

**FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENT
ABSENTEEISM IN NAKURU EAST DIVISION: A CASE
STUDY OF LANET, UPPER HILL AND MERERONI DAY
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION OF KENYATTA
UNIVERSITY**

APRIL 2002

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*Factors that
contribute to*



2007/299779

DEDICATION

To my husband Julius Okinda and our children Sella and John for being there for me always, my parents, brothers and sisters.

DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.



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This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University supervisor



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people that have been useful in one way or another for the completion of this project. I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Henry Ayot for supervising this work.

My great appreciation goes to Prof. Olembo for introducing me to the concepts of theories of administration during my postgraduate studies. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Nelson Karagu and Dr. Samuel Waweru for their challenging and useful lectures in Educational Administration.

I would also like to thank Prof. M. M. Patel for his very useful hints in Research Methods.

I would like to thank all the headteachers, teachers, students and parents of Lanet, Upper Hill and Mereroni for making collection of data a success.

The completion of this project would not have been possible without the support I received from my sister Penina Ouma.

Finally, I would like to thank Mary Omariba for typing this work.

ABSTRACT

The main concern of this study was to find out whether there were cases of student absenteeism in day secondary schools of Nakuru East Division. It also attempted to determine the factors that contributed to student absenteeism.

More specifically the study attempted to:

- a) investigate the causes of student absent in Nakuru East Division;
- b) find out what necessary steps headteachers were talking to reduce the problem; and
- c) suggest some possible solutions to the problem.

The project was limited to three (3) day secondary schools which were randomly selected in the division. Three headteachers, thirty classteachers, sixty students and thirty parents were selected to serve as the subjects for the study.

Questionnaires used for data collection were administered to classteachers, students and parent from the selected schools. An interview guide was also administered to the headteachers of the selected schools. The data collected were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics.

After analyzing the data, it was found that student absenteeism was a problem affecting all the selected day secondary schools. The major causes of student absenteeism in the selected schools were:

- a) Lack of school fees
- b) Sickness
- c) Family problems
- d) Withholding by parents
- e) School based reasons
- f) Distance to school
- g) Temporary employment
- h) Truancy
- i) Community influence
- j) Bad company

The research realized that student absenteeism created serious administrative problems. The major problems faced by headteachers of the selected day secondary schools were: student poor performance in examinations: problem of dealing with statistical returns; failure to cover the syllabus; time wasted in dealing with absentees and behaviour problems.

It was also realized that in order to solve the problem of student absenteeism, parents had a great part to play. Other groups of people

who could be of great help include local leaders, education officers and church leaders.

The following are some of the conclusions reached from the findings of the study:

- a) Student absenteeism is a problem worrying the family, the school and the society at large.
- b) Persistent student absenteeism affects individual performance in examination
- c) Some factors contributing to student absenteeism can easily be controlled if different groups of people co-operate to solve this problem.
- d) School administration cannot solve the problem without the help of other groups of people like parents, local leaders and education officers

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the problem

Education is an issue of major concern in most developed and developing countries. This is not only at national level but also at the household levels. Nyerere(1967), says that education has been regarded as a major weapon to liberate man in two senses. First, to socialize man to a level of making him work with others and second, to free himself from foreign bondage. The latter is particularly important in the newly independent country like Kenya. Pat Carlen et al (1992), observed that education is the society's means of reflecting on and changing its social order or culture. It is the function of education to conserve, transmit, advance and renew culture.

The Ominde Commission Report (1964), says that it is the aim of education in Kenya to provide schooling for every child of school-going age. This aim has received a lot of emphasis in the country's development plans. For instance, the development plan of (1964-1970), where the Kenya government set upon itself the long-term objective of

providing Universal Primary Education (UPE). Ministry of Education Annual Report (1970), says that a lot of money in Kenya is being spent on education and there are great educational opportunities for the youth.

Barry Turner (1974), observed that despite the importance which is attached to education all over the world, there are a number of young people who regard going to school as a burden to be tolerated rather than an opportunity to be grasped. Monroe (1976), in support of this says that when a family or a school is faced with a child who refuses to go to school regularly, the obvious reaction would be that of total disappointment, disbelief and anger towards the child. The family of the child may feel that it is a reflection of failure on their part resulting in unwarranted remorse.

Tyerman (1968), holds the view that teachers would often feel that the child's refusal to attend school impacts negatively upon their teaching ability or their understanding of the child. This is particularly the case when the child is physically fit, intelligent, promising and the parents have sacrificed a lot for the child's education. Willgoose (1974), says that absenteeism creates serious problems to the

✗ learner, both academically and socially. A student who is always absent from school lags behind in his or her schoolwork. Pat Carlen et al (1992), in talking about absenteeism in schools says that there are certain basic skills, which every learner is supposed to acquire through formal education in order to lead a meaningful life in the society.

Absence from school according to Clyne (1966), can lead to irretrievable loss of such educational benefits that the child's intelligence might have entitled him to. Under the present competitive conditions for university entrance, missing classes in secondary schools may make a difference between passing and failing the criterial examinations. This can lead to permanent educational backwardness in some field of knowledge.

Turner (1974), says:

A student who is persistently absent from school has difficulty in making friends with his peers in school. This happens mainly when student's performance is perpetually poor and there is no hope of improvement. Such a student may shy away from people in the school and eventually drop out form school.

Tyerman (1968), observed that if a student is forced to repeat a class as a result of absenteeism, he may feel threatened, inadequate and consequently inferior to the other students. In this case, he will have difficulty in establishing relationship with his peers and as a result he will become a misfit in the school. By extension this disease might spread to the society.

Raju (1973), says that most of the students who do not attend school regularly are always at loggerhead with the school authorities. Raju goes on to say that quite often some students would leave home to go to school but instead go to other places to roam about with other children. They get involved in a wide variety of delinquent behaviours such as drug abuse, petty stealing, prostitution and generally bad public conduct. The parents may know for the first time when the headteacher calls them to find out why the children do not go to school, either regularly or they have stopped altogether.

Berg et al (1988), in support of this says if such children are forced to go to school, they may create discipline problems in the school. Such students may become aggressive to

teachers, fellow students, disobeying school rules and regulations and failing to do school assignments. Other students in the school might copy their bad behaviour. Clyne (1966), says that absenteeism becomes a serious administrative problem when absentees become unruly. A headteacher faced with such a problem should try and handle it promptly and systematically. Cooper (1966), in support of this says that, the first step to take is to discuss the issue with the student, encouraging him to talk about any problems he may have at home or at school, guidance and counselling of the student may work. Force should not be used to make the student come back to school as this might make the situation worse.

The problem of student absenteeism as pointed out earlier also affects the family. Schwartz (1972), says that families sacrifice a lot of their resources in terms of money and efforts to enable their children go through the education system. Parents expect their children to do well in school so that they can be self-supporting when they complete their studies. They also see education as a long-term investment for they expect returns in form of support from their children when they grow up.

Mitchell (1972), observed that a child who does not receive adequate education is ill-equipped for living and for further studies and this brings about a big disappointment to the family.

Ministry of Education Annual Report (1996), says that in Kenya today, over 38% of national budget goes to education. The money is spent to improve education and also extend it to the majority of the citizens. The report of commission of inquiry: Public Service, structure and remuneration, otherwise known as the Ndegwa Report (1971), says:

Education is a way of equipping and preparing the youth with the necessary skills for both individual as well as national development.

The above discussion shows that student absenteeism is a problem, which not only affect the schools but also individuals, families and the society at large.

From a historical point of view, following the arrival of the white settlers in 1906, Nakuru District can be regarded as among the first regions in Kenya to have received the white settlers, who in turn built schools together with the

missionaries. Sifuna (1986) in support of this says that these schools depended on the resources and initiative of each mission as each formulated its own policy, trained employed its own teachers and set up its own curriculum.

The three sampled schools, that is Lanet, Upper Hill and Mereronic were founded in the early 1970s by the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru to cater for students who cannot afford boarding schools. (Sources: District Education Office, Nakuru). From the meeting of academic caucus from Nakuru district held in 1998, it was discovered that day secondary schools in the district have been experiencing the problem of student absenteeism and this has led to poor performance in national examinations.

What is making the researcher to be more interested in this area, is the fact that the district was among the first in the country to have mission stations white settlers and its economically empowered due to farming activities and yet the residents have not taken school attendance seriously.

1.2 Statement of the problem

From the above description of the problem of absenteeism in schools, it is clear that there was need to carry out an investigative research on factors that contribute to student absenteeism in Lanet, Mereroni and Upper Hill day secondary schools in Nakuru East Division. According to Lanet Secondary School headteacher, during parents day of the year 2000, said that when more resources are being spent on education than ever before, student absenteeism becomes an issue of great concern to the nation. When the presidential decree of 1974 provided for free primary education in Kenya, it was widely accepted that all children should have a chance of being educated and the parents had a duty to send their children to school regularly.

