DETERMINANTS OF KENYA CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION ABSENTEEISM AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IMENTI SOUTH SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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JUNE 2017
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any of the study programmes in any university.

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I dedicate this work to my husband Muthuri Kianjagi for the encouragement and patience with me during the entire period of the study. Thank you for many sacrifices.
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

**B.E.C.E** – Basic Education Certificate Examination

**SCD.E.** – District Education Officer

**K.C.S.E** – Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

**K.N.E.C** – Kenya National Examination Council

**K.S.S.H.A** – Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association

**M.O.E** – Ministry of Education

**TIQUET** – Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training

**UNESCO** – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

**EFA** – Education for All.
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ABSTRACT

The government of Kenya is committed to providing education for all the children. However, every year a good number of students who register for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) fail to turn up during examinations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the determinants of persistent absenteeism by candidates during the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Imenti South Sub-County.

This study adopted a descriptive survey design as the main research method. This design was appropriate because it helped to establish the relationship between variables. Purposive sampling was used as the major research technique. Questionnaires and interview schedules were employed as the main research instruments. The target population for the study was drawn from 68 secondary schools with an estimated population of 14,000 students. A total of 240 students out of 14,000 were included in the sample. Ten (10) principals out of 68 and 60 teachers were sampled to obtain the responses. Five (5) education officers were taken from the educational divisions in the county using purposive sampling. Hence the total sample size yielded 315 subjects. The study employed purposive sampling where each school and other respondents were selected based on a specific purpose. Random sampling of at least one third of the students who missed out exams was considered. Tracer-snowballing method was used to trace the whereabouts of those students who missed out examinations. The researcher specifically used self-administered, drop-and-pick questionnaire to respondents as well as conducting the interviews. After receiving the completed questionnaire, the responses were coded for analysis. The data was interpreted qualitatively using descriptive statistics. The obtained data was subjected to statistical package for social sciences (S.P.S.S) programme. Data was analyzed and presented using frequency tables, percentages and charts. The study findings revealed that between the years 2011 – 2015 there was a significant trend of students missing K.C.S.E examinations every year. For instance, in the year 2011 the number was the highest both for boys at 21 (0.5%) and girls 15 (0.4%) as compared to other years.

School environment such as teacher’s characteristics was one of the factor that was perceived to influence absenteeism in KCSE. Others were lack of learning materials, class size in numbers and role/quality of teachers. Home environments differ in many aspects such as the parents’ level of education, economic status, religious background, values, interests, parents’ expectation of their children, and family size among others. These factors affect students’ schooling. It was also revealed that majority of the students (51%) were affected by peer influence and Poor attitude towards school (43%) and negative attitude among others. It was concluded that a significant number of students in secondary schools miss national examinations. This was attributed to the school environment, home environment, peer influence and other personal issues like drug abuse. The study recommended that; firstly, an active policy by the Ministry of Education for providing bursaries to needy students should be undertaken. Secondly, the government, through the KNEC, needs to have clear guidelines on what should be done to students who register but do not turn up for K.C.S.E. examinations. Thirdly, guidance and counseling to be strengthened in schools. Fourth, community participation should be encouraged when dealing with school attendance. Finally, PTAs, BOMs, Sponsors and Old students associations should work together to
supplement Government's effort in providing necessary physical and learning infrastructures.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Education for all is a basic human right and important prerequisite for all forms of
human development (Eshiwani, 1993). The world conference in basic education held in
Jomtien in 1990 highlighted the need to provide equal opportunities in education.
However, the goal of education for all (EFA) has remained elusive in both the
developed and the developing countries. Indeed school completion rates have
remained low (Chagh, 2011). The question of the provision of equal opportunities in
education as well as ensuring the enrolment at the point of entry in secondary schools
is sustained until the end of the cycle has been the concern of many governments
worldwide.

In Kenya, the school is expected to perform its role of socializing individuals to
become better persons, parents and the community expect the school to have
mechanisms in which examinations perform important functions of shaping the future
of Kenyan youths. This is enabling the children to go through a normal and complete
cycle whose results are measured through K.C.S.E examination at form four level. The
success of a country in carrying out its primary charge of educating and socializing
students is contingent on students attending school regularly and sitting all their
examinations. In recognition of the importance of regular school attendance to quality
education, sitting national examinations becomes a priority goal (Allensworth &
Easton, 2007).
Despite the importance which is attached to education, all countries especially Kenya have a number of children who regard sitting K.C.S.E examinations as a burden to be endured rather than an opportunity to be grasped. Today, regular attendance in national examinations is an important factor in school success (Muturi, 1987)

Students’ absenteeism is a global issue. Schools in most parts of the world experience absenteeism during national examinations. In some countries like Japan, there are strict punishments, like failing to get the results for candidates who absent themselves from exams. An example is a rule that a candidate who absents oneself from examinations without a valid reason would receive a failing grade (Facts about Japan, Japanese culture article 25 p2, 2014). In Ghana, cases of absent candidates are reported yearly. For example, in 2009, eight candidates in Nkoranza District in Brong Ahafo did not sit (BEC) examinations because they were pregnant (Ghana’s news agency, 2009). Kenya has provided free secondary education and increased allocation to enhance its delivery (Ministry of Education, 2009). The trend in school enrollment has been impressive since 2003, but with concerns as regards to retention, attendance and pupil achievement (Ministry of Education, 2013) although the national data on enrollment shows the number of pupils attending school is increasing, there was need to carry out research on the socio-economic, school factors and students personal issues causing absenteeism from K.C.S.E examinations.

The Government of Kenya (GOK) has attached great importance to education as a means of human resource development for national needs. The Ominde Commission Report (1964), states that it is the aim of education in Kenya to provide schooling for
every child of school-going age. Thus, Kenya has provided free secondary education and increased allocation to enhance its delivery (Ministry of Education, 2009). Since the start of free secondary education, the trend in school enrollment has been impressive since 2003, though with concerns as regards to retention, attendance and pupil achievement (Ministry of Education, 2009). Although the national data on enrollment shows the number of pupils attending school is increasing, there was a need to carry out research on the socio-economic, school factors and students personal issues causing absenteeism from K.C.S.E examinations.

Articles 20, 35, 42, and 43 of the new constitution of Kenya 2010; states that every person has the right to education; the state will give priority to factoring in access to all individuals irrespective of circumstances (Republic of Kenya, 2013). In addition to article 53, 60 and 59 of the Constitution have provisions on children’s right to free and compulsory basic education; including quality services, and to access educational institutions and facilities. In pursuit of this, the government has designed a number of strategies which include collaboration with private sector, unilateral agencies as well as through a cost sharing policy with parents and communities in provisions of school facilities (Rachael, 2011).

According to a study by Ithanji (2005) on factors leading to student’s absenteeism in Ruiru division, there is a problem of student absenteeism from national examinations. A study by Uwezo (2011) reveals that in many sub counties in Kenya; Imenti south Sub-county included, more than four out of ten children miss school daily. Muiru (2005) investigated the factors leading to children’s absenteeism in public primary schools in
Ruiru Division, Thika Sub-county and found out that pupil absenteeism was a major problem in Ruiru Divisions public primary schools. The major causes of absenteeism were illness, lack of interest and bad company. Murungi (2010) investigated children’s health needs and their influence on preschool education enrolment. The results revealed that basic needs influenced children’s attendance in school; Munyiri (2010) had found that school feeding programmes improved children’s attendance and enrollment. The studies by Murungi and Munyiri mainly focused on children’s health needs and impact of feeding programme, while the current study focused on socio economic, school factors and students’ personal issues impacting on students’ absenteeism from K.C.S.E. Examinations.

Bironga (2002) investigated the factors responsible for student’s absenteeism in secondary schools in Ruiru Division of Thika District and found out that the major causes of students’ absenteeism were lack of school fees and sickness. Alouch (2002) investigated the factors that contributed to students’ absenteeism in Nakuru East Division in day secondary schools and found that student absenteeism was a problem affecting all selected day secondary schools. The study had found that the major causes of student’s absenteeism were lack of school fees, sickness, and family problems among others. The current study focused on socio-economic, school factors and students personal issues contributing to absenteeism from K.C.S.E in Imenti South Sub-county, hence the need for this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Absenteeism during K.C.S.E Examinations has been a long standing problem in the world and in Kenya, particularly at the secondary school level. Some of the students
who register for K.C.S.E Examination in secondary schools in Kenya drop out before they complete their cycle of education (Chagh, 2011). Currently, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) which runs as a Secretariat deals with all matters of national examinations in both public and private secondary and primary schools. Pupils and students in these institutions sit for common examinations in class eight and form four respectively at the end of every course.

Absenteeism during K.C.S.E Examinations poses various problems to the individual because the student fails to complete his or her level of education and fail to benefit from the education system. It is a worrying trend especially when it happens at a time when money and time are being spent by the Government of Kenya through Free secondary education on educating young people than ever before. One wonders why students do not sit examinations even after successfully going through a four-year course and even registering for the same.

Though a lot of concern has been raised on absenteeism in regular classroom attendance, there is very little research that has been done on absenteeism during national examinations. As indicated above, the malpractice keeps persisting in Imenti South sub-county year in year out. Absenteeism in national examinations has been taking place, but it is the current spate and intensity of examination absenteeism in schools that is causing concern to all stakeholders of education. Over time the causes of absenteeism have diversified and their determinants have also grown in complexity; Absenteeism in regular school attendance has also been addressed and solutions sought; it is the causes of absenteeism during examination among secondary school students in Imenti South sub-county that is of concern to this study. On the basis of this
observation, the researcher sought to investigate the factors that contribute to persistent candidate’s failure to turn up during examinations in K.C.S.E in Imenti South sub-county.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of absenteeism in sitting KCSE examination in Imenti South District and suggest possible remedies.

1.4 Objectives

This study sought to meet the following objectives:

i. Establish trends in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination absenteeism among candidates in secondary schools in Imenti South sub-county.

ii. Investigate the influence of school environment on failure to sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations by candidates in Imenti South sub-county.

iii. Find out the effect of home environment on candidates’ absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county.

iv. Investigate the influence of students’ personal issues on absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county.

1.5 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:-
i. What are the trends in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination absenteeism among candidates in secondary schools in Imenti South sub-county?

ii. How does the school environment influence failure to sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations by candidates in Imenti South sub-county?

iii. How does the home environment affect candidates’ absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county?

iv. To what extent do students personal issues influence absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that lead to candidate’s absenteeism in national examinations. The study may be significant to the field of education in that it might build upon the available body of knowledge relating to the candidate’s absenteeism in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.P.E.). This study focused on a geographically unique area (Imenti South sub-county) with unique characteristics and challenges. The public secondary schools system has experienced and continues to experience enormous challenges. This study may go a long way to help principals on ways to improve on the K.C.P.E. examination absenteeism by candidates. The outcome of the study may help stakeholders such as parents, principals, Ministry of Education officials among others; understand the effects of
school environment, home-based factors and the student’s personal issues on student’s K.C.P.E. absenteeism by candidates in public secondary schools.

The study may hopefully contribute towards reducing cases of absenteeism among future candidates thus making Imenti South sub-county schools keen on having all their students successfully conclude their studies. Thus secondary school graduates will become appropriately trained and certified persons who will immensely contribute to the development of the sub-county and the nation as a whole and hence relieving the country of the current human resource wastage. To the researchers, this study may form a basis for further research in the area as gaps will be identified by the end of the study.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study should have been conducted in all schools in Kenya given the national nature of the research problem. The study covered selected secondary schools in Imenti South Sub-county. Therefore, the findings of the study are limited to this population and may not be generalizable to all Kenyan secondary schools. Any generalization to other population may be made with dire consideration of the characteristics of such population, but it should be useful as a pointer to the larger cases of other secondary schools in Kenya. The study dealt with limited variables such as the home and school environmental characteristics as well as student’s characteristics which contribute to absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations among secondary schools in Imenti South Sub-county.
1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was basically concerned in determinants of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education absenteeism by candidates among secondary schools in Imenti south Sub-county. Although there are many factors that influence absenteeism during K.C.P.E. examinations, this study was basically concerned with specific factors; school environment factors, home environment and student’s personal issues like peer pressure that affect student’s absenteeism in the national secondary examination.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

The study operated on the following assumption;

The respondents were willing to co-operate and commented honestly and truthfully on the determinants of Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education absenteeism among candidates in Imenti South Sub-county.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Maslow’s theory of motivation (Maslow 1954). Maslow states that human beings are motivated by the hierarchy of needs. The needs are physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness, love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs.

