

Reducing Absenteeism Of Students Through Caregivers Support

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the role of caregivers in reducing students' absenteeism among 1st year college students. This research adhered to the action research cycle, which encompasses four sequential steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Judgmental sampling technique was used to select the students and caregivers/parents. Only the students who were habitually absent in 1st year section (H) from boy college and their parents were taken to participate in the study. The present study employed quantitative data collection and data analysis techniques. Descriptive statistics was run to calculate the percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the attendance data. A paired sample t-test which was conducted to compare the variance in attendance (February and March 2023). The mean difference in attendance between February and March was statistically significant, $t(29) = -6.81$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of -5.26 ($SD = 4.23$), indicating that, on average, students attended fewer classes in February than they did in March. Overall results suggested a significant decrease in absenteeism from February to March. From a reflective standpoint, the intervention program was successful in increasing parents' awareness and involvement in monitoring their child's attendance, which led to a reduction in the number of absences by 37% and an improvement in overall attendance. Based on findings, it was suggested that colleges should establish clear expectations, communicate the importance of attendance with caregivers, provide online attendance records, encourage parent monitoring, arrange regular meetings, offer incentives for positive attendance, and use technology for effective communication between parents and teachers to promote regular attendance and parental involvement.

Keywords: Absenteeism, Caregivers Support, Intermediate Level.

INTRODUCTION

Absenteeism is a significant problem in public and private colleges especially at intermediate level. Since in semester system, strict attendance policies are followed by the Universities. But up to the intermediate level, annual system is followed by the institutions in Pakistan. So, in many government and private sectors intermediate level colleges, students' attendance isn't taken a serious matter. Absentees are

Regularity in all learning matters in general, and especially in attendance, is critical for their academic success, and absenteeism can have a detrimental impact on their academic performance. According to Gottfried (2010), low attendance is significantly associated with lower academic achievement, increased likelihood of dropping out of school, and decreased motivation to learn. Absenteeism can be caused by various factors, including health problems, family obligations and personal issues.

Absenteeism can be a critical problem in case of intermediate level students, as they are at a crucial stage of their academic career. The intermediate level is a transition period for students, where they move from general education to specialization. Any gap in their attendance can cause them to miss out on crucial concepts and knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to address absenteeism among intermediate level students to ensure their academic success.

To reduce absenteeism, one of the potential solutions is caregivers' support. Caregivers, (parents or guardians), play a crucial role in students' academic success. Caregivers' support can have a positive impact on the attendance of their children. Caregivers can help the students to motivate and attend school regularly, provide assistance with transportation, and address any personal issues that may cause absenteeism.

However, while caregivers' support can be beneficial, research on its effectiveness in reducing absenteeism among intermediate level students is limited. Therefore, this study aims to reducing absenteeism among intermediate level students through caregivers' support.

Rational of the Study

This study was conducted to study the role of caregivers in reducing students' absenteeism and to identify potential obstacles and measures to improve caregivers' support in addressing absenteeism in college students. Addressing absenteeism through caregiver support has the potential to improve educational outcomes, reduce economic and social costs, and promote broader social and economic well-being for students, families, and communities. Absenteeism can have significant negative impacts on students' academic performance, social isolation, and motivation, as well as broader social and economic implications. By identifying effective caregiver support strategies, the study has the potential to improve educational

outcomes, reduce economic and social costs, and promote broader social and economic well-being for students, families, and communities. Ultimately, the study has the potential to benefit a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, caregivers, students, families, and society as a whole. Moreover, the study may serve as a valuable addition to the current literature by offering recommendations and beneficial insights for future academic research endeavors.

Objectives of the Study

- To establish an action plan to improve caregivers' support in reducing students' absenteeism
- To implement the action plan to improve caregivers' support in reducing students' absenteeism
- To examine the effectiveness of caregivers' support in reducing absenteeism of students at the completion of the action plan.
- To prepare a future action plan to improve caregivers' support in reducing students' absenteeism

Research Questions

- What are the action plan to improve caregivers' support in reducing students' absenteeism?
- How can the action plan to improve caregivers' support be implemented to reduce students' absenteeism?
- What is the difference between pre- and post-intervention in students' absenteeism?
- What are future action plan to improve caregivers' support be implemented to reduce students' absenteeism?

METHODOLOGY

To maximize the results of students' attendance improvement, the researcher employed the action research. Action research cycle consists of four

steps namely planning, action, observation, and reflection (Enala S. Lufungulo et al., 2021). According to Enala S. Lufungulo et al. (2021), CAR is a part of a broad movement that has been going on in education. It is related to the ideas of reflective practice' and 'the teacher as researcher'. In this method, there are four components in one cycle for conducting classroom action research; planning, action, observation, and reflection which were conducted integrated like spiral. Each phase concluded based on the previous one and the next.