Schwartz (1972), says that although educational opportunities are greater than they have been, increasing numbers of students are truanting or their parents are keeping them at home. This is confirmed by the ever – increasing public outcry concerning student absenteeism in both primary and secondary schools in Kenya, Daily Nation July 24th (2001).

Marklund (1973), observed that one of the main reasons given for students' poor performance in both internal and national examinations is absenteeism. Children who do not attend schools regularly for various reasons are unlikely to perform well in examinations. Recently, a leaders meeting in Kajiado District, East African Standard Nov. 21st 2000, expressed great concern over poor performance in K.C.P.E which was said to be attributed to absenteeism. In the said meeting, it was reported that some primary schools were currently run with less than fifty pupils.

School teachers, parents and the community at large have been showing a lot of concern on school attendance. In many parents-teachers' meetings, student absenteeism has been condemned and suggestions have been given on what possible measures to be taken to curb this habit.

Studies carried out before by Mweni (1984) and Gitonga (1992), seem to have missed the real causes of continued absenteeism of students in secondary schools in Kenya today. The many cases of student absenteeism in day secondary schools created a need for a research to be carried out in Nakuru East Division of Nakuru District. The idea

was to estimate the size of the problem and to determine its causes.

1.3 The purpose of the study

The study attempted to determine whether the problem of student absenteeism existed in day secondary schools within Nakuru East Division of Nakuru District. It also attempted to find out what contributed to student absenteeism and what kinds of problems confronted administrators as a result of student absenteeism. Similarly, the study suggested some solutions to the problems of student absenteeism on the basis of responses that were given by the respondents. Specifically, study attempted to:

- i) investigate the causes of student absenteeism in Nakuru East Division day secondary schools,
- ii) find out what necessary steps were taken by the headteachers to reduce the problem and
- iii) suggest some possible solutions to the problem.

1.4 Research questions

The study intended to offer some answers to the following questions.

- i) Does the problem of student absenteeism exist in Nakuru East Division?
- ii) What causes absenteeism?
- iii) What are the effects of student absenteeism?
- iv) What steps are headteachers taking to solve the problem of student absenteeism?
- v) Which other groups are involved or should be involved in trying to solve the problem?

1.5 Rationale and significance of the study

Eshiwani (1983), observed that if any region of the country lags behind in the number of students who attend school, then that region cannot effectively participate in the democratization process of education. The socio-economic development of such a region is likely to be retarded.

Turner (1974), says that a large sum of money is wasted when it is spent on students who do not benefit much from education due to absenteeism. With improved school attendance, the funds allocated for education will be properly utilized for the purpose they are intended for.

Absenteeism has been given as one of the reasons for students' poor performance in examinations. Absenteeism always causes serious administrative problems in schools. These include problems of dealing with statistical returns, failure to cover the syllabus, time wasted in dealing with absentees and behaviour problem.

The researcher is hopeful that students, teachers, parents and the nation as a whole will benefit from the findings of this study. The study tried to find out the causes of student absenteeism and gave useful solutions. This will help in improving the learner's performance as a result of improved school attendance. It is anticipated that the study will stimulate more educators and students to undertake research in areas not covered in this study.

1.6 Basic assumptions of the study

These basic assumptions guided the researcher in answering the research problem.

1. This study assumed that the school population would not vary significantly.
2. It was assumed that the resource allocation among the three study schools would be the same.

3. Finally, it would be assumed that parental occupation, family size, person living with the student and mode of school fees payment would be a good index of student's socio-economic status.

1.7 Limitation of the study

1. The research would have been carried out in the whole district but due to the vast geographical area, it was only possible to take a division and selected schools as the sample of that population for the study.
2. The time allocated for the project was too short.
3. Sample of the schools to be used in the study could be inhibited by accessibility problem.
4. Financial constraints could not enable the researcher to cover more schools.

1.8 Scope of the study

The study focused on student absenteeism in selected secondary schools in Nakuru East Division. Due to time factor, the study was confined to three schools randomly selected from a total of seven day secondary schools in the division. It was appreciated that the selected day secondary schools offered rich information on student absenteeism as

all headteachers, classteachers, parents and students were urged to respond to research instruments more freely and willingly.

1.9 Definition of terms used in the study

Parental withdrawal: The child is kept away from school by parents for their own purposes.

Truancy: The student is absent on his own initiative without the parent's permission.

School phobia: A child seems to be afraid of going to school, or even in some cases of leaving home although his parents are anxious that he should go regularly.

Illness: The child is unwell and kept at home in good faith.

Loner: The child who has difficulty in establishing relationships with adults and his peers.

Absenteeism: Physical absence of students from classroom at the time the register is

being filled in the morning and
afternoon

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature related to the problem content. In this case, the literature is reviewed from various books and also studies carried out by different researchers both locally and internationally.

2.2 Review of related literature to problem content

From the literature reviewed some aspects on student absenteeism emerged. The major areas are: categories of absentees, causes of absenteeism, effects of student absenteeism and solutions to the problem of student absenteeism.

1. Categories of absentees

There are different types of absentees depending on the causes of absenteeism. Extensive research on student absenteeism was conducted by Karlin (1972). He classified student absentees into three groups: truants, phobics and loners. According to Karlin, truants are those children who refuse to go to school for a variety of reasons. Some may feel tremendously inadequate and

as a result they turn to absenting themselves from school. Some children may be influenced by other truanting children. Basic influence is very crucial and when a child finds friends who are willing to miss school for 'football', he is also likely to be tempted to join them in the game. A similar view comes from Pat Carlen et al (1992).

According to Turner (1974), a school phobic is reluctant or refuses to leave home for school because of some bad experiences he has had at school. This child may pretend to be sick to find an excuse of not going to school or he may just declare point blank that he does not want to go to school. The school phobic refuses to leave home for school and parents know about it.

Waller (1980) and Berg et al (1978), hold the view that school phobia is characterized by emotional, behavioural or psychological problems in connection with school attendance, and is usually dealt with medically, by a range of behavioural, psychiatric and psychotherapeutic interventions. In the same literature, a major characteristic distinguishing between school phobia and

truancy is that, truancy is associated with antisocial behaviour such as stealing, lying, destructiveness and excessiveness fighting.

The loner according to Karlin (1972), is a child who has difficulty in establishing friendship with adults and his peers. A loner has not learned to talk to others and does not feel comfortable with himself. While at school he will often bury himself in books, not necessarily because he does not like people but because he is shy to the point of affecting his schoolwork. Because this child is lonely, he may eventually develop the habit of refusing to attend school.

Tyerman (1968), in his research on student absenteeism categorized absentees according to reason for absence. He gives the following reasons:

- Illness – The child is unwell and is kept at home in good faith. Tyerman says that 80-90% of absence are of this type.
- Parental withdrawal – The child is kept away from school by parents for their own purposes.

- Truancy – The child is absent on her own initiative without parents' permission.
- School phobia – A child seems to be afraid of going to school, or even in some cases of leaving home although his parents are anxious that he should go regularly

Saunders (1979), in his research deals mainly with illegal absence from school. He says that his type of absence is in itself a symptom that conceals three different causes:

- A child can be kept at home by parents.
- A child may stay away from school without the knowledge of the parents or the school.
- A child may stay at home despite every effort made by parents to get him to school.

Although Saunders (1979), is aware that the above three exist, he further goes on to say that there is little evidence as far as illegal absenteeism is concerned. This is because the figures are difficult to obtain as they are concealed within the overall figures of absence which include children who are not attending school for justifiable reasons.

Paul Williams(1974), observed that it is hard to define both truancy and school phobia. He says that truancy implies a degree of malice and therefore some would argue that a school phobic is not a truant. It is not easy to say when a simple dislike of school becomes a phobia.

Marx Clyne (1966), categorized school absentees under school refusal which he terms truancy and school phobia. He goes on to say that economic difficulties have a part to play.

David Ndeti (1982), says that there are two major types of non-attendance at school; truanting and school phobia. Trying to make a distinction between the two, he says that a truant leaves home to go to school but he does not make it while the phobic refuses to leave home.