The physiological needs include food, health, rest, and water. According to Maslow, these needs are the most important needs. The needs must be satisfied in order to pursue the next level of needs. In the current study, the theory is relevant as the researcher is concerned in determinants of K.C.S.E absenteeism among students in secondary schools. Absenteeism is caused by lack of needs as articulated in the Maslow theory. If any of the physiological necessities is missing, people are motivated
above all else to meet the missing need. Students find it hard paying attention to what the teacher is saying when they are hungry. Some of the students may not have had breakfast—or even dinner the night before. Recently, free lunch programs have been implemented in schools in some parts of this country to help students meet some of their physiological needs. This means that children who are hungry will be absent from school in order to look for food or do some work to earn money to buy food. That means lack of food is a cause of absenteeism in K.C.S.E examinations.

Secondly, the school environment highly contributes to the motivation of the children in terms of security, belongingness, self-esteem, and love. According to Maslow hierarchy of needs, these needs arise after physiological needs have been satisfied. This means that children will need to go to school and sit examinations if only they have something to eat. The third category of needs is belongingness and love needs. Children need love from fellow children and teachers, hence the school environment should be child-friendly to motivate attendance. In the absence of these needs, children will miss school and this will lead to absenteeism.

Thirdly, home environment plays a great role in shaping a child. This theory has focused on physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness, love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs as some of its tenets. The home environment contributes in shaping the way a child behaves. These needs are met through satisfactory relationships with family members, friends, peers, classmates, teachers, and other people with whom they interact. Satisfactory relationships imply acceptance by others. Having satisfied their physiological and security needs, people can venture out and seek relationships from which their need for love and belonging can be met.
Finally, self-esteem needs include the need to want people to recognize one’s abilities, value, competence, and need for good reputation. According to Maslow, failure to satisfy one level of needs puts one in a deficit state and becomes continually concerned about the level of needs (Maslow 1954). Maslow theory therefore was relevant to this study as it covers the tenet that has been discussed in the current study. The choice of the theory covered the objectives of the study as the tenets discussed were in line with the study. Addressing the needs of children satisfactorily will according to Maslow hierarchy of needs will help reduce absenteeism in K.C.S.E examinations in secondary schools.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 is a conceptual framework on the determinants of K.C.S.E absenteeism among secondary school candidates. This study was conceptualized by the researcher to correspond to the various questions governing the scope, and strategic aspects in absenteeism by candidates in sitting their K.C.S.E examinations. The most important aspects has been outlined below as the trends in K.C.S.E examinations, the school environment, home environment and the student personal issues which are discussed as the independent variables. The dependent variable in this framework is absenteeism in the K.C.S.E examinations.

Figure 1:1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

<table>
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<td>The school environment</td>
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Absenteeism can be caused by factors surrounding the child such as the school environment. Social cognitions and feelings are influenced by school and these may be just as powerful in shaping later outcomes on performance and intelligence. Such indirect effects of school are more elusive because they are mediated by children's motivation to learn or avoid learning, their conception of themselves as pupils, and the attributions they create for explaining success and failure. Therefore, students will miss K.C.S.E examinations because of school factors such as lack of love, a sense of belongingness and security, leading to absenteeism. The school has the responsibility to ensure that pupils/students experience the love, care, and feeling that they belong to the school community. School environment as the independent variable has a direct effect on absenteeism during the examinations. Secondly, home environment contributes in shaping a child’s future. Physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness, love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs are all aspects that affect a child as they grow. Family-related factors have been associated with absenteeism: for example, low economic status, higher than average family size, poverty, poor housing conditions and among others. Family background contributes to how students behave in secondary schools; in that, some families bring up maladjusted
children who are not able to cope with schools life especially in boarding schools. For example, many parents’ especially working ones have abdicated their role of parenting and except teachers to mold such students. Cases of students who have been brought up by single parents or where parents are in constant fights influence the way students behave in secondary schools. Sometimes, cases of very rich parents giving their children a lot of money may trigger truancy because such students want to be away in order to spend the money. This behaviour is carried on until the examination time where the student fails to turn up for the registered examination. The above factors, therefore, directly lead to failure of candidates to sit for K.C.S.E examinations which are the focus of the current study.

Finally, student’s personal issues affect their school attendance hence causing absenteeism during national examinations. Some children, especially girls feel that school was childish. These girls get initiated into sex very early, they get used and find school life boring compared to the hype they get with friends outside the school. When examinations approach, these girls are caught unprepared and they opt not to turn up for examinations even though they may have registered for them earlier. When in school, they feel superior because they have all the things the other children are having the fantasy about. Therefore, home environment directly affects absenteeism in K.C.S.E examinations. Students also abscond examinations for fear of failure in the examination. When a student registers for the Kenya National Examination K.C.S.E, he/she is very eager to sit that examination. However, in the process of preparing for the examination, anxiety starts building up and the candidate withdraws from school and never turns up for the examination. Further, most of them are influenced by their
peers and engage in activities that affect examination turn out. These activities include early sex which leads to early marriages drug abuse among others. The study also recognized the fact that students` background and cultural beliefs of the community play a major role in determining their participation in examinations. This relates to matters such as gender bias and stereotypes, occasioned by socialization in the community and low motivation in absence of role models in the community. The above concepts were highlighted using the schematic diagram shown in Fig 1.1, which shows the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables.
1.11 Operational Definition of Terms

**Absenteeism:** The term refers to failure to turn up and sit K.C.S.E examinations.

**Candidate:** Refers to a person enrolled by the Kenya National Examinations Council (K.N.E.C) for the purpose of sitting for one of the Council’s examinations.

**Certificate:** Refers to a document issued by K.N.E.C showing results obtained by a particular candidate in an examination.

**Free education:** Refers to a system of education where school fee has been waived and basic learning materials like text books provided.

**School phobia:** Refers to a child’s excessive fear of going to school or, even in some cases, of leaving home although his parents are anxious that he or she should go to school regularly.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Education is a process that preserves and transmits cultural heritage. National examinations have been in existence for quite a long time and are useful as a practical measure for assessing and passing judgments about the existing educational systems and making significant conclusions about the learner. The Kenya National Examinations Council is a body sanctioned by the government to develop, run and officially certify all the schools and most of the college examinations at the level of the university. In order to achieve this immense duty, The Kenya National Examination Council is dedicated to impartially evaluate all the learning achievements so as to safeguard the integrity, validity and equity of these examinations at all levels-nationally. A further purpose for external evaluation, is to determine the effectiveness of the system in terms of preparing learners for the next stage in their education and equipping school leavers with adequate knowledge and skills that will enable them to earn a living (Ministry of Education,1996). However, sometimes it has been handled as weapons rather than tools for evaluation. When handled as weapons of evaluation, tests expose children to a marathon of competition and those who cannot cope end up avoiding them all together. It is for this reason that the researcher felt that, absenteeism in the Kenya Certificate of secondary education is worrying, thus the purpose of the study. This chapter has covered the introduction, the trends in K.C.S.E absenteeism, the influence of school environment, effect of home environment on candidates’ absenteeism and the influence of students’ personal issues on absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations.
2.2 Trends in K.C.S.E Absenteeism in Schools

Kenya has adopted universal primary education (U.P.E), and is striving to achieve education for all (EFA). Educations both in primary and secondary school levels have been decreed by the government to be free and compulsory. The children’s act Cap. 114 of the laws of Kenya also provides for every child’s unhindered access to quality education. This can largely be effective if the students’ attendance of instruction is always guaranteed. If children will occasionally and in some cases chronically be absent from this instruction for whatever reasons, then the goals so sought by the students themselves and other stakeholders including the state, will not be met (Maina, 2015).

According to Reid (2005) some children, especially girls feel that school was childish. Reid in his study established that some girls got initiated into sex very early, they got used and found school life boring compared to the bars or where they were usually taken by their older friends. When time for examinations approached, these girls were caught unprepared and they opted not to turn up for examinations even though they may have registered for them earlier. When in school, they felt superior because they had all the things the other children were having fantasy about. They argued that there was no need for taking examinations because the older men provided them with all they (girls) needed.

Balfanz and Byrnes(2012) carried out a research where he found out that some families suffered more social disadvantages including poor housing conditions and more family disorder. In addition, their siblings were found to have behavioral, emotional and
reading disorders. Broken homes were associated with high rate of absenteeism. Many of the students not going to school every day came from homes where both parents were absent. This absence could have been attributed to death or divorce among other family factors. These factors affect the child psychologically leading to him or her hating school. However, these scholars dwelt on absenteeism during course work. The current study is focusing on the absenteeism in sitting for the national examinations (K.C.S.E).

A study by Muthoni (2008) on factors affecting quality education in public day secondary schools established that the main cause of poor academic performance in these schools were due to poor family background of the students’. This was shown by the rate of school fees payment and chronic absenteeism among the students from school. Other social factors included students’ home environs that consisted of distances that the students cover from their homes to their respective schools, the work that they do after school and the problems they face while studying at home. This study investigated the socio-economic factors which impact on students’ absenteeism from school, but the current study is focusing on absenteeism in sitting the Kenya certificate of secondary education.

Balfanz (2012) found out that students living in poverty were more likely to be chronically absent from school than those in higher social economic environments. In his research, Balfanz found out that the performance of a child and the ability to read was impacted by the attendance in early schooling. If the child is chronically absent, then he or she receives poor grades in his or her regular classroom examinations and is
likely to avoid the final examination which he or she fears may reflect the same poor grades. He further argues that if you are not in school you can’t learn. Absenteeism during examinations and in class affects the female students more than the male ones because Children, particularly girls, are withdrawn from school so that they can help earn money for the family. Some become house-girls and house-boys, hotel attendants, matatu touts, handcart drivers, “boda boda” (motor bicycle) cyclists or even help in other activities at home which contribute to family income (Nkinyangi, 1980). Many students come to school hungry because of lack of food at home. This results in malnutrition and illness which could lead to persistent absenteeism (Sago, 1984). However, this study looked into the possible relationship between this absenteeism in regular classrooms and absenteeism during examinations. This study therefore seeks to examine the determinants of K.C.S.E examinations absenteeism among students in Imenti South sub-county.

2.3 School Related Factors Causing Absenteeism

Children encounter many problems at school. Each child is a unique individual though there are common problems encountered by children at school. Within the school, there is the school administration that ought to provide leadership and a conducive learning environment. There is also the teacher-students interaction in the learning process. The school therefore, is an important socializing agent and has a great opportunity to shape a developing child than any other institution (Kombo, 2006). Schools are expected to provide self-fulfillment and training in skills, cultural values, and psychological, social and emotional attributes to the students. This research
sought to find out how the school as a socializing agent may be contributing to absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations.

Some teachers are harsh and they project their frustrations on innocent pupils. Some insult and beat pupils for no apparent reason. They abuse pupils to an extent of calling them dogs, porcupines and hedgehogs. Pupils with disabilities are also harassed with limping ones being called hyenas and those with protruding teeth are called warthogs. The pupils who cannot stomach these frustrations prefer to absent themselves from examinations. Episton and Sheldon (2002) say that when the realities of school threaten a child’s feeling of superiority, the student prefers to retreat to safety at home. Even if he or she may have registered for examinations he or she may still abscond.

A student’s ability to learn is heavily influenced by the school’s environment. Learning occurs more easily if order prevails. For example, if students and teachers attend classes regularly and according to the time-table; if facilities are clean and in good repair and if teaching materials are routinely provided. Order within classrooms and within school as a whole signals the seriousness with which a school approaches its mandate.

In an article by Onyango Bidden “Queries raised on free primary education” Daily Nation, Saturday 2nd October 2004 pg 36, classroom congestion, shortage of teachers and inadequate learning aids were said to be likely to affect quality of secondary school education. In Kenya today, it is common to find children learning under trees because they have no classrooms, thus getting exposed to very harsh weather conditions such as dust, rain and hot sun. Distance from school is a critical factor in
determining whether or not children, especially girls, attend school. In an education writers association 2012 held in America, the director of the early Education Initiative at the new America foundation, urged education managers to take absenteeism in national seriously. They found out that distance from school contributed to absenteeism.

The treatment that children got at school could also be a pre-determining factor whether they would attend or even sit examinations. Such situations were prevalent in primary schools. The researcher found that there was a close relationship between these factors that cause absenteeism in primary schools and those that may be causing the same in K.C.S.E examinations. Official school norms may also cause absenteeism. This is because official school norms reward students who achieve academically and intend to pursue higher education. These official school norms seem less fair to students from low socio-economic status and minority groups. Alienated students may readily reject such official school norms in favour of peer norms. Such students may also stay away from sitting K.C.S.E examinations. Thus the current study is interested in establishing the determinants of candidate’s absenteeism in sitting the national examinations.

