



# **Absenteeism and Job Security in Zambian Government Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Damview, Chipata Trades, St. Atanazio and Hillside Girls Secondary Schools (Chipata District)**

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**Abstract-** This study investigates the relationship between teacher absenteeism and job security in selected government secondary schools in Chipata District, Zambia—namely Damview, Chipata Trades, St. Atanazio, and Hillside Girls Secondary Schools. Recognizing that teacher attendance is central to effective learning, the research sought to understand how employment conditions and perceptions of job stability influence absenteeism patterns. A mixed-methods explanatory design was employed. Quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to teachers and attendance register reviews, while qualitative insights were obtained from interviews with school administrators, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Statistical techniques, including regression analysis, were used to examine associations between job security and absenteeism, while thematic coding captured teachers’ lived experiences and perspectives. Findings revealed that teachers with permanent, pensionable positions reported higher levels of perceived job security and, paradoxically, higher rates of unauthorized absenteeism compared to contractual staff. However, job security alone did not fully account for absenteeism trends. Other significant factors included transport challenges, health-related issues, low job satisfaction, and weak enforcement of attendance policies. These results highlight the complex interplay between structural employment protections and everyday realities of teacher welfare. The study concludes that effective interventions must combine clear disciplinary measures with initiatives that enhance teacher motivation and well-being. Recommendations include strengthening daily monitoring systems, streamlining disciplinary procedures in line with labor law, piloting attendance incentives, and investing in welfare programs to support teachers. By addressing both accountability and welfare, education authorities can reduce absenteeism and improve learning outcomes in Zambia’s public schools.

**Keywords-** absenteeism, job security, teacher attendance, government schools, Zambia, Chipata District, permanent teachers, contractual teachers.



## **I. Introduction**

Teacher attendance is a fundamental requirement for effective teaching and learning in secondary schools. When teachers attend regularly, students receive uninterrupted instruction, steady syllabus progression, and structured classroom engagement, all of which improve performance in national examinations (UNESCO, 2014). In contrast, persistent absenteeism—especially unauthorized absence—causes substantial instructional loss, breaks lesson continuity, increases colleagues' workloads, leaves learners unsupervised, and contributes to declining school performance; these effects reduce both the quality and equity of education, particularly in resource constrained government schools (World Bank, 2006).

This study examines the relationship between teacher absenteeism and job security in four government secondary schools in Chipata District, Eastern Province: Damview Day Secondary School, Chipata Trades Technical Secondary School, St. Atanazio Day Secondary School, and Hillside Girls Secondary School. These urban schools serve diverse student bodies and reflect common district level challenges such as rising enrolment, limited infrastructure, and ongoing efforts to improve learning outcomes (Ministry of General Education, Zambia, 2018).

Job security in this research is defined in two ways. First, it denotes formal employment status as determined by the Teaching Service Commission—whether permanent and pensionable or employed on contract terms (Teaching Service Commission, Zambia). Second, it covers teachers' perceptions of protection from unfair dismissal, arbitrary transfers, or sudden job loss. This dual definition recognizes that attendance behaviour is shaped by both legal protections and subjective feelings of stability, fairness, and career continuity (Dasgupta & Basu, cited in labour literature).

Teacher absenteeism is a global concern. Large multi country surveys using unannounced visits found average teacher absence rates near 19%, and documented that many teachers present at school were not actively teaching during visits, evidence compiled and published by the World Bank and partner researchers (Chaudhury et al., World Bank, 2006). These findings highlight the need to address monitoring, incentives, and management alongside pay and working conditions.

Within Zambia, government reports and academic studies have repeatedly identified absenteeism as a barrier to education quality.

National education bulletins and district reviews note causes such as delayed salaries, health problems, family responsibilities, secondary income activities, inadequate housing, heavy workloads, and weak supervision; these factors are particularly acute in peri urban and rural settings (Ministry of General Education, Zambia, 2018; Mwanza, University of Zambia thesis, 2012). Case studies and policy reviews also point to slow



disciplinary procedures and weak enforcement as contributors to persistent absence (Mulenga, 2015; Chileshe, 2019).

The study draws on two contrasting theoretical perspectives. Labour economics research suggests that stronger employment protections can sometimes raise absenteeism by reducing the perceived cost of shirking where monitoring is weak (Ichino & Riphahn, Institute for the Study of Labor/IZA, 2004). Conversely, human resource management scholarship argues that genuine job security, when combined with fair pay, supportive leadership, reasonable working conditions, and professional development, can improve morale, commitment, and voluntary attendance (Armstrong, Kogan Page, 2006).

Absenteeism is shaped by a complex mix of personal, institutional, and systemic factors—transport, health, family obligations, leadership quality, workload, salary timeliness, housing, and incentive structures. To address this complexity, the study uses a mixed methods design: quantitative measures of absenteeism and statistical tests of association with job security, complemented by qualitative interviews and focus groups to capture teachers' lived experiences and motivations.

This chapter sets out the background and rationale: to investigate how job security relates to absenteeism among teachers in the four selected Chipata schools and to produce evidence based recommendations for policy and practice to improve teacher attendance and learning continuity in Zambia's public secondary schools.

### **1. Background of the Study**

Job security was defined as the assurance of continued employment and protection from unfair dismissal. Scholars such as Kaushik Basu, Partha Dasgupta, and Richard Freeman noted that job security included both legal protections and workers' perceptions of safety in their jobs. Absenteeism, on the other hand, referred to a teacher's failure to report for scheduled work. Human resource experts like Armstrong (2006) distinguished between authorized absence (approved leave) and unauthorized absence, which was unplanned and often harmful to school operations.

Studies across Africa, Asia and Latin America showed that teacher absenteeism had many causes. Chaudhury et al. (2006) found that weak monitoring, long travel distances, poor working conditions and low morale contributed to high absence rates. Similarly, Bennell & Akyeampong (2007) reported that teacher motivation problems—including delayed salaries, poor housing and limited supervision—were major contributors to absenteeism in sub-Saharan Africa. In Uganda, DeStefano (2013) found that absenteeism was strongly linked to weak school leadership and lack of accountability mechanisms.

Labour market studies provided further insight into how job security could influence attendance. Ichino & Riphahn (2004) showed that absenteeism increased after workers



gained stronger employment protection, suggesting that job security could reduce the fear of sanctions. Earlier work by Grubb & Wells (1993) also argued that strict employment protection laws could unintentionally increase absenteeism if monitoring systems were weak. These findings suggested that the relationship between job security and absenteeism depended heavily on the strength of supervision and the clarity of disciplinary procedures.

In Zambia, district education reports and Ministry of Education reviews had repeatedly highlighted teacher absenteeism as a challenge. The Ministry of Education (MoE) Education Statistical Bulletin (2018) reported that teacher absenteeism was higher in rural and peri urban schools due to transport difficulties, illness and poor housing. A study by Mwanza (2012) in Eastern Province found that teachers often missed work because of long travel distances, poor road conditions and lack of reliable transport.

Another study by Mulenga (2015) reported that head teachers struggled to enforce attendance rules because disciplinary procedures were slow and bureaucratic. In Lusaka, Chileshe (2019) found that teacher absenteeism was linked to low motivation, delayed allowances and weak supervision.

Similar patterns were observed in Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya. For example, Kadzamira (2006) in Malawi found that teacher absenteeism was linked to illness, funerals, and poor working conditions. In Tanzania, HakiElimu (2017) reported that weak monitoring and poor school leadership contributed to high absence rates. These regional findings helped situate the Zambian case within a broader African context. Despite these findings, very few Zambian studies had examined whether job security itself contributed to absenteeism. Most research focused on working conditions, motivation and supervision, leaving a gap in understanding how employment protection shaped teacher behaviour. This study therefore focused on four secondary schools in Chipata District to provide school level evidence on whether job security influenced unauthorized absenteeism and how local factors—such as leadership, transport and health—interacted with job security.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Teacher absenteeism remained one of the most persistent and disruptive challenges affecting the quality of education in Zambia. Despite the Ministry of Education (MoE) issuing clear guidelines on teacher attendance, punctuality and professional conduct, many government schools continued to record high levels of unauthorized absenteeism. The MoE Education Statistical Bulletin (2018) reported that absenteeism was particularly high in rural and peri urban districts, where teachers faced long travel distances, poor road networks, inadequate housing and weak supervision. These findings aligned with earlier research by Mwanza (2012) in Eastern Province, who observed that teachers often missed work due to unreliable transport, long commuting distances and poor living conditions. Similarly, Mulenga (2015) found that head



teachers struggled to enforce attendance rules because disciplinary procedures were slow, bureaucratic and inconsistently applied across schools.

Although several Zambian studies had examined the causes of teacher absenteeism, very few had investigated whether job security itself contributed to the problem.

Most existing research focused on factors such as low motivation, illness, family responsibilities, poor housing, and weak supervision. For example, Chileshe (2019) found that teacher absenteeism in Lusaka schools was strongly linked to delayed payments, low morale and poor working conditions. In Northern Province, Kapambwe (2017) reported that teachers frequently missed work due to illness, funerals and community obligations, which were common in rural areas. In Western Province, Simasiku (2020) found that teacher absenteeism was influenced by poor school leadership, lack of incentives and limited monitoring by district officials. However, none of these studies examined whether teachers who felt more secure in their jobs were more likely to be absent without permission.

International evidence suggested that job security could influence attendance behaviour. A well known study by Ichino and Riphahn (2004) showed that absenteeism increased after workers gained stronger employment protection, especially when monitoring systems were weak. Their findings indicated that when employees felt safe from dismissal, the immediate cost of taking unauthorized leave decreased. Earlier work by Grubb and Wells (1993) also argued that strict employment protection laws could unintentionally increase absenteeism if disciplinary procedures were slow or ineffective. These studies raised important questions for the Zambian context, where permanent teachers enjoyed strong job protection under the Teaching Service Commission, while contractual teachers had less security and faced stricter performance monitoring.

At the same time, other scholars argued that job security could improve teacher commitment. Michael Armstrong (2006) noted that employees who felt secure in their jobs were more likely to show loyalty, motivation and consistent attendance, especially when supported by good leadership and fair working conditions. African studies supported this view. For example, Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) found that teacher motivation in Sub Saharan Africa improved when teachers felt valued, respected and supported by school management. In Kenya, Bold et al. (2017) reported that absenteeism decreased in schools where teachers felt accountable and supported by strong leadership. In Malawi, Kadzamira (2006) found that teacher absenteeism was linked to illness, funerals and poor working conditions, but also noted that supportive leadership reduced absenteeism significantly.

The situation in Zambia reflected these mixed patterns. Internal reports from the Chipata District Education Board (DEB) showed that some schools struggled with chronic absenteeism among permanent teachers, while contractual teachers tended to



have lower absence rates due to fear of non renewal. In addition, the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) disciplinary procedures were often lengthy, which made it difficult for head teachers to take timely action against absenteeism. However, these observations were not supported by systematic empirical evidence. Without clear data, it was difficult to determine whether job security was a major driver of absenteeism or whether other factors, such as transport, health, or leadership, played a more significant role.

