

**LEARNERS ABSENTEEISM AND HOW IT INFLUENCES THEIR  
ACADEMIC PROGRESS, A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KABARNET DIVISION,  
BARINGO DISTRICT, KENYA**

**BY**

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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF  
OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE IN BACHELOR  
OF EDUCATION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION OF  
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UNIVERSITY**

**DECEMBER, 2009**

## DECLARATION

I Kimurei C. Richard declare that this project is my original work and has never been presented to any other University for award of any academic certificate or anything similar to such.

Signature.....

Date.....14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2009

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## APPROVAL

This report resulting from researcher's effort in the area of **learners absenteeism and how it influences their academic progress, a case study of Six primary schools in Kabarnet division Baringo district in Kenya** was carried out under my supervision and with my approval it's now ready for submission to the academic board of Kampala International University for the award of a Bachelor of Education in Early childhood and primary education.

Signature.......... Date.....19/12/2009.....

**Mrs. NABUSETA DEBORAH TALIGoola**  
**SUPERVISOR**

## **DEDICATION**

This research report is dedicated to the almighty God who gave me physical and mental strength to undertake and accomplish this project in the prescribed period of time. I also dedicate to my wife Helen Chepkangor and my daughter Gladys and my parents who made me who I am.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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May almighty father bless them as they undertake their duties endeavors

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this research was to investigate the influence on learner's absenteeism on their academic progress in Kabarnet division, Baringo district in Kenya.*

*The following objectives guided the study; to establish the prevalence and causes of absenteeism, to establish the relationship between absenteeism and poor academic performance and to find out if absenteeism affects the children's retention in school. The respondents were teachers since they were the people with first hand information about the learners. A questionnaire was used to carry out this investigation. Finding of the study showed that absenteeism was rampant in school and the causes were both home based and school based factors, and that some learners performed poorly because of absenteeism and in some cases they dropped out of school. It was recommended that teachers change their attitude towards their learners and make learning interesting. They should also counsel the learners.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Education is a right to all citizens of Kenya, because government has assigned it a critical function of empowering individuals, transforming societies and economic of our nation. In response strategies have been laid to achieve education for all in the country. One of which has been to ensure that all the citizens engage and participate in educational development.

Free primary education has been launched in the country to fulfill the education pledge by the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). Government has indeed played its part by increasing its budget on education by 17.4% to reach Kshs 79.4 million (Abagi, 2000). School management committees were empowered to run primary schools with the provided resources. Enrollment rose by over 1.3 additional children against the 3 million who are estimated to be out of school.

The implementation however has not gone on smoothly. Retention of children in schools has been really affected by some negative socio-economic factors. Absenteeism has been recorded very often

in schools yet if effective and efficient learning is to take place, then there must be a form of application of full attention to what is being learnt and maintenance of concentration throughout the learning process. This study therefore is focused on investigating the effect of absenteeism of learners on their performance in class.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

The education sectors have been reported to be essential in stimulating any country's economic growth. This is because it helps to control ignorance. It has however been observed that there is high absenteeism of children from school. Consequently, performance in primary schools examinations have declined. This problem has been linked to rampant absenteeism. Teachers have failed to complete the syllabuses. This study is therefore intended to assess the effect of learners' absenteeism on their academic progress.

### **1.2 Purpose of the study**

To investigate the influence of absenteeism on academic progress of learners

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The following objectives guided the study;

- To establish the relationship between absenteeism and poor academic performance
- To establish the causes of absenteeism
- To find out if absenteeism affects the children retention in school.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The following research questions were cited to help focus the study;

1. What factors are responsible for absenteeism of learners from schools?
2. Is there any significant relationship between absenteeism and the performance of a child in class?
3. Do children who absent themselves from school complete the primary course?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The findings of the above research could be beneficial to various categories of people:

**The government.** The researcher was empowered to carry out this study in order to assist the government to achieve the Millennium

Goals by 2030. It could be a measuring yard stick for government to find out if it is really achieving its objectives of free primary education.

Parents could also benefit from the study in that they will realize and assess their role as stakeholders in implementing Free primary education. They will also realize their need to ensure that children indeed go to school regularly. Teachers are also to benefit in that they will also realize what role they have been playing in child absenteeism from school.

