

Survey Based Study on Causes for Absenteeism among Primary School Children in Baireddypalli Mandal Of Chittoor District.

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this study was to examine the causes for absenteeism among primary school children in Baireddypalli Mandal of Chittoor District. In this study, stratified random sampling method was adopted. The participants of the study were 240 students of IV and V classes of six M.P.P. Schools, in Baireddypalli Mandal, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh, India in 2013 – 2014 session who had below 90% of attendance. The tool used in the study for data collection was a 70 – item checklist developed by the researchers. The content validity of the tool was established. The reliability of the tool was established using test – retest method. Data was analyzed using Descriptive statistical methods (Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation), Skewness, Kurtosis and Differential analysis using t – test. The findings of the study revealed that entire sample of students had a very low significant difference towards causes for their absenteeism from school. Based on the findings, suggestions were made that same study may be extended to large number of Mandals in Chittoor District, other Districts, other classes of primary and secondary schools etc.*

Key words: *Absenteeism, Primary, Stratified random sampling, Descriptive statistical methods, Differential analysis.*

I. Introduction

Education is a comprehensive term. As we have seen education is bound up with human race, its boundaries are as rich and varied as life itself.

Derivative meaning of education

In its derivative sense the term education may be understood as **educare** and **educere**.

Educare

Educare is a Latin word and its meaning is “to nourish”, “to bring up”, “to raise”. This means educating , nourishing or bringing up the child according to certain ends or aims.

Educere

Educere is also a Latin word and its meaning is “to lead out”, “to draw out”. This means educating a child which implies drawing out what is ingrained in the child or leading him out of darkness into light.

According to **Swami Vivekananda** (1878), Education means “The manifestation of divine perfection already existing in man”.

According to **Mahatma Gandhi**, the champion of Basic education thinks of Education , as a means to develop man. He says, “By education, I mean an all – round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit”.

According to **Pestolozzi**, “Education is the natural, harmonious and progressive development of man’s innate powers”.

Importance of Education

According to **Broke**, “Educated citizens are greater defense to a democratic country than a vast standing army”.

Particulars of Primary and Elementary Education

Free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years is the constitutional commitment in India. At the time of adoption of the constitution in 1950, the aim was to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) within the next ten years i.e. by 1960. Keeping the view the

educational facilities available in the country at the time, the goal was far too ambitious to achieve within a short span of ten years. Hence the target date was shifted a number of times. Till 1960, all efforts were focused on provision of schooling facilities. It was only after the near realization of the goal of access that other components of UEE such as universal enrolment and retention, started receiving attention of planners and policy makers. It is the quality of education, which is at present in the focus in all programmes relating to elementary education in general and primary education in particular. Significant efforts have been made in the last Sixty years to universalize the elementary education. Since 1950, impressive progress has been made in every sphere of elementary education. In 1950 – 51, there were about 210 thousand primary and 14 thousand upper primary schools. Their numbers are now increased. The ratio of primary to upper primary schools over time has improved which is at present 3.3. The number of single-teacher primary schools has also considerably declined.

Over a period of time, enrolment, both at the primary and upper levels of education, has increased significantly. The transition from primary to upper primary and upper primary to secondary level is as high as 94 and 83 percent. However, the learner's achievement across the country remained unsatisfactory and far below than the expectations. The Government of India initiated a number of programmes and projects to attain the status of universal enrolment. Despite all these significant achievements, the goal of universal elementary education remains elusive and far a distant dream. A little less than 50% of the total population in 1991 was illiterate but since then the country has made considerable progress both in terms of total (7+ population) and adult literacy (15+) rates. The literacy rate (7+ population) increased from 52% in 1991 to 62% in 1998, thus showing an impressive increase of 10% points in a short period of about seven years. The adult literacy rate (15+ population) also increased significantly from 49% in 1991 to 57% in 1998, thus showing an increase of 8% points in a short span of about seven years. The significant improvement in literacy rates is because of the measures that have been initiated during that period. The literacy programmes in India are managed by the National Literacy Mission (NLM) launched in 1992 with an aim to make 10 million literates of the age group 15 – 35 years by the turn of the century i.e. 1999.