This gap in knowledge created a significant problem for policymakers and school leaders. Without clear evidence on whether job security contributed to absenteeism, it was difficult to design effective interventions that balanced fair employment protection with accountability and performance management. The lack of empirical data also limited the ability of district officials to implement targeted strategies for improving teacher attendance. As a result, schools continued to rely on general administrative measures that did not address the underlying causes of absenteeism.

Therefore, the problem this study addressed was the lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between job security and teacher absenteeism in government secondary schools in Chipata District. The study sought to determine whether job security was a contributing factor to unauthorized absenteeism and to identify how local conditions—such as transport, supervision and school leadership, interacted with job security to influence teacher attendance.

### **3. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether job security contributed to unauthorized absenteeism among teachers in government secondary schools in Chipata District. Although teacher absenteeism has been widely documented in Zambia and other African countries, very little was known about how employment protection, contract type, and perceived job stability influenced teachers' attendance behaviour. Most Zambian studies had focused on factors such as low motivation, illness, transport challenges and weak supervision, but they did not examine whether teachers who felt more secure in their jobs were more likely to be absent without permission (Mwanza, 2012; Mulenga, 2015; Chileshe, 2019).

The study therefore aimed to fill this gap by investigating whether permanent teachers, who enjoyed stronger job protection under the Teaching Service Commission, showed different absenteeism patterns compared to contractual teachers, who faced stricter monitoring and the possibility of non renewal. This question was important because international research had shown that job security could influence worker behaviour. For example, Ichino and Riphahn (2004) found that absenteeism increased after employees gained stronger employment protection, while Grubb and Wells (1993) argued that strict job security laws could unintentionally encourage absenteeism when monitoring systems were weak. These findings suggested that job security might play a role in teacher absenteeism in Zambia, but no local study had tested this relationship.



The study also sought to understand how local conditions, such as transport difficulties, school leadership, workload, and health challenges, interacted with job security to influence teacher attendance. Research in Zambia had shown that teachers in rural and peri urban areas often faced long travel distances, poor road networks and limited supervision, which contributed to absenteeism (MoE, 2018; Kapambwe, 2017). Regional studies in Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya also found that absenteeism was shaped by both personal and institutional factors, including leadership quality, community expectations and school accountability systems (Kadzamira, 2006; HakiElimu, 2017; Bold et al., 2017). These findings made it necessary to examine how job security operated within the specific context of Chipata District.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was not only to determine whether job security influenced unauthorized absenteeism, but also to provide evidence based insights that could help district education managers, head teachers and policymakers design more effective strategies for improving teacher attendance. By identifying whether job security was a contributing factor—and how it interacted with other conditions, the study aimed to support the development of balanced policies that protected teachers' rights while promoting accountability, professionalism and consistent classroom presence.

## **5. Research Objectives**

### **General Objective**

To determine whether job security contributed to unauthorized absenteeism among teachers in government secondary schools in Chipata District.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To determine the prevalence and patterns of teacher absenteeism in selected government secondary schools (Damview, Chipata Trades, St. Atanazio, and Hillside Girls Secondary Schools) in Chipata District, Zambia.
- To examine the relationship between perceived job security and levels of teacher absenteeism among educators in these selected schools.
- To identify the key factors contributing to teacher absenteeism and how perceptions of job security influence attendance behaviors in the context of Zambian government secondary schools in Chipata District.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the levels of unauthorized absenteeism among permanent and contractual teachers in Chipata District?
- How do teachers' perceptions of job security influence their attendance behaviour?
- Which school-level factors interact with job security to shape patterns of teacher absenteeism?



## 6. Significance of the Study

This study was significant for several important reasons. First, it addressed a major gap in Zambian educational research, as no previous study had examined the relationship between job security and teacher absenteeism, despite increasing concerns from district education boards, school administrators and policymakers. Existing Zambian studies had focused on issues such as teacher motivation, illness, transport challenges, delayed allowances and weak supervision (Mwanza, 2012; Mulenga, 2015; Chileshe, 2019; Kapambwe, 2017; Simasiku, 2020).

However, none had explored whether teachers who felt more secure in their jobs were more likely to be absent without permission. By focusing on job security, this study contributed new and original knowledge to an area that had been overlooked in Zambia. Second, the study was significant because its findings were expected to help the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the Chipata District Education Board (DEB) develop more effective policies for managing teacher attendance. Understanding whether job security contributed to absenteeism would help policymakers design interventions that balanced teacher rights with professional accountability. For example, if permanent teachers were found to be more frequently absent due to strong job protection, the TSC could strengthen monitoring systems, revise disciplinary procedures or introduce performance based supervision. Conversely, if contractual teachers showed higher absenteeism due to job insecurity, stress or poor working conditions, policymakers could improve support systems, induction programmes and welfare provisions. This evidence based approach would help ensure that attendance policies were fair, targeted and effective.

Third, the study contributed to the broader African and global literature on teacher absenteeism. Research from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria had shown that absenteeism was influenced by both personal and institutional factors, including leadership quality, workload, community expectations, teacher welfare and school accountability systems (Bold et al., 2017; Kadzamira, 2006; HakiElimu, 2017; DeStefano, 2013; Oduro, 2005). By adding evidence from Zambia, this study strengthened regional understanding of how job security interacted with local conditions to shape teacher behaviour. It also provided comparative insights that could be used by researchers studying absenteeism in similar contexts across Sub Saharan Africa.

Fourth, the study was significant for school leaders, especially head teachers, who often struggled to enforce attendance rules due to slow disciplinary procedures, limited authority and inconsistent support from district offices. Many head teachers reported that they lacked the tools, authority or timely backing needed to discipline teachers who frequently absented themselves. The findings of this study could help head teachers develop more targeted strategies for monitoring attendance, supporting teachers and improving school performance.



For example, the study could help school leaders identify whether absenteeism was driven by job security, poor supervision, transport challenges, low motivation or weak accountability structures.

Fifth, the study was important for teacher management and professional development. If job security was found to influence absenteeism, teacher training institutions and district offices could incorporate attendance management, professional ethics and accountability into induction programmes for new teachers. This would help promote a culture of professionalism and responsibility among teachers entering the service. It would also help the TSC refine its promotion, appraisal and disciplinary systems to ensure that job protection did not unintentionally encourage absenteeism.

Sixth, the study was significant for education planners and development partners. Organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank had emphasized the importance of teacher attendance in improving learning outcomes in developing countries (UNESCO, 2014; World Bank, 2018). By providing empirical evidence from Zambia, the study contributed to global efforts to strengthen teacher management systems and improve learning outcomes in low resource settings.

Finally, the study was significant for learners and communities. Teacher absenteeism has been shown to reduce learning outcomes, increase dropout rates and weaken community trust in public schools (Chaudhury et al., 2006; Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). By identifying the factors that contributed to absenteeism, the study supported efforts to improve learner performance, strengthen community confidence and enhance the overall quality of education in Chipata District and Zambia as a whole.

### **7. Limitations of the Study**

The study had several limitations that needed to be acknowledged. First, it focused on four secondary schools in Chipata District, which meant that the findings might not fully represent all schools in Zambia. Different districts had different challenges, such as varying levels of supervision, transport conditions, teacher accommodation and school leadership styles. Therefore, the results could not be generalized to all regions without caution.

Second, the study relied partly on school attendance registers, which could contain inaccuracies due to inconsistent record keeping. Some schools did not update registers daily, while others recorded attendance retrospectively. In some cases, teachers signed the register even when they were not present, a problem noted in earlier Zambian studies (Mulenga, 2015; MoE, 2018). This meant that some absenteeism data might not have reflected the exact situation on the ground.

Third, the study used self reported data from teachers through questionnaires and interviews. Some teachers might have under reported their absenteeism due to fear of



judgment, disciplinary action or social desirability bias. Although confidentiality was assured, the possibility of biased responses could not be completely eliminated.

Fourth, the study examined job security and absenteeism at one point in time, which limited the ability to capture long term trends or seasonal variations. Teacher absenteeism often fluctuated during examination periods, rainy seasons, agricultural seasons and times of illness outbreaks. A longitudinal study would have provided a more complete picture of how job security influenced absenteeism over time.

Fifth, the study did not include primary schools, which formed the largest part of Zambia's education system. Absenteeism patterns in primary schools might differ due to larger class sizes, different workloads, community expectations and different levels of supervision.

Sixth, the study did not examine salary delays, housing shortages or health related absenteeism in depth, even though these factors had been shown to influence teacher attendance in Zambia and other African countries (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Kadzamira, 2006). These factors might have interacted with job security in ways that were not fully captured.

Despite these limitations, the study provided valuable insights into how job security influenced teacher absenteeism in the Zambian context. It offered a strong foundation for future research and provided practical recommendations for policymakers, district officials and school leaders.

## **8. Chapter One Summary**

Chapter One introduced the study by explaining the problem of teacher absenteeism in government secondary schools in Chipata District. The chapter showed that absenteeism remained a major challenge in Zambia, affecting teaching time, learner performance and overall school effectiveness. Although many studies in Zambia had examined causes such as transport difficulties, illness, low motivation and weak supervision, none had investigated whether job security contributed to unauthorized absenteeism. This gap in knowledge formed the basis of the study.

The chapter also presented the purpose of the study, which was to determine whether job security influenced unauthorized absenteeism among teachers. It outlined the general and specific objectives, which focused on comparing absenteeism between permanent and contractual teachers, examining teachers' perceptions of job security, and identifying school level factors that interacted with job security to influence attendance. Research questions were developed to guide the investigation.

The significance of the study was highlighted, showing its importance to the Ministry of Education, the Teaching Service Commission, district education managers, school leaders, and researchers. The study was expected to provide evidence that could help



improve teacher attendance, strengthen accountability systems and support policy development. The chapter also acknowledged the limitations of the study, including its focus on four schools, reliance on school registers and self reported data, and the cross sectional nature of the research.

Overall, Chapter One established the foundation for the study by presenting the background, problem, purpose, objectives, research questions, significance and limitations, setting the stage for the detailed literature review in Chapter Two.

## **II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **1. Overview**

This section introduced the broader context of teacher absenteeism and explained why it remained a major concern for education systems globally, regionally and nationally. Teacher absenteeism had been widely recognized as one of the most persistent barriers to quality education because it reduced instructional time, disrupted learning continuity and weakened school performance. According to Chaudhury et al. (2006), teacher absenteeism averaged 19% across developing countries, with even higher rates in rural and hard to reach areas. Their multi country study in India, Indonesia, Uganda, Bangladesh and Peru showed that absenteeism was strongly linked to weak monitoring, poor working conditions and low motivation.

Globally, absenteeism had been studied in various contexts. UNESCO (2014) reported that teacher absenteeism was a major contributor to learning losses in low income countries. Rogers & Vegas (2009) found that absenteeism was influenced by teacher welfare, school climate, and leadership and accountability systems. In India, Muralidharan et al. (2017) found that absenteeism was strongly associated with weak supervision and lack of incentives. In Indonesia, Suryadarma et al. (2006) found that absenteeism was influenced by poor working conditions, long travel distances and weak leadership. These global studies demonstrated that absenteeism was a systemic issue requiring strong leadership, effective monitoring and supportive working conditions.

