

# Curbing Teacher Absenteeism in Public Basic Schools in the New Juaben South Municipality: Role of Head Teachers

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## Abstract

The objectives of the study are to examine the causes of teacher absenteeism in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality and to determine the effect of teacher absenteeism on teaching and learning activities in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study was a descriptive survey. The researchers used the stratified random sampling procedure to sample seventy respondents from ten basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality for the study. To collect information for the study, a closed-ended questionnaire was created and distributed. The data gathered were analysed using descriptive statistics. The study concludes that personal factors (such as a teacher's illness or pursuit of further education), school factors (such as an excessive workload for teachers and teachers who must leave school for official business), and environmental factors (bad weather and transportation difficulties) contributed to teacher absenteeism in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality. Also, teacher absences have a negative impact on both teachers' capacity to complete syllabus and academic performance of students. The study recommends that, head teachers of public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality strictly adhere to the Ghana Education Service's policy on teacher absenteeism, and effectively supervise their teachers' lessons to ensure they are teaching effectively.

**Keywords:** Teacher, Students, Absenteeism, Classroom, Teaching, Learning

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, absenteeism has been a significant issue in terms of human relations for businesses and organizations. This is due to the fact that absenteeism has a negative impact on an organization's productivity and performance and comes at a significant financial cost (Barmase & Shukla, 2013). Due to its financial impact on a country's economy, employee absenteeism is a global phenomenon and a key topic on the international agenda. Absenteeism has a significant impact on public schools, particularly on the provision of high-quality instruction to students. Global awareness about the issue of teacher absenteeism is rising. Its effects on governments, school boards, administrators, teachers, students, and other parties involved in education are extensive. Obiera and Nyang (2017) believed that as a result, it tends to hinder the attainment of Education for All (EFA).

At the office, absenteeism is a serious problem. A significant risk to human capital occurs when employees fail to report for work on time. This is so that an employee may only meaningfully contribute to achieving organizational goals when he or she makes himself or herself accessible for work (Armstrong, 2009). Absenteeism does not apply when a worker skips work after getting authorization to do so. Absenteeism is the wilful, preventable, and unlawful absence from work. Both companies and employees suffer from excessive absenteeism. In every nation, absenteeism is a major issue. In order to maintain efficiency and stability within the organization, managers are concerned about this issue and work to check them (Gupta & Joshi, 2008). Absence from work results in lost productivity, which runs counter to the goal of increased productivity. An absentee is someone who is supposed to be somewhere at a certain time but shows up later than expected. Employee absenteeism, regardless of the cause, is defined by Cascio (2013) as any failure on the part of an employee to arrive at or continue working during the scheduled workday. According to Sayles and Strauss (2011), absences reflect both apathy and bad morale.

One of the many essential traits of an effective classroom teacher is consistent attendance. Student attendance is impacted by teacher attendance, particularly because teachers frequently serve as role models and shape students' opinions of acceptable and inappropriate behaviour. Additionally, persistent teacher absences convey a negative message about the value of student attendance (Wambua, 2015). In most circumstances, teacher absences will negatively affect students' performance. This implies that as a teacher's absences grow in number, so does the degree of student achievement. Importantly, having a classroom teacher is a crucial component of education, particularly for children who perform on average. As a result, there is a connection between teacher absence and both student absence and achievement. There is the need to curb absenteeism among basic school teachers in the New Juaben South Municipality in order to improve the quality of education delivery and enable learners to become highly productive citizens.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

In Ghana's public basic schools, as in many other developing nations, teacher absenteeism is quickly evolving into a significant problem. It is clear that prolonged teacher absences will have a detrimental effect on students' academic performance since they will disrupt students' learning when a teacher is gone from class frequently. According to Wambua (2015), effective instruction can only happen when students are taught by teachers who put out an effort in the classroom and spend time really instructing in order to optimize instructional time. Unfortunately, this is missing in our basic schools. As a result, a thorough investigation is required to solve the issue of teacher absenteeism in the New Juaben South Municipality. This could address the gap in research on the reasons for and implications of teacher absenteeism in public schools.