### **1.5 Scope of the study**

This research was carried out in Kabarnet division, Baringo district in Kenya to investigate the effect of absenteeism on the learner's academic progress with special emphasis on factors for absenteeism, the relationship between absenteeism and academic progress and the influence of absenteeism on school drop out. The research exercise started in June 2009 and ended in December 2009.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reviewed literature of different reviewed researchers who had studied related problems to absenteeism.

#### **Theoretical framework**

According to Skinner's stimulus response theory, the stimuli present in the environment elicits a specific type of response in form of behavior. Organisms tend to seek pleasure and avoid pain. This means that rewarding experiences in while unpleasant ones will be avoided (Chauhan, 1978).

The above postulation could help to explain why children stay away from school. Could it be their school environment which is not conducive or could it be their homes that are influencing them. Both homes and school environment and even between there should be rewarding enough. Are parents being role models to their children to enable them love school? What sort of learning

environment have teachers established for their pupils? Is it attractive or it repels them?

### **Causes of absenteeism in school**

Children are reported to continuously absent reported to continuously absent themselves from school. The factors responsible have been categorized into two as home and school factors.

#### **School factors that contribute to learner's absenteeism**

According to an unknown author who published in the Guardian Newspaper (2000), the space in which a learner engages in active and strategic learning plays an important role in or repelling them from school. Crowded spaces tend to make learners stressed (Santrock, 2000). Could this be the reason as the why learners are avoiding school.

Abagi (2000) also had mentioned of the explosion of numbers of pupils in schools which consequently has strained the available resources.

Sifuna (2003) instead mentioned this overcrowding of learners due to free primary education as a challenge.

Further more within the school is the curriculum content which learners are exposed to on this note, a great number of Kenya's prominent education researchers have expressed their concerns about its quality (Ngaroga, 2006, Ndurumo, 2000). According to many researchers they believe this curriculum is overloaded. This could be the reason as to why some children choose to stay away from school to avoid these heavy tasks.

Frances (1980) also investigated the cause of absenteeism in an innercity school and found out that learners with attendance problems attribute their absenteeism to what called in school factors. According to him poor teacher pupil relationship class assignment without meaning and dissatisfaction with the course schedule. Relating this to the Kenyan experience what teacher pupil relationship exists in primary schools? Are the assignments given relevant to the type of learning? Do children attach any value to these tasks given them? And what do teachers do to encourage them.



Ramos (1980) correlated absenteeism to grades. He discovered that those children who attended school regularly had performed better than those who irregular. When he asked the students he discovered that some of them agreed that when you are in good terms with the teachers you will perform better. He also found out from the students that methods of teaching were not pleasant and that is why some children had to stay at home.

The above finding shows clearly that those children who stay away from school place much importance to their relationships with teachers and it implies that such students could readily blame their teachers for their high failure to perform well at school than anything else.

Zakarjsek (1984) carried out a study to establish the relationship of positive teacher behavior as cited in the PATL (Positive attitude towards learning) with three student factors which were their frequency and security of discipline problems, absence rate and grade point average, he established that the students with positive attitudes tend to display higher grade point average, higher attendance rates and fewer and less severe discipline problems.

The above study focused only to widen the scope by incorporating more of the school and home factors which contributes to learners absenteeism.

Bowes (1977) carried out a study to establish whether there was a significant relationship between organizational climate and the performance of learners in ten public schools in Chicago USA. The results from the Pearson test conducted showed that there was a relationship between the perception of the school climate and attendance of pupils. However further analyses of the study showed that teachers and administrators did not believe that school attendance was linked with the climate of the school. We should however not rely on the above finding because the students views were left out.

St. John in Moos and Moos (1978) observed that a pupil oriented teacher may contribute to improve attendance of learners. This was in relation to effects of classroom environment. In the same text Morgan was quoted that absenteeism was an intermediate outcome variable since students are less likely to be affected by classrooms they attended less frequently. If students are absent

then they can not avail themselves of relevant learning opportunities and lose the continuity of content which is crucial for learning. Home based factors that influence absenteeism.

### **Home based factors for absenteeism**

A study by Sifuna (1986) showed that poor attenders were most girls from rigid societies which believe girls belong to Kitchen and not in schools. On this note, Abagi (2003) added that gender related roles assigned to girls do not permit them to have opportunities to attend school regularly.

Further more FAWE (2000) also lamented that girls are usually assigned more domestic work leaving them with little time to attend school or to complete the assigned tasks. Because of fear of punishment the girls chose to remain at home rather than to go to school where they will be punished.