In Africa, teacher absenteeism had been documented in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and South Africa. Bold et al. (2017) found that absenteeism in Kenya was strongly linked to weak accountability systems and poor school leadership. Kadzamira (2006) reported that absenteeism in Malawi was influenced by illness, funerals, poor housing and long travel distances. HakiElimu (2017) in Tanzania found that weak supervision and poor working conditions contributed significantly to teacher absenteeism. In Uganda, DeStefano (2013) found that absenteeism was influenced by poor leadership, lack of incentives and weak monitoring. In Nigeria, Adeniji (2019) found that absenteeism was influenced by low motivation, poor welfare and weak disciplinary systems. These African studies showed that absenteeism was shaped by both personal and institutional factors.



In Zambia, teacher absenteeism had been studied in several districts, but most studies focused on motivation, working conditions and supervision rather than job security. Makumba (2020) found that teacher demotivation in Kasama District was caused by poor working conditions, low salaries, delayed promotions and negative community perceptions, all of which contributed to absenteeism. Chanda et al. (2023) examined absenteeism in Mporokoso District and found that weak supervision, poor leadership and lack of accountability contributed to high absenteeism levels. Chansa (2025) found that absenteeism in Kasama District negatively affected learner performance, especially in primary schools. Other Zambian studies such as Mwanza (2012), Mulenga (2015) and Kapambwe (2017) found that absenteeism was influenced by transport challenges, illness, funerals, poor housing, delayed allowances and weak supervision. The Ministry of Education (2018) also reported that absenteeism was higher in rural and peri urban areas due to long travel distances, poor roads and weak monitoring.

However, none of these Zambian studies examined whether job security influenced absenteeism. This gap was important because permanent teachers in Zambia enjoyed strong job protection under the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), while contractual teachers faced stricter monitoring and the risk of non renewal. International studies such as Ichino & Riphahn (2004) showed that absenteeism increased when job security increased, especially when monitoring was weak. Grubb & Wells (1993) also argued that strong employment protection could unintentionally encourage absenteeism when disciplinary procedures were slow. This raised important questions for the Zambian context, where disciplinary procedures were often slow and bureaucratic.

Therefore, this overview established the foundation for the literature review by highlighting the global, regional and national patterns of absenteeism, identifying the main factors influencing absenteeism, and showing the gap in Zambian research regarding the role of job security. The next section reviewed empirical studies in more detail.

## **2. Empirical Literature Review**

Empirical studies on teacher absenteeism had been conducted across the world, and they consistently showed that absenteeism was a complex issue influenced by personal, institutional and environmental factors. This section reviewed global, African and Zambian studies to highlight what was known and what gaps remained, particularly regarding the role of job security.

### **Global Empirical Studies**

Globally, teacher absenteeism had been widely studied because of its strong link to poor learning outcomes. Chaudhury et al. (2006) conducted a landmark study across India, Indonesia, Uganda, Bangladesh and Peru and found an average absenteeism rate of 19%, with rural schools recording even higher rates. Their study showed that absenteeism was influenced by weak monitoring, poor working conditions, long travel distances and low motivation.



In India, Muralidharan et al. (2017) found that absenteeism was strongly associated with weak supervision, lack of incentives and poor school infrastructure. Their study showed that teachers were more likely to be absent in schools where head teachers rarely conducted classroom observations. Kremer et al. (2005) also found that absenteeism in India was influenced by poor accountability systems and lack of sanctions for unauthorized absence.

In Indonesia, Suryadarma et al. (2006) found that absenteeism was influenced by poor working conditions, long travel distances and weak leadership. They noted that teachers in remote areas were more likely to be absent due to transport challenges and poor school infrastructure. In Peru, Alcázar et al. (2006) found that absenteeism was influenced by poor monitoring and lack of accountability, especially in rural schools. In Latin America, Bruns & Luque (2014) found that absenteeism was influenced by teacher welfare, school climate and leadership. They reported that absenteeism was higher in schools with poor leadership, weak supervision and low teacher morale. In the United States, Clotfelter et al. (2009) found that absenteeism was influenced by teacher burnout, workload and school climate.

These global studies demonstrated that absenteeism was a systemic issue influenced by multiple factors, including leadership, supervision, working conditions, motivation and accountability. However, very few global studies examined the role of job security, even though employment protection laws varied widely across countries.

#### **African Empirical Studies**

In Africa, teacher absenteeism had been documented in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and South Africa. Bold et al. (2017) found that absenteeism in Kenya was strongly linked to weak accountability systems and poor school leadership. Their study showed that teachers were more likely to be absent in schools where head teachers rarely monitored attendance or conducted classroom observations.

In Malawi, Kadzamira (2006) reported that absenteeism was influenced by illness, funerals, poor housing and long travel distances. She noted that teachers in rural areas often faced transport challenges, which made it difficult for them to report for work consistently. In Tanzania, HakiElimu (2017) found that weak supervision and poor working conditions contributed significantly to teacher absenteeism. Their study showed that absenteeism was higher in schools with poor infrastructure, lack of teaching materials and weak leadership.

In Uganda, DeStefano (2013) found that absenteeism was influenced by poor leadership, lack of incentives and weak monitoring. He noted that absenteeism was higher in schools where head teachers lacked the authority or resources to enforce attendance rules. In Nigeria, Adeniji (2019) found that absenteeism was influenced by low motivation, poor welfare and weak disciplinary systems. He reported that teachers



were more likely to be absent when they felt undervalued or unsupported by school leadership.

In South Africa, Van der Berg et al. (2016) found that absenteeism was influenced by teacher burnout, workload and poor school climate. They noted that absenteeism was higher in schools with large class sizes, heavy workloads and poor leadership. In Ghana, Oduro (2005) found that absenteeism was influenced by poor leadership, low motivation and weak accountability.

These African studies showed that absenteeism was influenced by both personal and institutional factors, including leadership, supervision, working conditions, motivation, transport and welfare. However, very few African studies examined the role of job security, even though employment protection laws varied widely across countries.

### **Zambian Empirical Studies**

In Zambia, several studies had examined teacher absenteeism, but most focused on motivation, working conditions and supervision rather than job security. Makumba (2020) found that teacher demotivation in Kasama District was caused by poor working conditions, low salaries, delayed promotions and negative community perceptions, all of which contributed to absenteeism. He noted that teachers were more likely to be absent when they felt undervalued or unsupported by school leadership.

Chanda et al. (2023) examined absenteeism in Mporokoso District and found that weak supervision, poor leadership and lack of accountability contributed to high absenteeism levels. Their study showed that absenteeism was higher in schools where head teachers rarely monitored attendance or conducted classroom observations. Chansa (2025) found that absenteeism in Kasama District negatively affected learner performance, especially in primary schools. He noted that absenteeism reduced instructional time and weakened learner outcomes.

Other Zambian studies such as Mwanza (2012), Mulenga (2015) and Kapambwe (2017) found that absenteeism was influenced by transport challenges, illness, funerals, poor housing, delayed allowances and weak supervision. The Ministry of Education (2018) also reported that absenteeism was higher in rural and peri urban areas due to long travel distances, poor roads and weak monitoring. Simasiku (2020) found that absenteeism in Western Province was influenced by poor leadership, lack of incentives and weak supervision.

However, none of these Zambian studies examined whether job security influenced absenteeism. This gap was important because permanent teachers in Zambia enjoyed strong job protection under the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), while contractual teachers faced stricter monitoring and the risk of non renewal. International studies such as Ichino & Riphahn (2004) showed that absenteeism increased when job security increased, especially when monitoring was weak.



Grubb & Wells (1993) also argued that strong employment protection could unintentionally encourage absenteeism when disciplinary procedures were slow.

This gap justified the need for the present study, which examined whether job security contributed to unauthorized absenteeism among teachers in government secondary schools in Chipata District.

### **3. Theoretical Review**

This section reviewed the major theories that explained how job security could influence teacher absenteeism. The theories provided the intellectual foundation for interpreting teacher behaviour in relation to employment protection, motivation, and supervision and workplace expectations. Four theories were particularly relevant to this study: Employment Protection Theory, Human Resource Management Motivation Theory, Expectancy Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. Together, these theories helped explain why teachers with different levels of job security might behave differently in terms of attendance.

#### **Employment Protection Theory**

Employment Protection Theory argued that the level of job security an employee enjoyed influenced their work behaviour, including absenteeism. According to Ichino and Riphahn (2004), employees tended to increase absenteeism once they gained stronger job protection, especially after probation periods. Their study in Germany showed that absenteeism rose significantly once workers became permanent, suggesting that strong job security reduced the perceived cost of being absent.

Similarly, Grubb and Wells (1993) argued that strict employment protection laws could unintentionally encourage absenteeism when disciplinary procedures were slow or ineffective. They noted that employees were more likely to take unauthorized leave when they believed that sanctions were unlikely or delayed.

This theory was highly relevant to Zambia, where permanent teachers were protected under the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). Studies by Mulenga (2015) and Chileshe (2019) found that disciplinary processes in Zambian schools were often slow, bureaucratic and inconsistently applied. As a result, permanent teachers might have felt less pressure to maintain consistent attendance, while contractual teachers—who faced the risk of non renewal—were more cautious.

Employment Protection Theory therefore provided a strong explanation for why job security might contribute to absenteeism in Zambian secondary schools.

#### **Human Resource Management (HRM) Motivation Theory**

Human Resource Management Motivation Theory emphasized the positive effects of job security on employee behaviour. According to Michael Armstrong (2006), employees who felt secure in their jobs were more likely to show loyalty, commitment



and consistent attendance. Job security was seen as a key component of employee motivation, especially when combined with supportive leadership, fair treatment and good working conditions.

African studies supported this perspective. Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) found that teacher motivation in Sub Saharan Africa improved when teachers felt valued, respected and supported by school management. They argued that job security could enhance teacher morale and reduce absenteeism when teachers perceived their work environment as fair and supportive.

In Malawi, Kadzamira (2006) reported that teachers with stable employment were more committed to their work, especially when school leadership was strong. In Tanzania, HakiElimu (2017) found that supportive leadership reduced absenteeism by improving teacher morale and strengthening accountability.

In Zambia, Makumba (2020) found that teachers who felt valued and supported by school leadership were less likely to be absent. This suggested that job security, when combined with supportive leadership, could reduce absenteeism.

HRM Motivation Theory therefore provided a contrasting perspective to Employment Protection Theory by emphasizing the positive effects of job security on attendance.

### **Expectancy Theory**

Expectancy Theory, introduced by Victor H. Vroom in *Work and Motivation* (1964), explains motivation as a cognitive process in which individuals assess the likelihood that their effort will produce desired outcomes. The model rests on three interdependent components: Expectancy (the belief that effort will lead to improved performance), Instrumentality (the belief that performance will be followed by specific outcomes), and Valence (the value the individual places on those outcomes). When all three links are perceived as strong, motivation to act is high; when any link is weak, motivation declines (Vroom, 1964; Armstrong, 2006).

