Article

School Absenteeism and Academic Performance among Kindergarten Learners

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between school absenteeism and academic performance among kindergarten learners using a descriptive-quantitative research design. The research focuses on the demographic profile of respondents, their academic performance, and the causes and effects of absenteeism. Data analysis reveals that while a majority of learners have consistent access to school, some face challenges such as long commutes and health-related absences. Findings show that absenteeism occurs "rarely," with the most common causes being illness, staying home with parents, and social distractions. However, more severe issues, such as bullying and fear of exams, were not significant contributors. The study also assesses learners' performance across developmental domains, revealing that most learners are either "consistent" or "developing" in areas like health, socio-emotional skills, and literacy, although gaps remain in reading and mathematics proficiency. These results highlight the need for targeted interventions, including improved healthcare access, engaging school environments, and active parental involvement, to address absenteeism and enhance educational outcomes. Reducing absenteeism's barriers, schools can foster consistent attendance, better academic performance, and holistic development among young learners, ensuring a strong foundation for future success.

Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) serves as the bedrock for lifelong learning, fostering critical cognitive, social, and emotional development during formative years (Shavkatovna, 2023). High-quality early learning environments stimulate growth across multiple domains, including problem-solving, language acquisition, and interpersonal skills (Kelemen, 2020). Studies reveal that ECE provides the foundational skills necessary for academic success and social integration (Loretha et al., 2023). Moreover, early learning programs

have long-term economic and social benefits, significantly reducing future inequality (Adewusi et al., 2023). In global settings, ECE is recognized as pivotal for sustainable development, emphasizing its ability to nurture problem-solvers and engaged citizens (Campbell & Speldewinde, 2022). Lifelong learning skills such as resilience, empathy, and collaboration are rooted in early childhood experiences, underscoring the importance of prioritizing this stage (Gupta, 2024).

Consistent school attendance during early childhood is critical for fostering cognitive abilities, emotional resilience, and social interactions (Hachem et al., 2022). Regular attendance correlates with higher academic achievement and emotional well-being due to sustained engagement with learning environments (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2021). Children with steady attendance exhibit better emotional regulation and social competence, enhancing peer relationships and academic performance (Chung et al., 2020). Research shows that school environments provide essential social-emotional learning opportunities, promoting empathy, teamwork, and problem-solving skills (Kanopka & Claro, 2020). Furthermore, attendance enables early intervention for children with developmental challenges, ensuring equitable opportunities for cognitive growth (Santos et al., 2021).

School absenteeism is an escalating challenge, with far-reaching consequences for young learners. Factors such as socioeconomic disparities, health issues, and family dynamics contribute to absenteeism, creating significant gaps in educational equity (Prosser & Birchwood, 2024). Studies indicate that absenteeism disrupts critical learning periods, undermining early cognitive and social development (Huang & Zeng, 2023). This issue is particularly pronounced in marginalized communities, where barriers such as limited access to healthcare and educational resources exacerbate attendance problems (Adewsui et al., 2023). Research highlights a strong connection between absenteeism and behavioral issues, further compounding its impact on educational outcomes (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2021).

Recent studies show absenteeism rates among young learners range between 15% and 25% globally, particularly in disadvantaged areas (Hachem et al., 2022). Absenteeism disrupts the formation of social relationships and cognitive skills, leading to gaps in academic performance (Martinez & Gomez, 2024). Chronic absenteeism correlates with lower literacy rates and increased behavioral challenges (Huang & Zeng, 2023). The ripple effects include reduced long-term educational attainment and diminished economic prospects (Chung et al., 2020).