2.3.1 School Atmosphere

Children encounter many problems at school. Each child is a unique individual though there are common problems encountered by children at school. Children need a sense of recognition by parents, peers and community. (Hindustan Times, New Delhi January 7 2015, p10 – 12).
The school is an important socializing agent and has a great opportunity to shape a developing child than any other institution (Kombo, 2006). The school is expected to provide self-fulfillment and training in skills and cultural values. Each individual should be better off from a psychological, social and emotional viewpoint as a result of attending school.

Nkanatha (2013) as cited from Eshiwani (1983) found that absenteeism in KCSE in the Western province in Kenya is influenced by large class size, poor school facilities, lack of preparation or homework, lack of sound and efficient leadership in the school administration, the inadequate amount of time allocated to teaching and learning teacher characteristics. In Kenya today, it is common to find children learning under trees because they have no classrooms, thus getting exposed to very harsh weather conditions such as dust, rain and hot sun. Distance from school is a critical factor in determining whether or not children, especially girls, attend school. In Ghana and Egypt, researchers have found out that long distance to primary school deters girls’ enrolment and attendance in school but not boys. In an education writers association 2012 held in America, the director of the early Education Initiative at the new America foundation, urged education managers to take absenteeism seriously. They found out that distance from school contributed to absenteeism.

Healthy school living, conditions are also a contributing factor in absenteeism. It means safe sanitation, aesthetic and wholesome physical environment in which children can participate in normal school activities with minimum interference, disturbance or frustration.
According to Amukowa and Karue (2013), some schools do not have enough supplies of any one set item for the satisfaction of students reading so that the poor students suffer both at home and in school. Coupled with other problems, such as poor lighting systems, interference, noise pollution in their environments and such other pecuniaries like hunger, lack of reading company and societal attitudes, all these made it extremely difficult for day students to excel in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (Amukowa and Karue, 2013).

Official school norms may also cause absenteeism. This is because official school norms reward students who achieve academically and intend to pursue higher education. These official school norms seem less fair to students from low socio-economic status and minority groups. Alienated students may readily reject such official school norms in favour of peer norms. Such students may also stay away from sitting K.C.S.E examinations.

2.4 Home Environment Characteristics

The family, more than any other factor, has a lot of influence on children’s behaviour. It is believed to be the source of standards, values and ways of behaving which persist throughout the child’s life. Many children with conduct disorders have been found to come from dysfunctional families. Tyreman (1968) found out that criminal behaviour and alcoholism, particularly of the father, are parental characteristics often associated with conduct disorder. Most children come from homes with fewer acceptances, less warmth, affection, emotional support and less attachment are mostly affected. Such children record poor grades, low achievement levels and they end up terminating their
school sooner than their peers at other levels of family backgrounds (Malley, 1978). The findings of these writers were based on pupils in primary schools. The researcher sought to find out whether those findings could apply to secondary schools and if they were actually the cause for absenteeism in K.C.S.E in Imenti South District.

Lack of parental interest in child’s education is one of the major causes of poor attendance of school. The child develops an unsatisfactory self-concept, sees himself/herself as a failure and in his/her own defense he/she has no desire to learn. If parents consider regular school attendance unimportant, then we should not be astonished when students stay away (Galloway, 1989). Parenting styles characterized by neglect and lack of involvement includes disengaged parents who are motivated to do whatever is necessary to minimize the cost in time and effort of interaction with the child. Such parents keep the child at a distance and focus on their own needs rather than those of the child. Such children are likely to become truants. Some degree of parental control is necessary if children are to develop into socially and intellectually competent individuals. Some families reflect poor supervision whereby there are no rules in the home or stating where children can go and when they must return home. They allow children to roam the streets and permitting them to engage in many independent and unsupervised activities. Whether Galloway was right was the concern of this study. Parental neglect is also a contributing factor to absenteeism in K.C.S.E examinations.

Lack of motivation is a prime factor responsible for absenteeism, poor achievements and dropping out of school. Motivation may lack from teachers, parents and the
community at large. Pupils who have had to repeat grades and who thus miss friends and feel themselves to be social misfits may develop an intense dislike for school and lose all interest and desire to learn. Similarly students, who have a history of low marks and failure, find school unrewarding, painful and cannot wait to get out (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These writers concentrated on absenteeism in primary schools and during regular class work. This research sought to find out whether similar reasons may cause absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations in Kenya.

2.5 Student’s Characteristics and Personal Issues

In a school situation, one of the known learning needs is attitude. If the attitude is negative then the student will lack interest in school and education despite his genetic potential (Awour, 2012). Attitudes are thus internal private events whose existence we infer from our own introspection or from some form of behavioural evidence when they are expressed overtly or covertly (Barge, 2011). It is believed that attitudes influence beliefs and our perceptions. Consequently, our perceptions are influenced by environment and our significant others. Thus this study looked at the attitudes of students towards education in Imenti South Sub-county. This is due to the fact that young people however have their own ideas about what schools should offer them. They have general perceptions of overall quality and content and this may determine how committed a young students may be to schooling and sitting examinations altogether.

(Menya, 1992) examined the factors limiting the achievement of education for all. The study found out that certain groups still remain out of reach of current educational programmes such as school children, girls and women in marginalized areas. This
study focused on factors that made students in Imenti Sub-county absent from sitting K.C.S.E examinations. Girls may drop out of school because they indulge in sexual activities while in school and may end up becoming pregnant and failing to sit the K.C.S.E examinations. Students may also engage in casual day labour in order to obtain money for personal items like cell phones although some others may receive them from parents. Boys and girls have various ways of possessing drugs. Majority get recruited into drugs without the knowledge of teachers. These students may develop bad behaviour in schools, play truancy and may not turn up during K.C.S.E examinations. From the above discussion it is clear that there is great need to address absenteeism during examinations as the malpractice poses serious consequences to the individual, the school and the society.

2.5.1 Age and Gender Differences

Studies carried out by Eshiwani in Kenya showed that more girls were persistently absent than boys (Eshiwani, 1984). Moreover, boys play more truants than girls. The Scottish Education Council Report (2009) also concluded that more girls were absent than boys. This was because girls were more vulnerable to problems associated with absenteeism than boy’s, for example early pregnancies. In addition, majority of Kenyan girls worked as house girls early in life when faced with financial problems.

Muvea (2011) indicates that a major problem for girls’ school attendance is their lack of underwear and sanitary protection when menstruating. The cost of sanitary protection and under clothes may also contribute to making the cost of educating girls higher than that of educating boys. When decisions have to be made because of financial constraints, girls are more likely, than boys, to be held back or to be
withdrawn from school (Ithanji, 2005). In Kenya, Siringi, a ‘Daily Nation’ correspondent (Daily Nation, April 2000) noted that girls skipped school during menstruation. This study concerned itself with finding out whether related factors were responsible for absenteeism during K.C.S.E. Examinations. A UNICEF report (children on the brink, 2000) argues that the greatest indicator that children are suffering is their absence from school.

(Mitchell, 2007) found a consistent trend for rates of absentees to increase with age, especially among girls. Absenteeism reached a peak at around the age of 13. Our study aimed at ascertaining whether Mitchell’s findings would also apply to absenteeism during examinations. Continued poor attendance was related to poor education attainments (Fogelman, 1980). This poor performance could lead to fear of similar results and the candidates could end up avoiding examinations altogether.

Excessive anxiety and fears also contribute to absenteeism. Clyne (1966) argues that most children fear being bullied, sexually harassed by menacing children of opposite sex, arousal of sexual longings, and loss of friends. Some parents of persistent absenteeees had reported that their children had obsession symptoms for example withdrawals, irritability and occasional fainting (Benson, 1980). However, the above study does not fully devote itself towards the effects of absenteeism from examinations as our study does. This research sought to find out how the school as a socializing agent may be contributing to absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations.

2.6Summary of the Gaps that the study filled

From the literature review the study established poverty, the school environment students’ personal issues and the home background were major factors that limit
participation of candidates in K.C.S.E examination. The failure in many counties to identify the real factors limiting students’ participation in K.C.S.E examinations has led to untold wastage in education. The wasted students do not benefit from their countries budget on education and are left out in the socialization process by their peers and school. Those who miss K.C.S.E examinations do not participate fully in nation building neither are they useful to themselves or their families.

A child’s background, according to Eshiwani (1993), is critical in determining the level of wastage in education. Most researchers’ emphasize on economic factors contributing to absenteeism during K.C.S.E other than the social cultural constraints which shape the definition of problems which affect children living in poverty. Such an approach is vital if literacy level is to be raised. Studies carried out in Kenya on absenteeism lack emphasis on the specific wastage caused by missing K.C.S.E examination. This study sought to address these gaps.

Without adequate research on the specific factors contributing to absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations, it is unlikely that the current trend of wastage in Kenya can be reversed. It is critical that real issues contributing to the problem be identified. This chapter raised important interactive issues leading to absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations. For example, socio economic background of students, school organization and student’s personal issues, which were identified as some of the factors contributing to absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations in Imenti South Sub-county Kenya.

Considerable amount of work as cited in this chapter, touching on absenteeism, has been done by various scholars. But critical analysis reveals there are gaps in education
concerning educational wastage which is caused by absenteeism during examinations. While some studies for instance Mwangi (1997) and Moraa (2002) focused on regular absenteeism during course work, our study addressed absenteeism in K.C.S.E examinations. The study concentrated on Meru County, and in particular on Imenti South Sub-county. Most scholars who have attempted to conduct a study on absenteeism have dwelt on the factors contributing to the vice during regular classrooms in primary and secondary schools, and in marginalized areas.

It is important to note that researchers such as Balfanz (2012), Muturi (1997) and Moraa (2002) have cited truancy, indiscipline, and poverty and school administration as major causes of absenteeism in schools. Imenti South Sub-county enjoys a good and stable climate leading to production of plenty of food and has economic stability. Therefore, poverty may not be a major factor hence, the need to consider other factors. This study benefited immensely from the views of the scholars cited in the literature review so as to improve on their ideas and try to cover the existing gaps on absenteeism more appropriately.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter highlights methodological details appropriate for the study. It entails procedures for obtaining information needed to answer research questions, research design, research site, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments and methods of data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design as the main research method. It employed the use of instruments such as questionnaires and interview schedules. This design was adopted because the study called for in-depth investigation of the factors leading to failure to sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations in Imenti South Sub-county. It was most appropriate because it helped to establish the relationship between variables and it is also a recommended research methodology in social sciences like education (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The great strength of this method is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation, and to identify or attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work (Bell, 1998). Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using basic descriptive statistics guided by the questions and objectives of the study.
3.2.1 Study Variables

According to Kombo and Tromp (2008) an independent variable is that which a researcher manipulates in order to determine its effects or influence on another variable. In this case, the independent variables were trends in K.C.S.E absenteeism among candidates in secondary schools, influence of the school environment on student’s absenteeism during national examinations, influence of the home environment on absenteeism and student personal issues. The dependent variable was absenteeism by students in sitting the national examinations.

3.3 Location of the Study

The study was carried out in Imenti South sub-county, Meru County, Kenya. The justification for selecting Imenti South was because the district is the largest in the County with the highest number of schools compared to the neighboring counties. This Sub-county has a total of 68 secondary schools. The district has been in existence since 2008 after being curved out of the old Meru Central District. It borders Maara sub-county in the South and Imenti Central sub-county in the North. These were: Four boys’ boarding schools, three girls’ boarding secondary schools and five day secondary schools.

