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THE SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE ANALYSIS

Mila P. Banchua

Southern Capital Colleges

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*Corresponding Author:

mila.banchua@deped.gov.ph

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the case of student absenteeism among junior high school students at Katipunan National High School, Sinacaban District, Division of Misamis Occidental during the School Year 2024–2025. Employing a case study research design, the study explored the underlying causes and school-based interventions related to absenteeism. Data collection involved interviews with students, teachers, and school staff, and the analysis followed a thematic approach—transcribing responses, identifying key statements, coding relevant data, and organizing the information into major themes that reflected the participants' lived experiences and perspectives. Findings revealed that student absenteeism was predominantly influenced by a combination of factors, including lack of interest and motivation toward schooling, digital addiction and distractions, mental and emotional struggles, and home and family responsibilities. Additionally, economic constraints and unstable or disruptive home environments further hindered students' consistent school attendance. Despite these challenges, the school implemented several programs to mitigate absenteeism, such as academic assistance, flexible learning options, emotional counseling, and personalized mentorship. These interventions were designed to equip students with the necessary resources, guidance, and encouragement to address their challenges and remain actively engaged in school. Through these initiatives, the school aimed to foster a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes regular attendance, academic success, and student well-being.

Keywords: case study, junior high school, student absenteeism, school attendance., thematic analysis

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Introduction

Chronic absenteeism is a major concern for teachers, as it affects not only academic achievement but also the overall well-being and future opportunities of students. Home visits have been used as a way to help students who miss school. Teachers visit students and their families to understand and solve problems that keep them from attending regularly. Rodriguez (2022) found that home visits, along with follow-up activities like community work and extra classes, greatly lowered absenteeism. Home visits can help reduce absenteeism, but their success relies on additional support that meets the unique needs of students and their families.

From other perspectives, various factors significantly contribute to chronic absenteeism, which remain persistent challenges in the educational landscape. Among the most commonly cited reasons are family responsibilities, such as older children being tasked with caring for younger siblings or contributing to household chores, which often take precedence over their education (Garcia & Weiss, 2023). In many low-income families, education is viewed as a secondary priority when immediate survival needs arise, compelling children to assume roles traditionally reserved for adults (Save the Children, 2022). Additionally, long distances to school present a major deterrent, particularly in rural areas where public transportation is either limited or unreliable. Students in these situations often face arduous journeys on foot or incur transportation costs that their families simply cannot afford (World Bank, 2021). These logistical barriers not only disrupt attendance but also drain students' energy and enthusiasm for learning, further exacerbating the issue of absenteeism (UNESCO, 2023).

More so, teachers have observed that despite numerous home visitations conducted to address absenteeism, a significant number of students exhibit extremely low motivation to attend school. According to Palma (2021), approximately 60% of students regularly experience absenteeism. The 2019 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) identified financial difficulties as a leading cause of absenteeism, with 19.2% of out-of-school children and youth citing high educational expenses as a primary barrier to regular attendance. Additionally, the Department of Education (2012) noted a spike in absenteeism rates post-pandemic, with around 30% of students frequently missing classes due to factors such as lack of parental support, poor learning motivation, and socio-economic constraints. Despite efforts such as home visitations, counseling sessions, and school-based intervention programs, many students continue to show minimal interest in attending school.

Furthermore, despite the implementation of various policies aimed at addressing absenteeism, the issue remains unresolved. DepEd Order No. 74, s. 2010 (Guidelines on Mainstreaming Dropout Reduction Programs in Schools) and DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2022 (Guidelines on School Attendance and Punctuality) emphasize the importance of keeping students in school and reducing dropout rates. However, these policies often fail to account for students who, despite their chronic absenteeism, do not qualify for the Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) program. ADM is designed for learners who are unable to attend regular classes due to justifiable reasons such as geographical barriers, financial constraints, or health conditions. Unfortunately, it does not extend to students whose absenteeism is primarily due to low motivation, household responsibilities, or lack of parental supervision.