The **scheme of Operation Black Board (OBB)** was launched on September 30, 1986 to improve facilities in schools by providing more teachers, rooms and teaching-learning equipments. The OBB scheme seeks to bring both the qualitative and quantitative improvements in primary education. But a large number of primary schools still has only few teachers and do not have adequate physical facilities and other teaching-learning material. In addition, a few schools do not have buildings and those who have, may not be in good condition and need repairs. The instructional rooms are also not adequate in a good number of primary schools. Even if the teaching-learning material is available that itself is not a guarantee that teachers are equipped to utilize these aids, which is noticed recently even in a state like Kerala also.

The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education

(**MID-DAY Meal**) launched in 1995 provides food grains / cooked meals to children in primary classes. This programme assures 100 grams of grains per day for children attending the schools for at least 80% of the total school days in a month. This programme has benefited more than 100 million children spread over 0.75 million schools.

The Government of India has also initiated an ambitious programme called **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** in 2001: an initiative for Universal Elementary Education to achieve the goal of UEE. The targets under SSA is that all children will bring back to school by 2003 and complete five years of schooling by 2007 and eight years by 2010. Accordingly, all children of age group 6-11 years will have to be enrolled by the year 2002-03 and retain till 2007 to achieve UPE. As per the proposals, all the districts of the country will come under the SSA before the end of the Ninth Plan i.e. 2002. By no magic, it can be achieved. Even, the Dakar Framework for Action to which India is a signatory envisages achieving the goal of UPE by the year 2015. This programme is collectively supported by the World Bank, the European Commission and United Kingdom's DFID; of these World Bank is the single largest contributor. In the first phase of support (SSA I : 2003-2006) the world bank contributed \$500 million of the total program cost of \$3.5 billion. In the second phase of support (coinciding with the 11th Plan: 2007-2012) the World Bank provided US \$600 million. With the country estimated to spend an enormous US \$ 17.75 billion on primary education, the Bank remains a small player financing less than 6% of the total Government Expenditure on the program. Over 7,000 NGO's are participating in the SSA.

The Constitution (86 amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of 6-14 years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards. Article 21-A and the RTE Act came into effect on 1 April, 2010.

Table-1: Expenditure on education in the Five Year Plans.

Five Year Plans	Years	Expenditure on Education in Millions of Rupees. (Elementary+Secondary+Higher)
I	1951-1956	1530
II	1956-1961	2730
III	1961-1966	5890
IV	1969-1974	7860
V	1974-1979	9120
VI	1980-1985	25300
VII	1985-1990	76300
VIII	1992-1997	196000
IX	1997-2002	203816
X	2002-2007	438250

In the XI Five Year Plan (2007-2012), the actual expenditure on Elementary Education was 118708.62 crores. Cumulative progress under SSA upto 2011-12 shows that 1,92,392 primary school constructions were sanctioned.

In the XII Five Year Plan (2012-2017), a target of 8% growth has been set over the five year period i.e. from 2012-13 to 2016-17. Total estimated cost of civil works under SSA in the Twelfth Five Year Plan like New school buildings, Residential schools, Additional Classrooms, DNS, Toilets, KGBVs and so on is 45,171 crores.

Twelfth Five Year Plan Strategy: The overarching goal of the Twelfth Plan is to enro OoSC (Out of School Children), reduce dropouts and improve learning outcomes across the elementary school years.