The sub county was also found appropriate for this study because there were numerous cases of absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations in the years 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 as records indicate at the sub-county examinations office (Imenti South DEO’s Office, 2012).
3.4 Target Population

Imenti South sub-county comprises of 68 secondary schools with an estimated population of 14,000 students and 600 teachers. However, this study targeted 30 schools with an estimated population of 6000 students as a result of logistical issues. The researcher considered 6 schools in each educational division as the sub-county has 5 educational divisions. The subject of the study was drawn from these schools which included: boys’ boarding secondary schools, girls’ boarding secondary schools, and day mixed secondary schools.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

The study employed random sampling where each school and other respondents were selected randomly. Sampling is the process of selecting a number of elements from the population so that by studying the sample properties and characteristics they can be generalized to the entire population. Stratified random sampling was used to select student respondents for this study. The researcher divided the target population of 14,000 students into strata or sub groups based on the categories of schools; Boys schools, Girls schools and mixed schools. A sample was drawn from each stratum. These sub-samples made up the final sample of the study. Tracer-snowballing method was used to trace the whereabouts of those students who missed out examinations. The researcher assumed that they would provide more information about absenteeism during examinations as they had the experience. Students who were interviewed assisted the researcher regarding the whereabouts of their former colleagues through cell phone contacts.
3.5.1 Sample Size

KCSE examination results were provided from the office of the sub county director of Education (SCDE) Imenti South Sub-county in Nkubu Town. The study population was divided into three as: Boys’ boarding schools, girls’ boarding schools and day secondary schools as shown in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1 Sample Size and Sampling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Education Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to (Sekaran, 2004), a sample size of between 20 and 400 of the targeted population is quite effective. In this case, the researcher applied a sample size of 10 principals, two from each educational division. The researcher took a sample of 12 teachers from each of the 5 administrative divisions. Five (5) Education officers were sampled each from the five divisions. Out of the total population of 14,000 students, 200 students were sampled. Therefore the total sample size yielded 275 respondents.

3.6 Research Instruments

An instrument is a tool developed by the researcher to collect the necessary information in a study. Kombo (2006) notes that research instruments include the questionnaires, interview schedule, observations and Focus Group Discussions. As far as this study was concerned, data collection instruments were used to obtain both primary and secondary data. The primary data was gathered through an interview schedule and questionnaires which were administered through drop and pick method. The procedure for interview is as explained below.

According to Orodho (2009), an interview schedule is a set of questions that an interviewer asks when interviewing respondents. The interview schedule was specially prepared for the candidates, teachers and parents. This instrument contained questions that were framed in line with the research objectives. It was the most appropriate because it permitted much greater depths than other methods of data collection (Borg
and Gall, 1979). Primary data was also appropriate as it was collected to meet specific research needs. It had questions which were not complicated and which lead to more in-depth discussions (Cooper and Schindler, 2003).

Interviews were conducted by the researcher using a guide. This helped the researcher to understand more deeply the problem under investigation. Oral interviews in this case were very important because they allowed the researcher to gather personal data and relevant details while the informants’ responses were being recorded.

The researcher used questionnaires which had closed ended questions and limited open ended questions. Closed ended questions helped respondents to make quick decisions in choosing the alternatives (Sekaran, 2005).

### 3.7 Data Collection Techniques

According to Kombo (2006), data collection is the gathering of information to serve or prove or refute some facts. The major sources of data that were used were primary and secondary. The researcher specifically used self-administered, drop-and-pick questionnaire to respondents. An interview schedule was also prepared for the SCDEs, students who missed examinations and the Principals. In addition to primary data, the researcher also relied on secondary data obtained from document analysis. The instruments that were used in data collection are presented in the following section:

(a) **Questionnaires**

The questionnaires were designed to include the close-ended and limited open-ended questions. There were different sets of questionnaires for head teachers, teachers, parents, students, including those who missed examinations. This was due to the fact
that different questions targeted different groups of respondents. The close-ended questions were utilized in cases where the range of possible responses was given on the questionnaires. This is because questionnaire is convenient to collect information from large number of respondents with in short period of time and in a cost effective way.

(b) Interview Guides

The researcher used interview guides to collect the information from the respondents. According to McLeod (2014), interviews involve social interaction between the interviewer and the informants. Unstructured interview was used based on closed-ended questions to obtain the data. The choice was because structured interviews are quick to conduct, meaning a large sample can be obtained and the representative data can be generalized for a larger population. The interviews also allow the participants to share their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs in their own words. During the interview, the researcher jotted down the main points given by the respondents for analysis.

(c) Document Analysis

The study employed documentary analysis from the relevant education offices in Imenti South Sub-county. Here the researcher analyzed documents like the examinations analysis by year and the school ranking report by performance and categories. According to Orodho (2007), document analysis involve interpretation of the documents to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. Analyzing documents in this study involved coding the content into themes to obtain data required for this study.
3.8 Data Analysis Techniques

After receiving the completed questionnaire, the responses were coded. The raw data was tallied and structured so as to make it manageable for analysis. Based on the data collection instruments, quantitative data were analyzed and expressed by using percentage and average mean to present the high light of the information. Percentage and mean score were used. Qualitative data was analyzed in narration form as a backup to each section of quantitative data analysis. The obtained data was subjected to statistical package for social sciences (S.P.S.S) software programme.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

To conduct this research, authorization letter from Kenyatta university graduate school was issued. After receiving research authorization from the university, the researcher applied for the research permit from National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation. Thereafter, the researcher moved to the study area to contact principals, SCDEs and teachers to arrange their convenient time to the questionnaire and interviews. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the research. Finally they were informed of the information to be obtained from the respondents and assured of the confidentiality of the data obtained during the research study.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents research findings and discussions which have been presented according to the objectives of the study and research questions. The objectives of the study were:

2. Investigate the influence of school environment on failure to sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations by candidates in Imenti South sub-county.
3. Find out the effect of home environment on candidates’ absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county.
4. Investigate the influence of students’ personal issues on absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county.

Information, perceptions or views regarding these factors were generated through a number of questionnaires and interviews which were administered to the principals,
teachers, education officers and students. The analysis and interpretation were done within the framework of the core objectives that the study sought to address. K.C.S.E examination results were provided at the SCD.E.’s office and formed part of the document analysis, the rest of the information was gathered using questionnaires and interview schedules. Data gathered from these schools through these instruments was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Therefore, the presentation of data analysis in this study was organized in such a way that the quantitative findings were presented and later discussed alongside the qualitative responses that formed part of the findings.

4.2 Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

4.2.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

In order to obtain the needed data, questionnaires were distributed to 12 secondary schools and responses gathered from principals, Education Officers, and students who missed K.C.S.E examinations. The respondents were asked to indicate their gender and the responses obtained are summarized in Table 4:1.

Table 4:1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Education Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4:1 shows the distribution of respondents by gender. It indicates that majority of students (60%) and teachers (58%) used in the study were females. In the overall
analysis, 41% (114) respondents were males and 59% (161) were females. There was female dominance because there are more girls’ secondary schools than boys in Imenti South sub-county. Even mixed schools are dominated by girls and similarly there are more female teachers than male. It was not therefore possible to base the results on gender but the proportion of males and females are nearly the same, indicating that gender of respondents was evenly represented in the sample.

4.2.2 Distributions of Schools by Type

The study also investigated the type of schools involved in the research. The types of schools were classified as boy’s schools only, girl’s schools only and mixed day schools. The distribution of the schools is summarized in Table 4:2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys only</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day/Mixed schools</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of schools on the sample by type. It indicates that there were more mixed schools (42%) than boys’ schools (33%) and girls’ schools (25%). This distribution is a fair reflection of the distribution of the schools in Imenti South. Ideally, mixed schools majority of which are day secondary schools are more than boys only and girls only. Introduction of free secondary school (FSE), in Kenya increased the population of mixed day secondary schools in the country. It was therefore a true reflection of the issues of absenteeism in K.C.S.E in Imenti South sub-
Thus, day schools were perceived to have high rate of absenteeism during the national examinations than any other category of school.

There was high return ratio from all the categories of respondents in this study which can be attributed to the establishment of a good rapport with the respondents during the research project. The high return rate of questionnaires for most respondents was important in providing adequate information and data for analysis so that a holistic picture would be obtained about the situation of students failure to turn up for K.C.S.E examinations in Imenti South sub-county.

4.3 Trends in K.C.S.E Examinations Absenteeism among Schools in Imenti South Sub-County

The results in this section were based on the questionnaires and the unstructured interviews which were administered to the principals, teachers and students who missed to take examinations. Since the establishment of Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), a significant number of youth and young adults have been missing K.C.S.E examinations. The findings sought to identify trends in K.C.S.E examinations and are summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 4:3 Trends in K.C.S.E Absenteeism in Imenti South Sub-county from 2011 – 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. Registered</th>
<th>Absentees</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3530</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3436</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings in table 4.3 show that between the years 2011 – 2015, a significant number of students did not sit the K.C.S.E examinations. In the year 2011 the number was the highest both for boys 21 (0.5%) and girls 15 (0.4%) compared to other years. The trend seem to have decreased in year 2012, and 2013 but again rose in 2014 where boys recorded an absenteeism of 20 (0.5%) and girls 12 (0.3%). Year 2015 recorded the least number of absentees in both categories whereby boys recorded 13 (0.3%) and girls 11 (0.3%).

According to Kimatu (2007), student absenteeism in Kenyan schools has been a result of students not taking education seriously. Absenteeism of students in KCSE in Meru County is persistently high compared to other areas (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The situation has been accelerated by factors among them the school environment, home environment, and student personal issues. Nkanatha(2013) established that absenteeism in KCSE in the Western province in Kenya is influenced by class size, school facilities, laziness and lack of sound and efficient leadership in the school administration and teacher characteristics.

### 4.3.1 Trends in K.C.S.E Absenteeism by Gender

The term gender in this context refers to social cultural categorization of human beings as either male or female. In relation to gender, female learners are known to have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Boys Absenteeism</th>
<th>Girls Absenteeism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3342</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3521</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3563</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>17394</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
different learning needs from those of the male. Because of her biological make up, the female student needs more privacy and security due to vulnerability. From Table 4.3 above, more males than female students failed to turn up for K.C.S.E examinations. In the year 2011, 21 (0.5%) male students failed to turn up for K.C.S.E examinations as compared to 15 girls (0.4%). According to most education officers, the number of boys was more than that of the girls because in Meru, there is plenty of food, cash crops like coffee, bananas, tea and other economic activities like quarry mining. Young boys demand their share of economic wealth (inheritance), including land while they were still in school. Once given, these boys lost interest in school and even withdrew from examinations. The following sentiments were expressed by a teacher during interviews.

“Our boys find no need of coming to school because they can afford the same items as the teachers who teach them. They feel that the money they get is enough to build a house, maintain a wife and feed a family. They compare themselves with their friends who have salaried jobs and feel they earn more than them especially if they happen to be operating a small business. This idea negatively interferes with their continuity of schooling” (Personal communication with a male teacher, Imenti South sub county February 2016).

A number of girls missed K.C.S.E examinations every year. In 2011, 15 (0.4%) recorded the highest absenteeism while 2012 recorded the least 7 (0.2%). On interviewing the students who missed examinations the following was identified. Failure of girls to turn up for K.C.S.E can partly be attributed to the negative attitude by parents who saw no need of educating the girl child. Most girls engaged in illicit
sexual activities which left them pregnant. The following was said by a student who dropped from school.

“Money is needed for schooling but hard to get if a girl comes from a poor family. When teachers send girls home to get personal items and school fees the girls go to their boyfriends for help. In return, these boys request for sexual favours which the girls find hard to resist because of the benefit involved. Consequently the girls end up becoming pregnant and hence dropping from school.” Thus, the girl child suffer once they get pregnant as they miss the examinations (Personal communication with female students, Imenti South Sub-county, March 2016).

On the other hand, if the boys or some teachers within the school sexually harass the girls, they could absent themselves from school. Regular absenteeism could lead to repetition of classes and consequently lead to avoiding examinations due to fear of ridicule or even embarrassment. The persistent request for a date for a girl could send signals that the girl is mature enough to date. When a girl internalizes that she can be dated she may spend most of her time looking forward to the date and therefore fail to concentrate on her schoolwork. Thus the above mentioned signals could contribute to absenteeism in K.C.S.E as some of the girls could give in to the demands thus end up even getting pregnant.

Likewise if the girl is threatened to be raped, they may choose to absent themselves from school and from examinations for fear of embarrassment. In order to confirm this, girls who had been threatened to be raped were asked about their precautions against the threat. One of the girls had the following to say.