#### *Research Objectives*

The objectives of the study were to

1. examine the causes of teacher absenteeism in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality.
2. determine the effect of teacher absenteeism on teaching and learning activities in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality.

#### *Research Questions*

The study attempted to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the causes of teacher absenteeism in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality?
2. What is the effect of teacher absenteeism on teaching and learning activities in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality?

#### *Teacher Absenteeism*

Any failure on the part of an employee to arrive at or stay at work on time, regardless of the cause, is known as absenteeism (Ivatts, 2010). For teachers, this entails showing up for work but not teaching in the classroom or being unable to do so due to health issues (Castrol, Duthilleul, & Callads, 2007). According to research, teacher absenteeism is a global issue that disproportionately affects developing nations. The teacher absenteeism rate in industrialized countries is as low as 10%, compared to over 40% in developing countries (Hubbell, 2008).

There is a dearth of research on teacher absences and there are few logical conclusions about its causes (Ivatts, 2010). The World Bank and Global Development Network began a multi-country assessment on fundamental health and education in order to start filling in those gaps on the causes of teacher absenteeism (Chaudhury, et al. 2004). Poor motivation, a lack of accountability, personal illness, family issues, training programs, and job dissatisfaction are some of the factors that contribute to the high levels of absenteeism among teachers in many African countries, according to Ivatts (2010), although the evidence offered is inadequate. According to Glewwe and Kremer (2006), acceptable grounds for teacher absences predominated in Zambia and Kenya while unlawful absences were widespread in many other African nations. Furthermore, it was discovered that a third of primary school instructors in Ghana and Zambia missed class owing to low motivation. Many of these teachers wished to go to secondary school teaching positions where motivation is stronger (Crogetti et al., 2014).

#### *Personal Factors Influencing Teacher Absenteeism*

The evidence from research indicates that individual traits affect teacher absenteeism. They include the teacher's age and gender, their health or that of a family member, their experience and job dissatisfaction, their seniority and the nature of their employment, their qualification and lack of professional competence, compassionate leave, family conflicts, and other obligations related to their families (Musyoki, 2015).

According to research, teachers enter the job while they are extremely motivated, but as they become older, they "burn out" (Glewwe & Kremer, 2006). This clarifies why senior teachers are more likely to be absent.

Female instructors miss more school than male teachers do, according to Ervasti et al., (2012) since they have more demanding family duties. However, Rosenblatt, and Shirom (2005) assert that male professors miss more classes than their female counterparts, who have fewer obligations outside of the office that are likely to keep them from the classroom. Female instructors are missing more frequently than male teachers in Kenyan schools, and younger female teachers are absent more frequently than older female teachers due to more family obligations. according to a general observation that is not that dissimilar from the situation in Ghana.

#### *School Factors Influencing Teacher Absenteeism*

The working environment and institutional aspects of the school have various effects on the absenteeism of teachers. Lack of established social norms, the institution's leader's poor leadership style, ineffective supervision and monitoring procedures implemented by the Ministry of Education and the school administration, the school's status as a private or public institution, inadequate facilities and resources, a lack of in-service training initiatives among other motivational programs, a high student-teacher ratio, and the assignment of other administrative responsibilities at the school are a few of them (Musyoki, 2015). Aaronson, Barrow, and Sander (2007) note that teacher training can increase absenteeism, particularly when teachers are taken out of the classroom for an extended length of time without a replacement.

According to Kremer et al., (2005), teachers in private schools in the same area had an absence rate that is one-third lower than that of instructors in public schools. Compared to their counterparts in public schools, instructors in private schools are well-motivated to work harder since they are paid better, according to Musyoki (2015). Even after controlling for other variables, Chaudhury et al., (2006) found that average schools with the finest infrastructure and equipment had a much lower absence rate than those with the lowest infrastructure. The results of the multi-country study show that schools with high-quality facilities and suitable teaching and learning tools have lower absentee rates because their staff members are more motivated. Glewwe and Kremer (2006) claim that teachers who are given extra responsibilities outside of the classroom (such as accompanying students to sporting events, plays, concerts, and science quizzes) are kept away from their classes less frequently than those who aren't.