DepEd Order No. 54, s. 2012 (Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of Alternative Delivery Modes) provides the framework for these alternative learning approaches. However, the qualifications for ADM include self-discipline, the ability to learn independently with guidance, and the presence of structured support systems. This means that students who are frequently absent due to disengagement, lack of interest, or family obligations often fall outside the scope of ADM eligibility. As a result, many students remain caught in an educational gap where they neither fit into the formal school system nor qualify for alternative learning interventions. This situation highlights the need for more inclusive and responsive solutions to address chronic absenteeism, which is influenced by a complex interplay of personal, familial, and societal factors.

In light of these challenges, the study was conducted to analyze the case of student absenteeism among high school students at Katipunan National High School, Sinacaban District, Division of Misamis Occidental during the School Year 2024-2025. The results of the study provided insights into the underlying factors contributing to persistent absenteeism, even with the implementation of school-based interventions. Specifically, the study identified the key reasons why students continued to miss classes despite home visitations, assessed the effectiveness of current attendance-monitoring strategies, and explored potential gaps in the existing support systems.

Methods

This study utilized a case study research design to examine the issue of student absenteeism among junior high school students at Katipunan National High School in Sinacaban District, Division of Misamis Occidental, during the School Year 2024–2025. The research focused on understanding the underlying causes, experiences, and challenges related to chronic absenteeism within the school's rural educational setting. Through interviews with students, teachers, and school administrators, the study explored the effectiveness of school interventions, particularly home visitation programs, in addressing absenteeism. Using purposive sampling and thematic analysis, the research gathered in-depth qualitative data to identify recurring themes and patterns influencing students' attendance. Ethical considerations, confidentiality, and informed consent were strictly observed throughout the study to ensure the reliability, validity, and integrity of the findings.

Results and Discussions

Common Reasons for Student Absenteeism

The findings of the study revealed that absenteeism among junior high school students at Katipunan National High School is caused by multiple interconnected personal, social, economic, emotional, and environmental factors. Through thematic analysis, the study identified several recurring themes that explain why students frequently miss school. Among the most dominant reasons were lack of interest and motivation toward schooling, digital addiction and distraction, mental and emotional struggles, home and family responsibilities, economic and material constraints, peer influence, lack of parental guidance, and unstable home environments. These findings indicate that absenteeism is not merely a result of laziness or poor discipline but is deeply rooted in the students' lived experiences and daily realities.

One of the strongest themes that emerged from the data was the students' lack of interest and motivation toward schooling. Many participants described school as boring, exhausting, and disconnected from their personal interests or future goals. Some students admitted that they preferred staying at home, resting, working, or engaging in entertainment activities rather than attending classes. Several participants expressed that they no longer saw school as meaningful because they believed that practical work or learning skills outside school were more useful for survival. This finding suggests a growing disconnect between students and the traditional educational environment. The rigid structure of classroom instruction, long hours of lectures, and repetitive academic tasks appear to contribute to students' disengagement and declining motivation. These findings support the Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (1985), which explains that students become demotivated when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are not met. When learners feel disconnected from classroom activities and perceive little personal value in education, absenteeism becomes more likely. This implies that schools must adopt more learner-centered, interactive, and contextualized teaching approaches that align with students' interests, abilities, and real-life experiences.

Another major factor contributing to absenteeism was digital addiction and distraction. Participants admitted spending excessive amounts of time playing online games, watching videos, and browsing social media, often until late at night or early morning. As a result, students frequently overslept, felt physically exhausted, and lacked the motivation to attend classes. The findings show how digital entertainment has become a competing priority that overshadows students' educational responsibilities. Some students even acknowledged that they preferred digital activities over classroom participation because these activities provided immediate satisfaction, enjoyment, and escape from stress. The findings support Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that behavior is shaped by environmental influences and repeated exposure to rewarding activities. Moreover, the findings revealed that weak parental supervision and peer influence further intensified students' dependence on technology. Students who were surrounded by peers with similar gaming habits or weak interest in education were more likely to imitate the same behaviors. These results emphasize the importance of strengthening digital literacy education, parental monitoring, and time management interventions. Schools may also benefit from integrating educational technologies and interactive digital learning strategies that can redirect students' interests toward more productive academic engagement.