Targets for the Twelfth Plan:

1. Ensure universal access and , in keeping with letter and spirit of the RTE Act, provide good-quality free and compulsory education to all children in age group of 6-14 years.
2. Improve attendance and reduce dropout rates at the elementary level to below 10% and lower the percentage of OoSC at the elementary level to below 2% for all socio-economic and minority groups and in all states.
3. Increase enrolments at higher levels of education and raise the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at the secondary level to over 90% , at senior secondary level to over 65%.
4. Raise the overall literacy rate to over 80% and reduce the gender gap in literacy to less than 10%.
5. Provide at least one year of well-supported, well-resourced pre-school education in primary schools to all children, particularly those in educationally backward blocks (EBBs)
6. Improve learning outcomes that are measured, monitored and reported independently at all levels of School education with a special focus on ensuring that all children master basic reading and numeracy skills by class 2 and skills of critical thinking, expression and problem solving by class 5.

Primary education is a fundamental right in India and an important goal to which India and the World Bank are totally committed. The Government of India recognize education as a critical input of the development of human capital, jobs for its people, and economic growth for the country. In the mid 1990's , a series of District Primary Education Programs (DPEP) were introduced in districts where female literacy rates were low. The DPEP pioneered new initiative to bring out-of-school children into school, and were the first to decentralize planning for primary education and actively involve communities.

Challenges Ahead

Primary Education

Despite these gains, the demand for education far exceeds supply at all levels, both in terms of access and quality. About 10 million primary age children remain out of school and social disparities persist. Some independent surveys have shown that half of all children in the 6-14 age group cannot read.

The key challenge ahead is to finish the “Access agenda” while dramatically increasing focus on the quality of education provided. This requires more attention to classroom processes, basic reading skills in early grades, teacher quality and accountability, community or parent oversight and better evaluation and assessment of learning outcomes. The low quality of primary education affects the quality of learning at the secondary level. In addition to this are issues of inappropriate curriculum and poor teaching practices.

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya were established to encourage primary education. National Means-cum-Merit scholarship is being awarded to encourage the children of primary and secondary schools.

Effect of absence

Among the many factors that contribute to the educational wastage, a probable factor of which we hear more and more these days is certain degree of apathy or indifference towards studies and irregularity of attendance at classes among students. Truancy at school or absenting from classes is not a new phenomenon but has probably been there for centuries. As observed by Reavis and Pierce (1953) “ a child must be physically present in school if he is to derive maximum benefit”. Irregular attendance leads ultimately to wastage and stagnation. Educational wastage has been continued to be one of the dominant problem that educationist confront. Absence is the preliminary step that leads to wastage and stagnation.

Need for research in the area of absenteeism

When such are the harmful effects of absence, the need for research in this area need not be over emphasized . Several studies revealed that the rate of absenteeism is high among primary school children of the age group 6-11 when compared to other age groups. By knowing the causes, the investigator can suggest certain measures.

Further, research is also needed in the field of the effect of absence on scholastic achievement. According to the existing rules, a student of primary school (from classes I to V) has to attend schools not less than 90% of the working days for further promotion. Keeping this rule in view, another study is required to see whether the common belief that absenteeism affects achievement is true. This will help to determine the minimum attendance in the school.

Definition of the concept of absenteeism

Students absenteeism is defined as “**Temporary cessation of the student, when his presence is expected**”.

“Absence of the student from school during regularly working hours”. “ The failure of student to report for study when he is scheduled to work”. A student attends his regular class work during the academic year of his study in a class. The total number of days, a student attends the regular school work and the total number of days the school works during the same academic year are noted. The percentage of attendance was calculated for each student. It was calculated as follows.

$$\text{Percentage of attendance} = \frac{\text{Number of days the student attended the school}}{\text{Number of days school worked}} \times 100$$

From the percentage of attendance, a student’s percentage of absence was calculated as follows.

$$\text{Percentage of absence} = 100 - \text{Percentage of attendance.}$$

The students were divided into three categories according to their percentage of absence. They are (1) Absentee students (2) Moderately regular students and (3) Regular students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The problem under study is “Survey based study on causes for absenteeism among primary school children in Baireddypalli Mandal of Chittoor District”.

The following are the purposes of the study.