Figure 1. Action Research Cycle



Source: Makoelle, Tsedisio. (2016). Inclusive Teaching in South Africa. 10.18820/9781928355038.

The instruments used to collect the data were checklist and students' attendance record which are administered to observe the students' attendance before and after the action research cycle. The quantitative method was used in which the both descriptive and inferential statistics was run. A percentage of students' attendance was counted. It showed the variance in student's attendance pattern before and after caregivers'

involvement. Paired sample t-test was also employed to examine the attendance pattern of students' attendance before and after the intervention.

The study employed judgmental sampling to select students and Caregivers/parents. Judgmental sampling involves purposely picking individuals from the population based on the researcher's knowledge and judgment (Msabila and Nalaila, 2013).

The technique of judgmental sampling, as described by Orodho and Kombo (2002), is a potent research tool that enables researchers to select information-rich cases that are closely related to the central issues being studied for in-depth analysis. Black (1994) further emphasizes that the use of judgmental sampling helps eliminates unsuitable individuals, thereby ensuring that only the most appropriate respondents are selected for the study. As a consequence of such a rigorous selection process, results obtained from purposively sampled respondents are expected to be more accurate than those derived from alternative forms of sampling (Orodho and Kombo, 2002). Hence, judgmental sampling is a highly effective and widely used technique in research methodology that helps researchers to obtain reliable and valid data for their investigations. This study was conducted in Tehsil Samundri and confined to only one selected boy college and the focus was on caregivers' support in reducing learner absenteeism. For data collection, the target sample were absent students and their parents. The study's sample size adhered to the categories listed in the table 1.

Table 1: Participants of the Study

No	Participants	Number of Participants
1	Caregivers/Parents	30

2	Students	30
	Total	60

Only the students who were habitually absent in 1st year section (H) from boy college and their parents were taken to participate in the study.

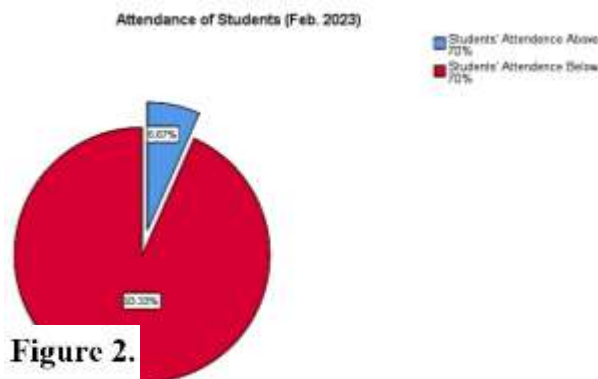


Figure 2. In this study, quantitative data analysis was conducted to examine the attendance patterns of students. Descriptive statistics were employed to calculate the percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the attendance data. Additionally, a paired samples t-test was utilized to compare the attendance of students during the months of February and March in the year 2023. The use of this statistical test allowed for the identification of any significant differences in attendance patterns between the two months. These analytical techniques provided valuable insights into the attendance patterns of students in this study.

Additionally, the results of the study were intended solely for academic purposes, as explicitly stated in the consent form. It is crucial to safeguard the identities of participants and maintain the confidentiality of collected data in any research to ensure ethical standards are upheld. Furthermore, by limiting the use of research results solely to academic purposes, the researcher ensures the integrity of the study and prevents the misuse of the data.

Data Analysis and Findings

This section focuses on the analysis of quantitative data. In quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics was used in which percentage was counted to observe the percentage of students attend the classes before and after the action research cycle. In adherence to the attendance policies set by the college, it was stipulated that maintaining a minimum attendance rate of 70 percent was deemed essential.

The figure 2 indicates the percentage of students with above and below of 70% attendance in the month of February 2023 before the intervention (caregivers' involvement in controlling the absenteeism of their children before the action research cycle.). The pie graph shows that only 7% students were regular and having their attendance above 70%. While 93% were habitually absent and have their attendance below 70%.

I. Planning

The first step was to develop a parental involvement plan in order to monitor students' attendance and reducing absenteeism. This plan involved drafting an outline of the roles and responsibilities of parents in monitoring their child's attendance and establish clear expectations for their involvement. The researcher established a session with parents. The agenda of the session with parents was to collaboratively set action plans to reduce absenteeism, which suggested that the teacher researcher was seeking input and participation from parents.