“Early pregnancies kept girls from sitting final examinations. The girls fear to relate with boys who threaten to rape them. As a result they opt to stay away
from classes and from examinations and would not report the matter to anybody because they fear the boys.” Girls thus undergo psychological torture from men who ask for sexual favours and when their attempts are thwarted they threaten the girls. This could lead to absenteeism from school and the national examination altogether (Personal Communication with a female student, Imenti South sub-county, January 2016)

If a girl is lured with money or presents to have sex, she may easily give in to sexual advances of the boys, male teachers or members of their communities. The motivation to have a boyfriend could be very high especially in cases where boys and girls intimacy is common, fashionable or heroic. The relationship could lead to pregnancy, which may lead to expulsion from school, hence shattering her dreams. This is due to the fact that she may find it difficult to re-sit examinations for fear of ridicule by her schoolmate and fellow community members. Table 4.3 show data existing at the DEO’s office indicating that a total of 54 girls missed examinations during the period between years 2011-2015. The personal interview with the girls, established that pregnancy was the main reason for dropping out of school hence missing the exams as cited by 80% of the girls. Table 4.4 show the trend of absenteeism as a result of pregnancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of students Registered</th>
<th>Total number of Girls who missed Exams</th>
<th>Preganancies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3530</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3436</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3342</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3521</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3563</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 above indicates that most of the girls that missed examinations was because of pregnancies. Year 2013 had the highest number of girls who missed the national examinations (55%) due to pregnancy. Year 2015 followed with a record of 36% of the girls missing examinations due to pregnancies. The year 2012 had 29% of the girls pregnant, while 2014 had 25% of the girls pregnant. Year 2011 had the least number of girl's pregnancies in schools with 20%. Thus the issue of missing the national examination due to pregnancy is of concern if we have to reduce student absenteeism during KCSE.

The girls who engage in risky sexual behaviours are also at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Thus, they have high chances of being absent from examination for fear of embarrassment. In order to supplement the above information on sexual harassment, students were asked to specify the particular individual who had sexually molested them. It was established that some of the fellow schoolmates, teachers, relatives or a resident living with them at home used to molest them sexually. The results are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4:5 Incidences of Sexual Harassment among Students who Missed Examinations while at Home/School, to and from School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incidences of sexual harassment</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School mates</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives or persons living at home</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touts or hawkers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never been harassed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that out of the girls who had been sexually harassed, 43% was by relatives or persons living with them. School mates were also involved in harassing girls sexually with 29% of the girls agreeing to this. It was also established from 14% of the girls that touts and hawkers sexually harassed them while heading to school or while leaving school. Only 8% said they were sexually harassed by their male teachers while 6% of the girls have never been sexually molested. This statistics implies that a significant number of teachers were not faithful to their professional obligation as they were involved in sexual harassment. In spite of the teachers being custodians of the students at school, some of the teachers sleep with the girls they are supposed to impact good morals. Some of the girls are coerced to have sex with the teachers thus they may end up pregnant and miss the national examinations.

According to guidance and counseling teachers, in an environment where students are harassed/molested by both their classmates and their teachers and even people living with them, the girls may lose focus in schoolwork, concentrate on love affairs and abandon examinations that they had earlier registered (Mwangi, 1997). The girls may begin to internalize that they are big enough or mature enough to start engaging in early sex. Early engagement in sex may lead to sexually transmitted diseases or even pregnancy. If they get pregnant, they may end up dropping out of school since they have to stay at home and nurse their children. The guidance and counseling teacher confirmed this in an interview with the below sentiments.

“I often counseled girls who had been sexually harassed by touts and hawkers or persons living with them or even
their parent’s visitors.” (Personal communication with a guidance & counseling teacher, February 2016 Imenti South sub-county).

This implies that the girls are not safe from sexual harassment in school to and from school and also they are not safe at home. Some get pregnant and eventually drop out of school and even failed to sit for K.C.S.E examinations.

4.3.2 Trends in K.C.S.E Absenteeism by School Categories in Imenti South Sub County

The study sought to establish absenteeism during K.C.S.E by the categories of schools and the results are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4:6 Trends of K.C.S.E Absenteeism by School Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3530</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3436</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3342</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3521</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3563</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study established that mixed day schools registered the highest number of absenteeism. This could be attributed to more day schools in the sub county than the other schools. The year 2014 registered the highest number of dropouts with 21 (0.6%), Year 2011 had 16 (0.5%) of the absenteeism by students from day schools
while in 2012 14 (0.4%) did not do their exams. In 2015 and 2013, the absenteeism from the day schools was 12 (0.3%) and 10 (0.2%) respectively.

Single schools had relatively low absenteeism as compared to the mixed school. Boys’ schools had the highest number of absenteeism in KCSE in 2011 with 10 of the students. Years 2013 had 8 (0.2%) of the students while 2012 and 2015 had equal number, 7 (0.2%) students not doing their final examinations.

Among the girls’ schools, year 2011 had the highest number of girls (10; 0.3%) not doing their examination followed by the year 2014 where 6 (0.2%) of the students did not sit for the national examinations. The other years 2012, 2013 and 2015 registered a low number of students missing the national examinations with 3, 4 and 5 of the students.

The study revealed that there are more cases of absenteeism in mixed schools than those of girls only and boys only. The situation can be attributed to the high number of mixed schools in Imenti South, and the fact that students come from home every day. In an interview with the principals and the education officers, it was revealed that there are many distracters when a student walks home from school. The study revealed that some girls boda boda operators who entice them with money and free motor bike rides. According to students who missed examinations, these girls in return pay back through sex favours which these men prefer to money. The girls end up becoming pregnant and dropping out of school altogether. In an interview with one of the girls who did not sit for the KCSE examinations, the following sentiment was captured:

“I met a boda boda man who was a friend of my brother. He often took me home and asked for no pay. One day he asked me to go to his home. I could not resist because we had become used and he did not charge me for the
motor bike rides. He made sexual advances, though I resisted, I finally accepted and this happened several times. I became pregnant in form three third term and dropped out of school after registering my examinations to go and deliver the baby. I could not go back to school because there was no one to take care of my baby.” (Interview with a female student in Imenti South sub-county February 2016).

Asmawatet. al (2012) argues that the category of school has less influence on student of absenteeism. The current study disagrees with the above study, as it has been established that the type of school that a child attends determines the dangers the student is exposed to, which in turn influences the student’s absenteeism in KCSE examinations.

4.3.3 Trends in K.C.S.E Absenteeism by Divisions in Imenti South Sub-county

Data on the absenteeism during K.C.S.E by divisions was collected from the examination office at the Sub-county director’s office formerly D.E.O’s office. The information was captured as it was received and summarized in Table 4.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Students registered</th>
<th>Nkuen Division</th>
<th>Igoji Division</th>
<th>Abogeta Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3530</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>3436</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3342</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Imenti South, there are three educational divisions that make up the sub-county. These divisions are: Abogeta division, Nkuene division and Igoji division. Abogeta division recorded the highest number of absenteeism 14 (0.4%) of the students in the year 2011. This could be linked to the high rate of strikes that happened that year leading to expulsions and suspensions. In 2014 and 2015 the numbers of students who dropped out of school and did not do exams were 10 and 9 (0.3%) respectively. The years 2012 and 2013 had the lowest absenteeism in the KCSE with 8 and 7 (0.2%) students respectively.

Egoji division, in 2011 had the highest number of students (12) dropping out of school while the year 2014 followed with 11 (0.3%) of the students not sitting for their KCSE. Year 2013 had 9 of the students from Egoji missing their examinations. Other years were 2012 and 2015 with 6 and 7 respectively.

In Nkuene the obtained statistics show that the highest number of absenteeism from national examinations was in 2014 with 11 (0.3%) cases. The years 2011, 2012 had an equal number of students who missed the national exams with 10 (0.3%) cases witnessed. Absenteeism from KCSE was lowest in year 2013 with 7 (0.2%) cases reported.

Abogeta division in total seems to have the highest number of KCSE dropouts. Different interviews with education officers reveal that the trend can be attributed to the fact that most schools are located in the lower zone of the Sub County which is a bit dry. In these regions parents have low income opportunities and most of them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Absentees</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Absentees</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Absentees</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3521</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3563</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cannot afford regular school fees for their children. Nkuene and Igoji divisions are situated in areas where residents are economically endowed. This is because most of the schools are around towns where most business people prefer to take their children for easy access to the schools. The two divisions (Nkuene and Igoji) are in tea zone and coffee zone areas whereby these cash crops play a major role in school fees payments. The following sentiments from an officer in the D.E.O’s office Abogeta division explain.

“Most parents from this region are poor. They pay their fees using the crops that they get from the farms during the rain seasons. This money is paid in small bits and sometimes they fail to pay. When the parents fail to meet the required money, the child is sent home and sometimes they do not report back.” (Personal communication with an education officer Imenti South sub County, 2016).

The male students interviewed indicated that, in addition, prostitution is easily done by girls who get a lot of money from their male friends. They are provided by these male friends with all the things their peers fantasize about. These men take them to posh hotels and are provided with food, drinks and cash. It was reported that these girls hate schooling because they argue that their friends are providing what they need at the moment. They, therefore, avoid school and examinations altogether. The sentiments below from a female student illustrate how serious prostitution had affected education in Imenti South Sub-county:

“I cannot be hired as a house girl because in a day, as prostitute I earn enough for a house girl’s salary. I cannot go back to school either because those who completed school ahead of me are still getting hired for simple jobs.” This perception from some of the girls has
accelerated failure to sit for the K.C.S.E examinations.
(Personal communication Imenti south, July 2013).

The study established that if these students hailed from families of low economic backgrounds, they would find salaried jobs more rewarding than schooling and hence abandon examinations altogether. It does not matter to them whether they actually registered or not as long as their new jobs kept them paid while they were away from schools.

4.4 Influence of School Environment on Student’s Absenteeism in K.C.S.E Examinations

School environment includes the classrooms, staffroom, library, playing fields and toilets among other things. School environment also include how students relate with their teachers and their fellow students. The school environment can be expressed in terms of whether it is friendly and conducive for learning or otherwise. Schools may contribute to students failing to sit for the K.C.S.E examinations as well as drop out.

The results of this section were based on the questionnaire and interviews which were directed to teachers, education officers and student. The results are presented in Table 4.8

**Table 4.8 School Environment Factors Influencing Absenteeism in K.C.S.E**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Students who missed examinations (n=200)</th>
<th>Teachers (n=65)</th>
<th>Education Officers (n=5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys (n=80)</td>
<td>Girls (n=120)</td>
<td>Both gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Characteristics</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Characteristics</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8 show that most students cited teacher’s characteristics as one of the most pressing factor that influence absenteeism in KCSE. This was supported by 50% of the boys and 50% of the girls. Some of the teachers (38%) also agreed with teacher’s characteristics as one of the reasons why students run away from school. Teachers therefore have a great role to play not only in classroom but also in other aspects of the student’s growth. On interviewing the education officers, all of them agreed that teacher’s characteristic is one of the causes of absenteeism in KCSE. Majority of the boys (44%) who responded indicated that role/quality of teachers sometimes make students run away from school while 34% of the girls agreed with this. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the teachers and 60% of the education officers also supported that the quality of the teacher contribute to student absenteeism in KCSE. This is because teachers must exercise teaching not only in classroom work but also other life skills that will motivate the students to avoid the vice of dropping out of school and missing the national examinations.

The school learning atmosphere was another issue that came out strongly during this study. This was supported by 35% of the boys and 33% of the girls in this study. Majority of the teachers (71%) also were in support of school atmosphere as one of the reasons for students’ absenteeism in KCSE. Sixty percent (60%) of the education
officers said that most of the students who drop out of the school give the reason as the school’s learning atmosphere not conducive. According to the education officers, teachers and principals need to cultivate a good atmosphere for learning. Schools must be friendly and attractive to learners. All manners of behaviour must be accommodated in a school with those curtailing on discipline being dealt with according to the laid down procedure.

Another factor that contributed to student’s absenteeism in KCSE is class size in numbers. This was supported by 25% of the boys and 21% of the girls involved in this study. Teachers who agreed with class size as the reason for absenteeism in KCSE were 62%, with 80% of the education officers strongly agreeing with this.

Lack of learning materials in schools was also indicated as the reason why the students do not sit for their final examination. The factor was supported by 25% of the boys, 21% of the girls and 80% of the teachers. Majority of the education officers (84%) also indicated this as a reason student drop out of school and as a result not sitting their KCSE examinations.

4.4.1 Teachers Characteristics
Teacher characteristics include the manner in which the teachers treat the students while teaching. They also include the way teachers handle cases of indiscipline among students. This indicates the teacher’s interest in building and developing student’s personality, equipping students with character formation, with the ability to cope with different situations and responsible behaviour. In other words, these are characteristics which enable the children to take responsibility; being responsible for one’s own
behaviour and responsible to the needs of others. It was deemed necessary to investigate the teachers’ characteristics due to the belief that teachers who are sensitive to the students’ needs are more likely to assist them and consequently such students may find a friend in their teachers. Alternatively, if the teachers are too quick to punish or they are hostile to them, the students may develop fear and therefore lack the necessary motivation to attend school and sit examinations. Likewise if the teachers keep punishing students an atmosphere of fear, or anxiety may be created, which could encourage absenteeism from national examinations.