The study further revealed that mental and emotional struggles significantly affect students' attendance and academic participation. Participants described experiencing stress, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, headaches,

and feelings of being overwhelmed due to academic workloads and personal problems. Many students admitted that they lacked the emotional energy to attend school or concentrate during lessons. Some students explained that they felt mentally drained because of academic expectations and responsibilities both at home and in school. These emotional burdens negatively impacted their motivation, resulting in disengagement and absenteeism. The findings align with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), which explains that unmanaged stress can negatively affect an individual's behavior, functioning, and overall well-being. Likewise, Cognitive Load Theory supports the finding that excessive mental demands reduce learners' cognitive capacity, resulting in fatigue and burnout. These findings highlight the urgent need for schools to strengthen counseling services, mental health programs, psychosocial support systems, and stress-management interventions. Educational institutions must recognize that emotional well-being plays a crucial role in academic engagement and attendance. When students feel emotionally supported and psychologically safe, they are more likely to remain motivated and committed to their studies.

Home and family responsibilities also emerged as major contributors to absenteeism. Many participants reported missing school because they were required to help their families with farming, take care of younger siblings, fetch water, or contribute to household income. In some cases, students lacked stable housing or enough food, forcing them to prioritize survival over education. These findings reflect the realities faced by many learners in rural and economically disadvantaged communities, where children often play active roles in supporting family needs. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory supports this finding by emphasizing that family and environmental conditions directly influence children's development and educational experiences. The findings indicate that poverty and family obligations create competing priorities that interfere with school attendance. Furthermore, economic and material constraints intensified absenteeism among students. Participants shared that their families struggled to provide school supplies, transportation expenses, and other educational needs. Beyond financial difficulties, students also experienced embarrassment, low self-esteem, and social isolation because they lacked the materials needed for classroom participation. These emotional effects discouraged students from attending school regularly. The findings are consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which explains that individuals cannot fully focus on higher-level goals such as learning when their basic physiological and security needs remain unmet. These results suggest the importance of implementing stronger financial assistance programs, feeding programs, school supply initiatives, and flexible learning opportunities that can support students facing socioeconomic hardships. Schools and communities must collaborate in developing interventions that reduce the burden of poverty while sustaining students' educational participation and well-being.

School Programs to Reduce Absenteeism

The findings also revealed that Katipunan National High School implemented several intervention programs aimed at addressing absenteeism and supporting students facing academic, emotional, and socioeconomic challenges. The major themes identified under this category include academic assistance and flexible learning options, guidance and emotional support, parental involvement and home interventions, personalized mentorship and academic monitoring, and life skills and welfare support programs. These interventions played a significant role in helping students cope with their challenges and maintain their academic engagement despite difficulties in attendance.

One of the most effective interventions identified by participants was academic assistance and flexible learning options. Students appreciated the efforts of teachers who provided extra academic help, peer tutoring programs, online learning resources, flexible deadlines, make-up activities, and opportunities for online submission of assignments. Participants explained that these interventions helped them catch up with missed lessons and reduced their anxiety about falling behind academically. Flexible learning arrangements allowed students to continue participating in school despite family obligations, health issues, or transportation difficulties. These findings support Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concept of scaffolding, which explains that learners benefit from guidance and support provided by teachers and peers. The results indicate that learner-centered and adaptive educational practices significantly improve students' participation and reduce the risk of dropout among learners with attendance difficulties. The availability of academic support also helped students feel valued and included, strengthening their confidence and motivation to continue studying.

Guidance and emotional support programs also emerged as essential interventions in reducing absenteeism.