Applied to teacher attendance, Expectancy Theory predicts that teachers will be more likely to attend school and engage in classroom duties when they believe their presence and effort will be noticed (Expectancy), when they perceive a reliable connection between good attendance and concrete outcomes such as recognition, promotion, or allowances (Instrumentality), and when those outcomes are personally meaningful (Valence). If supervisors do not observe or document effort, if performance is not tied to timely rewards or sanctions, or if available rewards are of little value to teachers, one or more links in the expectancy chain will be weak and absenteeism becomes more likely (Vroom, 1964; Armstrong, 2006).

Empirical and policy literature supports the relevance of these mechanisms for education systems similar to Zambia's. Large multi country studies and World Bank



analyses have shown that weak monitoring and unclear incentive structures are associated with elevated teacher absence rates, underscoring the importance of instrumentality in shaping attendance behaviour (Chaudhury et al., World Bank, 2006). Local research cited in this report—such as Mwanza (2012) and Simasiku (2020)—documents teacher perceptions that attendance is poorly linked to rewards or sanctions, and describes slow disciplinary procedures and inconsistent supervision that reduce perceived instrumentality and lower motivation to attend.

Expectancy Theory also clarifies the complex relationship between job security and absenteeism observed in the Chipata context. Permanent (pensionable) employment may increase the long term valence of career outcomes but, where monitoring and enforcement are weak, it can reduce perceived instrumentality because teachers feel insulated from immediate consequences. Conversely, contractual status may lower perceived job security while increasing perceived instrumentality if disciplinary measures are applied more promptly. Thus, employment status alone does not determine attendance; the perceived strength of the effort→performance→reward links mediates how job security affects behaviour.

For this study, Expectancy Theory suggests concrete measurement and analytic strategies. Survey instruments should include items that operationalize Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence (for example, Likert items on whether effort is noticed, whether good attendance leads to rewards, and how much teachers value those rewards). These measures can be tested as mediators in regression models linking employment status (permanent vs contractual) to unauthorized absence days, while controlling for transport, health, job satisfaction, and enforcement of attendance policies.

Policy implications derived from the theory are straightforward: strengthen all three links to reduce absenteeism. Practical steps include improving supervisory observation and feedback so effort is visible (raising Expectancy); ensuring transparent, timely, and enforceable links between attendance/performance and outcomes, both positive and negative (strengthening Instrumentality); and designing rewards that teachers actually value, such as career progression opportunities, targeted welfare supports, or transport/housing assistance (increasing Valence). Combined, these measures address both accountability and welfare, reducing the conditions under which absenteeism is rationalized (Vroom, 1964; Armstrong, 2006; Chaudhury et al., 2006).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Peter M. Blau's Social Exchange Theory conceptualises workplace behaviour as reciprocal social interactions: employees respond to the treatment they receive from their organisation, and positive treatment elicits reciprocal positive behaviours (Blau, 1964, John Wiley & Sons). Blau argued that social rewards (respect, recognition, trust) and material rewards (pay, promotion) operate together in informal exchange systems; when teachers perceive that school leaders treat them fairly and supportively, they



develop a felt obligation to reciprocate through commitment, effort, and reliable attendance (Blau, 1964).

Empirical reviews and theoretical syntheses have extended Blau's insights into organisational settings. Research on organisational support and exchange shows that perceived organisational support and procedural justice are robust predictors of employee commitment and discretionary behaviours (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Eisenberger and colleagues demonstrated that employees who feel supported by their employer report higher commitment and lower withdrawal behaviours (Eisenberger et al., 1986, *Journal of Applied Psychology*). Cropanzano and Mitchell's review synthesised social exchange mechanisms across organisational research and highlighted reciprocity, trust, and perceived obligation as central processes linking support to behaviour (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, *Journal of Management*).

Applied to schools, Social Exchange Theory predicts that teacher attendance improves when head teachers demonstrate fairness, provide timely welfare support, and recognize teacher contributions. Sector studies corroborate this: multi country education analyses and country case studies link stronger perceived support and fair leadership to lower teacher absence (Chaudhury et al., 2006, World Bank). In Ghana, Oduro (2005) found that teachers who reported respectful and supportive leadership exhibited greater organisational commitment and lower absence rates (Oduro, 2005). In Uganda, DeStefano (2013) reported reductions in absenteeism where school administrators actively engaged teachers and addressed welfare concerns (DeStefano, 2013).

Zambian research similarly supports the exchange perspective. Field studies and theses in Zambia document that teachers who perceive supportive leadership, transparent handling of welfare issues, and fair disciplinary procedures are more likely to attend regularly; conversely, perceptions of neglect or unfair treatment correlate with higher absence (Kapambwe, 2017; Chileshe, 2019). These local findings align with the broader literature showing that perceived organisational support and procedural justice strengthen reciprocal obligations and reduce withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Blau, 1964).

Mechanistically, Social Exchange Theory explains absenteeism through three interacting processes relevant to this report. First, perceived organisational support creates a felt obligation: teachers who believe the school values their contribution reciprocate by being present and engaged (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Second, procedural justice affects legitimacy: when rewards and sanctions are applied transparently and consistently, teachers accept accountability and are less likely to shirk (Colquitt et al., 2001). Third, relational bonds and social norms, peer expectations, collegial solidarity, and leader-teacher trust, reinforce attendance through informal



encouragement and social sanctions; weak relational ties reduce these informal controls and make formal rules less effective (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

For the Chipata study, Social Exchange Theory implies that job security interacts with leadership and climate. Permanent (pensionable) teachers may have stronger long term attachment to the profession, but if leadership is perceived as unsupportive or unfair, the reciprocal obligation weakens and absenteeism can increase despite formal protections. Conversely, contractual teachers who experience strong relational support may demonstrate high attendance even without formal job security. Thus, leadership style and school climate can mediate or moderate the relationship between employment status and absenteeism; measuring perceived organisational support, procedural justice, and leader–member exchange will be essential to unpack these dynamics.

Policy and measurement implications. To operationalize Social Exchange Theory in this study, include validated scales for Perceived Organisational Support (POS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986), Procedural Justice (Colquitt, 2001), and Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and test them as mediators between job security (permanent vs contractual) and unauthorized absence days. Qualitative interviews and FGDs should probe teachers’ narratives of reciprocity, trust, and fairness to capture informal exchange dynamics. Interventions that strengthen perceived support—regular respectful communication from head teachers, timely responses to welfare needs (transport, housing, health), transparent recognition systems, and consistently applied disciplinary procedures—are likely to reduce absenteeism by rebuilding reciprocal obligations and trust (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Chaudhury et al., 2006).

#### **Relevance of the Theoretical Review to the Study**

The four theories reviewed in this section provided a strong foundation for understanding how job security influenced teacher absenteeism. Employment Protection Theory explained how strong job security could increase absenteeism by reducing the perceived cost of being absent. HRM Motivation Theory explained how job security could increase commitment and reduce absenteeism when combined with supportive leadership.

Expectancy Theory explained how teachers’ beliefs about rewards and sanctions influenced their attendance behaviour. Social Exchange Theory explained how leadership style and school climate influenced teacher commitment and absenteeism.

Together, these theories helped the study interpret the complex relationship between job security, teacher behaviour and school level conditions in Chipata District.

#### **4. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study illustrated how job security was expected to influence teacher absenteeism, and how this relationship was shaped by a range of individual, school level, work related and environmental factors. The framework was



developed from the theoretical perspectives reviewed earlier and from empirical evidence across global, African and Zambian contexts. It was also informed by the 2024 systematic conceptual model on teacher absenteeism by García Carrizosa and De Witte (2024), which identified more than 40 variables influencing absenteeism across multiple domains. This made the framework comprehensive and aligned with contemporary research trends.

The central independent variable in the framework was job security, conceptualised in two dimensions: objective job security and subjective job security. Objective job security referred to formal employment conditions such as permanent status under the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), tenure, legal protection from dismissal and predictable salary structures.

Zambian studies (Mulenga, 2015; Chileshe, 2019) showed that permanent teachers enjoyed strong job protection, and disciplinary processes were often slow and bureaucratic. Subjective job security referred to teachers' perceptions of their job stability, including confidence in continued employment, perceived fairness of disciplinary procedures and fear (or lack of fear) of sanctions. International labour market studies (Ichino & Riphahn, 2004; Grubb & Wells, 1993) demonstrated that perceived job stability strongly influenced attendance behaviour.

The dependent variable in the framework was unauthorized teacher absenteeism, defined as absence without permission or valid reasons. This included failure to report for duty, late arrival, early departure and "hidden absenteeism," where teachers were present at school but not teaching (Chaudhury et al., 2006).

Zambian studies (Makumba, 2020; Chanda et al., 2023; Chansa, 2025) consistently showed that absenteeism reduced instructional time and negatively affected learner performance, making it a critical issue for school effectiveness.

The relationship between job security and absenteeism did not occur in isolation. It was shaped by several mediating and moderating factors identified in global, African and Zambian studies, and reinforced by the 2024 conceptual model. School leadership and supervision were among the strongest moderators. Studies in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia (Bold et al., 2017; HakiElimu, 2017; MoGE, 2018) showed that strong leadership reduced absenteeism, while weak supervision increased it. Work environment and conditions also played a major role. Poor infrastructure, lack of teaching materials and inadequate housing increased absenteeism (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Kadzamira, 2006), while supportive environments reduced it.

Transport and distance to school were also important moderators. Long distances and poor roads increased absenteeism in rural Zambia (Mwanza, 2012; MoGE, 2018), especially during the rainy season. Teacher motivation and welfare further shaped attendance behaviour. Low salaries, delayed allowances and poor welfare increased



absenteeism (Makumba, 2020; Adeniji, 2019), while motivation improved when teachers felt valued and supported. Workload and class size contributed to burnout and absenteeism (Van der Berg et al., 2016), while balanced workloads improved attendance. Health and family responsibilities were also major causes of absenteeism in Zambia (Kapambwe, 2017; Mulenga, 2015). Finally, accountability and monitoring systems played a critical role. Weak monitoring increased absenteeism (Chaudhury et al., 2006; DeStefano, 2013), while strong accountability reduced it.

The conceptual framework assumed that job security could influence absenteeism in multiple ways.

High job security among permanent teachers could increase absenteeism when monitoring was weak, as predicted by Employment Protection Theory (Ichino & Riphahn, 2004). However, high job security could also reduce absenteeism when teachers felt valued and supported, as suggested by Human Resource Management Motivation Theory (Armstrong, 2006).

Low job security among contractual teachers could reduce absenteeism due to fear of non renewal, but it could also increase absenteeism if insecurity caused stress or low morale. The moderating factors, such as leadership, supervision, motivation and transport, determined the direction and strength of these relationships.

Overall, the conceptual framework provided a clear and comprehensive structure for examining how job security interacted with school level and personal factors to influence teacher absenteeism in Chipata District. It guided the formulation of research questions, objectives and data collection tools, and ensured that the study was grounded in both theory and empirical evidence.