For Abagi (1993) it was the cultural practices that he cited for influencing absenteeism. According to Abagi (1993) when girls undergo initiation their attitude changes towards schools and instead think of marriage and think little about school hence

absenteeism from school. Such learners could be the areas who have a poor relationship with their teachers. This is why Reid (1987) observed that these learners with negative feelings about teachers were poor attenders.

Marhmore was quoted by Reid (1987) that absenteeism was also influenced by age, social class, sex, race, language and family circumstances. This is where Popham (1967) was quoted that some children stay away from school because they have to go and do petty work to earn the family an income.

Abagi (1993) just spelt it out that child labour was rampant where families were experiencing a finance crisis. Coclough (1986) added that with the policy of cost sharing some children just decide to stay at home because they lack scholastic material and uniforms which government can not provide. Unexcused absences sometimes escaped the awareness of parents; otherwise they can be used to curb the same.

Adams (1983) investigated the impact of divorce on children as measured by somatic related absent and health visitations. He

compared a group of children whose parents have divorced and those whose parents had not divorced. He established that there was no difference with those reported to be away from school because of illnesses.

Family connected variables directly or indirectly associated with poor school attendance were established by Kutcher (1972). The variable include low fathers education, large number of siblings, high mothers social alienation, her negative attitude towards the school and towards mutual understanding with the child and mother dominated discipline.

Kutcher (1972) observed that those factors for dropout were found to be related to elementary level absenteeism and maladjustment, suggesting that the dropout syndrome begins in the family and can be recognized as early as first grade.

Reid (1987) talked about the negative attitude of parents towards education would influence the child's attendance. According to Reid, the teachers in his study area felt that they were fighting an

uphill battle against parents whose attitude towards education was unfavorable and often challenge their children's need for education.

Comparing the exclusively absent and normal attenders, Burns (1983) observed that the excessively absent learners saw health, home responsibilities and figure as prime reasons for school absence.

Yet Makhabila (2007) asserts that the fate of pupils in 104 primary schools and 25 secondary schools in the recent land-clashes which hit his Elgon District remain unknown. These schools had not been open in the beginning of school term of the year 2007 raising a lot of worries and many questions on how well these students performance in KCPE and KCSE examination will be.

According to UNESCO report (2006) poor parents have continued to invest in boys education in prevalent to girls and as a result girls are made to remain at home to perform household duties. Further more Jabet (2007) also observed that HIV/AIDS forces girls out of school to cater for the sick ones.

In conclusion, the above could be the very reasons as to why absenteeism is prevalent in Kenya although some may differ since some carried out research in diverse areas with divergent culture such as the USA.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter the research presented the procedures used to carry out this research, how the research instruments were constructed; and how the data was collected and analyzed.

#### **3.1 Research design**

This study was conducted using the descriptive and qualitative design since it was all about investigating the factors for absenteeism. At the end though the study had to adopt some quantitative techniques to analyze the information collected.

#### **3.2 Research area and population**

The study was carried out in the selected primary schools found in Kabarnet division, Baringo district in Kenya which included Kapngelel primary school Kasore primary school, Kituro Boarding primary school, Kapkomoi primary school, Kitumbei primary school and Kipkaech primary. The study involved both pupils and teachers.



### **3.3 Sample size and sampling technique**

Out of 375 teachers who were the target population, 75 respondents were drawn using simple random sampling.

### **3.4 Research instruments**

The instruments used in data collection were questionnaires because teachers were literate population which could readily answer the questions in written form; within the shortest time possible.

### **3.5 Type of data used**

In this study both primary and secondary data were collected for the purpose of investigating the influences of absenteeism in primary schools.

### **3.6 Data collection procedure**

Permission had to be granted to the researcher by two categories of people; the institute of Open and Distance learning of Kampala International University and the Head teachers where the study was conducted.

The researcher then proceeded by distributing the questionnaire to the respondents chosen. The researcher had no helper. Questionnaires were returned after two days.

### **3.7 Analysis of data**

The data collected were coded while collecting the mistakes to remove inconsistencies. It was then treated statistically using excel program in the computer soft ware. To present this data frequency table had to be drawn as in chapter four.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This study sought to establish those factors that were responsible for learner absenteeism from school. The following objectives were adopted for the research; to establish the factors causing absenteeism. To establish if there was any relationship between absenteeism and poor performance. To find out if absenteeism leads to child school drop out. This chapter presented the data that were collected from the field analyzed it and the findings were later interpreted.