#### *Environmental Factors Influencing Teacher Absenteeism*

Community-based features known as environmental factors in various ways contribute to teachers' absence. Examples include the school's location, the teacher's home, the school's distance from the town, the degree of poverty there, the fact that instructors are given non-teaching duties, the parents' educational level, political sway, and the weather (Musyoki, 2015).

Teachers who live a greater distance from the school miss more days than those who live closer to the school. This is due to the fact that such teachers frequently arrive late whenever they encounter a scheduling issue. Teachers miss more school on Fridays and Mondays when they leave early to begin long weekends and when they arrive late because of weekend activities, according to Chaudhury et al., (2004). As a result of their inability to get to school on time due to subpar transportation, instructors from rural places also have higher absentee rates. Again, people drive a great distance to urban areas to acquire services like banking and occasionally they prolong weekends and holidays. Because there aren't enough trained people in the neighbourhood to supervise and monitor the instructors, Abeles (2009) claims that teachers in underprivileged communities have significant absence rates. On the other side, it is a prevalent misconception that low-income areas lack exciting activities to lower teacher absenteeism.

#### *The Impact of Teacher Absenteeism on Teaching and Learning*

A school system as a whole may suffer from teacher absenteeism which can range from reduced student achievement and attendance to reputational damage and wider economic costs (Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2009). According to international sources, there are negative effects of teacher absenteeism on total learner achievement since low teacher attendance is associated with low learner attendance (Banerjee, King, Orazem & Paterno, 2012). Due to the depletion of resources and increased administrative time required to recruit qualified replacements while still managing attendance, teacher absenteeism puts additional strain on educational institutions both nationally and internationally (Obeng-Denteh, Yeboah, Sam & Monkah, 2011).

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive survey was used in the investigation. The core of a descriptive survey, according to Amedahe and Asamoah-Gyimah (2016), is gathering data from a sizable population using thoughtfully crafted questions and meticulously administered questionnaires. In a descriptive survey, information is gathered to address research questions about the current situation of the subject being studied. Because the researchers wanted to address absenteeism among elementary school teachers in the New Juaben South Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the descriptive survey approach was deemed appropriate. For the study, the

researchers selected 70 participants from seven public elementary schools in the New Juabeng South Municipality using a stratified random selecting approach. Stratified sampling, according to Amedahe and Asamoah-Gyimah (2016), entails segmenting the population into several homogeneous groups or strata. Subjects in each group are comparable in these ways. Then, a sample is taken from each category or level. The final sample for the study is made up of the sub samples. Based on one or more factors, such as sex, age, or profession, the population is divided into homogeneous groups. A random selection of participants from each strata, or the seven separate schools, was made in order to obtain a sample that was representative of the entire population. The sample size, which consists of ten (10) respondents from each of the seven institutions, was proportionally drawn from each group. To collect information for the study, a closed-ended questionnaire was created and distributed. The measure was verified by two senior lecturers from the SDA College of Education's Centre for Academic Success (SDACoE-CAS) Research Unit. The processing and analysis of the data were directed by the research objectives. Data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 program using data code sheets made from the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviation) were used to analyze the collected data.

*Demographic Data of Respondents*

The following Tables presented data gathered on the sex of teachers, age of teachers, and number of years the teachers have spent in teaching.

**Table 1: Sex of Teachers**

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	60
Female	28	40
Total	70	100

Source: Field data (2022)

Table 1 shows that forty-two respondents, or 60% of the total, were male instructors, while twenty-eight respondents, or 40% of the total, were female teachers. According to Table 1, the study's respondents included both male and female teachers, showing that both sexes' perspectives were taken into account when the study's conclusions were made.