1. Identification of the causes for absence of IV and V class children.
2. Suggesting remedial action for reducing absence.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Generally in rural areas, the rate of absenteeism in primary school children is high when compared to urban secondary school children. The rate of absenteeism is particularly high in Rayalaseema area. Therefore a scientific study of the causes is needed to recommend remedial measures for reducing absence.

Further the study attempts to determine whether there is any relationship between absence and achievement and also the critical level of absence above which it has effect and below which it has no effect on achievement. The study provides scientific basis for fixing minimum attendance in school from the point of view of achievement of the students.

II. Methodology

In this study, survey method was adopted. Stratified random sampling method was used to obtain the desired sample.

Location and sample of the study:

In Chittoor District, there are so many Government and private Primary Schools. The investigators felt that it will be difficult to cover the students of all schools in all Mandals. Therefore, it was decided that a few schools in Baireddypalli Mandal should be covered rather than the total schools in Chittoor District. Accordingly, 6 Government Primary Schools were covered in the study.

Table 2 : Details of the sample taken for the study from each school

S.No.	Name of the School	IV Class	V Class	Total
1.	M.P.P.School, Pathapetha	15	15	30
2.	M.P.P.School, Kadapanatham	15	15	30
3.	M.P.P.School, Belupalli	25	25	50
4.	M.P.P.School, Pathurunatham	25	25	50
5.	M.P.P.School, Kuppanapalli	25	25	50
6.	M.P.P.School, Vengamvaripalli	15	15	30

A total sample of 240 students of IV and V classes of 6 M.P.P.Schools in Baireddypalli Mandal were taken for the present study.

Variables used in the present study are Class, Gender, Father Education, Mother Education, Father Occupation, Mother Occupation, Caste, Parental Income, Religion, Locality, Management, Total Family Members.

Tool used for data collection:

The investigators used a tool developed by themselves for carrying out the study. The tool consisted of 70 statements covered from the following are shown in the table below.

If the child agrees an item as a cause for his absenteeism, he puts (✓) to the statement. He gets 1 mark to that statement. If the child disagrees an item as a cause for his absenteeism, he puts (X) to the statement. He gets 2 marks to the statement. An individual's score is the sum of all the scores for the 70 statements.

Table 3 : Details of the main and sub areas with number of causes based on which the tool was prepared by the investigators.

S. No	Main Area	Sub-Area	No. of Causes	Total
1	Home	(a) Emotional climate of the home	06	20
		(b) Economic Difficulties	06	
		(c) Parents attitude towards attendance	02	
		(d) Parents discipline	02	
		(e) Help to Parents	04	
2	School	(a) Physical environment	04	22
		(b) School Discipline	04	
		(c) Teachers	08	
		(d) Curriculum	01	
		(e) Examination System	05	
3	Personal Causes	(a) Health	06	16
		(b) Personal attitude	10	
4	Peer groups		05	05
5	Recreation facility		04	04
6	Transport Facility		03	03

The tools used in the study are

1. Absence cause check list.
2. Interview Schedule
3. Attendance

Method of data collection :

The tool was administered to sample of absentee students. Before the administration of the tool, permission was taken from the Mandal Educational Officer of Baireddypalli Mandal. Head-Masters of concerned schools were requested to give permission, for the collection of data. The copies of tool was administered to students. The researchers first explained the importance of investigation to the teachers and

students. Before giving the check-list to the examinee, certain instructions were given for getting appropriate responses.

Data analysis :

Table 4 : Distribution of total sample and its sub – samples.

Sl. No	Categories		Number
1	Entire Sample		240
2	Class	IV	120
		V	120
3	Gender	Boys	120
		Girls	120
4.	Father Education	Literate	167
		Illiterate	73
5	Mother Education	Literate	115
		Illiterate	125
6	Father Occupation	Farmer / Labour	172
		Business / Employee	68
7	Mother Occupation	Housewife	101
		Employee	139
8	Caste	OC	96
		BC	64
		SC /ST	80
9	Parental Income	Below 15,000	161
		Above 15,000	79
10	Religion	Hindu	162
		Muslim	37
		Christian	41
11	Total family members	Up to 4	80
		Above 4	160
12	Locality	Rural	144
		Urban	96
13	Management	Govt.,	137
		Private	103

Data was analyzed using Descriptive statistical methods (Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation), Skewness, Kurtosis and Differential analysis using t – test.