As communication tools, Parents would be informed about the session and follow-up actions through WhatsApp, text messages and phone calls. A time and location for the session of parental involvement was established as 11 AM in Conference Hall.

Firstly, it was determined that parents should familiarize with college's attendance policy before monitoring child's attendance. This will help them to understand what constitutes an excused absence, what the consequences of excessive absenteeism are, and what steps can be taken if their children were absent. Secondly, Parents would establish a routine for checking their child's attendance which could include checking attendance reports by surprise visit to the college, or communicate regularly with their child's teachers. Thirdly, parents needed to identify patterns of their children's absenteeism. By monitoring attendance regularly, they can identify patterns of absenteeism. This could include frequent absences on certain days of the week or during certain times of a month. Identifying these patterns could help parents to understand causing factors of absenteeism and take appropriate action.

Parents were also briefed to address the underlying issues that may be contributing to the absenteeism. This could include health issues, academic struggles, or social and emotional challenges. By addressing these issues, parents and the teacher researcher can help their child to attend school regularly and stay engaged in their education. Parents can also reward their child for good attendance. This could include offering a small reward for perfect attendance for a month or celebrating with a special activity or treat.

2. Action

The researcher started intervention at this phase. The attendance policy of the college was communicated to parents in meeting includes information on the attendance policy. they were

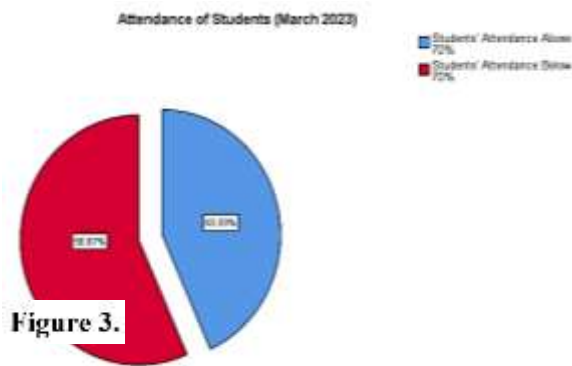
also provided attendance policy in written form. Parents would make sure to make surprise visits to the college to check on their child's attendance. Parents also communicated regularly with their child's teachers to check on their child's attendance. They could send text/ WhatsApp message or call the teacher to inquire about their child's attendance. Parents regularly checked the attendance reports provided by the college to identify patterns of absenteeism. Parents identified patterns of absenteeism and to keep track of their child's attendance using a calendar. They also looked for days of the week or times of the month when their child is frequently absent. Parents kept a calendar to track their child's attendance. This was included noting the dates of their child's absence and looking for patterns in their attendance. Ongoing support from the college, such as regular communication and follow-up meetings, might be needed to help parents support their child's attendance.

3. Observing

Parents were able to familiarize themselves with the college's attendance policy and establish a routine for checking their child's attendance. They were also able to identify patterns of their child's absenteeism, communicate with the college as soon as possible when their child was absent, and keep a calendar to track their child's attendance.

These actions helped the child to prevent from falling behind in their studies. Most importantly as a required outcome of this intervention, by implementing the actions, parents were better equipped to monitor and address their child's absenteeism, which ultimately lead to a reduce in the number of absences and an improvement in overall attendance.

However, some challenges were faced during this intervention program. As some (4) parents were not engaged in intervention. They didn't join the planning session conducted by the researcher



teacher. This made it difficult for them to monitor their child's attendance effectively. Some Parents had busy schedules that make it challenging to regularly check their child's attendance or communicate with the college. This led to gaps in monitoring and missed opportunities to address absenteeism. Identifying patterns of absenteeism was required careful monitoring and analysis, which was also challenging for parents who are not familiar with attendance tracking or who have limited access to attendance reports.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Attendance (Feb 2023)	30	5.00	22.00	12.36	4.01
Attendance (March 2023)	30	11.00	24.00	17.63	3.32

The table 2 reveals the results of descriptive statistics, which presents data on attendance for two time periods, February 2023 (Feb 2023) and March 2023, the mean attendance for February was 12.36 (SD = 4.01) based on a sample of 30 observations. This suggests that, on average, students attended approximately 12.37 out of the total number of sessions, and the

Additionally, some students resisted the parents' efforts to monitor their attendance. This made it difficult for parents to enforce attendance expectations and make progress in reducing absenteeism. In spite of all circumstances, parents' participation in monitoring and controlling absenteeism of their parents was commendable.