Participants shared that counseling sessions, regular teacher check-ins, and peer support groups helped them cope with stress, emotional struggles, and personal challenges. Students explained that they felt cared for, understood, and emotionally supported whenever teachers and counselors reached out to them. These emotional support systems helped strengthen students' sense of belonging and connection to the school community, which in turn improved their willingness to attend classes. The findings support Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, particularly the importance of love, belongingness, and emotional security in motivating learners. The results imply that schools that prioritize students' emotional well-being create safer and more inclusive learning environments that promote academic engagement and attendance. Counseling programs, peer support systems, and psychosocial interventions should therefore be strengthened and institutionalized within schools to support students experiencing emotional and mental difficulties.

Another important intervention identified in the study was parental involvement and home intervention programs. Participants acknowledged that home visitations, parent-teacher meetings, attendance monitoring, and communication logs strengthened accountability and improved attendance behaviors. When parents became actively involved in monitoring students' academic progress and attendance, students became more aware of their responsibilities and were less likely to skip classes. These findings support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the importance of collaboration between home and school environments in promoting positive student outcomes. However, the study also revealed that some challenges remained, particularly when parents were too busy working or when students found ways to avoid school monitoring systems. Despite these challenges, the findings highlight the importance of sustaining strong home-school partnerships and promoting open communication between educators and families. Schools must continue implementing parent education programs and family engagement initiatives that encourage shared responsibility for students' educational success.

The study further found that personalized mentorship and academic monitoring significantly improved students' academic participation and motivation. Students appreciated being assigned mentors who regularly checked on their progress and offered individualized support. One-on-one tutoring sessions and close academic monitoring helped students recover from missed lessons and rebuild confidence in their academic abilities. These findings support Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners achieve better outcomes through guided support from more knowledgeable individuals. Personalized mentorship allowed students to feel recognized, supported, and motivated to continue their studies despite academic or personal struggles. Lastly, life skills and welfare support programs also contributed positively to students' engagement in school. Workshops on time management, study habits, and daily organization helped students develop practical skills necessary for balancing school and personal responsibilities. Financial assistance for school supplies and fees also reduced some of the economic burdens faced by learners. These findings indicate that schools must address not only academic concerns but also the broader personal and socioeconomic needs of students. Holistic support programs that combine academic, emotional, social, and financial assistance are essential in reducing absenteeism and promoting long-term educational success among learners.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study reveals that student absenteeism at Katipunan National High School is predominantly driven by a combination of factors, including a lack of interest and motivation towards schooling, digital distractions, mental and emotional struggles, and family responsibilities. Economic challenges and unstable home environments further contribute to the students' inability to attend school regularly. However, the school has implemented various programs to address these issues, including academic support, flexible learning options, emotional counseling, and personalized mentorship. These initiatives aim to reduce absenteeism by providing students with the necessary resources, guidance, and support to overcome their challenges and stay engaged in their education. Through these efforts, the school seeks to create a more conducive learning environment that promotes regular attendance and overall student well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations are proposed to address student absenteeism and strengthen learner engagement. Students are encouraged to develop a stronger sense of responsibility toward their education by actively participating in school activities, managing digital distractions

responsibly, and seeking academic or emotional support whenever necessary. Teachers are advised to continue implementing learner-centered and flexible teaching strategies, such as individualized assistance, adjusted deadlines, and engaging instructional methods, while remaining sensitive to students' emotional and mental health needs. Parents are likewise encouraged to become more actively involved in monitoring their children's attendance, academic progress, and home environment by providing consistent guidance, emotional support, and balanced household responsibilities. School heads should further strengthen intervention programs by enhancing counseling services, mentorship initiatives, flexible learning opportunities, and financial assistance programs for economically disadvantaged students, while also fostering strong collaboration among teachers, parents, and learners. Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies exploring the evolving causes and long-term effects of absenteeism, particularly in relation to digital distractions, socioeconomic conditions, and community-based interventions, in order to develop more comprehensive and sustainable solutions to improve school attendance and student success.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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