Pat Carlen (1992), came up with the following categories of absentees:

- Officially induced – Absence forced upon pupils by what are in effect ‘lock-outs’ precipitated by: shortage of teachers; teachers’ industrial action; failure of

school buildings to meet legal requirements in relation to say, heating or safety; and disciplinary action towards pupils, for example, temporary or permanent exclusions from school

- Officially approved - Absences officially recognized as being attributable to personal or family reasons, such as illness, pregnancy, bereavement or parents' holiday periods.
- Officially illicit but unofficially condoned - Absences that are not officially recognized as being attributable to a legitimate case but that are none the less not processed or recognized as illegitimate by school teachers.
- Officially illicit but parentally condoned - Absences recognized and disapproved as being illicit by both school and parents but where parents feel unable or unwilling to enforce attendance.
- Officially illicit and parentally disapproved- Absences where at least some officials and the parents constrict the absence as illegitimate and undesirable (though they may differ about the form official and parental interventions should take).

- Internal and illicit – Absence from lessons, even through the pupil may be officially recorded as present at school.

Despite the above classification of absentees, it is not easy to categorize absentees as some illegal will be concealed in the legal absence. This view as noted earlier, was expressed by Saunders (1979). A similar view is held by Paul Williams (1974), who says that figures obtained on student absenteeism are not good enough for researchers or local authorities who want to do something more constructive about truancy. The major fault according to Williams is the register. He says that most serious deficiency of the register is that it misses completely the children who skip classes after the count is taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

2. **Causes of absenteeism**

A lot of research on causes of student absenteeism has been done in many countries especially in Western Europe and America. From these researches, many causes of absenteeism have been detected and they include:

- Illness – Researchers like Willgoose, Wheatly et al maintain that the major cause of student absenteeism is illness. Willgoose (1974), reported that in most school systems in America 15% of students, were absent daily. He said that illness was the cause of absenteeism and was also the greatest factor in non-promotion because of high correlation between illness and poor scholastic achievement.

An earlier research by Wheatly (1965), sees illness as a major cause of student absenteeism. He says that in the year ending June 1961, days lost from school in the United States of America because of acute illness among children in the age group of six to sixteen years totalled to 156,194,000 which represented an average of four days per child. He also says that accidental injuries are a leading cause of school absenteeism. They include fracture, dislocation and wounds.

The above investigation focuses on legal absenteeism, that is, non-attendance for justifiable reasons. This means that the parents and teachers are aware of the child's

sickness and in some cases doctors have confirmed that the child is unfit to attend school.

- **Socio-economic status**

According to some researches, absence from school depends on socio-economic status of the child's parents. Tyerman (1968), found that absence on the whole was twice as high among children of unskilled parents compared with those of professional parents. A similar observation was made by Clyne (1966) and Mitchell (1972), whose researches covered school's in America and Europe. From their findings, they concluded that: in underdeveloped countries or in socially low and economically insecure levels, absence from school may be due to lack of food, clothing and the work outside school.

Raju (1973), holds a similar view. Although her research mainly dealt with dropouts, her findings can be true of absenteeism because dropout is an advanced stage of absenteeism. The child starts by absenting himself and eventually he may drop out of school. Raju says that, socio-economic status of the family affects a child's school

attendance. In families of low economic status, there is lack of facilities for students to study outside school. In many cases children return from the farm after dark and have inadequate light to do their homework. This affects the performance, discouraging children to the extent of withdrawing from school.

Kenya Times, July 16th (1999), District Officer for Ileho Division in Kakamega District, Mr. Abednego Mulli warned parents who fail to send their children to school, that they would face prosecution. He gave such parents one week ultimatum to send their children to school. The D.O. stressed at a baraza that the government will not tolerate parents who shunned their responsibility to educate their children. Mr. Mulli directed chiefs and their assistants to arrest and charge those who will fail to take their children to school after the expiry of one week.

He said that, most of the area parents had allegedly turned school-aged children into herdsboys and maids claiming to be poor. The administrator also directed chiefs to arrest any child found loitering at market centres during school hours

in a bid to reduce the high school drop out rate in the division.

Coombes (1974), says that the kind of environment in which the school is set and the culture of the community around the school have some bearing on the responses on the parents towards the school demands and attitudes and traditional practices of a particular community have negative or positive effects on school attendance. Reports on cases of withholding by parents are numerous particularly in families of low economic status.

There is a school of thought that explains truancy in terms of so-called anti-social attitude prevalent in working-class communities, Willmott (1959) and Tyerman (1972). This work emphasizes cultural rather than individual or family pathology and thus draws heavily on the "culture of poverty" thesis popular during the late and early 1970 according to Lewis (1966) and Roberts (1971). Such work, though often accused of assuming the superiority of middle-class culture and the intrinsic value of schooling, at least recognized the material effects that the dominance of middle-class culture can have on working - class people.

Nevertheless, not until the mid-1970s did people see a systematic critique of the social control functions of the education system, along with an appraisal of such features of working – class life as youth subcultures of resistance to such regulation Davies (1976) and Barton 1980.

The school

Fogelman et al (1980), reported that the school system sometimes can be a contributing factor to student absenteeism. At times, the relevance of the school curriculum affects school attendance. Raju (1973), expressed a similar view for she says that some children may prefer to stay at home to help their parents instead of going to school to be subjected to boring and irrelevant lessons. Apart from school curriculum teachers are known to discourage students by inflicting punishment on them. This is supported by Kennel Ogwaro (1983), who said:

Some students don't like going to school. The excuse given is lack of school fees. But now primary education is free, they say that there is too much caning. Some children say that they are caned for giving wrong answers or asking 'silly' questions. If this claim is true, one wonders what sort of training the teachers received.....

He further goes on to say,

One girl told me that she played truant because she was hit with a ruler for not being able to do long division sum.

One outstanding critique concerning punishment was raised by Malkiat Singh (1983), for he had the following to say:

Children can be detained after school, but it is self-defeating exercise since first of all it imposes more work on the teacher himself, since he or she must also stay behind look after the children in detention. In any case it underlines the bad impression that many children have of school. If staying longer at school is a punishment, then going there all must be in some way undesirable.

Related to punishment imposed on the learners are school rules. Some school rules demand too much from the learners and as a result, some students prefer truanting instead of being subjected to strict school rules. Reynolds (1976), provide evidence that there is much that some children dislike about school which forces them to absent themselves. Reynolds conducted some study in nine schools in Britain where only small difference were found in social class distribution of the catchment area of the school. Consequently Reynolds inferred that differences in the pupil when they left school reflected differences in schools themselves. He found a high level of consistency in

attendance rates over a seven year period; they ranged from 77.2% in the worst school to 89.1% in the best; delinquency rates ranged from 3.8% to 10.5%. Reynolds (1976), is quoted by Saunders (1979) as having concluded:

Some schools appear to be coping better than others with their pupils and with their pupil problems.

Although Reynolds does not mention of the things which might make pupils hate a particular school, the world is rich with examples of unpleasant things which force pupils to develop negative attitude towards schooling. To quote Dr. Ndetei (1982):

Problems related to the school environment are usually complex and difficult to discern. It could be anything from bullying by other children and difficulty with particular lesson to a general dissatisfaction with the school.

Tyerman (68), sees punishment given to students as one of the factors contributing to student absenteeism for after interviewing twenty three truants he said the following:

.....of the whole group, seventeen stated that they played truant because they were afraid of their teacher. Other common reasons were fear of being given the stick.

Individual problems

Carroll (1977), and Stott (1966), attribute student absenteeism to individual problems. Causes related to the individual are usually emotional in nature. Among the leading problems as reported by the above researches are: student poor performance in school, feeling of inadequacy in establishing relationships, acute anxiety, stress, strain and unfounded fears. Poor performance is seen as a direct cause of truancy. The child becomes frustrated and depressed and this causes him to develop feeling of inferiority. This in turn leads to lack of effort and further failure. The child may then become rebellious and try to escape by playing truant.

Raju (1973), also believes that poor performance in school discourages students to the extent of withdrawing from school. Karlin (1972) and Seabrook (1974), hold the view that persistent loners and truants have problems with peer relationships. As a result of school problems, some children develop school phobia while others start truanting.

Age and peer influence

Richardson and Ken Fogelson (1974), says that attendance patterns change from age group to age group, concerning

relationship between age and attendance, they noted that absence is more common in the earlier years than in primary schooling. These researchers believe that low attendance is common in the first years of schooling while others argue that if school-leaving age is increased, the number of absentees increases as well.

Change and distance to school

Change and distance to school can affect school attendance. Raju (1973), says that communication and distance between the home and the school affect school attendance. She says, the means of transportation in many areas are inadequate and some students drop out of school because of long distance to and from school.

When students are late in the morning due to long distances to school, some will try to avoid classes as Coombes (1974), says:

Lateness is often a source of anxiety to many pupils and they will avoid entry after the bell has gone.

Bullying

Holmes (1989), says that research on truancy has perennially provided evidence that bullying is a recurring

factor in young persons' refusal to go to school regularly. The young people he interviewed volunteered the information that they had experienced bullying at school, most of it restricted to verbal abuse about their physical attributes, their sexual reputations and their being in residential care.