Teachers on the other hand felt that indiscipline among students must be addressed. They felt that their role as teachers was weakened especially with the outlawing of corporal punishment. The following was expressed by a teacher during interviews.

“In the absence of the cane, discipline is hard to administer. Other methods have been suggested but in most cases they do not work. Children fear the cane and it is the only method through which effective discipline can be achieved.”

(Personal communication with a teacher in Imenti South sub-County 2016).

Table 4.8 shows that the majority (71%) of teachers reported that the school environment contributed to pupils’ absenteeism from school. This is because confrontation with teachers and pupils, poor relationship between teachers and pupils and teacher harshness erode pupil’s interest in schooling. The results are consistent with a study by Kamande (2011) who studied hygiene and sanitation education and the factors influencing school absenteeism among pupils in Kibera slums in Kenya and found out that school environmental factors had a significant relationship to
absenteeism of pupils. A study by Elinor, Syni-An, Edward, Christine and Shao (2010) on school building condition survey in a New York school found that there was a relationship between students absenteeism and unfavourable school building conditions.

4.4.2 Class Size

Class size means classroom size versus the number of students occupying the class. Class size in relation to teacher student ratio relate to the teachers ability to monitor the student’s movement in and out of classrooms. The number of students in a class affects the ability of the teacher to move freely while marking or checking pupil’s work in class. The recommended number by the Ministry of Education (MOEST) is forty five (45). Class size determines the workload and the teacher’s preparation. It also determines whether the teacher can cater for individual differences among pupils. If the classroom is small and the students are many, they could get over crowded. An overcrowded classroom may make the work of the teacher very difficult. He or she may not mark assignments in good time. He/she may not notice cases of misbehaviour or those who disrupt learning. In most of the school sampled in this study, classrooms had between fifty and seventy learners as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4:9 Classroom Size as Collected from the Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Average No. Of Learners Per Class</th>
<th>Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys only</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed day school</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls only</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This implies that overcrowding is found in mixed day secondary schools with a deviation of +15. This can be attributed to the introduction of Free Secondary Education (F.S.E) thus attracting large numbers of students in this category of schools. However overcrowding does not give teachers ample time to attend to learners well, thus negatively impacting on the learner’s performance which may eventually lead to wastage. Therefore some classes in Imenti South Sub-county were found to be overcrowded as the day secondary schools represents the highest number of secondary schools.

4.4.3 Lack of Learning Materials

Learning materials refer to a spectrum of educational materials that teachers use in the classroom to support specific learning objectives as set out in lesson plans. These include visual materials such as charts and pictures, overhead projectors, textbooks, chalk, duster and black board. Where there are no learning materials, teaching becomes very monotonous because teaching is dominated by the teacher. The duty of the teacher is to provide appropriate environment where the child will construct his knowledge by interacting with his physical and social environment.

In an interview with teachers, 58% of the teachers reported that inadequate teaching materials contributed to students’ absenteeism while 42% did not regard lack of learning materials as the cause of student absenteeism in KCSE. Gitonga (1997) in his study in Nairobi on absenteeism and its effects on academic achievement among marginalized urban children found out that lack of learning materials contributed to pupils’ absenteeism from school.
A student’s ability to learn is heavily influenced by the school’s environment. Learning occurs more easily if order prevails. If students and teachers attend classes regularly and according to the time-table, if facilities are clean and in good repair, and if teaching materials are routinely provided. Order within classrooms and within school as a whole signals the seriousness with which a school approaches its mandate.

The following sentiments were made from an English teacher during the study.

“I have 54 students in my English class. The students share eleven (11) textbooks among themselves. During class activity they crowd over the few books and the exercise takes longer to end. I end up giving few working activities during a single lesson.” (Personal Communication with a teacher in Imenti South sub-county Feb, 2016).

4.5 Influence of Home Environment on Student Absenteeism in K.C.S.E

In the third objective, the researcher established home related factors which cause students’ absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations in Imenti South sub-county. Home environments differ in many aspects such as the parents’ level of education, economic status, religious background, values, interests, parents’ expectation of their children, and family size among others. Students from varying home environments are affected differently by such variations (Ogoye, 2007).

The study sought to find out some of the specific home environment variables that contribute to absenteeism during K.C.S.E in Imenti South sub-county. The results are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4:10 Factors Contributing to Students’ Absenteeism in K.C.S.E Examinations
The findings of the study established that alcoholism and drug abuse widely contributed to the students’ absenteeism in KCSE examinations. This was supported by 83% of the students, 92% of the teachers and 60% of the education officers. Parent’s economic status was another factor that was cited, with the majority (57%) of the students, 77% of the teachers and 80% of the education officers agreeing that it contributes to student Absenteeism in KCSE examinations. The study also established that involvement of the students in domestic chores led to absenteeism in KCSE. Most of the students (55%), 77% teachers and 40% of the education officers agreed that most students miss examination because of their involvement in family chores. Another significant factor was domestic problems for example violence. Ninety five percent (95%) of the students, 74% of the teachers and 60% of the education officers agreed that domestic problems has led to absenteeism in the Final secondary examination. The other notable factor that leads to absenteeism in KCSE was the social cultural barriers as acknowledged by 54% of the students, 69% of the teachers and 80% of the education officers.
4.5.1 Parents Economic Status

Ogoye (2007) notes that economic status is a critical issue in many African communities where illiteracy and poverty are high, thus limiting parental involvement in student’s schooling. In some cases, learning and reference materials have to be shared among students, and not all parents are able to buy for their children personal learning materials.

Lack of school fees was also reported to cause absenteeism by most of the respondents who were interviewed. Even though a child would be willing to continue with education, he/she may lack examination fees and other levies needed. These students end up abandoning school. They join other businesses like casual labour in farms, or as house girls or even touts in the case of boys. This shows that most schools put a lot of effort to ensure sufficient supply of teachers and learning materials but little effort in ensuring students from poor background acquire money for examination, registration and school fees. A teacher lamented about losing potential students due to lack of school fees in the following statement:

“Lack of school fees has denied children with bright futures the opportunity to achieve their dreams. Students who are top performers in their classes end up staying at home with no hope of ever sitting examinations because their parents cannot afford the money needed.” (Personal communication with a male teacher Imenti South District August 2015).

In order to obtain more information about school fees, teachers were asked to indicate whether parents paid school fees on time. The results were given in Table 4.11 below.
Table 4:11 Presentation of Students’ Payments of School Fees in Imenti South District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payments of school fees</th>
<th>No. of Teachers (n=176)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School fees always paid in time</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School fees not always paid on time</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School fees never paid on time</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>176</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results in Table 4.11 it is evident that a large number of students had difficulties in paying school fees on time. The findings showed 66 (38%) of the students were not able to pay school fees in time. Forty percent of the teachers (40%) indicated that parents and guardians never paid school fees on time and only 40 (22%) were able to pay school fees on time.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that majority of the students were sent home for school fees, thus interrupting their studies. Such students felt discouraged from concentrating on their studies and ended up abandoning K.C.S.E examinations altogether.

Despite the free day secondary education by the Government of Kenya, most students had difficulties in raising school fees. Much of this is associated to the kind of backgrounds, these students came from. These included specific circumstances and home conditions which affected students while at home. They also included facilities such as reading tables, sizes of homes, sleeping and sitting arrangements. The lighting systems, furniture and the number of people living in the house, the nature of the relationship between the students living in the homes and their parents or guardians...
including members of the extended family was all part of the family background. Exposure to such a home environment gave an indication of whether the student was stable, comfortable and secure while at home. Students who were faced with such conditions also lack finances for their school fees and upkeep. Hardships at home were also unsettled while in school as one student observed during interview:

“Those students who lack school fees are also faced with numerous other problems at home. At school they do not want teachers, friends and classmates to know. They try to hide it and when they can no longer hold it, they prefer to stay away from school. This is because their friends and some teachers who know about their backgrounds make fun about it which hurts them.” (Personal communication with a Student Imenti South District, August 2015).

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that majority of students were sent home for school fees which interrupted their studies. Such students felt discouraged from concentrating on their studies and some even drop out. Cardoso and Vener (2006) attributed high dropout in KCSE to extreme poverty. Some parents are not able to raise the requisite fees needed for registering the students for the final examinations. Researchers have observed that low achieving students from low socio-economic backgrounds are at risk of dropping out due to inadequate parenting, financial constraints, poor schooling infrastructure, demotivated teachers, pressures to augment family income, poor nutrition and health, few models in the community and peer group (Chagh, 2011).

4.5.1.1 Lack of Basic Needs for the Students

The results shows that students did not frequently receive money for basic needs and that their parents did not provide adequate basic needs like food, clothing, learning
resources and transport due to lack of money. The children were involved in drug trafficking, poverty etc. The findings of this study are in agreement with those of Reid (2005) who had found out that money was an issue for families in poverty and when there was no money for daily necessities such as food, clothing, supplies and transportation lower income families are unlikely to make ends meet. Education may not be a top priority for them and parents therefore are neglectful to their children’s best interest in education.

4.5.2 Alcoholism and Drug Abuse by the Students

The findings from Table 4.10 show that drug abuse was a major cause of absenteeism during K.C.S.E examinations as students either engage in drug taking or even peddling the drugs. The student concentration is no longer on the education and performance.

This shows the need for the government to enhance health and safety in schools and to put proper mechanisms that deal with drug suppliers in and around the schools. When asked how drug abuse contributed to absenteeism, parents said that their sons and daughters had various ways of acquiring and hiding drugs so that they were not easily noticed by the school administration. They also had different and secretive ways of abusing drugs so that the school administration would not know. The researcher established through interviews that some students obtained cheap drugs which they in turn sold to others in school. Due to easy access, majority got recruited into drug usage without the knowledge of teachers. Such students developed bad behaviour in school. They played truancy and were often subjected to punishment. By the time the teachers realized the cause of such behaviour, the child was already addicted in drug use and
ended up dropping from school. A parent, who had a child who dropped from school, said the following during interviews:

“The drugs are put in fingernails; other drugs are put and taken in food. Sometimes drugs are added into tea and food, and then taken. Drugs are sometimes hidden in mobile phones.” (Personal communication with a female parent South Imenti sub county, July 2015.)

The presence of alcohol and illicit brew and beer dens in the student’s neighborhood and home environment implies that they are likely to be disturbed and distracted by the noisy drunkards on their way to and from school or when studying or doing their homework. The girls especially could be victims of indecent attacks from the club revelers. Therefore it can be concluded that some home environments are not conducive to learning due to alcoholism and drug abuse. The home environment was congested and often unsupportive.

Whenever the parents or relatives are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, parenting and guiding students may become very difficult due to disruptive behaviour associated with alcoholism/drug abuse and thus may not be good role models to their children. Such children may be affected the following day, which could affect their concentration in class. Poor concentration leads to poor performance and therefore leads to failure to sit K.C.S.E examinations.

4.5.3 Involvement in Domestic Chores by Students

In order to supplement the information regarding the students’ failure to turn up for K.C.S.E. examinations, students were asked to indicate whether they were engaged in
other activities at home while they were still students. The responses were presented in Figure 4.1.

**Figure 4:1 Types of work students engage in while on Holidays and weekends**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boda boda</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Care of Siblings</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Labour</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses in this study were collected from students (n=176). The findings revealed that majority (33%) of the students were involved in taking care of the siblings. Twenty eight percent (27%) recorded that they were casuasls during the holidays and weekends. Other students represented by 23% indicated that they used to be Boda boda operators during the holidays and weekends. Other types of work were noted by 11% of the students. Some of these are students working as barbers, quarry work, house girls, workshops and shop attendants among others. Only 6% of the students indicated that they are engaged in prostitution. However, it is discouraging that a number of students engage in the vice as it is not expected that a student would opt for prostitution.

Some of the reasons students engage in other works were; to help their parents raise enough funds; to assist parents to sell goods during market days, to take care of younger
siblings when parents are busy in family business activities and to assist parents in
doing household chores. All these may affect student’s schooling life and hence lead to
absenteeism in the KCSE examinations.

Domestic problems made students run away from school in case of fights. Problems at
home lead to lack of provision of basic needs, separation of parent’s, drug abuse and
single parenthood. A child who lived with a step mother said this during an interview.

“I have lived with foster parents who made me do all the
household chores while the rest of the children were free.
During holidays the other children received extra tuition
while I stayed at home and cooked. I could not continue
with school because I was called names and they stopped
paying my school fees. I later opted to be a house girl and
finally got married at the age of seventeen.”(Personal
communication with a female student Imenti South
District, September 2015).