## 5. Research Gap

Although teacher absenteeism had been widely studied globally, regionally and nationally, a significant gap remained in understanding how job security influenced absenteeism in Zambia. Most global studies focused on absenteeism as a general phenomenon, examining factors such as weak supervision, poor working conditions, long travel distances and low motivation (Chaudhury et al., 2006; Rogers & Vegas, 2009; Muralidharan et al., 2017). While these studies provided valuable insights, they did not specifically examine how employment protection or job stability shaped attendance behaviour among teachers.

In Africa, research in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria highlighted the role of leadership, welfare, transport challenges and weak accountability systems in influencing absenteeism (Bold et al., 2017; Kadzamira, 2006; HakiElimu, 2017; DeStefano, 2013; Adeniji, 2019). However, these studies also did not explore the relationship between job security and absenteeism, despite the fact that employment



protection laws varied widely across African countries. This left a gap in understanding how job stability interacted with school level conditions to influence teacher behaviour. In Zambia, several studies had examined teacher absenteeism, but they focused on factors such as motivation, transport challenges, illness, funerals, delayed allowances and weak supervision (Mwanza, 2012; Mulenga, 2015; Kapambwe, 2017). Recent studies such as Makumba (2020), Chanda et al. (2023) and Chansa (2025) confirmed that absenteeism remained a major challenge affecting learner performance and school effectiveness.

However, none of these studies examined whether job security contributed to absenteeism. This omission was significant because permanent teachers in Zambia enjoyed strong job protection under the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), while contractual teachers faced stricter monitoring and the risk of non renewal.

International labour market research showed that job security could influence absenteeism. Ichino and Riphahn (2004) found that absenteeism increased when workers gained stronger employment protection, especially when monitoring was weak. Grubb and Wells (1993) similarly argued that strict employment protection could unintentionally encourage absenteeism when disciplinary procedures were slow. These findings raised important questions for Zambia, where disciplinary processes were often bureaucratic and inconsistently enforced (Chileshe, 2019; MoGE, 2018).

Another gap in Zambian research was the lack of comparative studies examining differences in absenteeism between permanent and contractual teachers. No study had investigated whether contractual teachers, who faced the possibility of non renewal—were more likely to maintain consistent attendance than permanent teachers.

Additionally, no study had explored how job security interacted with moderating factors such as leadership, supervision, workload, transport and teacher welfare, despite evidence that these factors strongly influenced absenteeism (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Van der Berg et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the 2024 systematic conceptual model by García Carrizosa and De Witte identified more than 40 variables influencing teacher absenteeism across individual, school, work and environmental domains. Yet, Zambian studies had not integrated this contemporary model into their analyses, leaving a modern conceptual gap in the literature.

Therefore, the present study addressed a critical gap by examining whether job security influenced unauthorized absenteeism among teachers in government secondary schools in Chipata District.

It also explored how job security interacted with school level and personal factors, providing new evidence that had not been previously documented in Zambia.



## 6. Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed international, regional and Zambian literature on teacher absenteeism and job security, synthesizing evidence from global reports, African case studies and local research. At the global level, multi country analyses highlight that teacher absence is often a systemic problem linked to weak monitoring, unclear incentives and institutional capacity constraints (World Bank, 2006; UNESCO, 2014). Regional studies from sub-Saharan Africa emphasise the role of teacher welfare, transport and housing constraints, and school leadership in shaping attendance patterns (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Kadzamira, 2006). Zambian policy documents and academic work point to proximate causes such as delayed salaries, health problems, family responsibilities, secondary income activities, inadequate housing, heavy workloads and inconsistent enforcement of attendance rules (Ministry of General Education, Zambia, 2018; Mwanza, 2012; Chileshe, 2019).

The chapter organised these findings into interacting explanatory domains. Structural constraints (for example, transport and health) create practical barriers to daily attendance, while organisational factors (leadership style, supervision quality, clarity and speed of disciplinary procedures) determine whether absence is noticed and sanctioned. Motivational elements (job satisfaction, perceived fairness, and career prospects) influence teachers' willingness to invest discretionary effort. Employment conditions (permanent versus contractual status and perceived job security) shape both incentives and the psychological context in which teachers interpret rewards and sanctions. The review emphasised that these factors rarely operate in isolation; instead, they combine in context specific ways to produce observed patterns of absenteeism (Ichino & Riphahn, 2004; Armstrong, 2006).

A central outcome of the literature review was the identification of a clear research gap. Although several Zambian and regional studies document proximate drivers of absenteeism (welfare, transport, supervision), few have explicitly tested whether and how formal job security (permanent/pensionable status) contributes to unauthorized absence, or systematically compared absenteeism between permanent and contractual teachers while controlling for welfare and supervision variables (Mulenga, 2015; Simasiku, 2020).

This gap matters because employment status may interact with perceived enforcement and organisational support in complex ways: formal protections can either reduce fear of sanctions (potentially increasing shirking where monitoring is weak) or strengthen long term commitment (potentially reducing absence when combined with supportive leadership) (Grubb & Wells, 1993; Ichino & Riphahn, 2004).

The chapter also presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the study. Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) provides a mechanism linking effort, perceived performance and valued outcomes, while Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986) explains how perceived organisational support, fairness



and reciprocity shape discretionary behaviours such as attendance. These frameworks offer testable pathways through which job security, leadership, welfare and monitoring may influence absenteeism.

Finally, the chapter justified the mixed methods design adopted for the study. Quantitative analysis is needed to measure and compare unauthorized absence across employment categories and to test mediating perceptions (expectancy, instrumentality, valence, perceived organisational support), while qualitative interviews and focus groups are necessary to capture teachers' lived experiences, informal exchange dynamics and contextual nuances that surveys may miss. Filling the identified gap will produce actionable evidence for policy, specifically, how to combine accountability measures with welfare and leadership interventions to reduce absenteeism and improve instructional continuity in Zambia's government secondary schools (World Bank, 2006; Ministry of Education, Zambia, 2018)

### **III. Research Methodology**

#### **1. Overview**

This chapter explains in detail the methods and procedures that were used to investigate absenteeism and job security in four government secondary schools in Chipata District. The chapter is important because it shows how the study was planned, how participants were selected, how data was collected, and how the findings were analysed. A clear methodology helps the reader understand the strength of the study and gives confidence that the results are trustworthy. According to Creswell (2014), a strong methodology chapter must describe the research process in a way that allows another researcher to repeat the study under similar conditions.

Absenteeism and job security are sensitive and complex issues in the Zambian education system. Several studies have shown that teacher absenteeism is a major challenge in many African countries, including Zambia. For example, a World Bank (2020) report found that teacher absenteeism in Sub Saharan Africa averages between 15% and 25%, with Zambia falling within this range. UNICEF Zambia (2018) also reported that absenteeism contributes to poor learning outcomes, especially in rural and peri urban schools. Locally, Muyatwa (2018) found that absenteeism in Nyimba District was influenced by factors such as poor supervision, low motivation, and personal challenges faced by teachers. Mulenga (2020) also observed that job insecurity and unclear promotion procedures contributed to teacher stress and absenteeism in Lusaka Province.

Because of the sensitivity of these issues, the methodology for this study was designed to ensure confidentiality, respect, and accuracy. The chapter begins by explaining the research design used in the study. It then describes the population from which participants were drawn, followed by the sampling procedures and sample size. The chapter also outlines the sources of data, the methods used to collect data, and the



instruments that were used. After that, the chapter explains how the data was analysed and how the researcher ensured validity, reliability, and trustworthiness. Finally, the chapter discusses ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and difficulties faced during the research process.

The methodology used in this study follows established practices in educational research. For example, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) emphasise the importance of using multiple data collection methods to strengthen the credibility of findings. Similarly, Yin (2018) argues that case study research is most effective when it uses several sources of evidence, such as interviews, observations, and documents. This study followed these recommendations by using questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document analysis.

## **2. Research Design**

This study used a descriptive case study design. A research design is the overall plan that guides the researcher in collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. The descriptive case study design was chosen because it allows the researcher to study a real life situation in depth and to understand the experiences of people within their natural environment. Yin (2018) explains that a case study is useful when the researcher wants to explore a phenomenon within its real context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear.

Absenteeism and job security are influenced by many factors, including school leadership, teacher motivation, workload, personal challenges, and administrative policies. These factors interact in complex ways, making it difficult to study them outside their natural environment. A case study design allows the researcher to observe these interactions as they occur in real school settings. This makes the design suitable for exploring the experiences of teachers, administrators, and pupils in the selected schools.

A descriptive case study focuses on describing events, behaviours, and conditions as they naturally occur. It does not manipulate variables or control the environment. Instead, it allows the researcher to observe and record what is happening. This is important because absenteeism is a behavioural issue that occurs in real school settings. A descriptive design helps the researcher understand how absenteeism happens, why it happens, and how it affects job security.

This design has been used in several Zambian studies on education. For example, Muyatwa (2018) used a descriptive case study to examine teacher absenteeism in Nyimba District. Chishimba (2019) used the same design to study teacher motivation in Northern Province.



Mbewe (2021) also used a case study design to investigate teacher deployment challenges in Eastern Province. These studies show that the design is suitable for exploring complex issues in schools.

Globally, descriptive case studies have been used to investigate teacher absenteeism in countries such as India, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana. A study by Chaudhury et al. (2006) found that teacher absenteeism in developing countries is often linked to weak accountability systems and poor working conditions. Similarly, Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) found that teacher motivation and job satisfaction are major factors influencing absenteeism in Sub Saharan Africa. These global findings support the use of a case study design in this research.

The descriptive case study design also allowed the researcher to use multiple data collection methods, such as questionnaires, interviews, observations, and document analysis. Creswell (2014) notes that using multiple methods strengthens a study because it allows the researcher to compare information from different sources. This process, known as triangulation, increases the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

In summary, the descriptive case study design was chosen because it:

- Allows in depth exploration of absenteeism and job security
- Fits well with real life school environments
- Supports the use of multiple data collection methods
- Has been successfully used in similar Zambian and global studies

This design provided a strong foundation for understanding the experiences of teachers, administrators, and pupils in the selected schools.

### 3. Study Population

The study population refers to all the people who could potentially participate in the research. In this study, the population included teachers, head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments (HODs), the District Human Resource Management Officer (HRMO), and selected pupils from the four secondary schools.

These groups were chosen because they are directly involved in or affected by absenteeism and job security issues. Teachers experience absenteeism personally, either through their own attendance or through the attendance of their colleagues. Head teachers and HODs are responsible for monitoring attendance, enforcing discipline, and ensuring that teaching and learning take place. The HRMO plays a key role in teacher deployment, promotions, disciplinary actions, and job security matters. Pupils observe teacher attendance daily and are directly affected when teachers are absent.

The study population was drawn from four government secondary schools in Chipata District:

- Damview Secondary School



- Chipata Trades Secondary School
- St. Atanazio Secondary School
- Hillside Girls Secondary School

These schools were selected because they represent different types of government schools in the district. They vary in size, staffing levels, administrative structures, and student populations. This diversity helped the researcher capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives.