Homework

Reid and Kendall (1982), says many parents resented being expected to force their children to do homework. In homes already under stress as a result of illness, poverty and fraught personal relationships, it was not surprising that homework was seen as a further irritant. Some of the students interviewed by the Reid said, they had been suspended because of constant refusal to do homework.

3. Effects of student absenteeism

Studies on effects of student absenteeism carried out by Reid and Kendall (1985), reveal that children who do not attend school regularly are unlikely to be well-prepared to face hard realities of life. There are high chances of them performing poorly in examinations. Absence from school can lead to the loss of such educational benefits as the child's intelligence might have entitled him to.

Apart from affecting schoolwork, absenteeism also affects other aspects of life. Rhode Boyson (1974), says that there is a risk that many absentees who do not obtain jobs become delinquents.

Dumila (1984), says that truancy has been a major problem in our schools, for it worries both parents and teachers. He further argues that most truants are below average in intelligence and therefore it is to be expected that their work is below normal level of their age.

4. **Solutions to the problem of absenteeism**

Many suggestions on how to solve the problem of student absenteeism have been generated by writers such as Reid and Kendall (1987). Views expressed depend on differences in cultural, social and ideological outlooks of national systems of education. Some countries like Britain put a lot of emphasis on compulsory school attendance in order for the learners to receive adequate instructions.

Compulsory school attendance is not confined to Britain and Scotland alone. Tyerman (1968), says that

a similar practice has existed in America since 1981. Apart from American States enacting laws on school attendance, groups of people have also given their opinions looking at the problem from different angles. This problem has been approached from psychological, administrative and medical points of view. Psychologists advocate for diplomacy in handling absentees.

Karlin (1972), a psychologist says that it needs great understanding on the part of teachers. They should try to understand the child's problem for this would help in deciding on what measures to be taken. Friendliness according to Saunders (1979), is necessary so as not to provoke truancy as a form of retaliation or competition.

Tyerman (1968), says that in America and Britain, if a child is registered at a particular school, it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that he attends school regularly.

Anderson (1972), a conducted research on causes of pupil absenteeism in American schools and concluded that illness was the leading cause of irregular school attendance. He came up with the idea of cooperation between the school, parents and health department. He suggested that the school parents and health department should work out a joint programme of action against the disease.

From the above suggested solutions, it is clear that there cannot be general rule of solving absenteeism problem. Treatment for any particular child should be determined by the state of his or her health background and facilities provided by the school

5. **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher has reviewed literature related to the problem of absenteeism.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology of carrying out any research depends on the type of study one wants to carry out. For example, Katheri and Pals (1993), have elaborated on the survey made on the research. This is where a researcher employs the use of questionnaire in order to determine opinions, preferences and perceptions of groups of people of interest to the researcher. Questionnaires are used to collect basic descriptive information from a broad sample.

Sampling is used to provide information that can be used to gather responses in depth from a small sample. Koul (1984), recommends descriptive research method in education. This method is easy and direct and the researcher can gather information in terms of individual opinion about some issues by simple questionnaire or interview. Dalen (1966), states that some respondents will only give information if you present them with carefully selected questions.

Other respondents are more willing to communicate orally than in writing and will therefore provide data and information more readily in an interview than in a questionnaire, as Kerlinger (1973), noted. In this study, questionnaires and an interview schedule were used to get the opinions of teachers, students and parents about factors that contribute to student absenteeism in day secondary schools in Nakuru East Division.

The division was selected due to large number of absentees in day secondary schools in the division. The researcher would have carried out the study in the whole district but due to the geographical vastness of the area, and limited time for carrying out the research project, it was not possible to cover the whole district.

The study employed the following research instruments to gather the data:

- a) Questionnaires – these were given to class teachers, students and the parents of schools under study.
- b) Interview – this was for the headteachers of schools under study.

The researcher personally sent questionnaires to the subjects and the subjects were given up to two weeks to fill them before the researcher went round collecting the questionnaires. With this method, the researcher hoped to get all responses from the questionnaires.

3.2. Sampling Procedure

This study was carried out in Nakuru East Division of Nakuru District. Three-day secondary schools were selected for the study using random sampling. Since student absenteeism is a common problem in day schools, any of the day schools in the division was chosen for the study.

To do random sampling, the names of the seven day secondary schools in the division were written on separate pieces of paper. These paper were folded and balloted. The papers were shuffled thoroughly and then three papers were picked, to represent the three schools for the sample. After picking the schools randomly, the researcher solicited information from the headteachers of the selected schools, class teachers, student absentees and parents of the absentees. The total number of respondents that were used for this study was broken down as follows:

Respondents	Number
Headteachers	3
Class teachers	30
Student absentees	60
Parents of absentees	30

3.3. Instruments and data collection

Two types of instruments were used for the study. They were questionnaires and interview guide.

1. Questionnaires

Three different questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire was administered to 30 class teachers. It sought information on the following:

- i) Professional qualification
- ii) How long they have been teaching
- iii) How long they have been class teachers.
- iv) Who marks the student class attendance register.
- v) Factors that can help reduce student absenteeism in the division.

The second questionnaire was distributed to absentees. The third questionnaire was given to the

thirty parents of the absentees. The questionnaire sought information on the following:

- i) Level of education of the parent.
- ii) Economic level of these parents.
- iii) Distance of their homes from school.

2. Interview

The interview guide was used to record verbal responses from the headteachers of the three selected schools regarding absenteeism and lasted only one hour.

SECTION A: HEADTEACHERS' INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. General background and information on student

1.1 How many students?

1.2 How many absentees?

1.3 How many absentees in the last month?

1.4 How many absentees in the last week?

1.5 How many absentees in the last day?

1.6 How many absentees in the last hour?

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the data derived from headteachers, students, parents' responses to the research instruments. The chapter is subdivided as follows:

- a) Headteachers' interviews schedule: Section A
- b) Class teachers' questionnaire: Section B
- c) Students' questionnaire: Sections C
- d) Parents' questionnaire: Section D
- e) Summary of the findings.

4.2 SECTION A: HEADTEACHERS' INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. General comments and information on student attendance records.

Table IV.1, IV.2 and IV.3 show how attendance records are kept in the schools which were selected for the purpose of the study.

Table IV. 1 shows that in all the schools attendance registers were marked by class teachers.

**TABLE IV.1:
MARKING OF CLASS REGISTERS**

Marker	No. of responses	%
Class teacher	03	100
Class prefect	00	00
Headteacher	00	00
Total	03	100

This table shows that the three (100%) headteachers indicated that the attendance registers were marked by the classteachers. This information shows that the selected schools seem to agree with Mbiti (1974), who says that class registers are kept by the classteachers who should submit to the headteacher daily for attendance record.

Table IV.2:

NUMBER OF TIMES REGISTERS ARE MARKED

No. of times	No. of Responses	Percentage
Twice per day	02	67
Once per day	01	33
Once per week	00	00
Once per month	00	00
Total	03	100

The results in this table show that class registers are marked twice daily, a common practice in many African countries as Farrant (1980), reports:

In most countries the attendance register must be written up twice a day – at the beginning of the morning session and the session immediately after the long break.

It should be noted that one (33%) headteacher indicated that the class registers were marked once per day.

Table IV.3 shows headteachers' responses to the question which sought to know how many times they checked the attendance registers. The table shows that one headteacher (33%) checked the registers once per month and none of the headteachers checked the register occasionally and or everyday. It was satisfying to note that two (67%) of the respondents checked the registers once per week.

Table IV.3

CHECKING OF REGISTERS BY HEADTEACHERS

No. of times	No. of Response	%
Once per month	01	33
Occasionally	00	00
Once per week	02	67
Every day	00	00
Total	03	100

These findings show that the headteachers have some laxity as far as the checking of attendance register is concerned. This laxity probably stems from the fact that the headteachers are busy most of the time. This forces them to delegate the duty to the deputy headteacher. Despite this explanation, Mbiti (1974), says that the headteacher should be informed of daily school attendance to keep his attendance notice board up-to-date. When the headteachers check attendance registers more often, they will be able to certify that the registers are correctly marked and this information will be very useful in the school administration.

2 Cases of absentees

Table IV.4, IV.5 and IV.6 revealed that student absenteeism was a problem affecting all the selected day secondary schools. All the three headteachers indicated that there were cases of absentees in their schools as shown in Table IV.4

TABLE IV.4
EVIDENCE OF ABSENTEE CASES

Absentees	No. of Responses	%
Yes	03	100
No	00	00
Total	03	100

This finding answers the research question which sought to know whether the problem of student absenteeism existed in the selected day secondary schools.