#### **4.1 Background information**

Seventy five questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who were teachers. All of them were returned.

##### **4.1.1 Prevalence of absenteeism**

The researcher found it important to find out if indeed there was a problem of absenteeism in primary schools.

**Table 1: Showing number of absenteeism by schools studied**

<b>Does absenteeism occur in schools</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Kipkaech primary	4	5.3
Kapkomoi primary	4	5.3
Kituro boarding primary	3	4.
Kitumbei primary	7	9.3
Kapngelel primary	15	20
Kasore primary	4	5.3
Kaptorokwo primary	10	13.3
Kabochony primary	5	6.7
Kapkiai primary	13	17.3
Kabarbarma primary	10	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>99.8</b>

**Source: Primary data**

The above table shows that all teachers agreed that absenteeism was prevalent in schools. This therefore confirms a problem in the primary schools. Learning can not be effective when children miss the concepts that should be studied as cited by Moos and Moos (1978).

## **4.2 Causes of absenteeism in primary schools**

The researcher wanted to find out if the causes of absenteeism in schools were in their homes or schools?

### **4.2.1 School based factors that cause absenteeism**

Teachers were asked what school factors cause children to remain at home.

**Table 2: Showing the causes of learners absenteeism**

<b>Causes of absenteeism</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Congestion	11	14.6
Fear punishment	49	65.3
Poor relationship	53	70.6
The curriculum material may be too tough	21	28
Lack of interest	19	25.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>149/375</b>	<b>40.8</b>

**Source: Field data 2008**

In table above 15% of the teachers said that lack of space could be the reason for absenteeism. 65.3% contributed that some of the children feared punishment. 70% of the respondents thought that poor teacher/learner relationship could be the cause of

absenteeism, 28% of the respondents however complained that the curriculum material which was too heavy was to be blamed, and 25% thought these children just lacked interests.

The above findings revealed a role that school was also playing in repelling children from school. Some children remain at home because school is not the best place to be and think that learning is almost meaningless.

#### **4.2.2 Home based factors that influenced learner absenteeism**

Researchers had earlier cited that some home factors such as societal expectations and gender related roles were responsible for learner absenteeism.

**Table 3: Showing respondents views on factors in home which influence learner absenteeism**

<b>Home based factors for absenteeism</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of school requirements	53	70.6
Child labour	31	41.3
Domestic roles, to look after siblings	45	60
Children lack interest	63	84
To look after the sick relatives	27	36
Laxity of parents and guardians	48	64
Healthy problems	26	34.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>293/525</b>	<b>55.8</b>

**Source: Field data 2008**

From the responses which teachers gave, it showed that 70% of the teachers agreed that some children lacked school requirements and therefore had to stay at home. This could be connected with the parents who are poor and therefore can not afford providing for the children school requirements. It also revealed that 41% of the same teachers knew that some children remain at home to go and earn some money for the family. 60% of the teachers also shared that absenteeism is due to the fact that some children cut lessons to look after their young brothers and sisters. Almost all of the respondents shared that children who absent themselves lack interest in studying. This tendency could be due to their lack of motivation to learn or that the school learning environment was not conducive. 64% of the teachers shared that some parents could not pressurize their children to attend school regularly; and 34% of the respondents contributed that those children who cut lessons were either sick.

The above findings clearly show that within home environment there exists some factors that are repelling children to attend school regularly as theorized by Chauhan (1984). However the

overall percentage indicates that 55% of based factors influence absenteeism in primary school.

### **4.3 The relationship between absenteeism and academic progress of learners**

Many researchers believe that persistence missing of lessons contribute to poor performance in class. The researcher had to assess the daily performance of learners who had a habit of absenteeism. With the help of the teachers the researcher identified pupils who were found of absenteeism and asked the teachers how they performed in Mathematics and English in end of Term III examination.

**Table 4: Showing the continuous performance of pupils**

<b>Pupil</b>	<b>Score in mathematics</b>	<b>Score in English</b>
A	53	64
B	41	47
C	58	27
D	50	61
E	61	30
F	08	21
G	32	35

**Source: Teachers records of assessment 2008**



Finding above showed that out of the seven pupils identified, four of them had scored 50% and above in Mathematics, and three out of the same seven had a score of fifty and above.