**Table 2: Age of Teachers**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Above 41 years old	12	17
38-41 years	17	24
34-37 years	26	37
30-33 years	15	22
Total	70	100

Source: Field data (2022)

Table 2 shows that of the teachers, fifteen (representing 22% of them) were between thirty and thirty-three years old, twenty-six (37% of them) were between thirty-four and thirty-seven, seventeen (24% of them) were between thirty-eight and forty-one, and the remaining twelve (17% of them) were over forty. The study's sampled respondents were mature enough, as seen in Table 2, to comprehend and complete the questionnaire's items without any anticipated difficulty.

**Table 3: Number of Years Spent in Teaching**

Years	Frequency	Percentage
Above 15 years	13	19
11-15 years	25	36
6-10 years	23	33
1-5 years	9	13
Total	70	100

Source: Field data (2022)

From Table 3, nine teachers, or 13% of the total, had been in the profession for one to five years; 23, or 33% of the total, had been in it for six to ten years; 25, or 36%, had been in it for eleven to fifteen years; and the final thirteen, or 19% of the total, had been in it for more than fifteen years. Table 3 shows that the study's sample of teachers had sufficient expertise to give reliable data from which to make insightful conclusions.

*Research Question One*

What are the causes of teacher absenteeism in selected public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality? This research question gathered data on the causes of teacher absenteeism in selected public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality. Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 present responses gathered from the respondents on personal related factors, school related factors, and environment related factors respectively that lead to teacher absenteeism.

Table 4: Personal Related Factors Causing Teacher Absenteeism

Causes	SA	A	D	Mean	Std. D
Illness of the teacher or a family member	19 (27%)	30 (43%)	21 (30%)	2.0286	.76084
Alcoholism and indulgence in other drug substances	26 (37%)	34 (49%)	10 (14%)	1.7714	.68464
Pursuing further studies	24 (34%)	35 (50%)	11 (16%)	1.8143	.68721

Source: Field data (2022).

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; Std. D = Standard Deviation

The assertion that a teacher's or a family member's illness contributes to teacher absences got the highest mean score in Table 4 ( $M = 2.0286$ ,  $Std. D = 0.76084$ ). According to the respondents, personal factors like a teacher's illness are the main causes of teacher absenteeism at the public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality. The results support the hypothesis put forth by Ervasti et al. (2012) that female professors miss class more frequently than male teachers do because they have more demanding home obligations. The results also support Rosenblatt and Shirom's (2005) assertion that male professors are absent from work more frequently than their female counterparts, who have less obligations outside of the office that are likely to keep them from attending classes.

Additionally, Table 4's assertion that teachers who are pursuing additional education are more likely to miss class earned the second-highest mean score ( $M = 1.8143$ ,  $Std. D = 0.68721$ ). The result backs up Glewwe and Kremer's (2006) assertion that when teachers spend more time in the classroom, they become more driven to pursue additional education at the expense of their teaching. This leads to their frequent absences from class. As a result, both male and female teachers missed class for personal reasons.

Table 5: School Related Factors Causing Teacher Absenteeism

Causes	SA	A	D	Mean	Std. D
Out of school on official duty	26 (37%)	31 (44%)	13 (19%)	1.8143	.72817
Relaxed school policies on absenteeism	25 (36%)	37 (53%)	8 (11%)	1.7571	.64686
Excessive workload	13 (10%)	28 (40%)	29 (41%)	2.2286	.74545

Source: Field data (2022).

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; Std. D = Standard Deviation

The statement that an excessive workload contributes to teacher absenteeism received the highest mean score from Table 5 ( $M = 2.2286$ ,  $Std. D = 0.74545$ ). This result supports Glewwe and Kremer's (2006) assertion that instructors should be given additional responsibilities outside of the classroom, such as chaperoning extracurricular activities like science workshops, theater productions, and field trips. Contrary to other instructors who are not given such responsibilities, teachers are kept out of the classrooms, which raises the absenteeism rate.