Table IV.5 shows that non-attendance was more frequent towards the end of the week. Three headteachers said that there were more absentees at the end of the week.

TABLE IV.5
TIME OF THE WEEK WITH LOW ATTENDANCE

Time	No. of Response	Percentage
Beginning of the week	00	00
End of the week	03	100
Mid-week	00	00
Total	03	100

The explanation given for this pattern was that the schools were situated in an area where market day falls on a Friday and most of the students accompanied their parents in the market place to help in selling farm produce. Others remained at home to look after cattle or babysit when their parents are away. This finding agrees with Clyne (1961), who observed in his research that:

A particular kind of absence from school is created by parents who keep their children at home for supervision of younger children, for looking after a sick parent or for some other domestic convenience.

The headteachers were asked to indicate what time of the year when there were many absentees. Table IV.6 presents the findings:

TABLE IV.6
TIME OF THE YEAR WITH MANY ABSENTEES

Time	No. of Responses	%
Midyear	00	00
Beginning of year	03	100
No pattern	00	00
Total	03	100

The three headteachers said that there were more absentees at the beginning of the year. Reasons given is that farming activities are going on at that time. Change of schools and dropping out of school was also seen as a reason.

Asked which level had many absentees, the headteachers said that form one and two had more absentees than form three and four, a view held by Tyerman (1968), who says that in each year of school life, the lower the stream, the lower was the attendance.

TABLE IV.7

THE LEVEL WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF ABSENTEES

Level	No. of Responses	%
Upper classes	00	00
Lower classes	03	100
Equal in both levels	00	00
Total	03	100

Similarly, the respondents were asked to indicate which, group between boys and girls had more absentees than the others. The details of the findings are shown in Table IV.8

TABLE IV.8

GROUP WITH MORE ABSENTEES

Group	No. of responses	%
Boys	02	67
Girls	01	33
Total	03	100

It was noted that in the selected day secondary schools, the majority of absentees were boys. This is because boys like playing truant, breaking school rules and would be suspended from school. But at the same time, some girls would get pregnant and eventually drop out of school.

3 Causes of absenteeism

In response to the question that sought to know about the factors that contributed to student absenteeism, a number of responses were recorded although the respondents were only three. This is because the respondents were not restricted to giving one response. Their responses are listed in the box below.

Box 1

What causes students to be absent from school?

- a) Lack of school fees
- b) Sickness
- c) Family problems
- d) Withholding by parents
- e) School-based reasons
- f) Distance to school
- g) Lack of school uniforms
- h) Temporary employment
- i) Truancy and bad company

Source: participant headteachers

From the responses in box 1 above, it is clear that many factors contributed to student absenteeism in selected day secondary schools. Lack of school fees and sickness were the leading factors according to all the headteachers. The major family problems cited by the respondents included: marital instability, lack of food, sick parents and death of relatives.

Closely related to family problems was the problem of withholding by parents. The three headteachers said that many students missed classes because they were withheld at home to attend to domestic work.

In addition, the respondents said that school-based reasons such as fear of punishment from teachers, excessive homework, strict rules and regulation, fear of bullying played a role in non-attendance. Other reasons given for absenteeism included, distance to school, lack of uniform, temporary employment, truancy and bad company.

This finding is consistent with that of Raju (1973), in her research already discussed in chapter two of this report. She says that many students drop out of school because of the long distances they have to travel every day.

The headteachers were asked to indicate the performance of absentees. Table IV.9 shows the details of the findings.

TABLE IV.9

PERFORMANCE OF ABSENTEES

Performance	No. of Responses	%
Poor	03	100
Very poor	00	00
Total	03	100

The table shows that all the respondents indicated that the performance of absentees was poor. This finding is consistent with those of Tyerman (1968) and Clyne (1966) as cited in the literature review.

4 **Solution to the problem of absenteeism**

Another question in the interview guide sought to know the groups of people at the school involved in dealing with absentee cases. The details of the findings are presented in table IV.10 below.

TABLE IV.10

GROUP INVOLVED IN DEALING WITH ABSENTEES

Group	No. of Responses	%
Class teacher	02	67
Headteacher	00	00
Deputy headteacher	01	33
Total	03	100

The responses in Table IV.10 indicate that in the selected schools, class teachers dealt with absentee cases, probably it was the duty of class teachers to record attendance registers, as it was pointed out earlier.

Steps taken to solve the problem of student absenteeism are clearly stated in box 2

Box 2

Steps taken to solve the problem of student absenteeism

- a) Discussing with parents
- b) Providing bursaries
- c) Counselling the students
- d) Introducing boarding facilities or feeding programmes
- e) Providing learning materials
- f) Demanding for sick sheet or punishing truants

Source: participant headteachers

The above responses in box 2 seem to indicate that in most cases, the parents were called to discuss the issue of absenteeism with the class teachers. In some cases, bursaries and counselling were provided for the needy students. The respondents also felt that introducing feeding programmes, boarding facilities, punishing truants would help in solving or reducing absenteeism in the selected day secondary schools.

Box 3 shows headteachers' responses to the question that sought to know the administrative problems they faced due to absenteeism.

Box 3

Problems faced by headteachers due to student absenteeism

- a) Poor performance in examination
- b) Failure to cover syllabus
- c) Behavioural problems
- d) Problems in dealing with statistical returns
- e) Time wasted
- f) Parents' reluctance to pay school levies
- g) Transfer of students

Source: participant headteachers.

From the responses in box 3, it can be deduced that student absenteeism posed two major administrative problems. The most common problem was poor performance in examinations as was pointed out by all the three headteachers. They said that they were blamed for poor results in schools. Another common problem was failure to cover syllabus as teachers were forced to repeat lessons in order to help those who missed classes and this affected teaching process. The rest of the recorded administrative problems were found to be of low magnitude.

The respondents said that most of the persistent absentees had behavioural problems as some refused to obey school rules and were generally rude to teachers. Others were involved in fighting and bullying their colleagues.

The responses of the headteachers to the question which required them to name groups of people who could be of help to them in solving the problem of absenteeism are shown in box 4. Again the respondents were not restricted to one response.

Box 4

Groups which can help to solve the problem of student absenteeism:

- a) Parents
- b) Local leaders
- c) Teachers
- d) Education officers
- e) Church leaders
- f) Old students
- g) School students
- h) School sponsors

Source: participant headteachers

It is interesting to note that all the respondents felt that parents should play a very big role in solving the problem of absenteeism. They suggested that parents could help by reporting cases of absenteeism to school authorities,

checking homework given to their children by teachers to ascertain that they attend school, refraining from withholding their children and cooperating with school authorities whenever they are summoned to school to discuss the issue.

Another useful group in solving the problem of absenteeism were local leaders. This view was expressed by the headteachers who were of the opinion that chief councilors and members of parliament, should convene meetings to inform the public on the importance of education. It was also suggested that leaders should request parents to encourage their children to attend school and if the problem persisted, then the parents should be sued. This finding agrees with Tyerman's (1968), report concerning court action in Britain against student absenteeism when he said:

The court can punish parents proved to have intrigued the school attendance law.

A few examples have already been cited in the literature review where mention was made of chiefs in some parts of Kenya who had been authorized to take stern measures against parents who refused to encourage their children to go to school.

Unfortunately, there is no compulsory education in Kenya. Therefore no Act compels children to go to school nor are parents liable to punishment if they do not ensure that their children attend school regularly.

4.2 SECTION B: CLASS TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1 Causes of absenteeism

Teachers' opinions were sought on what causes absenteeism among students in day secondary schools. Item four (4) on the class teachers' questionnaire asked the teachers to state reasons which they thought attributed to absenteeism.

After content analysis, nine main reasons of absenteeism were generated. They were:

- a) Lack of school fees
- b) Sickness
- c) Family problems
- d) Withholding by parents
- e) School-based reasons – some students were absent from school because of institutional reasons. These included fear of punishment, excessive homework, fear

of bullying among students, strict school rules and regulations.

- f) Community influence – This included incidences where students were absent due to drugs, anti-education attitudes among members of a given community.
- g) Negative parental attitude towards their children’s education – Teachers hinted that the parental attitude towards education was changing because of lack of employment among educated children.
- h) Engagement in paid employment
- i) Truancy and adolescent problems

Table IV.11 presents class teachers’ perceptions on reasons of student absenteeism from school.

TABLE IV.11

CLASSTEACHERS PERCEPTION ON REASONS OF STUDENTS ABSENTEEISM FROM SCHOOL

Reasons	Boys		Girls	
	F	%	F	%
Lack of school fees	9	30	10	33
Sickness	5	17	6	20
Family problems	4	13	5	17
School based reasons	3	10	2	07

Community influence	3	10	2	07
Negative parental	2	07	2	07
Attitude towards education				
Engagement in paid employment	2	07	1	03
Truancy	1	03	1	03
Adolescent problems	1	03	1	100
Total	30	100	30	100

Table IV.11 shows that class teachers perceived lack of school fees as the most important contributor to student absenteeism. This is consistent with headteachers' opinions in the previous section.

