



# **An Investigation on the factors influencing pupil absenteeism in primary Schools, A Case Study at Mufili Primary School of Lupososhi District, Zambia**

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**Abstract-** This study provides a detailed investigation on the factors influencing pupils' absenteeism in primary schools, a case study at Mufili primary school in Northern Province using these three objectives: 1 to investigate the pupils' factors leading to absenteeism, 2 to investigate the main factors that teachers contribute to pupils absenteeism, 3 to assess the influence of family and community factors on pupils absenteeism, 4 to identify the demographic factors contributing to pupils absenteeism at Mufili primary school and 5 to propose measures on how to reduce absenteeism among the learners at Mufili primary school. The study used a qualitative research approach to collect data and quantitative approach in presenting its findings. The study sampled 35 parents, 30 learners in all grades from 1 to 7 and 15 teachers respectively, random sampling method was used to select respondents and descriptive statistics method was used by use of tables and percentages to analyse data collected from learners and teachers. The findings are that in Northern Province, absenteeism is very high especially in Mufili zone. The significance of this study is that the findings might be worthwhile to educational practitioners, policy makers, NGOs and other stakeholders and lastly, learners themselves should take keen interest in education.

**Keywords-** Truancy, family Related cause, Labelling, Phobic.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Education is not only the transfer of information, knowledge and skills from the teachers to the pupils but the actual transformation of a person to become educated. Being educated means one has access to prime states of mind no matter what kind of situation one is facing. One is able to act efficiently perceive exactly, and think clearly to accomplish ones goals and aspirations. Absenteeism at school is either deliberate or not. It has seriously led to both poor class performance and school performance at class and final examination level in all subjects. It has also greatly affected teachers' preparations. This problem is very serious in primary schools. Little is known about the effects of absenteeism on academic performance. There is, therefore, need to undertake the research. To establish the factors influencing pupil absenteeism in primary Schools, A Case Study at Mufili Primary School of Lupososhi District, Zambia.



## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Theoretical framework**

The study was based on theoretical findings of Scheff (2007), which states that students who are always absconding from school usually perform poorly in class and the situation leads them to dropping out of school. He further goes on to state that truancy (absenteeism) is a problem which is an indicator of other problems but hidden. This means that educational stake holders should not rush to condemn the absentees but try to find out why such learners stay away from school. Since at the school in question, absenteeism was found being one of the causes of poor performance, then in relation to the findings of Scheff (2007). The researcher had to find out the problems that lead to the vice and suggested possible ways of controlling it so as to improve the learner performance. That is because the education received through regularly attending school is a big instrument for developing the local residents surrounding the school and helps to seek individual competence in the future life. The theory therefore is linking to my study because at the school, learners are performing poorly due to absenteeism and a good number of them have even stopped going to school indulging themselves in bad habits of drinking beers, smoking and early marriages.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### **Research design**

Healy (2011) explains that the function of the research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables you to effectively address the research problem as unambiguously as possible. Hence in this study the researcher used a combination of mixed qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data will be employed. The qualitative method was used for the data collected using interviews. The data from respondents was extracted using questionnaires. This study was carried out at Mufili primary school.

### **Population of the study**

All teachers were used to provide required information because of their educational and teaching experience, as well as pupils from grade 1 to 7 through frequent interactions with the pupils and also to get their views on absenteeism of pupils from school, in particular, at Mufili Primary School, Lupososhi District in Northern Province.

### **Sampling procedure**

The study engaged the following sampling methods drawn from the understanding of sampling by Rubin and Babbie (2005:280-400):

- **Probability sampling strategies:**

Simple random sampling (SRS): randomly select participants from a comprehensive list of beneficiaries.



- **Stratified Random sampling:** The population was divided into subgroups (e.g rural, male/ female) and randomly selected participants.
- **Cluster sampling:** A selected random clusters of villages was done during data collection.

#### **Sample size**

In this study the total sample was 80 respondents, translating into pupils (15) girls and (15) boys, parents 15 women and 20 men and (15) teachers, who represented the characteristics of the study population and were drawn from the quotas within pupils' categories in the school and the community. This was in agreement with Creswell (2013).

#### **Sampling Area**

The case study focused on one school in Mufili Zone of Lupososhi District of Northern Province which is Mufili primary school.

#### **Sources of Data collection**

The data collection instruments were distributed to all the respondents. They were distributed so that they could answer at their convenient time. The questionnaires were administered for a high rate of turnover. The responses and observations from all respondents were collected for final analysis.

#### **Methods of data collection**

Structured questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data from the respondents in order to capture a wider information base from them. The questionnaires were used to distribute and respondents took part at their own time.

#### **Tools for Data collection**

The empirical data collection was done using tools developed by the researcher and they underwent scrutiny with the research Guide situated at DMI-St Eugene University in Mansa. A pre-test of the instruments was conducted to check the appropriateness, consistency and integrity of the questionnaires. The researcher planned and used three gathering methods which are; focus Group Discussions, questionnaires and interviews.

