respondents gave responses that were in the affirmative. They went on to indicate that attendance to lectures was

sometimes affected as they had to fulfill their work related obligations. This study established that most students who reported experiencing absenteeism of this character include the following, male students, students from rich family backgrounds, students from single parent families.

3. Non-attendance so as to Catch-up on or Completing Work to do with Studies

It emerged that many students do not attend core learning sessions at university due to other pressing study related activities that they will be doing. In this aspect the students having absented themselves from lectures several times because they were busy trying to catch-up or completing work that has to do with their studies. Several activities were mentioned as having a bearing on students' non-attendance for lectures, chief among them being the need to work on assignments, completing assigned projects, researching in the library, preparing for presentations and studying for pending tests. From these findings, it is clear that when students do not attend a scheduled session, caution should be exercised not to simply misconstrue this as a mere signal of lack of motivation or some form of deviant behavior on the part of the students.

4. Non-attendance Due to Lecturers Whom they Dislike

Students were asked to indicate whether nonattendance in lectures or other university activities had anything to do with the lecturers who teach them. The former group of students cited factors ranging from poor teaching styles by lecturers, boring lectures, lectures being too long, lecturers showing favoritism to certain students as critical lecturer characteristics that predispose them towards absenteeism or non-attendance. Some lecturers come late and some overlap their lectures with time for other lectures. If the lecture is too long it becomes boring. Lectures must be short and precise because we end up sleeping and it will be of no use to come and sleep every now and again. They are too relaxed and have too much freedom of which most of them are not good performers. These sentiments are critical as they help reveal that a number of lecturer-related characteristics or attributes can be a factor in the problem of non-attendance for lectures by students.

5. Non-attendance Due to Uninteresting Courses/Subjects

On whether there were any courses or parts thereof that students dislike so much that they could choose not to attend classes, fifty-eight percent of the students gave responses that were in the affirmative. On the other hand, forty-two percent of these did not consider this aspect an important one

in this regard. Thus, many students expressed dissatisfaction over the way lectures are delivered in class. The running thread in most student responses on this aspect was that lectures were boring. From these responses, one could infer with reasonable justification that most lectures presented to students fail to generate the students learning interest or motivation in general. Student motivation has been cited by several research studies as being closely correlated not only to student attendance but also to general student achievement and throughput rates.

6. Missing Classes so as to be with Friends and Peers

From the findings it emerged that peer influence has a significant bearing on student attendance to lectures. Close to forty percent of the respondents admitted having missed classes in the past in order to be in the company of friends. Peer influence has been cited by several researchers among them, as an important factor that contributes to various forms of anti-school behavior such as absenteeism, truancy, and dropping out. This is not surprising given the fact that over eighty percent of the students who participated in this study were young people whose average age ranged from 18 to 23. This is the age group that seems to be most vulnerable to the problem of peer influence. The peer group has also been cited as an important agent who has a strong bearing on the students will and ability to perform well. Although data was mainly focusing on the effect of peer group on achievement, this has important implications for this study because the student's level of achievement can predispose students into absenting or even detained from the course.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the problem of absenteeism is quite prevalent in the university higher education landscape. The problem is precipitated by interplay of a multiplicity of factors which are both internal and external to the student and or the university. Key among the factors that give rise to absenteeism are poor teaching strategies by lecturers, unfavorable learning environments, poor socio-economic background, peer influence as well as un conducive interpersonal relations between students and lecturers. The problem of student absenteeism is gaining much attention from educators, researchers and policy makers as it is not just an educational problem but also a social and political issue with huge social costs. Therefore, this study advocates that in order to address the problem in any meaningful way, efforts should be directed not only at the student or university but at the broader socio-economic and political environments in which universities are located.

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