The statement in Table 5 with the second-highest mean score ( $M = 1.8143$ ,  $Std. D = 0.72817$ ) was that being absent from class due to official business. This result is consistent with the finding made by Aaronson, Barrow, and Sander (2007) that teacher preparation programs can increase absenteeism among faculty members, particularly when those faculty members are gone from the classroom for an extended length of time without a replacement.

Table 6: Environmental Related Factors Causing Teacher Absenteeism

Causes	SA	A	D	Mean	Std. D
Transport difficulties	27 (39%)	29 (41%)	14 (20%)	1.8143	.74781

Long distance between school and residence of teachers	30 (43%)	36 (51%)	4 (6%)	1.6286	.59397
Bad weather conditions	19 (27%)	32 (46%)	19 (27%)	2.0000	.74211

Source: Field data (2022).

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; Std. D = Standard Deviation

The statement that poor weather conditions contribute to teacher absences received the highest mean score from Table 6 (M = 2.0000, Std. D = 0.74211). This result supports Musyoki's (2015) assertion that local weather conditions play a variety of roles in influencing teacher absenteeism. As an illustration, if it keeps raining heavily, the teacher won't be able to go to class.

The assertion that transportation issues contribute to teacher absences earned the second-highest mean score in Table 6 (M = 1.8143, Std. D = 0.74781). This result is consistent with Chaudhury et al., (2004)'s observation that instructors from remote places had a higher absenteeism rate because they cannot get to school on time due to an inadequate transportation system.

#### *Research Question Two*

What is the effect of teacher absenteeism on teaching and learning activities in selected public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality? This research question gathered data from respondents on the effect of teacher absenteeism on teaching and learning activities in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality. Table 7 presents the responses gathered from the respondents.

Table 7: Effect of Teacher Absenteeism on Teaching and Learning Activities

Causes	SA	A	D	Mean	Std. D
Teachers are unable to complete the syllabus	26 (37%)	30 (43%)	14 (20%)	1.8286	.74155
Teachers are unable to make teaching and learning interesting	26 (37%)	38 (54%)	6 (9%)	1.7143	.61721
Learners do not actively participate in lesson presentations	24 (34%)	36 (52%)	10 (14%)	1.8000	.67244
Learners perform poorly in academic work	22 (31%)	39 (56%)	9 (13%)	1.8143	.64365

Source: Field data (2022).

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; D = Disagree; Std. D = Standard Deviation

The statement in Table 7 with the highest mean score—"Teachers are unable to complete the syllabus"—had a standard deviation of 0.74155 and a mean of 1.8286. This finding supports the hypothesis put forth by Obeng-Denteh et al. (2011) that teacher absence places additional strain on schools by depleting their resources and lengthening the administrative time required to identify suitable substitutes for completing the curriculum.

The assertion that students perform poorly in their academic work got the second-highest mean score from Table 7 (M = 1.8143, Std. D = 0.64365). This finding is consistent with Obeng-Denteh et al., (2011)'s finding that teacher absences are linked to poorer test scores and lower learner achievement in schools. Again, the finding confirms the conclusion by Banerjee et al., (2012) that there are mutually reinforcing implications of teacher absenteeism for overall learner academic performance.

### **III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the study's findings, it is concluded that personal factors (such as a teacher's illness or pursuit of further education), school factors (such as an excessive workload for teachers and teachers who must leave school for official business), and environmental factors are the main causes of teacher absenteeism in public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality (bad weather and transportation difficulties). Additionally, teacher absences have a negative impact on both the academic performance of the students and the teachers' capacity to complete the curriculum. The study makes several recommendations, including that head teachers of public basic schools in the New Juaben South Municipality strictly adhere to the Ghana Education Service's policy on teacher absenteeism, be mindful of their teachers' workloads, and effectively supervise their teachers' lessons to ensure they are teaching effectively.

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