According to class teachers, the second most important reason for student absenteeism was sickness. This could be due to lack of medical facilities in the area. Another important reason which contributed to student absenteeism from school was family problem which included parental withholding. According to class teachers, this was the third most important reason which made students to stay out of school. More girls than boys were absent from school because of this reason.

The other reason was fear of punishments, after breaking school rules and regulations. This finding is consistent with headteachers' opinions in the previous section.

In addition, the respondents said that community influence such as drug taking, and attitude among members of some communities toward education affected school attendance. Truancy and adolescent problems to some extent affected school attendance. Teachers hinted that adolescent problems such as advent of early sexual relationships was responsible for absenteeism from school.

2 Intervention programmes

Table IV.12 presents class teachers' opinions on make-up instruction programmes in order of importance.

TABLE IV.12

CLASSTEACHERS OPINION ON MAKE-UP INSTRUCTION PROGRAMMES

Type of make-up programme	F	%
Giving notes	13	43
Extra tuition	9	30
Revision series	5	17
Extra homework	3	10
TOTAL	30	100

Table IV.12 shows that the most frequent makeup programme suggested by the class teachers was giving notes followed by extra tuition from teachers. This finding was consistent with students' opinion, since most students highlighted that copying notes and discussion with teachers would help them make-up for what was missed. A basic comparison between students' and teachers' opinions shows that teachers had over emphasized extra tuition at the expense of students discussing with each other owing to the fact that if extra tuition were organized, this could give teachers financial gains.

Teachers' opinions were sought on possible intervention programmes for reducing the problems of student absenteeism from school. The results of content analysis yielded the following methods:

- a) Providing bursaries to the needy students - This included all opinions which dwelt on provision of financial assistance to needy students by the government, churches and welfare societies.

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Teachers' opinions were sought on possible intervention programmes for reducing the problems of student absenteeism from school. The results of content analysis yielded the following methods:

- a) Providing bursaries to the needy students - This included all opinions which dwelt on provision of financial assistance to needy students by the government, churches and well-wishers.
- b) Introducing boarding and feeding programmes
- c) Parents discussing with teachers - Teachers contended that parents played a significant role in their children's

education. Therefore, to deal with problem of student absenteeism, parents should be involved in various ways like inviting parents during open days, asking parents to pay school fees on time.

- d) Providing learning materials - Teachers highlighted the fact that most persistent absentees lack necessary learning materials which adversely affect their performance in school. Hence parents, government and well-wishers should provide learning materials.
- e) Improving teaching methods - some teachers advocated for student-centred approach during teaching and improvement of teacher - student relationships, like guiding and counselling students.
- f) Reducing excessive homework - Excessive homework contributes to student absenteeism from school. One way of reducing student absenteeism from school would involve reduction in amount of homework given to students.
- g) Punishing truants - like making truants dig school farm.
- h) Reducing excessive punishment in schools.
- i) Taking roll calls more often.

Table IV.13 presents classteachers' opinions on intervention programmes in order of importance.

**TABLE IV.13:
CLASSTEACHERS' OPINION ON INTERVENTION
PROGRAMMES FOR REDUCING ABSENTEEISM IN
SCHOOL**

Intervention programme	F	%
Providing bursaries	8	27
Providing learning materials	6	20
Improving teaching methods	4	13
Introducing boarding and feeding programmes	3	10
Parents discussing with teachers	3	10
Reducing excessive homework	2	07
Punishing truants	2	07
Reducing excessive punishment	1	03
Calling roll calls more often	1	03
TOTAL	30	100

Table IV.13 shows that the highest percentage (27%) of class teachers expressed the opinion that provision of bursaries to needy students would play a significant role in curbing the problems of student absenteeism. This suggestion is consistent with previous finding where lack of school fees

was found to be a major reason for absenteeism among students as discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

The second most important intervention programme was the provision of learning materials. Lack of learning materials was found to be a major cause of absenteeism among both male and female student. The third most important intervention programme was improving the methods of teaching. Improving methods which would help in reducing absenteeism caused by school-based factors.

The fourth most important method of curbing absenteeism in day secondary schools according to class teachers is introduction of boarding facilities. If boarding facilities are introduced in schools then students would be provided with balanced diet. This would help in curbing absenteeism due to medical reasons.

Teachers and parents should also discuss on the possible causes of absenteeism among students. On one hand this would inculcate positives attitude among parents towards their children's education and help in reducing absenteeism due to parental withholding on the other hand.

Too much homework was also found to cause absenteeism among students. Students who come to school without finishing their homework are often punished, hence they opt to remain at home. Reducing excessive homework would reduce the rate of absenteeism among students.

Excessive punishment from teachers makes students to fear attending school. Teachers therefore suggested that appropriate punishment should be applied and in a reasonable manner. Finally, teachers expressed the opinion that in some schools roll calls are not taken on daily bases as the policy states, hence calling roll call more often would help in curbing the problem of student absenteeism.

4.3 SECTION C: STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1 Reasons for absence from school

To identify possible reasons which accounted for absenteeism in day secondary schools, students were asked to state reasons which made them absent from school in items 11b and 12. of student questionnaire. After careful analysis, the reasons which made students' absent were listed down. It was noted that students' reasons of

absenteeism from school in the three selected schools were not significantly different, hence for two items the responses were combined. After content analysis eight main categories of reasons for absenteeism were identified. These were:

- i. Sickness- This was rather broad category and included situations where students were absent from school because of medical reasons.
- ii. Lack of school fees – This category of absenteeism included incidences where students were absent because of lack of school levies such as development fund, P.T.A. contribution fees, tuition fees.
- iii. Lack of school books- In certain instances students were absent from school because they lack either textbooks or exercise books hence they were sent home by the headteacher to collect them.
- iv. Parental condoned absence – This includes a myriad of reasons where students were absent with the knowledge and consent of their parents. The most common forms of parental condoned absence were: children were left at home to look after younger siblings, helping with domestic chores, helping with farm work.

- v. Truancy – Some students were absent from school without the consent of their parents or teachers. Most truants said they missed school with no genuine reasons. For example, it was raining heavily, they overslept. They engaged in paid employment outside home or they lacked interest with schoolwork.
- vi. Lack of school uniform – Some students were absent from school because they lacked proper school uniform.
- vii. School-based reasons – Some students were absent from school because of institutional reasons. These include fear of punishment from teachers, excessive homework, fear of bullying among students, strict school rules and regulations.

Other reasons of absenteeism from school which could not fit in the seven broad categories were classified together. These include school phobia, inability to cover long distances and students attending their relatives funeral.

Table IV.14 presents the frequency of reasons of absenteeism from school. Students had the opportunity to write more than one reason.

TABLE IV.14

FREQUENCY OF REASONS FOR STUDENTS ABSENTEEISM FROM SCHOOL

Reasons of absence	F	%
Lack of school fees	15	25
Sickness	12	20
Lack of books	10	17
Parental condoned	8	13
Truancy	6	10
Lack of uniform	5	08
School-based reasons	3	05
Others	1	02
Total	60	100

Table IV.14 shows that the most frequent reason for student absenteeism from school was lack of school fees or non-payment of school dues. This confirms previous findings where children from poor and unenlightened homes are persistently absent and therefore they drop out of school. Introduction of cost-sharing at all levels of educations has

increased the problem of absenteeism since students are sent home to collect school dues.

The second most frequent reason for absence from school was illness. This finding is consistent with Branby (1951), who reported that 96% of non-attendance in London secondary schools was due to medical reasons. A possible explanation for the above finding is that, the selected schools are found in rural areas where there is a problem of clean water, proper sanitation and few medical facilities.

Lack of exercise and textbooks among students also contributed to a significant proportion of absenteeism. Some students mostly girls were absent with approval of their parents. Truancy was the fifth most frequent reason for absenteeism. Lack of school uniform was the sixth most frequent reason of student absenteeism. Lack of school uniform could be attributed to parental poverty. Certain school-based factors made students to stay out of school, few students however were absent due to these factors.

To compare actual and perceived reasons of absenteeism, item 8 on the student questionnaire probed into students'

perceptions on what caused absenteeism among their peers. Ten main reasons of absenteeism had been previously provided in the questionnaire. These were illness, lack of school fees, too much homework, punishment, lack of interest in schoolwork, helping with household chores, bullying and threats from other students, lack of books and other reasons. Table IV.15 presents perceived reasons of peer's absenteeism from school.