- Focus Group Discussions

A focus group discussion is a special type of a group of individual human beings who share the same purpose and are composed of a certain characters and guided by the same procedures on specific interest ( Selvan, 2007). In this case study 3 focus group discussions were conducted; one at primary level (1-7), one at basic level ( Form 1 to 9), one with the members of the community and the parents.

#### **In depth interviews**

Interviews are questions asked orally in order to gather information on a given topic (Rubin and Bubbie, 2005). If these questions cannot be written on a piece of paper the interview is said to be unstructured interview (kombo and Tromp, 2006). If there is a



written list of questions or topics that need to be covered during the interview then such an interview is said to be 'semi structured' or 'structured'. In this research a method of structured interview was adopted. Every informant or respondent was asked a series of similar questions in order to have a uniform but variation of understanding on the factors influencing pupils Absenteeism in primary schools.

#### **Tools for Data analysis**

Bogdan and Birklen (2007), defined data analysis as working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what to be learned. In this study, qualitative data was analysed by transcription of information basing on the research instruments used in data collection in the field. During the field work a phone was used to record and note books were used to write information as well as other specific stationeries were involved. In other words a manual method as well as a computer, especially Microsoft office programs, Google forms, sheets application system were used during data collection, presentation and analysis. During the analysis of information, the computer programs Microsoft Excel, Access, word and statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) were used to formulate charts and tables for easy interpretation of the data. All information and data addressing a particular objective was grouped together and interpretation of each was done in line with the research objectives. The researcher used content analysis techniques (analysis of the responses in preparation for presentation and discussion) to analyse data that was gathered through questionnaires and interviews

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **Sex distribution of Respondents**

Table 1. Sex distribution

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	16	53.3 %
Male	14	46.7 %



Total	80	100 %
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According to the sex distribution in table 1, 53.3% respondents were females and 46.7% were male respondents.

#### Respondents' age

From the table 2, it indicates that the majority of respondents were in the ages between 7-10 representing 12.5% of the respondents, the ages between 11-15 representing 18.75% of the respondents, and the ages 15-18 representing 6.25% of the respondents and ages 19-25 representing 31.25% of the respondents and the ages 25-50 representing 31.25% of the respondents.

Table 2. Respondent's age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
7-10	10	12.5%
11-15	15	18.75%
15-18	5	6.25%
19-25	25	31.25%
25-50	25	31.25%
Total	80	100

#### Pupils Factors Leading To Absenteeism

The figure 1 below shows that absenteeism according to respondents showed that 43.3% was caused by poverty as the possible factor, 10% was caused by poor infrastructure, 26.7% caused by peer pressure also as a possible factor and lastly, 20% caused by Pamperness from family. The table shows the respondents possible factors which influences absenteeism at Mufili primary School.

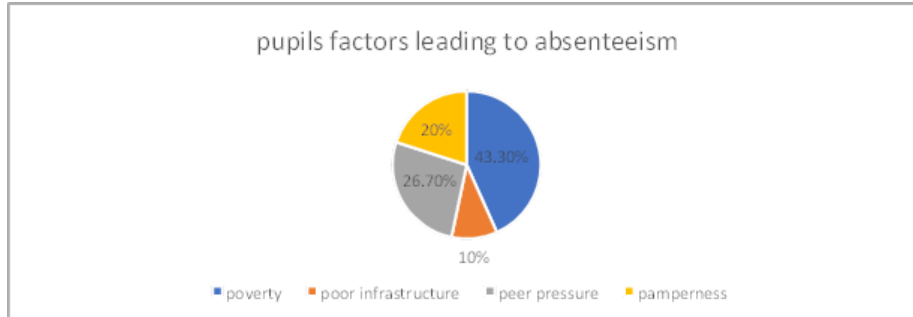


Figure 1: Chart Showing Pupils Factors Leading to Absenteeism

Table 3: Pupils Factors Leading To Absenteeism

Factor	School pupil	Percentage
Poverty	13	43.3%
Poor infrastructure	3	10%
Peer pressure	8	26.7%
Pamperness	6	20%
Total	30	100%

**Teacher's Factors Leading to pupils Absenteeism**

The table below has shown teachers factors that make it possible for pupils to absent themselves from school and results are as follows; labelling 6.7%, poor teacher approach 26.7%, contact time 20%, action and attitude 46.6%.