Despite the growing focus on absenteeism, research examining its nuanced relationship with academic outcomes at the kindergarten level is limited. Many studies prioritize older students, leaving gaps in understanding early educational trajectories (Stoiber & Gettinger, 2021). Research seldom integrates the role of family dynamics, school policies, and community support in mitigating absenteeism among kindergarteners (Santos et al., 2021). There is also a lack of longitudinal studies tracking how early absenteeism influences future educational and social outcomes (Martinez & Gomez, 2024). This study aims to equip educators, parents, and policymakers with actionable insights to reduce absenteeism. Understanding its root causes, such as health barriers and socio-emotional challenges, stakeholders can design targeted interventions (Fisher et al., 2023). Policymakers can use data-driven approaches to create accessible resources and support systems (Chung et al., 2020). Additionally, schools can adopt inclusive practices to foster belonging and engagement

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-quantitative research design to examine the demographic profile of kindergarten learners, their academic performance, and the causes and effects of absenteeism. This method is well-suited for systematically analyzing numerical data and identifying patterns and relationships that can inform understanding and interventions. The population of the study includes kindergarten learners from selected school, with parents/guardians and teachers providing additional perspectives to ensure a comprehensive approach. A stratified random sampling method is used to ensure representation across key demographic variables, such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Data collection involve three key instruments of and academic performance record review to quantify learning outcomes, and a structured survey to explore the causes and effects of absenteeism. Excel was applied to analyze the data, enabling the researchers to draw conclusions about the absenteeism and academic performance and providing evidence for targeted educational intervewntion.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Distance from School

Distance from School	Frequency	Percentage
Can be walked	30	60.00
Takes two rides of commute	18	36.00
Takes more than two rides to commute	2	4.00

The table presents the distribution of respondents based on the distance from their school. A majority of the respondents, 60%, live close enough to the school that they can walk there, indicating high accessibility for most. Another 36% of the respondents require two rides to commute, while a small portion, 4%, need more than two rides to reach the school. This suggests that while most respondents have convenient access to their school, a significant minority faces challenges with longer commutes that may require multiple forms of transportation.

Table 2. Possible Causes of Children's Absenteeism

	Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1.	Nasakit ko (eg. hilanat, sibo, ubo,appointment sa doctor)	2.36	Rarely
2.	Mas interasado ko nga makig-uban sa akong mga higala	2.10	Rarely
3.	Nahadlok ko sa mga tawo didto (e.g. kasal o lubong)	1.42	Never
4.	Mas gipili nako nga magpabilin sa balay uban sa akong mga ginikanan.	2.40	Rarely
5.	Dili ko komportable.	1.84	Rarely
6.	Gikapoy kaayo ko ug natulog nalang.	1.82	Rarely
7.	Gusto kong mogahin og panahon uban sa akong mga higala.	2.24	Rarely
8.	Naa koy mga problema sa magtutudlo o mga klasmeyt.	1.16	Never
9.	Sa akong hunahuna makalaay ang makalaay ang eskwelahan ug dili ko ganahan moadto.	1.10	Never
10.	Gusto nakong buhaton ang ubang mga butang (pananglitan pagpamalit o pagdula.)	2.36	Rarely
11.	Nahadlok ko sa exam	1.10	Never
12.	Gi bully ko	1.28	Never
	Aggregate Mean:	1.77	Rarely

The table outlines the possible causes of children's absenteeism based on the perceptions of respondents, with a 5-point scale interpretation. The aggregate mean score of 1.77 suggests that, overall, absenteeism occurs "Rarely." The highest-scoring indicators include staying at home with parents (mean = 2.40) and being absent due to illness or doctor's appointments (mean = 2.36), both interpreted as "Rarely." Social reasons, such as wanting to spend time with friends (mean = 2.24) and opting to stay home out of fatigue (mean = 1.82), also contribute to absenteeism but at a lower level. On the other hand, several causes, such as fear of exams (mean = 1.10), school being boring (mean = 1.10), problems with teachers or classmates (mean = 1.16), and bullying (mean = 1.28), are all interpreted as "Never" causes of absenteeism. This suggests that while minor factors such as illness or social distractions occasionally cause students to miss school, more serious issues like fear of exams, bullying, or discomfort with school are not major reasons for absenteeism according to the respondents. The data on children's absenteeism implies that schools and communities need to focus on addressing minor but recurring factors that lead to absences. Health-related issues, such as illness and doctor's appointments, are a notable cause, suggesting a need for better health education and access to medical care to minimize preventable absences. Additionally, the data