The null hypothesis for sub-samples was tested by employing ‘t’ test at 5% level of significance using the following formula

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sigma_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{\sigma_2^2}{n_2}}} \cdot N \cdot t_{(n_1+n_2-1)} \quad \text{at 5 \% level of significance}$$

III. Results

The results were presented in line with research statements and hypothesis.

Table 5 :Distribution of Absenteeism scores of over all sample

C.I	F	C.F	Mid Point	d	D ²	Fd	Fd ²
71-80	12	12	75	-3	9	-36	108
81-90	14	26	85	-2	4	-28	56
91-100	45	71	95	-1	1	-45	45
101-110	59	130	105	0	0	0	0
111-120	57	187	115	1	1	57	57
121-130	37	224	125	2	4	74	148
131-140	16	240	135	3	9	48	144
N = 240						∑Fd=141	∑Fd ² =591

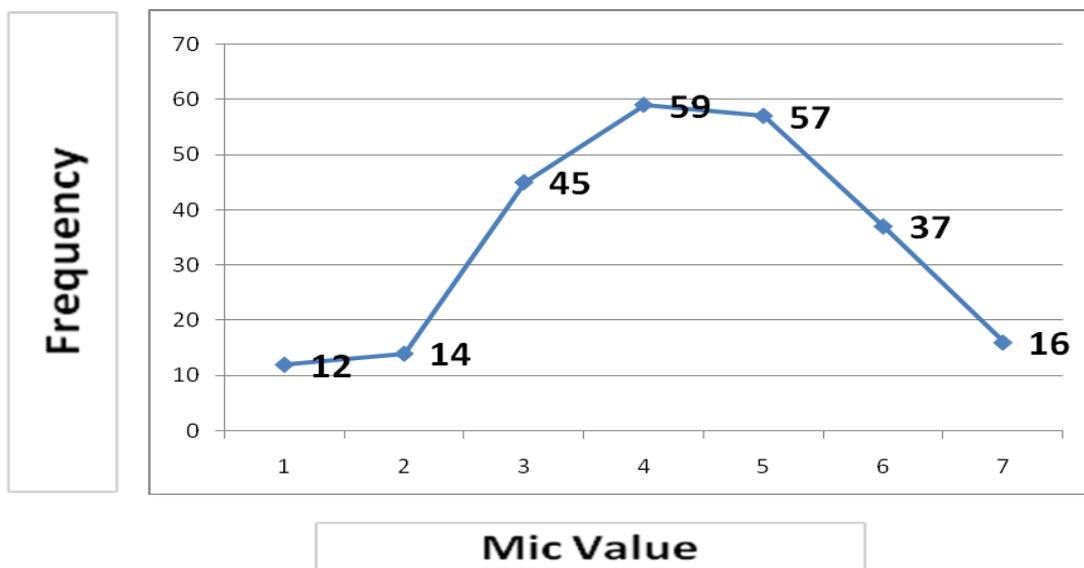
N = 240
 C = 10
 A = 105
 M = 108.375
 Mn = 108
 Md = 108
 R = 65
 SD = 14.689
 Sk = -0.239
 Ku = -0.507

From the table, it is clear that the Mean scores of absenteeism of primary school children for total sample of 240 is 108.375. Median is 108 and mode is 108. Mean, Median and Mode are nearly the same. So the curve is normal.

Since the Skewness obtained -0.239 is a negative value, the peak is shifted towards left.

The Kurtosis thus obtained i.e., -0.507 is less than 0.263, the peak of the curve will be leptokurtic that is, a large density of the sample is accumulated at the Mean score it self with out having been distributed.