Table 4. Teachers Factors Leading To pupils Absenteeism

Factor	Teachers	Percentage
Labelling	1	6.7%
Contact Time	3	20%
Poor teacher approach	4	26.7%
Action and attitude	7	46.6%
Total	15	100%

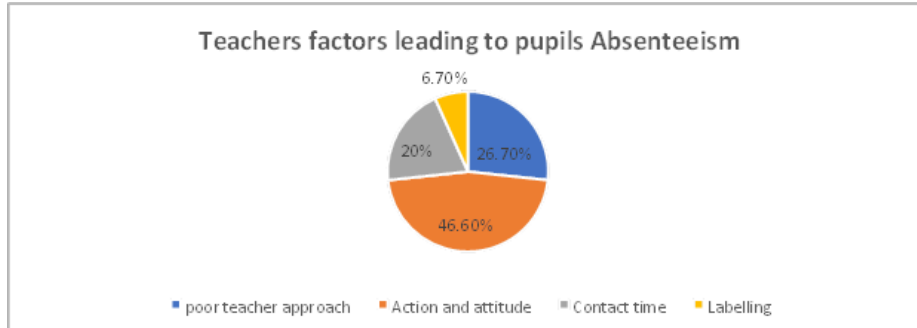


Figure 2: Chart s howing teachers factors leading to pupils absenteeism

**Parents and Community factors Leading To pupils Absenteeism**

Table 5 below shows that absenteeism according to respondents showed that 17% was caused by parental factor as the possible factor, 14.3% was caused by community factors, 11.4% was caused by family structure, 6% was caused by family expectations, 17.1% was caused by family health, 8.6% was caused by truancy, 17% was caused by lack of supervision and lastly, 8.6% was caused by family values. The table shows the respondents possible factors which influences absenteeism at Mufili primary School.

Table 5: Parents and community factors Leading to pupils Absenteeism

Factor	Parents and community	Percentage
Parental	6	17%
Community	5	14.3%
Family structure	4	11.4%
Family expectations	2	6%
Family health	6	17.1%
Truancy	3	8.6%
Lack of supervision	6	17%
Family values	3	8.6%
Total	35	100%

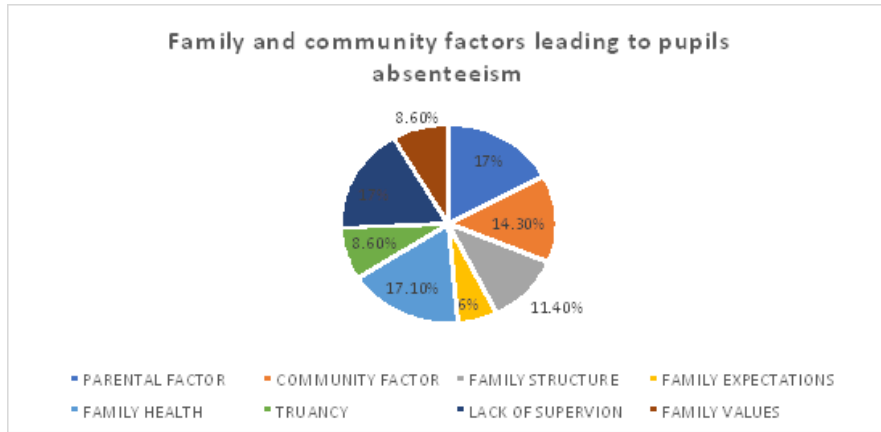


Figure 3: Chart showing parents and community factors leading to pupils absenteeism

#### Geographic factors leading to pupils absenteeism

The table below has shown geographic factors that make it possible for pupils to absent themselves from school and results are as follows; mining 33.3%, market day (Umunanda ) 33.3%, and fishing 33.3%.

Table 4. Geographic factors leading to pupils absenteeism

Factor	Teachers	Percentage
Mining	5	33.3%
Market day (Umunanda)	5	33.3%
Fishing	5	33.3%
Total	15	100%

Figure 4: Chart showing geographic factors leading to pupils absenteeism

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study revealed that there are countless factors influencing absenteeism in Zambian schools in particular at Mufili primary school. Some of the mentioned factors are; attitude, poor infrastructure, contact time, peer pressure, inferiority, health, labelling, poverty, Pamperness to mention but a few.



The study further revealed that there are leading factors that are involved in absenteeism of pupils which have been outlined in ascending order from attitude to contact time. These factors lead to absenteeism regardless of family background. As if not enough, challenges have been raised due to the absenteeism of pupils. These challenges have been dealt with by means of implementing measures to control the situation.

Frequent and positive communications with parents about attendance are needed to reduce absenteeism, this study shows the importance of consistent, two-way communication between schools and families for improving the most serious attendance problems. Research has shown that just about all families want their children to succeed in school (Irae, 2000). Many parents need help, however, in understanding how to guide their children in school, starting with helping their children to attend school regularly. All parents need to be kept informed of their children's attendance and academic progress. Communications between teachers and parents, therefore, are essential for the kinds of collaborative work that will help get pupils to school.

Absenteeism has become a big issue in the school performance of both the pupils and teachers preparation in Mufili Zone. Unless precautions are taken to administer the issue, numbers of drop outs would increase. Guardians and parents should bear in mind that what they do, children are watching, they have to secure their children's future for they may not always be there to provide everything to their children by educating their children on the importance of education.

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