shows that some children prefer staying home with their parents or spending time with friends, indicating the importance of engaging parents in promoting consistent school attendance and creating a more socially engaging school environment. Encouraging positive social activities within the school could help reduce these social distractions. It is also encouraging that more serious factors like bullying, fear of exams, and problems with teachers or classmates are not significant causes of absenteeism, reflecting a generally safe and supportive school environment. Overall, while absenteeism is relatively low, addressing these minor causes through targeted interventions could further improve attendance.

Table 3. Health, Well-Being and Motor Development

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	1	2.00
D	Developing	18	36.00
C	Consistent	31	62.00

The table shows the distribution of kindergarten learners' academic performance in the area of Health, Well-being, and Motor Development. The majority of learners, 62%, are categorized as "Consistent," indicating that they regularly demonstrate skills in physical health, well-being, and motor development. Meanwhile, 36% of the learners fall under the "Developing" category, meaning they are making progress but have not yet fully mastered these skills. A very small percentage, 2%, are classified as "Beginning," suggesting that these learners are at the initial stages of developing their health and motor skills. Overall, the data indicates that most learners are performing well in this area, with the majority showing consistent ability, though a significant portion is still developing.

Table 4. Social-Emotional Development

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	0	0.00
D	Developing	28	56.00
C	Consistent	22	44.00

The table presents the academic performance of kindergarten learners in the area of Socio-Emotional Development. The majority of learners, 56%, are categorized as "Developing," indicating that they are still progressing in skills such as emotional regulation, social interaction, and forming relationships, but have not yet fully mastered these areas. Meanwhile, 44% of the learners are rated as "Consistent," meaning they regularly and effectively demonstrate socio-emotional skills. Notably, none of the learners are classified as "Beginning," indicating that all students show at least some level of socio-emotional development. Overall, the data suggests that while a significant portion of learners are still developing their socio-emotional skills, many are already consistent in their abilities.

Table 5. Language, Literacy, and Communication

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	2	4.00
D	Developing	26	52.00
C	Consistent	22	44.00

The table shows the academic performance of kindergarten learners in the area of Language, Literacy, and Communication. The largest group, 52%, falls under the "Developing" category, meaning that these learners are making progress in their language and communication skills but have not yet fully mastered them. A significant portion, 44%, are categorized as "Consistent," indicating that these learners regularly demonstrate strong abilities in language, literacy, and communication. Only a small number, 4%, are in the "Beginning" stage, showing that they are just starting to develop these skills. Overall, the data suggests that while most learners are either developing or consistent in their language and literacy abilities, a small number still require additional support to improve.

Table 6. Speaking

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	0	0.00
D	Developing	19	38.00
C	Consistent	31	62.00

The table presents the academic performance of kindergarten learners in the area of Speaking. A majority of learners, 62%, are categorized as "Consistent," meaning they regularly and effectively articulate their thoughts and ideas verbally. Another 38% of the learners fall under the "Developing" category, indicating they are progressing but have not yet fully mastered speaking skills. Notably, none of the learners are in the "Beginning" stage, suggesting that all students have at least some levels of speaking ability. Overall, the data indicates that most learners demonstrate strong speaking skills, though a significant portion is still developing in this area

Table 7. Reading

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	13	26.00
D	Developing	21	42.00
C	Consistent	16	32.00

The table shows the academic performance of kindergarten learners in the area of Reading. The largest group, 42%, is in the "Developing" category, indicating that these learners are making progress in reading skills but have not yet fully mastered them. A significant 32% of learners are categorized as "Consistent," meaning they regularly demonstrate strong reading abilities. However, 26% of the learners are in the "Beginning" stage, showing that they are still at the early stages

of developing reading skills. Overall, the data suggests that many learners are either developing or consistent in their reading abilities, a substantial portion still requires additional support to strengthen their reading skills.