Fig.1: Frequency polygon showing the distribution of scores.



Similarly, Mean and Standard Deviation of absenteeism of sub – samples were also calculated. The calculated Mean scores of sub- samples ranged from 104.00 to 113.44. The calculated Standard Deviation scores of sub- samples ranged from 10.585 to 17.603.

The table value ‘t’ at 5% level of significance is 1.96. The calculated ‘t’ value for all the sub- samples were shown in the following table.

Table 6:

Sl. No	Categories with Subsamples	t- value	Null Hypothesis (H ₀)
1	Class	1.193	Accepted
2	Gender	3.532	Rejected
3	Father Education	0.764	Accepted
4	Mother Education	2.994	Rejected
5	Father Occupation	4.919	Rejected
6	Mother Occupation	0.446	Accepted
7	Caste	0.566	Accepted
8	Parental Income	1.876	Accepted
9	Religion	1.443	Accepted
10	Total family Members	1.026	Accepted
11	Locality	3.737	Rejected
12	Management	4.137	Rejected

A conclusion was made that sub-samples had a low significant difference towards causes for their absenteeism from school.

IV. Discussion

The absentee children have given the following causes for school absence.

1. Help the parents in house hold work.
2. Unable to sit in over crowded classes.
3. Heavy home work given by teachers.
4. Looking after the young children in the house.
5. Frequent class tests.
6. Not prepared well for the examination.
7. Not able to understand properly lessons taught by the teachers.
8. Frequent suffering from fever.
9. Sickness among parents and other members of the family.
10. Harvest seasons.
11. Taking more times to go to school.
12. Studies are not very much useful.
13. Attending domestic ceremonies.
14. Visit to friends.
15. Possibility to learn through self study without attending the classes.
16. No interest in classroom teaching.
17. More wastage of time to attend classes.
18. Friends advise not to go to school.
19. Service to guests.

Apart from above causes , the absentee children face the following adjustmental problems.

1. Frequent colds.
2. Falling sick often.
3. Adolescence problems.
4. Skin diseases are the problems in the area of health and physical development.
5. Extra-study hours.

REMEDIAL MEASURES SUGGESTED BY INVESTIGATORS TO REDUCE THE ABSENTEEISM.

1. Parents should be motivated to show interest towards education of their wards.
2. Absenteeism causes should be identified and rectified both by teachers and parents.
3. Classroom arrangements should be made in such a way that children should feel to spend more time in the school rather than outside.
4. Financial assistance to the child and parents.
5. Parents should free their children from domestic works.
6. Teachers should pay personal interest to check absenteeism.
7. Wide usage of audio-visual aids and different methods in teaching, suitable to the level of understanding of the individual absentees.
8. Provision of games and sports materials to children.
9. School environment should be clean and congenial.
10. Provision of rich curriculum, meeting the needs, interests and attitudes of the absentees.
11. More number of periods should be allotted to Mathematics and sufficient training should be given in difficult subjects.
12. Health checkup by doctors should be arranged in schools.
13. Teachers should treat all the children equally irrespective of their caste, sex or religion.
14. Progress reports and attendance particulars should be sent to parents periodically.
15. Rules relating to child labour should be strictly enforced.
16. Extra coaching, free text books, scholarship, mid-day meals etc. should be provided to absentee children.
17. Girls should be pursued to attend the school regularly.
18. Each school should have sufficient teachers.
19. Utilization of mass media.

These measures will certainly help the absentee children to become regular children.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The present study is limited to IV and V classes. It may be extended to other classes of the primary and secondary schools.
2. A similar study can be carried out by covering large number of Mandals in the district.
3. A comparative study of two or more districts covering different causes as perceived by different groups like Teachers, Headmasters, Community leaders, Parents, Members of Village education committee may be carried out as to how to overcome the problems of absenteeism.
4. It is suggested that the relationship between absenteeism and adjustment to school may be studied.

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