The figure 3 indicates the students' attendance percentage after the intervention (caregivers' engagement in controlling the absenteeism of their children at the completion of action research cycle with above and below of 70% attendance in the month of March 2023. The pie graph shows that 43% students were regular and having their attendance above 70%. While 56% were remained absent and have their attendance below 70%. As a result of action research cycle, the caregivers' involvement supported to reduce students' absenteeism by 37%.

attendance varied widely with a standard deviation of 4.01. For March, the mean attendance was higher at 17.63 (SD = 3.32) based on the same sample size of 30 observations. This indicates that, on average, students attended approximately 17.63 out of the total number of sessions, and the attendance was less dispersed with a standard deviation of 3.33.

Table 3. Paired Sample T Test

Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
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Pair 1	Feb Attendance March Attendance	-5.26	4.23	-6.81	29	.000
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The table 3 indicates the results of paired sample t-test which was conducted to compare attendance in February and attendance in March. The mean difference in attendance between February and March was statistically significant, $t(29) = -6.81$, $p < .001$, with a mean difference of -5.26 ($SD = 4.23$), indicating that, on average, students attended fewer classes in February than they did in March. The negative t-value suggests that the mean difference was significantly different from zero. The results suggest a significant decrease in absenteeism from February to March.

4. Reflection

The researcher implemented an intervention program to reduce absenteeism among students. The program involved developing a parental involvement plan, conducting a session with parents to collaboratively set action plans, and implementing actions such as familiarizing parents with the college's attendance policy, establishing routines for checking attendance, identifying patterns of absenteeism, and communicating with the college.

From a reflective standpoint, the intervention program was successful in increasing parents' awareness and involvement in monitoring their child's attendance, which led to a reduction in the number of absences by 37% and an improvement in overall attendance. However, some challenges were faced during the program, such as some parents' lack of awareness of the attendance policy and consequences of absenteeism, busy schedules that make it challenging to regularly check attendance, and some students resisting parental efforts to monitor their attendance.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to reduce absenteeism among students through caregivers' involvement. Monitoring students' attendance requires a collaborative effort between parents, teachers, and the school. Based on the results presented, it was found that the intervention program to reduce absenteeism among students through parental involvement was effective. The reduction in absenteeism can be attributed to the implementation of the intervention program, which involved parental engagement in monitoring their child's attendance and developing action plans to address the issues. The findings of this research is aligned with previous studies as well. Mahuro and Hungi (2016) conducted a study aimed at investigating the impact of parental participation on student academic achievement, and their findings revealed that parental involvement significantly motivates children to enhance their academic performance. In another research study conducted by Epstein and Sheldon (2002) titled "Improving Student Attendance Through Family and Community Involvement," the authors examined the relationship between various family-school-community partnership practices and attendance patterns. The results of their investigation indicate that implementing these practices can lead to a rise in daily attendance rates, a reduction in chronic absenteeism, or both.

Despite some challenges encountered during the program, the overall success suggests that parental involvement is a promising approach to reducing absenteeism among students. Further research could explore ways to address the challenges faced and further enhance the effectiveness of parental involvement in reducing absenteeism.

Future Action Plan

The college should communicate the importance of attendance to parents and encourage them to monitor their child's attendance. The colleges should upgrade and shift their attendance record on online portal weekly or monthly.

Establish clear expectations for attendance and communicate these to parents. This can be done through a college-wide attendance policy that outlines the consequences for unexcused absences.

Parents should check-in with their child regularly to ensure they are attending school and are not skipping classes. They should also ask their child if they are experiencing any problems that may be causing them to miss school.

Parents should review their child's attendance records regularly and identify any patterns of absenteeism. If their child has been absent frequently, parents should investigate the reasons for the absences and take action to address any underlying issues.

Parents and college should arrange the reward their child for positive attendance, such as by offering incentives for attending school regularly or celebrating perfect attendance.

The college should arrange regular parent-teacher meeting to discuss attendance and academic progress. These conferences provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to communicate openly about any concerns they have regarding attendance or academic performance. They can also develop strategies to support the student's attendance and academic goals.

The college can also inform the parents regarding attendance and its impact on academic performance. This can also provide parents with information on why attendance is important, what the college's attendance policy is, and how parents can track their child's attendance.

The college should create a parental involvement agreement that outlines the roles and responsibilities of parents in monitoring their child's attendance. This agreement can be signed by parents, teachers, and the student, demonstrating a commitment to improving attendance.

The college should use technology to facilitate communication between parents and teachers regarding attendance. This can include an online portal where parents can access their child's attendance records, receive alerts when their child is absent, and communicate with teachers. The college should develop a communication plan. This plan can include regular WhatsApp, phone calls or text messages.

By reflecting on the challenges and successes of the program, the future researcher may improve and enhance the intervention to further reduce absenteeism and improve overall attendance in the future.

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