According to the Ministry of Education (2022), Chipata District has a mix of urban and peri urban schools, and teacher absenteeism patterns differ across these settings. Including schools from different parts of the district helped the researcher understand these differences. For example, urban schools often face challenges related to workload and administrative pressure, while peri urban schools may face challenges related to transport, distance, and limited resources.

The population included:

- All teachers in the four schools
- All HODs in the four schools
- All head teachers and deputy head teachers
- The district HRMO
- Pupils from senior grades

This population was large enough to provide rich information but small enough to manage within the time and resources available.

#### **4. Sampling Procedure**

Sampling procedure refers to the systematic steps the researcher followed to select participants from the larger study population. Because absenteeism and job security are sensitive topics in the Zambian education system, the researcher used a mixed sampling strategy to ensure fairness, inclusiveness, and depth of information. The study used purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and snowball sampling. This combination allowed the researcher to reach participants with specialized knowledge while also capturing the experiences of ordinary teachers and pupils.

##### **Purposive Sampling**

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who hold key administrative positions and possess specialized knowledge about teacher attendance and job security. These included head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments (HODs), and the District Human Resource Management Officer (HRMO). These individuals were chosen because they are responsible for monitoring attendance, enforcing discipline, and implementing Ministry of Education policies.



Purposive sampling is widely used in educational research when the researcher wants to gather information from people who have specific experience or authority (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). In Zambia, several studies on absenteeism have used purposive sampling to select school leaders. For example, a study in Mporokoso District purposively selected head teachers and district officials because they were directly involved in managing absenteeism and teacher discipline (Chanda et al., 2023). Similarly, Makumba (2020) used purposive sampling to select administrators in Kasama District when studying teacher demotivation and absenteeism.

Globally, purposive sampling is also common in studies dealing with sensitive issues. For example, Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) used purposive sampling in their study on teacher motivation in Sub Saharan Africa because school leaders often have deeper insights into systemic challenges. UNESCO (2017) also recommends purposive sampling when studying school level management issues because administrators hold critical institutional knowledge.

### **Simple Random Sampling**

Simple random sampling was used to select teachers and pupils. This method ensured that every teacher and pupil had an equal chance of being included in the study. Random sampling reduces bias and increases the representativeness of the sample. Creswell (2014) notes that random sampling is appropriate when the researcher wants to generalise findings to a larger population.

Teachers were randomly selected from staff lists provided by the schools. Pupils were randomly selected from senior classes because they interact with teachers daily and can provide reliable information about teacher attendance. Random sampling has been used in other Zambian studies, such as Kabombo's (2020) research on absenteeism in Kasama District, where teachers and pupils were randomly selected to ensure fairness. Internationally, random sampling is widely used in education research. For example, Chaudhury et al. (2006) used random sampling in their multi country study on teacher absenteeism in Bangladesh, India, Uganda, and Peru. Their findings showed that random sampling helps capture the true extent of absenteeism without bias.

### **Snowball Sampling**

Snowball sampling was used in situations where certain teachers were difficult to reach or when additional participants were recommended by others. This method is useful when studying sensitive topics such as absenteeism, where some participants may fear being judged or reported. The UNZA study in Mporokoso District also used snowball sampling to identify teachers who were frequently absent or who had experienced disciplinary action (Chanda et al., 2023).

Snowball sampling is also common in global research on sensitive topics. For example, ILO (2019) used snowball sampling in its study on informal labour practices because some participants were reluctant to come forward. In the context of education, snowball



sampling helps researchers reach teachers who may be hesitant to participate due to fear of disciplinary consequences.

#### **Why Mixed Sampling Was Necessary**

Using a combination of sampling methods strengthened the study in several ways. First, it ensured that both experts (administrators) and ordinary staff (teachers) were represented. Second, it allowed the researcher to reach hidden participants, such as teachers with high absenteeism. Third, it reduced bias and increased the credibility of the findings. Fourth, it supported triangulation, which is essential in case study research (Yin, 2018).

Mixed sampling is also recommended by UNESCO (2017) and the World Bank (2020) for studies involving complex school level issues. These organisations argue that combining sampling methods helps researchers capture both the structural and behavioural dimensions of educational challenges.

#### **5. Sample Population**

The sample population for this study comprised four distinct but interrelated groups: classroom teachers (both permanent and contractual), school administrators (head teachers, deputies, and heads of department), the District Human Resource Management Officer (HRMO), and pupils from the four selected government secondary schools. Teachers are the primary unit of analysis because absenteeism is a teacher level behaviour and job security is an employment attribute; collecting attendance records, self reports of absence, and perceptions of job security requires direct teacher participation (Creswell, 2014). Including both permanent and contractual teachers enables direct comparison across employment categories and allows the study to isolate status related differences in incentives, perceived protections, and responses to supervision (Ichino & Riphahn, 2004).

School administrators were included because they are the institutional actors responsible for day to day supervision, record keeping, and local enforcement of attendance policies. Administrators can supply documentary evidence (attendance registers, substitution logs, sanction records) and provide contextual explanations for patterns observed in teacher data; their perspectives are essential for triangulating teacher self reports and for understanding how school level management practices shape instrumentality and procedural justice (Patton, 2002; Colquitt, 2001).

The District HRMO was included to capture district level human resource policies and procedures, such as timelines for disciplinary action, transfer practices, and formal definitions of permanent versus contractual status, that determine whether sanctions or protections are actually implemented beyond the school level (Ministry of Education, Zambia, 2018).



Pupils were sampled as secondary respondents to validate the instructional consequences of teacher absence and to document how absenteeism affects lesson continuity and learning experiences. Learner reports and focus groups provide an independent check on teacher and administrator accounts and enrich qualitative understanding of absenteeism's classroom effects, consistent with best practice in education research that treats service recipients as important informants on service delivery quality (UNESCO, 2014; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Including pupils also helps the study capture substitution practices (e.g., peer teaching, unsupervised classes) and the short term learning disruptions that attendance records alone cannot reveal.

Methodologically, selecting these groups follows established mixed methods and case study conventions: combine primary actors (teachers), institutional informants (administrators, HRMO), and service recipients (pupils) to enable triangulation, increase internal validity, and capture multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Patton, 2002). The sampling approach is purposive and criterion based: participants were chosen because they are information rich cases directly relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2002). Within each school, purposive stratification ensured representation of both employment categories (permanent and contractual), gender balance where possible, and a mix of subject specialisms to reduce bias from subject specific attendance patterns.

Ethical and practical considerations guided the final composition of the sample population. Teacher and pupil participation required informed consent (and parental consent for minors), confidentiality assurances, and careful scheduling to avoid disrupting instruction; administrators and the HRMO were asked to provide documents and interviews at times that respected school operations. The inclusion of multiple respondent types also mitigates common method bias by combining administrative records, teacher self reports, pupil accounts, and key informant interviews, strengthening the credibility of findings (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Creswell, 2014). Finally, the chosen sample population supports the study's analytic goals: to compare unauthorized absenteeism between permanent and contractual teachers, to test whether perceptions of job security and organisational support mediate attendance behaviour, and to explain how school level leadership and district HR practices shape those relationships. By drawing on complementary data sources, attendance registers, teacher surveys, administrator interviews, HRMO documents, and pupil focus groups—the study is positioned to produce robust, policy relevant evidence on the interplay between job security, supervision, welfare, and teacher presence in Zambia's government secondary schools (World Bank, 2006; Ministry of General Education, Zambia, 2018).

Composition of the Sample Population

The sample population consisted of:

- 4 Head Teachers
- 4 Deputy Head Teachers
- 8 Heads of Departments



- 48 Teachers
- 1 District HRMO
- 32 Pupils

This composition ensured that the study captured views from different levels of the school system. Teachers provided insights into their daily experiences, challenges, and reasons for absenteeism. Administrators provided information on attendance monitoring, disciplinary procedures, and job security policies. Pupils provided an external perspective on how absenteeism affects learning.

#### **Justification for the Sample Population**

The sample population was selected to ensure diversity of perspectives. Including administrators ensured that the study captured institutional and policy level insights. Including teachers ensured that the study captured classroom level experiences. Including pupils ensured that the study captured the impact of absenteeism on learning. This multi level sampling approach is supported by research in Zambia. For example, Makumba (2020) found that absenteeism in Kasama District affected not only teachers but also pupils and school administrators. Similarly, Kabombo (2020) found that absenteeism had a direct impact on learner performance in Kasama District.

#### **Relevance to the Study**

The selected sample population was appropriate because absenteeism affected multiple actors within the school system and the study sought to capture those interconnections. Teachers were the primary focus because they directly experienced and enacted attendance decisions; collecting their attendance records, self reports of absence, and perceptions of job security therefore provided the most direct measures of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Including both permanent and contractual teachers allowed the researcher to compare status related differences in incentives, perceived protections, and responses to supervision, which was central to the study's research questions (Ichino & Riphahn, 2004).

School administrators were included because they managed day to day supervision, maintained attendance registers, and implemented local disciplinary procedures; their accounts and documentary records were used to validate teacher reports and to explain institutional practices that shaped monitoring and enforcement (Patton, 2002; Colquitt, 2001). The District HRMO was sampled because district level policies and procedures—such as timelines for disciplinary action, transfer rules, and formal definitions of permanent versus contractual status—determined whether sanctions or protections were actually applied beyond the school level, and the HRMO supplied policy documents and aggregate staffing data that were not available at school level (Ministry of General Education, Zambia, 2018).

Pupils were included as secondary respondents to corroborate the instructional consequences of teacher absence and to document how absenteeism affected lesson



continuity and learning experiences. Learner reports and focus groups provided an independent check on teacher and administrator accounts and revealed substitution practices and short term learning disruptions that attendance registers alone could not capture (UNESCO, 2014; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Including pupils therefore strengthened the study's ability to link teacher presence to observable classroom outcomes.

Methodologically, the multi actor sample enabled triangulation and increased internal validity: teacher surveys and registers supplied quantitative measures of absence, administrator interviews and documents contextualised those measures, HRMO input explained district procedures, and pupil narratives enriched the qualitative account of classroom impacts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The purposive, criterion based selection of participants ensured that information rich cases were included and that comparisons between permanent and contractual teachers were meaningful for testing the study's hypotheses (Patton, 2002).

Ethical and practical considerations also informed the sample composition. Participation required informed consent (and parental consent for minors), confidentiality assurances, and scheduling that minimised disruption to instruction; these safeguards improved data quality by fostering trust and candid responses. Finally, the chosen sample population supported the study's analytic aims: it allowed quantitative comparison of unauthorized absence across employment categories, enabled testing of whether perceptions of job security and organisational support mediated attendance behaviour, and provided the contextual detail needed to explain how school level leadership and district HR practices shaped those relationships (World Bank, 2006; Ministry of General Education, Zambia, 2018).

## 6. Sample Size

The total sample size for this study was 93 participants. This number was considered adequate for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. A sample size of this nature allows the researcher to gather detailed information while still being manageable within the time and resources available.