Teachers were also asked to state the other social factors contributing to students’
absenteeism from K.C.S.E. The following factors were established: Lack of basic
needs, irresponsible parents, sickness of parents, poverty, parent’s illiteracy, lack of
family planning, HIV/Aids, parents staying away from their children. This state of
affairs is consistent with the study carried out by Suhid, Raham and Kamau (2012) on
factors causing student absenteeism according to peers. They found out that the major
factor contributing to absenteeism among students is the family quarrels at home. This
study sought to establish whether similar factors applied to Imenti South Sub-county.
4.5.4 Lack of Involvement and Supervision by Parents in Student’s Work

Parental involvement include monitoring and helping with homework, attending school conferences and functions and providing a supportive learning environment. Crawage (1992) posits that when parents experience problems in their own lives that are related to intimate relationships and other external factors, they tend to focus less on their children. This can eventually lead to less involvement or a total lack of interest in the children and subsequent problem behaviour. The above discussions about unconducive home environment were supported by the following sentiments from a teacher during the interviews.

“If one or both parents living with the students abuse alcohol, the home environment may not be conducive to studying. Similarly if the home is overcrowded, some of the students may be forced to do their homework sitting on the floor. This can demotivate the students forcing them to drop out of school.” (Personal communication with a teacher Imenti South District, May 2013).

The family more than any other factors, has a lot of influence on student behaviour. It is believed to be the source of standards, values and way of behaving which persist throughout the child’s life. Many children with conduct disorders have been found to come from dysfunctional families. Tyreman (2013) found out that criminal behaviour and alcoholism, particularly of the father are two parental characteristics often associated with conduct disorder.

4.6 Influence of Personal Issues on Absenteeism in KCSE

The fourth objective of the study sought to establish the influence of student’s personal issues on K.C.S.E absenteeism in Imenti South sub-county. The students were asked to
identify personal issues that affected them negatively at school and at home. The findings were presented in the Table 4.12.

Table 4:12 Student’s Responses on Personal Issues that Affect them (n=176)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Personal Issues</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Attitude towards school work</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer influence</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiscipline</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Behaviour</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug abuse</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Employment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was revealed from the study findings that majority of the students (51%) were affected by peer influence. Poor attitude towards school was recorded by 43% of the students. Thirty seven percent (37%) indicated emotional behaviour as a personal issue that affected them. Others were drug abuse as recorded by 24%, pregnancy 20%, indiscipline 20% and early employment at 9%. Indiscipline often led to disruptive behaviour and students who find themselves in bad books of the teachers do not perform well in class. They are often on punishments and may end up avoiding examinations altogether. The study established that students who drop out and fail to turn up for K.C.S.E examinations are more likely to have exhibited behavioural and disciplinary problems in school.

In a school situation, one of the known learning needs is attitude. If the attitude is negative then the student will lack interest in school and education despite his genetic
potential (Awour, 2012). Attitudes are thus internal private events whose existence we infer from our own introspection or from some form of behavioural evidence when they are expressed overtly or covertly (Barge, 2011). It is believed that attitudes influence beliefs and our perceptions. Consequently, our perceptions are influenced by environment and our significant others. This is due to the fact that young people however have their own ideas about what schools should offer them. They have general perceptions of overall quality and content and this may determine how committed a young student may be to schooling and sitting examinations altogether.

A student who is indiscipline is one who portrays behaviour or attitude that can be defined as undesirably different from those prescribed by the school rules. Such undesirable behaviour may include: fighting or bullying students, or even stealing from others. The behaviour may therefore be positively rewarded or negatively rewarded depending on the individual teachers involved. In the sample studied, all teachers were hesitant in using the cane, therefore resulted to other alternative methods of discipline such as guidance and counseling. Majority of the teachers complained that the students had become unruly following the ‘spare the rod’ declaration and that indiscipline was on the upward trend.

Menya (1992) examined the factors limiting the achievement of education for all. The study found out that certain groups still remain out of reach of current educational programmes such as school children, girls and women in marginalized areas. Girls may drop out of school because they indulge in sexual activities while in school and may end up becoming pregnant and failing to sit the K.C.S.E examinations. Students may also
engage in casual day labour in order to obtain money for personal items like cell phones although some others may receive them from parents. Boys and girls have various ways of possessing and involving themselves in drugs. Majority get recruited into drugs without the knowledge of teachers. These students may develop bad behaviour in schools, play truancy and may not turn up during K.C.S.E examinations. The above discussion discloses that there is great need to address absenteeism during examinations as the malpractice poses serious consequences to the individual, the school and the society.

4.6.1 Stressful Life Events
Most students experience increased levels of stress and stressors during their school life. These include financial difficulty, health problems and early parenthood. Such students find it difficult to concentrate in school or sit examinations altogether. The study found out that such students are associated with increased rates of drop out.

Other variables that were associated with school dropout have also been identified for students with disabilities. This is because those students with physical or other forms of disability may not cope with the same speed as those with ability. They, in the process of normal learning get discouraged and may abandon examinations.

4.6.2 Methods Used by Teachers to Discipline the Students
The methods used by teachers in disciplining the students sometimes discouraged students. Humiliating punishments by the teachers was the reason students drop out of school and fail to sit the KCSE examinations. Teachers were asked about the disciplinary methods that are used to discipline students and the results were recorded in the Table 4.13.
### Table 4:13 Methods of Behaviour Correction Used to Punish Students by Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods of punishment</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caning the students</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending students home</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprimanding</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual labour</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in the table 4.13 shows 30% of teachers who responded caned students, 27% sent them home to bring parents, 23.5% reprimanded them while 16.5% applied guidance and counseling. Teachers said that these punishments took place whenever the students failed to complete their homework, made noise or became rude. On interviewing the students who missed examinations, they felt that teachers were too harsh on them and sometimes administered punishment that students did not deserve. Although canning is outlawed by the Kenyan law, teachers have continued with the practice. A student had the following to say.

“I was made to sit outside the classroom and re-do my homework every morning. Back at home, I was involved in domestic chores and lacked time to complete my homework. This became the order of the day and after every sitting I received canes from the mathematics teacher. This made me fear school and stopped attending school while in form four second term.

(Personal communication with a male student in Imenti South sub-county, February 2016)

The above findings, shows that teachers should not punish before they find out the cause of misbehaviour. Such a punitive school environment may cause students to miss
school as they fear pain caused by corporal punishment. This would lead to failure to sit the national examinations.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of key findings, which are set in line with the study objectives. Conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research are also presented in this chapter.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The study investigated determinants of K.C.S.E absenteeism among schools in Imenti South sub-county. The objectives of the study were:


2. Investigate the influence of school environment on failure to sit for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations by candidates in Imenti South sub-county.

3. Find out the effect of home environment on candidates’ absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county.

4. Investigate the influence of students’ personal issues on absenteeism from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations in Imenti South sub-county.

Information, perceptions or views regarding these factors were generated through a number of questionnaires and interviews which were administered to the principals,
teachers, education officers and students. The analysis and interpretation were done within the framework of the core objectives that the study sought to address. K.C.S.E examination results were provided at the D.E.O’s office and formed part of the document analysis, the rest of the information was gathered using questionnaires and interview schedules. Data gathered from these schools through these instruments was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. Therefore, the presentation of data analysis in this study was organized in such a way that the quantitative findings were presented and later discussed alongside the qualitative responses that formed part of the findings.

5.3 Summary of the Findings

5.3.1 Trends in K.C.S.E Examinations Absenteeism among Schools in Imenti South Sub-county

A significant number of students in secondary schools have been missing K.C.S.E since the creation of Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). The findings show that between the years 2011 – 2015 there was a significant trend of students missing K.C.S.E examinations every year. In 2011 the number was the highest both for boys 21 (0.5%) and girls 15 (0.4%) compared to other years. The study has revealed that more males than female students failed to turn up for K.C.S.E examinations. In the year 2011, 21 (0.5%) male students failed to turn up for K.C.S.E examinations as compared to 15 girls (0.4%) of the registered candidates. The situation was attributable to plenty of food, cash crops like coffee, bananas, tea and other economic activities like quarry mining. Young boys engaged in these economic activities while in school. Failure of girls to turn up for K.C.S.E can be attributed to the negative attitude by parents who saw
no need of persuading their daughters to go to school. In a personal interview with the girls, 80% cited pregnancy as the main reason for dropping out of school hence missing the exams.

The study revealed that some of the girls were also sexually harassed by close relatives with 43% attesting to this. Others were male school mates, hawkers and touts, and some of the male teachers. This implies that a good number of teachers were not faithful to their professional obligation as they were involved in crimes harassing female students sexually.

The study reveals that there are more cases of absenteeism in day schools than those from boarding schools. The situation can be attributed to the high number of day schools in Imenti South, and the fact that students come from home every day.

5.3.2 Influence of School Environment on Student’s Absenteeism in K.C.S.E Examinations

The school environment can be expressed in terms of whether it is friendly and conducive for learning or otherwise. Earlier studies have tended to show that schools themselves contribute to students failing to sit exams. Most students cited teacher’s characteristics as one of the most pressing factor that influence absenteeism in KCSE as was supported by 50% of the boys and 50% of the girls. This includes the way teachers handle cases of indiscipline among students. Teachers must develop interest in building and developing a whole personality, equipping students with character formation, with the ability to cope with different situations and responsible behaviour.
Other contributory factors to absenteeism were school atmosphere which was supported by 35% of the boys and 33% of the girls. Class size in numbers was an issue in most of the schools in Iment South with 25% of the boys and 21% of the girls citing it as the reason why they dropped out of the school. An overcrowded classroom may make the work of the teacher very difficult. For instance he or she may not mark assignments in good time. He/she may not notice cases of misbehaviour or those who disrupt learning. Lack of learning materials and role/ quality of the teachers were also considered as the factors that lead to absenteeism in KCSE. According to the education officers, teachers and principals need to cultivate a good atmosphere for learning to make it friendly and attractive to learners. All manners of behaviour must be accommodated in a school with those curtailing on discipline being dealt with according to the laid down procedure.

5.3.3 Influence of Home Environment on Student Absenteeism in K.C.S.E

In the third objective, the researcher established home related factors which cause students to be absent from sitting K.C.S.E examinations in Imenti South sub-county. Home environments differ in many aspects such as the parents’ level of education, economic status, religious background, values, interests, parents’ expectation of their children, and family size among others. Alcoholism and drug abuse widely contributed to the students’ absenteeism in KCSE examinations as was supported by 83% of the students, 92% of the teachers and 60% of the education officers. Parent’s economic status was also cited, by the majority (57%) of the students, 77% of the teachers and 80% of the education officers. In some cases learning and reference materials had to be shared among students, considering that not all the parents are able to buy personal learning materials for their children. It was revealed that majority of the students were
sent home for school fees, thus missing classes and the examinations. Such students felt discouraged from concentrating on their studies and ended up abandoning K.C.S.E examinations altogether.

Others factors that led to absenteeism were social cultural barriers such as FGM, circumcision among boys and early marriages. Involvement in domestic chores was cited by (55%) of the students, 77% of the teachers and 40% of the education officers. Majority (34%) of the students were involved in taking care of the siblings, 28% were casuals during the holidays and weekends. Other students represented by 23% indicated that they use to be Boda boda operators during the holidays and weekends. Domestic problems such as violence and quarrels at home affected students’ psychological well-being resulting to absenteeism in the final examination.

5.3.4 Influence of Students Personal Issues on Absenteeism in KCSE

The fourth objective of the study sought to establish the influence of student’s personal issues on K.C.S.E absenteeism in Imenti South sub-county. It was revealed that majority of the students were affected by peer influence. Negative attitude towards school was recorded by 43% of the students. If the student’s attitude towards learning is negative, then the student will lack interest in school and education despite his/her potential. Consequently, our perceptions are influenced by environment and our significant others.

In the sample studied, all teachers were hesitant in using the cane, therefore resulted to other alternative methods of discipline such as guidance and counseling. This was a measure to ensure that students do not have negative attitude about them and the school in overall. It was revealed that girls drop out of school because they indulge in sexual
activities while in school and may end up becoming pregnant and failing to sit the K.C.S.E examinations. Students also engaged in casual day labour in order to obtain money for personal items like cell phones although some others may receive them from parents. Majority get recruited into drugs without the knowledge of teachers. These students may develop bad behaviour in schools, play truancy and may not turn up during K.C.S.E examinations. The students who missed examinations felt that teachers were too harsh on them and sometimes administered punishment that students did not deserve. Thus absenteeism is affected by issues that affect student both in school and at home.