TABLE IV.15:

PERCIEVED REASON OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Reason of absence	F	%
Lack of school fees	18	30
Illness	10	17
Lack of learning materials	8	13
Help with household chores	6	10
Lack of interest in school work	5	08
Too much homework	4	07
Excessive punishment	3	05
Strict school rules and regulations	3	05
Bullying and threats from students	2	03
Other reasons	1	02
Total	60	100

A comparison between Table IV.14 and IV.15 shows that the order of importance of actual and perceived reasons of absenteeism is similar. Both boys and girls were perceived by their peers as being absent from school because of non-payment of school fees. This was followed by illness. Students perceived lack of learning materials to be the third most important reason which contributed to their peers' absence from school. The students expressed the opinion that their peers were absent because of helping with various household chores due to parental instructions.

Table IV.15 highlights certain school-based factors which students perceived to be contributory to their peers' absence from school. These were excessive punishment, too much homework from teachers and strict school rules and regulations.

2 Intervention programmes

Students' ideas were sought on appropriate make-up programme which could be used to help students who have to stay away for a long time learn what they missed during their absence session. The following options were suggested.

- a) Copying notes – Included incidences where students suggested that they could makeup for what was learnt through copying notes from other students.
- b) Discussion with other students – This included situations where the student who was absent probed and learnt from other students purely on discussion.
- c) Extra reading – In this category the particular student read what was learnt from the course text.
- d) Discussion with teachers – Included instances where students made deliberate efforts to discuss with teachers what was learnt.
- e) Discussion with parents – A significant number of students felt that their parents could help them make up for what was learnt.

Table IV.16 presents students' opinion on make-up programmes in order of importance

**TABLE IV.16:
STUDENTS' OPINION ON MAKE UP INSTUCTION PROGRAMME**

Types of make up programmes referred	F	%
Copying notes	20	33
Discussion with teachers	15	23
Discussion with other students	12	20
Extra reading	8	14
Discussion with parents	5	8
Total	60	100

Table IV.16 shows that the most frequent make-up programmes suggested by the students was copying notes followed by discussion with teachers. The fourth important make-up programme according to students was extra reading. Discussion with parents was also suggested as a way of making up for what was missed. A basic comparison between students and teachers' opinions shows that teachers had over emphasized tuition at the expense of students discussing with each other.

4.4 SECTION D: PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1 Causes of absenteeism

According to item 8 of the parents questionnaire that sought to know about the factors that contributed to student absenteeism, the following responses were recorded as in box 5 below.

Box 5

Causes of student absenteeism

- a) Sickness
- b) Lack of school fees
- c) Distance to school
- d) Suspension from school
- e) Lack of school uniform
- f) Lack of text books, exercise books
- g) Lack of bus fare
- h) Withholding by parents
- i) Truancy
- j) School rules and regulations

Source: participant parents

From the responses in box 5 above, many factors contributed to student absenteeism in the three selected schools. Sickness and lack of school fees were the leading factors as it was indicated by all the parents. Other problems included distance to school, suspension from school, lack of school uniforms, lack of textbooks, lack of bus fare, withholding by parents, truancy and strict school rules and regulations.

2 Solutions to the problem of absenteeism

Item 11 in parents' questionnaire sought to know ways in which parents can help in solving the problem of absenteeism. Steps taken by parents towards solving the problem of student absenteeism are presented in box 6 below.

Box 6 **Steps taken to solve the problems of student absenteeism by parents**

- a) Discussion with teachers
- b) Counselling student
- c) Paying school fees on time
- d) Introducing boarding facilities or feeding programmes
- e) Providing learning materials

Source: participant parents

The above responses in box 6 seem to indicate that in most cases the parents were called to discuss the issue of absenteeism with the teachers. In some cases counselling was provided to students by their parents. The respondents also felt that introducing feeding programmes, boarding facilities and providing learning materials would reduce the problem of student absenteeism in the selected day secondary schools.

4.5 Summary of the findings

The following is a summary of the findings of this study. It covers aspects related to student absenteeism in selected day secondary school of Nakuru East Division of Nakuru District.

- a) The headteachers, classteachers, students confirmed that there were cases of student absenteeism in all the selected secondary schools.
- b) Major causes of student absenteeism as given by the respondents are:
 - i. Lack of school fees
 - ii. Sickness
 - iii. Family problems
 - iv. Withholding by parents

- v. School based reasons distance to school
- vi. Distance to school
- vii. Lack of uniform, textbooks
- viii. Temporary employment
- ix. Truancy

c) Absenteeism affected student's performance in both internal and external examinations. Major administrative problems faced by headteachers due to student absenteeism are:

- i. Failure to cover the syllabus
- ii. Behavioural problems created by absentees
- iii. Problems of filling statistical returns
- iv. Time wasted in dealing with absentees
- v. Parents were reluctant to pay development funds
- vi. Student transfers

d) Group of people, other than the school authorities should help in solving the problem of absenteeism. The groups which can be of great help are parents, local leaders, education officers and church leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Summary

In the preceding chapters, the following aspects were covered: The introduction, the review of related literature, methodology and data analysis. This chapter deals with summary, conclusions and recommendations from the study.

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors that contribute to student absenteeism in day secondary schools in Nakuru East Division of Nakuru District. It also sought to provide some possible solutions of the problem of absenteeism. The review of related literature gave a guideline on how to approach the present study. It provided some insight on the theoretical basis of this project.

The data obtained from headteachers, classteachers, students and parents of the selected day secondary schools were analyzed to get answers to the following research questions

- a) Does the problem of student absenteeism exist in Nakuru East Division?
- b) What are the causes of absenteeism?
- c) What are the effects of student absenteeism?
- d) What steps are headteachers taking to solve the problem of student absenteeism?
- e) Which other groups are involved or should be involved in trying to solve the problem?

The sample population for this study consisted of three headteachers, thirty classteachers, sixty students and thirty parents from the three selected day secondary schools in Nakuru East Division. The instruments used included questionnaires that were administered to classteachers, students and parents. The first part of the questionnaires dealt with general information about the classteachers, students and parents and also about the school. There were both open-ended and closed items, which gave the respondents flexibility in responding to the questionnaire. Information regarding cases of the absentees, factors contributing to student absenteeism, effects and solutions to the problem were required.

Another instrument used was an interview guide which was used to record verbal responses from the headteachers of the three selected schools regarding absenteeism. The first part of the interview guide dealt with general information about the headteachers and the school. The other part of the interview guide contained both open-ended and closed-ended.

The advantage of using questionnaire is that it was economical in terms of labour money and time. Also, the subjects were able to answer questions without fear because questionnaires are impersonal.

Interview guide was used because other respondents are more willing to communicate orally than in writing and will therefore provide data and information more readily in an interview.

The data collected were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. This was based on the responses given by the headteachers, classteachers, students and parents. Appropriate percentages were calculated to arrive at conclusions.

In general, the study revealed that student absenteeism was a problem affecting all the selected day secondary schools. Among the leading causes of student absenteeism in the selected schools were lack of school fees, sickness and family problems. The respondents said reasons like withholding by parents, school-based reasons, distance, lack of school uniform, temporary employment, truancy, community influence and bad company, to a great extent also affected school attendance.

5.2 Results and conclusions

The following are the results and conclusions which emerged from the data analysis:

- a) It was the responsibility of class teachers in the selected day secondary school to record the student attendance registers. This was done twice daily in the mornings and afternoons. Only in a few cases class teachers delegated the duty of marking class registers to class prefects.
- b) Student attendance registers revealed that absenteeism was a problem affecting all the schools which were selected for the study. Records showed that non-attendance was serious towards the end of the week.

- c) Absence in the selected day secondary schools was more frequent in the lower secondary classes than the upper classes. Similarly, there were more cases of absentees among boys than girls.
- d) Many factors contributed to student absenteeism in the said day secondary schools. Among the leading ones were lack of school fees, sickness, family problems, withholding by parents, school-based reasons, distance to school, lack of school uniform temporary employment, truancy, community influence and bad company.
- e) Absenteeism affected students' performance in examinations. The study revealed that students who did not attend school regularly performed poorly in internal and national examinations.
- f) Persistent student absenteeism eventually resulted in dropout. Also, some persistent truants become delinquents.
- g) Absentee cases in most of the selected schools were dealt with by class teachers and deputy headteachers and only in a few cases headteachers.
- h) In solving the problem of student absenteeism, parents were summoned by the schools to discuss the issue with class teachers and sometimes the deputy headteachers. Providing bursaries to the needy students. Introduction of feeding

programmes, providing guidance and counselling to the absentees, reducing excessive homework.