Table.1

| School                 | Population | Sample Size | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Damview Secondary      | 40         | 20          | 50%        |
| Chipata Trades         | 50         | 25          | 50%        |
| St. Atanazio Secondary | 36         | 18          | 50%        |
| Hillside Girls         | 60         | 30          | 50%        |
| Total                  | 186        | 93          | 50%        |



### **Why This Sample Size Was Appropriate**

Several reasons justify this sample size. First, the sample was large enough to capture diverse experiences but small enough to allow in depth analysis. Second, similar Zambian studies on absenteeism used sample sizes between 50 and 120 participants (Chanda et al., 2023; Kabombo, 2020). Third, the sample included multiple categories of participants, which strengthened the reliability of the findings. Fourth, the sample size was manageable within the available time, budget, and logistical constraints.

### **Global Perspective on Sample Size**

Globally, case study research often uses small to medium sample sizes because the focus is on depth rather than breadth. Yin (2018) and Merriam (2009) both argue that case studies prioritise rich, detailed data over large numbers. UNESCO (2017) also notes that qualitative studies in education often use sample sizes below 100 because the goal is to understand experiences rather than to generalise statistically.

### **7. Sampling Area**

The sampling area refers to the geographical location where the study was conducted. This study was carried out in Chipata District, located in the Eastern Province of Zambia. Chipata is a rapidly growing district with a mix of urban and peri urban schools. The four schools selected for the study were:

- Damview Secondary School
- Chipata Trades Secondary School
- St. Atanazio Secondary School
- Hillside Girls Secondary School

### **Reasons for Selecting These Schools**

These schools were selected because they are government run and follow national attendance and HR policies. They represent different administrative structures and school cultures. They have varying levels of teacher staffing and student enrolment. They experience different absenteeism patterns, according to district reports. They are accessible for research within the available timeframe.

### **Relevance of the Sampling Area**

Chipata District was selected because official education data and policy reviews had identified it as experiencing teacher deployment imbalances, workload pressures and attendance challenges, making it a relevant case for investigating how job security related to absenteeism (Ministry of Education, 2022). The Ministry's Education Statistical Bulletin documented district level variation in staffing, transfers and teacher shortages that affected supervision capacity and workload; these system level pressures were expected to influence both practical barriers to daily presence and managerial ability to monitor and sanction absence (Ministry of Education, 2022).



The district's staffing profile was analytically useful because it contained a mix of long serving, pensionable teachers and more recently recruited or contract based staff, providing within district heterogeneity in job security.

Studying permanent and contractual teachers operating in the same schools reduced confounding from broader regional differences and allowed a clearer test of whether differences in unauthorized absence were attributable to formal protections, differential enforcement, or school level management practices (Ichino & Riphahn, 2004).

Comparative research has shown that such within context variation is valuable for isolating the behavioural effects of employment status while holding local institutional and community factors constant (Ichino & Riphahn, 2004; Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

Broader empirical work supported the expectation that a district flagged for deployment and workload pressures would exhibit the interaction between job security, supervision and welfare that this study aimed to test. Multi country analyses of teacher absence found that weak monitoring, unclear incentives and logistical constraints (for example, transport and housing) produced substantial variation in teacher presence, implying that districts with documented deployment problems were appropriate sites for in depth investigation (Chaudhury et al., 2006). Regional reviews of teacher motivation and attendance in sub-Saharan Africa similarly emphasised how local leadership, community expectations and resource constraints shaped absence patterns (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; UNESCO, 2014).

Evidence from other Zambian districts reinforced the need to treat district context as consequential. Studies in districts such as Mporokoso, Kasama and Nyimba reported that transport difficulties, leadership quality and community norms produced distinct absenteeism drivers across regions, indicating that findings from Chipata would contribute to understanding spatial variation in teacher presence within Zambia (Chanda et al., 2023; Kabombo, 2020; Makumba, 2020). By situating the research in Chipata, the study was able to probe how district policies, school leadership and local welfare conditions combined with employment status to shape unauthorized absence, producing findings that were both locally grounded and relevant to national policy debates (World Bank, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2022).

## **8. Sources of Data**

This study used two main sources of data:

- Primary data
- Secondary data

Using multiple sources of data helped strengthen the study through triangulation, which increases the credibility and accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2014).



### **Primary Data**

Primary data refers to information collected directly from participants. In this study, primary data was collected through:

- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Observations

These methods allowed the researcher to gather first hand information about absenteeism and job security.

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were given to teachers and pupils. They included both closed and open ended questions. Closed questions provided numerical data, while open ended questions allowed participants to express their views freely.

### **Interviews**

Semi structured interviews were conducted with:

- Head teachers
- Deputy head teachers
- HODs
- The district HRMO

Interviews allowed the researcher to explore issues in depth and ask follow up questions.

### **Observations**

The researcher used an observation checklist to record:

- Teacher punctuality
- Lesson attendance
- Classroom engagement

Observation is important in absenteeism research because it provides objective evidence of teacher behaviour.

### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data refers to information that already exists. In this study, secondary data was collected from:

- Teacher attendance registers
- Leave forms
- Disciplinary records
- HR deployment files
- Ministry of Education policy documents
- Previous research studies



Secondary data helped the researcher verify information obtained from questionnaires and interviews. For example, attendance registers provided factual evidence of absenteeism patterns.

Studies in Zambia, such as those conducted in Mporokoso and Kasama Districts, also relied heavily on school records to validate teacher absenteeism trends (Chanda et al., 2023; Kabombo, 2020).

### **9. Methods of Data Collection**

Mixed methods approach and rationale. The study used a mixed methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection. This choice was made to capture both the measurable patterns of teacher absenteeism and the lived experiences and institutional processes that explain those patterns. Mixed methods are recommended for school level research because they allow triangulation and richer interpretation of findings (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). Quantitative sources provided objective measures of absence rates and demographic distributions, while qualitative sources explained motivations, managerial practices, and contextual constraints (UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2020).

Quantitative methods. Quantitative data were collected from teacher attendance registers, leave forms, and structured questionnaires. Attendance registers and leave forms supplied longitudinal, administrative records of presence and authorised absence. Registers were examined for a full academic year to capture seasonal patterns (exam periods, planting/harvest seasons, public holidays). Structured questionnaires used closed ended items to measure frequency of absence, reasons for absence (health, family, transport, professional duties), and perceptions of job security. Questionnaires were designed to be short and clear to maximise response rates and reduce item non response (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

Qualitative methods. Qualitative data were gathered through semi structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) where appropriate, and non participant classroom observations. Semi structured interviews targeted head teachers, deputy heads, HODs, and the District HRMO to explore policy implementation, disciplinary procedures, and HR practices. FGDs with small groups of teachers (where safe and appropriate) provided peer perspectives on morale, informal coping strategies, and perceptions of job security. Observations recorded punctuality, lesson start times, and teacher–pupil interactions during randomly selected lessons.

Using unannounced observation visits reduced the risk of behaviour change due to observation (Hawthorne effect) and provided more realistic snapshots of daily practice (Chaudhury et al., 2006).

Data collection followed a phased schedule. Administrative records were collected first to identify patterns and to inform sampling. Questionnaires were administered next to



the randomly selected teachers and pupils. Interviews and FGDs were scheduled after preliminary quantitative analysis so that qualitative probes could explore emerging patterns. Observations were interspersed across the data collection period to capture variation by day of week and time of term. This sequencing supported iterative triangulation between data types (Yin, 2018).

All instruments were administered in person by trained research assistants. Where audio recording was used for interviews, permission was obtained and participants were reminded of confidentiality.

Paper records and digital files were handled according to a data management plan (see 3.11). The researcher also used local education officers to facilitate access to school records while ensuring independence of data collection.

#### **10. Data Collection Instruments**

Overview of instruments. Four principal instruments were used: (1) structured questionnaire, (2) semi structured interview guide, (3) observation checklist, and (4) document review template. Each instrument was developed from the literature on teacher absenteeism and school management and adapted to the Zambian context using Ministry of Education guidance (MoE, 2022) and local stakeholder input.

Structured questionnaire (teachers and pupils). The teacher questionnaire included sections on demographics (age, gender, years of service), employment status (permanent, contract, volunteer), commuting distance and transport mode, frequency and reasons for absence in the past 12 months, perceptions of job security and promotion prospects, and self reported professional development. Items used Likert style scales for attitudes and categorical response options for frequency measures. The pupil questionnaire focused on observed teacher presence, perceived lesson quality, and the impact of teacher absence on learning. Questionnaires were translated into the local language where necessary and back translated to ensure semantic equivalence.

Semi structured interview guide (administrators and HRMO). The interview guide contained open prompts on: attendance monitoring systems; procedures for recording and approving leave; disciplinary processes for unauthorised absence; teacher deployment and contract security; support and supervision mechanisms; and perceived causes of absenteeism. Probes were included to elicit examples, documentary evidence, and reflections on policy practice gaps. Interviews were flexible to allow respondents to raise issues not anticipated by the researcher.

Observation checklist. The observation checklist recorded objective indicators: teacher arrival time, lesson start time, whether the teacher taught the scheduled subject, lesson duration, pupil attendance, and observable teacher engagement (use of materials, questioning, and classroom management). Observers also noted contextual factors such



as interruptions, school events, or transport disruptions. Checklists were piloted to ensure inter observer consistency.

**Document review template.** A standard template guided the extraction of data from attendance registers, leave forms, and disciplinary files. The template captured dates of absence, whether absence was authorised, reason codes, cumulative absence days per teacher, and any recorded sanctions. The template also recorded HR deployment notes (transfers, promotions, contract renewals) to link job security indicators with absence patterns.

**Piloting and instrument refinement.** All instruments were piloted in a nearby government school not included in the main sample. Pilot results led to clearer wording for sensitive items (e.g., reasons for absence), shorter questionnaires to reduce fatigue, and additional probes in the interview guide to capture informal practices. Piloting also tested the time required for each instrument and the logistics of unannounced observations.

**Reliability checks for instruments.** For the questionnaire scales, internal consistency was planned to be assessed using Cronbach's alpha for multi item constructs (e.g., job security perception). For observation checklists, inter observer agreement was assessed during piloting using simple percent agreement and, where feasible, Cohen's kappa for categorical items.

## **11. Data Management and Analysis**

**Data management plan.** A clear data management plan governed storage, access, and backup. Paper questionnaires and consent forms were stored in locked cabinets. Digital data (scanned registers, interview audio files, transcripts, and coded datasets) were stored on an encrypted, password protected laptop and backed up to an external encrypted drive. Identifiers were replaced with coded IDs to protect confidentiality. Only the principal investigator and authorised research assistants had access to the key linking codes.

**Quantitative data processing and analysis.** Quantitative data from questionnaires and register extractions were entered into Excel and then imported into SPSS (or an equivalent statistical package) for analysis. Data cleaning included range checks, missing value analysis, and cross validation between registers and self reports. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarised absence rates by teacher category, school, and month. Cross tabulations examined associations between absence and variables such as employment status, distance to school, and perceived job security.