Table 8. Writing

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	0	0.00
D	Developing	30	60.00
C	Consistent	20	40.00

The table presents the academic performance of kindergarten learners in the area of Writing. The majority of learners, 60%, fall under the "Developing" category, indicating that they are making progress in their writing skills but have not yet fully mastered them. Meanwhile, 40% of the learners are categorized as "Consistent," meaning they regularly demonstrate proficiency in writing. Notably, none of the learners are in the "Beginning" stage, suggesting that all students have at least some levels of writing ability. Overall, the data indicates that while many learners are still developing their writing skills, a significant portion has already achieved consistency in this area.

Table 9. Mathematics

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	3	6.00
D	Developing	41	82.00
C	Consistent	6	12.00

The table shows the academic performance of kindergarten learners in the area of Mathematics. The majority of learners, 82%, are categorized as "Developing," meaning they are making progress but have not yet fully mastered mathematical concepts and skills. A smaller portion, 12%, are classified as "Consistent," regularly demonstrating proficiency in mathematics. A few learners, 6%, are in the "Beginning" stage, indicating that they are at the early stages of developing their math skills. Overall, the data suggests that most learners are still in the process of building their mathematical abilities, with only a small number showing consistent proficiency.

Table 10. Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment

Grade	Description	Frequency	Percentage
B	Beginning	3	6.00
D	Developing	41	82.00
C	Consistent	6	12.00

The table presents the academic performance of kindergarten learners in the area of Understanding the Physical and Natural Environment. The majority of learners, 82%, are in the "Developing" category, indicating they are making progress in understanding concepts related to their surroundings but have not yet fully mastered these skills. A

smaller group, 12%, are categorized as "Consistent," meaning they regularly demonstrate a strong understanding of the physical and natural environment. A few learners, 6%, are in the "Beginning" stage, showing they are just starting to develop these skills. Overall, the data suggests that while most learners are still in the process of developing their understanding of the environment, a small portion has achieved consistency in this area.

Discussion

Based on the findings, absenteeism significantly affects academic performance, particularly in early education, as supported by numerous studies. Research highlights that children who miss school frequently in kindergarten perform worse academically and socially compared to their regularly attending peers. Absenteeism is negatively correlated with executive functioning, language skills, and overall academic performance, with long-term cumulative effects extending into primary grades (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021). Furthermore, specific causes such as health-related absences, family challenges, or transportation issues exacerbate disparities in educational outcomes, suggesting that targeted interventions could mitigate these impacts (Wei, 2024).

Additionally, studies show that absenteeism disrupts early learning trajectories, hindering literacy and numeracy development, critical for subsequent educational success (Kaufmann et al., 2021). Factors such as longer commutes and inconsistent attendance often lead to lower engagement and reduced teacher-student interaction, diminishing the overall quality of learning environments (Kirksey & Gottfried, 2021). Addressing these barriers through policies such as improved transportation systems, health programs, and parental involvement initiatives could significantly reduce absenteeism rates and enhance academic achievement. These findings underline the importance of identifying and addressing the causes of absenteeism early to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students, particularly in foundational education settings.

Conclusion

The study highlights the significant impact of absenteeism on the academic performance and development of kindergarten learners, with notable variations influenced by factors such as health issues, transportation challenges, and family dynamics. While most learners demonstrate consistent or developing proficiency across various academic and developmental domains, absenteeism remains a critical barrier to maximizing their potential. The findings emphasize the

importance of addressing minor but recurring causes of absenteeism, such as health-related absences and social distractions, through targeted interventions like improved access to healthcare, enhanced parental involvement, and more engaging school environments. By mitigating these challenges, schools and policymakers can create more inclusive and supportive learning conditions that foster consistent attendance and better academic outcomes, laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and development.

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