The mean score of Mathematics for the absentees was

$$\frac{53+41+58+61+08+32}{7}$$

$$\frac{303}{7} = 43.2$$

The mean score of absentees in English was

$$\frac{64+41+27+61+30+21+35}{7}$$

$$\frac{285}{7} = 40.7$$

According to the mean scores of absentees in both subjects it is evident that these learners performance is below average. This finding concurs with a number of scholars cited in literature. This indicates that there is a relationship between the performance of learners and absenteeism.

#### **4.4 Does absenteeism influence child school drop out?**

Some experts had expressed concern about absenteeism turning into school drop out. This becomes worse because as already cited in Ngaroga (2007) the programme of free primary education was already being challenged by poor retention of children in the system up to the end of the primary school course. Teachers were therefore asked whether indeed they had any records of absentees who dropped out of the school.

**Table 5: Showing the learner absentees who drop out of school**

<b>Absentees who dropped out of school</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	42	56
No	25	33.3
Can not tell	08	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>99.9</b>

**Source: Field data 2008**

From the analysis 56% of the teachers reported cases of absentees who had dropped out; 33.3% of the teachers refused that there were any connection between the two and 10% of the teachers had no idea of this occurrence.

The above finding revealed a crisis of worming school drop out. We need the children to remain in school and get the basic knowledge and skills which could contribute to the economic development of our country. The goals of using education as a means of attaining economic growth and development is not fully being achieved.

Some teachers had showed that learners who absented themselves from poor or lacked interest. This could be because of the poor teacher pupil relationship which Dexter (1982) had previously cited. The lack of interest could be to teachers assigning learners with tasks which are either hard or meaningless.

Some teachers contributed that children who dodge classes fear to be punished. This finding concurs with the theory of perception according to Skinner. It shows that within the school environment there are stimuli which are undesirable for the learners which are preventing them of regular attendance of school.

### **Question number two**

#### **What is the relationship between absenteeism and academic progress of the learners?**

Ramos (1980) in his research had established a correlation between absenteeism and grades, where he stated that those children who attended regularly had a better performance than those who were irregular.

In the findings of this study it was established that the known absentees in the schools studied performed below average as compared to the rest. There is therefore a relationship between absenteeism and academic progress. When away it appears that these children miss a lot from class which they can not recover on their own hence the poor performance.

### **Question number three**

#### **Does absenteeism influence school drop out?**

Basing on the findings the learners who drop out of school according to the teachers had started as absentees. The tendency of learner absenteeism therefore eventually will end up in learners dropping out of school. This is a bit worrying at the time when government of Kenya is aiming at increasing the numbers of children who are accessing free primary education.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

Learner absenteeism is rampant in ten selected schools which included Kabarnet division, Baringo district, and other and is influenced by both school and home factors. We do not want children to stray out of school because whenever they stay away they can not avail themselves of relevant learning opportunities and

therefore tend to lose the continuity of course content which is crucial for learning. The time is now to break this behavior in children if Government is to achieve any education for all.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The following were recommended for the study

Motivation is a key factor to retaining learners in school therefore all the measures taken in this study must be directed towards motivating of learners.

Teachers must be the type who can establish conducive learning environment for their learners. The classroom must be arranged in such a way that it caters for all learners with diverse needs.

Some children could be hungry or burdened because of the home backgrounds. The school must set up school feeding programmes to provide a nutritious meal for all children.

Guidance and counseling services must be put up in schools and should cater for those learners who have already adopted this behavior.

Teachers who are the implementers of the curriculum would serve better if they are motivated themselves. It is therefore very important that they are given attention.

The policy of cost sharing must be adjusted to reconsider providing scholastic materials for the learners who come from families with low economic status.

A policy must develop to monitor those parents who prevent their girl children to attend school because they have to stay at home and work. Also legal action has to be taken against those individuals who carry out cultural practices, which harm girl children.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: Questionnaire for teachers

Dear Respondent

I am carrying out a research on **learner absenteeism and academic** progress your contribution towards this study will be highly appreciated.

#### Section A

Religion

.....

Gender

.....

Age

.....

#### Section B: Absenteeism in schools

1. Absenteeism occurs in primary schools

Yes ☐

No ☐

Do not know ☐



6. Is there any link between absenteeism and school drop out?

Yes ☐

☐

No ☐

☐

Do not know

If yes please explain

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you**