5.4 Conclusions of the Study

This study concludes that absenteeism during K.C.S.E examination is significant in Imenti South sub-county. According to the respondents, this was attributed to plenty of food, cash crops like coffee, bananas, tea and other economic activities like quarry mining that young boys engaged in. Pregnancy among girls was a major reason why most girls left school after engaging in sexual activities with men who took them to posh hotels and provide them with food, drinks and cash. There are more cases of absenteeism in KCSE in mixed schools which were mostly day schools. Teacher’s characteristics is a factor that influences absenteeism in KCSE; in the way the teachers handle indiscipline cases. Lack of learning materials and role/ quality of the teachers are also considered as the factors that lead to absenteeism in KCSE. Home environment affect the students in different perspectives. Some of them are; parents’ level of education, economic status, religious background, values, interests, parents’ expectation
of their children, and family size among others. Others are domestic problems such as violence and quarrels at home which affected students’ psychological well-being.

Peer influence and negative attitude towards school also affect the students. Girls fail to sit the examination because they indulge in sexual activities while in school and end up becoming pregnant and failing to sit the K.C.S.E examinations. Students also engage in casual day labour in order to obtain money for personal items like cell phones, although some others may receive them from parents. These students develop bad behaviour in schools, become truancy and may not turn up during K.C.S.E examinations. The study revealed that to curb drop out in the KCSE examinations, issues of school environment, home environment and the students’ personal issues need intervention, hence the recommendations.

5.5 Recommendations of the Study

1. An active policy by the Ministry of Education for providing bursaries to needy students should be undertaken. Such a policy is crucial if wastage rate in education due to absenteeism in K.C.S.E examinations is to be minimized.

2. The government, through the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), needs to have clear guidelines on what should be done to students who register but do not turn up for K.C.S.E. examinations. This would ensure that the schools would follow up the registered candidates and, therefore, reduce wastage of education resources.

3. Guidance and counseling to be strengthened in schools. This can be done through introducing a basic counseling course for all teachers so that the
work of guidance is owned up by all teachers. This would ensure that all teachers are equipped with skills on alternative disciplinary methods. Equipped guidance and counseling teachers will be able to counsel the students and discipline them appropriately.

4. Community participation should be encouraged when dealing with school attendance. Members of the community would be encouraged to monitor the students within their vicinity.

5. Parents Teachers Associations (PTA), Board of Management (BOM), Sponsors and old students associations should work together to supplement Government’s effort in providing necessary physical and learning infrastructures to improve the learning atmosphere in schools.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study is only a general survey carried out in a few sampled schools in Imenti South Sub-county. The research mainly points out the factors which cause absenteeism during K.C.S.E national examinations. The following suggestions can be tried in pointing out other areas of study:

a) The present study can be replicated in other Counties using similar statistical methods but with a larger sample. This would reveal the possible factors that can reduce absenteeism during K.C.S.E. examinations.

b) Further, research is required to study other factors that affect absenteeism in the national examinations (KCSE) in the entire Meru County.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Letter of Introduction

Virginia K. Muguna
Kenyatta University
Department of Educational Foundations
P.o Box 43844-00100
Nairobi

Dear respondent,

RE: INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

I am a post graduate student at Kenyatta University doing a Master degree in Education in Sociology and policy studies. I am carrying out research on persistence of K.C.S.E examinations’ absenteeism in selected secondary schools in Imenti South sub-county Kenya. This research is aimed at eliciting information from the school principals, teachers and Education officers. I am glad to inform you that your institution /office has been selected as one of the respondents in this study. Kindly provide your honest response to enable me carry out this study and it will be held with strict confidence for purely academic purposes only. Do not mention your name or the name of your school/office. Please add any other relevant information that you may find valuable for this study.

Your co-operation will highly be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Virginia K Muguna.
APPENDIX II: Questionnaire for the Principals and Teachers

This questionnaire is for collecting data for purely academic purposes. The study seeks to investigate the determinants of KCSE examination absenteeism among secondary schools students in Imenti South Sub-county. All information will be treated with strict confidence. Do not put any name or identification on this questionnaire.

*Answer all questions as indicated by either filling in the blank or ticking the option that applies.*

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. What is your gender?
   - Male [  ]
   - Female [  ]

2. How many years have you taught in this school?
   - 1 to 3 years [  ]
   - 4 to 5 years [  ]
   - 5 to 10 years [  ]
   - Above 10 years [  ]

3. How old are you?
   - Below 30 years [  ]
   - 31 - 40 years [  ]
   - Above 40 years [  ]

4. What is your educational level?
   - Diploma [  ]
   - Degree [  ]
   - Masters PhD [  ]

5. Which category is your school?
   - Boys School [  ]
   - Girls’ school [  ]
   - Day school/Mixed [  ]

**SECTION B: TRENDS IN KCSE EXAMINATION ABSENTEEISM**

1. Are there any students who missed KCSE examination from 2011-2015 in your school?
   - Yes [  ]
   - No [  ]

89
If yes, How many per year per gender?__________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

2. How many girls missed examination from 2011-2015 as a result of pregnancies?
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3. Among the cases of pregnancies reported in your school, who were responsible for the pregnancies?
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9. Are there cases of sexual harassment reported in your school?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, who are the perpetrators?

a) School mates [ ]
b) Relatives [ ]
c) Touts [ ]
d) Teachers [ ]

10. How does your school deal with absenteeism in KCSE?
SECTION C: INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON KCSE ABSENTEEISM

11. Does the school environment affect absenteeism in KCSE among secondary school students?

Yes [    ] No [    ]

12. In the table below, indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements about the school environment in your school. Tick appropriately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>The teacher-student ratio is manageable for all subjects e.g. by hiring additional BoG teachers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Adequate instructional materials per student, both for learning at school and at home

13. What are the school factors that affect student’s absenteeism in KCSE in your school?

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14. What measures would you recommend in your school to improve on students’ absenteeism during the KCSE examinations?

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SECTION D: INFLUENCE OF HOME ENVIRONMENT ON KCSE ABSENTEEISM

15. Does socio-economic status of parents influence absenteeism in KCSE examinations?

Yes [ ] No [ ] I don’t know [ ]
16. The table below shows to what extent parents’ socio-economic status influences students’ absenteeism in KCSE. Tick according to your level of agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provision of learning resources influences Students’ absenteeism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students from high economic status are not likely to miss KCSE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status influence school attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students performance is affected by their social economic status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents provide the learning resources for their students</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

17. Do you think home chores influences students’ absenteeism?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The house chores makes the students not to concentrate on their school work</td>
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<tr>
<td>A lot of time is spent on home chores than in academics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents contribute to</td>
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</table>
18. In your opinion, what are some of the ways in which involvement of students in home chores can be tackled to reduce KCSE absenteeism?

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19. In your opinion what are the major home environments factors influencing absenteeism during K.C.S.E in your schools

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20. What are some of the home chores that students are engaged in during the holidays and weekends?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
SECTION E: INFLUENCE OF STUDENT PERSONAL ISSUES ON KCSE ABSENTEEISM

21. Are there any personal issues that affect students, thus failing to sit for KCSE examinations?

Yes [   ] No [   ]

Please rate the issues on the table accordingly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest in education by both the student and the Parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Long distance to school</td>
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<td>Loss of parent/Close relative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harsh punishment in school</td>
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<td>Drug abuse</td>
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<td>Pregnancy</td>
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<td>Early employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

22. The following table presents students poor attitude towards school work that cause absenteeism. Please tick appropriately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worry about getting into trouble</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work is too hard/too much</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. Name any other personal issues that may affect students thus failing to sit for the KCSE examination.

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24. Suggest ways in which we can help students overcome the issues that affect absenteeism.

________________________________________________________________
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION
APPENDIX III: Questionnaire for the Students

This questionnaire is for collecting data for purely academic purposes. The study seeks to investigate the determinants of KCSE examination absenteeism among secondary schools students in Imenti South Sub-county. All information will be treated with strict confidence. Do not put any name or identification on this questionnaire.

*Answer all questions as indicated by either filling in the blank or ticking the option that applies.*

**SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. What is your gender?

   Male [ ]    Female [ ]

2. Which form are you in?

   Form 1 [ ]    Form 2 [ ]
   Form 3 [ ]    Form 4 [ ]

3. How old are you?

   15 years [ ]
   16 years [ ]
   17 and above years [ ]

4. Which category is your school?

   Boys School [ ]    Girls’ school [ ]    Day school/Mixed [ ]

**SECTION B: TRENDS IN KCSE EXAMINATION ABSENTEEISM**
5. Are there any students who missed KCSE examination from 2011-2015 in your school?

Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If yes, How many per year per gender?
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6. How many girls missed examination from 2011-2015 as a result of pregnancies?
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7. Among the cases of pregnancies reported in your school, who were responsible for the pregnancies?
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8. Are there cases of sexual harassment reported in your school?

Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If yes, who are the perpetrators?

a. School mates [ ]

b. Relatives [ ]

c. Touts [ ]

d. Teachers [ ]
e. Never been harassed [ ]

10. How does your school deal with absenteeism in KCSE?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

SECTION C: INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON KCSE ABSENTEEISM

11. Does the school environment affect absenteeism in KCSE among secondary school students?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

In the table below, indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements about the school environment in your school. Tick appropriately.

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13. What measures would you recommend in your school to reduce students’ absenteeism during the KCSE examinations?
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SECTION D: INFLUENCE OF HOME ENVIRONMENT ON KCSE ABSENTEEISM

14. Does socio-economic status of parents influence absenteeism in KCSE examinations?
   Yes [    ]     No [    ]     I don’t know [    ]
   If yes to the question, please explain
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

15. The table below shows to what extent parents’ socio-economic status influences students’ absenteeism in KCSE. Tick according to your level of agreement.
16. Do you think home chores influences students’ absenteeism in KCSE?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

17. Indicate on the table below how you rate house chores that students are engaged in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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SECTION E: INFLUENCE OF STUDENT PERSONAL ISSUES ON KCSE ABSENTEEISM
21. Are there any personal issues that affect students, thus failing to sit for KCSE examinations?

   Yes [ ]   No [ ]

22. Please rate the issues on the table accordingly.

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<tr>
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<td>Pressure from friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social isolation</td>
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</table>

24. Name any other personal issues that may affect students thus failing to sit for the KCSE examination.

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103
25. Suggest ways in which we can help students overcome the issues that affect their school life.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION
APPENDIX IV: Interview Schedule for the Principals

1. How has been the student enrolment for the KCSE for the last five years?
2. How many students have missed the KCSE exams in each year?
3. What are some of the causes of the students missing national examination in your school?
4. What is the general condition of classroom used by students with regard to the materials used for roofing, walls, floor, ventilation and lighting? (Very Good, Good, fair, poor).
5. Generally, how is the size of the classes used by students in your school? (Adequate, Inadequate).
6. What is the general condition of desks and/or chairs for the students? (Very good, good, fair, Poor).
7. Do the teachers have guide books for the subjects they teach?
8. Do the teachers prepare lesson plans for their lessons?
9. How is the availability of textbooks and other learning materials in your school? (Adequate, not adequate).
10. Have you ever attended an in-service course on the management of students?
11. If no what is the reason for this? (No funds, no time, no need, the school does not allow).
12. How is the material support by the parents for students in your school in terms of provision of uniform, books, pens and other school requirements? (Adequate, inadequate, not at all).
13. How is the cooperation between the parents and the school to ensure that students perform well in the national examinations?
APPENDIX V: Interview Schedules for the Education Officers

1. What is the student enrolment in the Imenti South Sub-county from 2011-2015?
2. How many students have been absent from sitting the KCSE examination from 2011-2015?
3. Among those who missed examinations, which gender has the highest number?
4. Which category of schools has the highest number of dropping out of school?
5. What are major causes of absenteeism in most of the schools?
6. How many girls missed examinations as a result of early pregnancies?
7. Among the pregnancy cases reported in the Sub-county, who are the perpetrators of these acts?
8. What are the school environmental factors that have affected student’s absenteeism in KCSE?
9. What are the home environmental factors that affect student and as a result fail to sit their KCSE examinations?
10. Is there any students’ personal issues that affect students and fail to sit for their national examinations?
APPENDIX VI: Research Authorization

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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when replying please quote

Ref: No.

NACOSTI/P/16/87104/13057

26th October, 2016

Virginia Kagendo Muguna
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Determinants of K.C.S.E examination absenteeism among secondary school students in Imenti South District, Kenya,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Meru County for the period ending 24th October, 2017.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Meru County before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Meru County.

The County Director of Education
Meru County.