- i) Slight punishment like watering flowers, cutting grass, washing classroom or suspension for two weeks was given to students who absented themselves without permission or good reasons.
- j) Absenteeism is an educational problem that teachers alone cannot solve totally. Other groups of people suggested to solve the problem are the parents, local leaders, education officers, church leaders, old students, welfare organizations and school students.

5.3 Recommendations

From the above results, the following conclusions and recommendation were reached:

- a) Student absenteeism is a problem worrying the family, the school and the community. This is because a child who does not attend school regularly is ill-equipped to face hard realities of life. The present study has shown that those who ^{don't} attend classes regularly don't perform well, in both internal as well as national

examinations. To solve this problem, it requires close link between the home, the community and the school.

b) Since absenteeism carries serious implications for the child, parents, school and the society, there is need to identify absences accurately. It will not be easy to eradicate this problem unless the groups affected cooperate. There is need for reciprocal cooperation between the school and the home so that an exchange of information is easily and readily undertaken on both sides.

c) It is not always easy for parents to know whether their children have been to school since they are not involved in the checking of attendance registers. Therefore, teachers should not demand for explanation from parents whenever absence occurs, for some children go truanting instead of going to school and parents are not aware of that. As pointed out earlier, some parents are not aware of their children's absence and they are alerted either by poor progress reports, they receive from school or complaints of bad behaviour.

d) Some of the factors contributing to student absenteeism can easily be controlled. Parents were

said to be responsible for most of the absence as they withheld their children to help them with domestic work. There is need to discourage this habit by putting emphasis on regular school attendance as it is done in some countries. Parents who withhold their children for no apparent reason should be prosecuted. It is only after taking stern measures against such parents that school attendance will improve.

e) The results of the present study have shown that persistent student absenteeism results in dropout and also that some truants are involved in delinquent vices. This explains the presence of many parking boys and child prostitution in the towns. Measures taken to solve this problem are not expensive compared to the overall saving of the nation if the problem is solved. It is sound economically as well as good social work to prevent children being deprived of the opportunity to grow into well-adjusted, competent adults.

f) From the suggestions given by headteachers on different groups which should help in solving the problem of student absenteeism, it is clear that although this is an educational problem, teachers by themselves cannot solve it. Worse still, if the whole

responsibility is given to the class teachers, chances of solving it are very slim.

Therefore there is need for educational authorities to appeal to various groups of people to join hands to solve this problem, but first and foremost parents should play the key role as pointed out earlier.

g) The present study has shown that in order to solve the problem of absenteeism, class teachers, deputy head teacher or headteachers' normally give punishment to those who absent themselves without good reasons. Giving punishment has not solved the problem. In order to be effective, there is need to study each absentee case carefully. Every absentee should be considered as an individual and given the help that his own particular circumstances demand. It sounds illogical to give same kind of punishment to all absentees as some punishments can be irrelevant, depending on the reasons for absence. Other punishment are too light to be effective and instead the offenders enjoy them.

h) Although the respondents did not attach serious blame on the schools as far as factors contributing to

student absenteeism were concerned, it is felt that a student who enjoys school is unlikely to absent himself without a good reason. The school should also provide adequate pastoral support to student especially by paying attention to students who are emotionally disturbed to the extent of absenting themselves from school. Above all if the student is to enjoy school, he must feel that he is liked, that he can do the work and that his parents and teachers recognize and appreciate the school.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

5.4 Implications of findings

As mentioned in chapter one of this study, it was hoped that the results of the study, would help in solving the problem of student absenteeism. It was pointed out earlier that this problem worries family, the school and society. It also worries the affected student.

Parents sacrifice a lot for their children's education. Their efforts and funds are wasted if the children do not benefit much from schooling. Research findings have shown that children who do not attend school regularly are unlikely to do well in examinations. Parental efforts can be well

rewarded if their children achieve what they are entitled to through regular school attendance.

The headteachers of the selected day secondary schools said that one of the administrative problems they face due to student absenteeism was schools' poor performance and they were blamed for that. It is hoped that if the problem is solved, school administration will not be blamed and this will enhance the progress of secondary schools in the country.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

This study was limited in scope in that it was confined to Nakuru East Division of Nakuru District. Further and related studies are recommended in other districts and provinces of Kenya with a view to establishing the extent the present findings and similar ones can be generalized throughout the country.

Research could also be made to find out to what extent truants become delinquents. To this end, relevant information should be obtained from approved Kenyan schools.

An investigation should be made to determine the relationship between student absenteeism and dropout.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE: CLASS TEACHERS

Instruction

Please fill in the questionnaire below on students' attendance patterns in your school. Your response will be treated with confidence and will not be used for any other purpose other than for the current research.

1. Name of the school _____
2. Gender Male () Female ()
3. a) List down five main reason of absenteeism among students in your school in order of importance (i.e.) from most to least important
i) _____
ii) _____
iii) _____
iv) _____
v) _____

b) Give three reasons, that account for absenteeism among girls.

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

c) Give three reasons, which account for absenteeism among boys.

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

4. Who marks students attendance register for your class.

5. How many times in a day is the student's attendance register marked

6. Describe patterns of attendance of your students (i.e. state whether absenteeism decreased or increases) during:
- i) Beginning or end of the week

 - ii) Beginning or end month

7. Comment on the rate of absenteeism among girls and boys in your school
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
8. The performance of students who are persistently absent can be described as (tick appropriately)
- Above average ()
- Average ()
- Below average ()
9. List down five most effective methods used in your school to deal with the problem of absenteeism.
- i) _____
 - ii) _____
 - iii) _____

iv) _____

v) _____

10. List down three remedial class instruction programmes that could be used in your school to help students who are persistently absent.

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

11. List down three main ways in which the parents contribute to students absenteeism.

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE: STUDENTS

Instructions

Please fill in this form to the best of your ability. Your response will be treated with strict confidence and will not be used for another purpose apart from the current research.

1. Form _____

2. Gender _____

3. Age _____

4. Where do you live most of the time? (name of village or Estate where you live)

5. Whom do you live with most of the time? (Tick where appropriate)

With both parents ()

With my mother ()

With my father ()

With a relative ()

Others (specific) _____

6. How many elder brothers and sisters do you have?

Brothers _____ sisters _____

7. How many younger brothers and sisters do you have?

Brothers _____ Sisters _____

8. What is your father's occupation _____

9. What is your mother's occupation _____

10. a) How many days have you been absent this term?

b) What were the reasons for your absence this term?

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

11. a) How many days were you absent last term?

b) what were the reasons for your absence last term.

12. Below is a list of reason which cause absenteeism among your classmates. (Tick three reason which you think contribute most to your classmates)

Illness ()

Lack of school fees ()

Lack of interest in school work ()

Helping with housework ()

School rules and regulations ()

Bullying and threats from other students ()

Lack of exercise and textbooks ()

Other (specify)

13. Who paid your school fees this term? (Tick where appropriate)

Father ()

Mother ()

Older brother ()

Relatives ()

others ()

14. List down three main ways in which your school can help to reduce the problem of absenteeism.

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

15. List down three main ways in which your parents can help to reduce the problem of absenteeism.

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

APPENDIX III

QUESTIONNAIRE: PARENTS

Instruction

Please fill in this form to the best of your ability. Your response will be treated with strict confidence and will not be used for another purpose apart from the current research.

1. Name _____

2. Age _____

3. Level of education _____

4. Occupation _____

5. What is the distance from your home to school where your children learn? _____

6. How many children do you have in school right now?

7. Who pays school fees for your children

8. List down reasons which cause absenteeism among your children

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

iv) _____

v) _____

9. How many times last term were you called to school due to absenteeism of your child _____

10. How many days has your child been absent this term

11. List down three main ways in which you as a parent can help to reduce the problem of absenteeism

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: HEADTEACHERS

1. Name _____
2. Experience as a headteacher _____
3. What is the total number of students in your school

4. What is the total number of teachers in your school

5. Who marks the students attendance register in your school

6. How often do are the registers marked.

7. How often do you check these registers

8. Do you have cases of absentees in your school.

9. What time of the week is the attendance low

10. What time of the year do you have many absentees

11. Why do you think there are many absentees at that particular time of the year

12. Between boys and girls, in which group do you find a bigger number of absentees.

13. Which level has many absentees?

14. Why do you think there are many absentees in that level

15. Please mention the causes of student absenteeism in your school according to their frequency

16. How is the performance of absentees judging by both internal and external examination

17. Who deals with absentees cases in your school

18. Briefly say what steps are usually taken to solve the problem of absenteeism in your school.

19. Have you been successful in solving this problem

20. Briefly explain the administrative or discipline problems you face due to student absenteeism.

21. Which other groups are involved or should be involved in trying to solve the problem of absenteeism