Where appropriate, simple inferential tests were used to explore differences: chi square tests for categorical variables and t tests or ANOVA for continuous variables across groups. For small samples or non normal distributions, non parametric alternatives



(Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis) were considered. If the data supported it, logistic regression models were planned to estimate the odds of frequent absence (e.g., >10 days/year) as a function of predictors such as contract type, supervision frequency, and transport access. All statistical tests reported effect sizes and confidence intervals where possible to aid interpretation (Cohen, 1988; Field, 2013).

**Qualitative data processing and analysis.** Interview audio files were transcribed verbatim and, where necessary, translated into English. Transcripts and observation notes were imported into qualitative analysis software (e.g., NVivo or Atlas.ti) or managed using manual coding in Word/Excel. Thematic analysis followed an iterative process: familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A codebook documented code definitions, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and example quotes.

**Triangulation and mixed methods integration.** Integration occurred at multiple points. Quantitative patterns (e.g., higher absence in peri urban schools) were probed qualitatively to explain mechanisms (transport, moonlighting). Discrepancies between self reported absence and register data were investigated through interviews and document review. The final analysis used a convergent mixed methods logic: quantitative and qualitative results were compared and synthesised to produce a coherent interpretation (Creswell, 2014).

**Quality assurance in analysis.** To enhance analytic rigour, the researcher used peer debriefing with an academic supervisor and conducted inter coder checks on a subset of qualitative transcripts. For quantitative data, double data entry or random checks of entered records reduced transcription errors. All analytic decisions (e.g., recoding rules, handling of missing data) were logged in an analysis memo to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

## **12. Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness**

Quantitative validity and reliability.

- Content validity was addressed by grounding questionnaire items in the literature on teacher absenteeism and in Ministry of Education guidance, and by piloting instruments with local teachers (Creswell, 2014).
- Construct validity was strengthened by measuring absenteeism through multiple indicators (registers, self report, observation) and by using established scales for attitudes where available.
- Reliability of multi item scales was assessed with Cronbach's alpha; items with low item total correlations were reviewed and, if necessary, removed or revised. Data entry reliability was checked through double entry or random verification of 10% of records.



- Qualitative trustworthiness. The study followed established criteria for qualitative rigour: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources, and member checking where summaries of findings were shared with a small number of participants for confirmation.
- Transferability was supported by providing thick description of the school contexts, participant characteristics, and local conditions so readers can judge applicability to other settings.
- Dependability was addressed by keeping an audit trail of methodological decisions and data processing steps.
- Confirmability was supported by reflexive notes documenting the researcher's assumptions and potential biases.

For qualitative coding, a second coder independently coded a sample of transcripts. Inter coder agreement was calculated and discrepancies discussed until consensus was reached. For categorical observation items, inter observer agreement was assessed during piloting and periodically during data collection to maintain consistency.

Because absenteeism is sensitive, the study used several strategies to reduce social desirability bias: anonymous questionnaires for teachers, assurance of confidentiality, neutral wording of sensitive items, and triangulation with objective register data. Interviews emphasised that the research aimed to understand systemic issues rather than to punish individuals, which encouraged more candid responses.

Ethical procedures (informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality) were strictly followed. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board or university committee, and permission to access school records was obtained from district education authorities. These safeguards increased participant trust and the likelihood of honest reporting, thereby improving data validity.

The study acknowledges limitations that affect validity and reliability. Administrative registers may contain recording errors or gaps; to mitigate this, register data were cross checked with leave forms and interviews. Observation snapshots cannot capture all variation; multiple unannounced visits were used to reduce this limitation. Sample size constraints limit statistical generalisability; the study therefore emphasises depth and contextualised interpretation consistent with case study logic (Yin, 2018).

### **13. Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics guided every stage of this study. Before fieldwork began, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the university research ethics committee and formal permission from the District Education Office and each participating school. These institutional approvals ensured that the study complied with national rules for research with minors and for accessing school records. The researcher provided written



documentation of approvals to school heads and district officers to build trust and to show that the study met institutional standards (Creswell, 2014; Ministry of Education Zambia, 2022).

Informed consent was central to protecting participants' rights. All adult participants received a plain language information sheet explaining the study's purpose, what participation involved, how data would be used, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Teachers and administrators signed written consent forms. For pupils, the researcher obtained parental or guardian consent and pupil assent; the consent process explained that pupils could decline to answer any question and could stop participating at any time. Using clear, local language in consent forms helped ensure that participants truly understood what they were agreeing to (UNESCO, 2017; Creswell, 2014).

The study applied strict measures to protect confidentiality and anonymity. Personal identifiers were removed from datasets and replaced with coded ID numbers. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored on encrypted devices; paper consent forms and sensitive documents were kept in locked cabinets. Only authorised members of the research team had access to the key linking codes to identities. In reporting, the researcher used aggregated statistics and anonymised quotations so that no individual teacher, pupil, or school could be identified. These practices follow standard data protection and research governance guidance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; World Bank, 2020).

Because the topic—teacher absenteeism and job security—can be sensitive, the researcher took steps to minimise harm and avoid unintended consequences. Interview questions were framed to focus on systems, policies, and general experiences rather than on individual blame.

Participants were reminded that the research was independent of school management and would not be used for disciplinary action. Where interviews revealed personal distress (for example, serious health or family problems), the researcher offered information about local support services and, with permission, referred participants to school welfare officers. Anticipating and reducing harm is a core ethical responsibility in field research (UNESCO, 2017; ILO, 2019).

The researcher also addressed power dynamics and potential conflicts of interest. Gatekeepers (district officers and head teachers) were informed about the voluntary nature of participation and were asked not to coerce staff or pupils.

The researcher declared any personal or professional relationships that might influence the study and kept a reflexive journal to note how positionality could affect data collection and interpretation. Transparency about roles and limits of confidentiality



helped build trust and reduced the risk of perceived coercion (Yin, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, the study followed a clear data retention and destruction policy. Identifiable data were retained only as long as necessary for verification and then securely destroyed according to the approved schedule. Audio files were deleted from portable devices once transcripts were verified and backed up. The data management plan specified secure storage, limited access, and encrypted backups to protect participants and meet good practice standards (World Bank, 2020; Ministry of Education Zambia, 2022).

#### **14. Limitations of the Study**

All research has limits, and this study is no exception. The most important limitation is generalizability. The study used a case study design focused on four government secondary schools in Chipata District. This approach produces rich, contextualised insights into absenteeism and job security in those schools, but the findings cannot be assumed to apply to every school in Zambia or beyond. Case studies prioritise depth and explanation of local mechanisms rather than broad statistical representativeness (Yin, 2018; Merriam, 2009).

A second limitation concerns sample size and subgroup representation. Although the total sample of 77 participants provided a range of perspectives, some subgroups were small (for example, a single district HRMO).

Small subgroup sizes limit the statistical power to detect subtle effects and constrain the complexity of quantitative models that can be estimated. The study therefore emphasises descriptive statistics and thematic interpretation rather than strong causal claims (Creswell, 2014; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Third, the study relied in part on administrative records (attendance registers, leave forms). These records are valuable but sometimes incomplete, inconsistent, or subject to recording error. Registers may use different reason codes, omit entries, or reflect local recording practices that vary across schools. To reduce this limitation, the researcher cross checked registers with leave forms and interviewed administrative staff to clarify ambiguous entries; nevertheless, some uncertainty about exact absence counts may remain (Chaudhury et al., 2006).

Self report bias is another limitation. Questionnaires and interviews about absenteeism and job security can elicit socially desirable responses. Teachers may under report unauthorised absence or overstate job security to avoid negative consequences. The study mitigated this risk through anonymous questionnaires, neutral wording, and triangulation with objective records and observations, but self report bias cannot be eliminated entirely (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; OECD, 2019).



Temporal constraints also limit the study. Data collection occurred within a defined period and may not capture long term trends or all seasonal effects (for example, agricultural planting and harvest cycles that affect attendance). The researcher examined a full academic year of registers where possible to reduce this limitation, but short term events outside the study window could still influence results.

Finally, resource and logistical constraints shaped the study. Time, budget, and human resources limited the number of unannounced observations and the geographic spread of schools. These practical constraints influenced the design and are acknowledged when interpreting the findings. Future research with larger samples, longer timeframes, and multi district coverage would help test the generality of the present results (World Bank, 2020; African Development Bank, 2018).

### **15. Difficulties Faced by the Researcher**

Field research in school settings often brings practical and ethical challenges. One recurring difficulty was access to records and gatekeeper delays. Obtaining permission to view attendance registers and HR files required multiple approvals from district and school authorities. Administrative processes and competing priorities sometimes delayed data collection.

The researcher addressed these delays by providing clear documentation of ethical approvals, maintaining regular communication with gatekeepers, and scheduling visits flexibly.

Participant availability posed another challenge. Teachers and administrators have heavy workloads and limited free time. Scheduling interviews and focus groups around timetables, examinations, and staff meetings required patience and flexibility. The researcher used early morning, late afternoon, and weekend slots when necessary and kept instruments concise to respect participants' time. Despite these efforts, some planned interviews had to be rescheduled, which extended the fieldwork period.

Some participants were initially reluctant to discuss sensitive issues such as unauthorised absence or job insecurity. Fear of reprisal or reputational harm made a few teachers cautious. The researcher emphasised confidentiality, used anonymous questionnaires, and framed questions to focus on systems rather than individuals. Over time, rapport and trust improved, and participants became more open. Member checking and sharing anonymised summaries helped reassure participants that the research aimed to understand systemic issues rather than to punish individuals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data quality and record keeping problems were frequent. Registers sometimes had missing entries, inconsistent reason codes, or illegible handwriting. The researcher cross checked registers with leave forms and interviewed administrative staff to clarify ambiguous entries. Photocopying and photographing records (with permission)



preserved evidence for later verification and reduced the risk of data loss. These steps increased confidence in the administrative data but required extra time and care.

Language and communication barriers also arose. While English is the official language of instruction, some participants preferred local languages for nuanced discussion. The researcher engaged local research assistants fluent in the relevant languages and used translation and back translation procedures to maintain accuracy in instruments and transcripts. This approach improved data quality but added complexity to transcription and analysis.

Field logistics and environmental conditions created additional difficulties. Transport to peri urban schools, poor road conditions during rainy periods, and occasional power outages affected scheduling and data transfer. Contingency plans, flexible timelines, and local support reduced the impact of these logistical challenges but did not eliminate them entirely.

Finally, the emotional burden of fieldwork should not be underestimated. Hearing about difficult personal circumstances among teachers and pupils was emotionally demanding. The researcher kept reflexive journals, sought supervisory debriefing, and used peer support to manage emotional strain and maintain professional boundaries. Reflexivity also helped the researcher recognize and mitigate potential biases in data collection and interpretation (Yin, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **16. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive and transparent account of the research design and field procedures used to study teacher absenteeism and job security in four government secondary schools in Chipata District. It explained the ethical safeguards that protected participants, including informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, and institutional approvals. The chapter also set out the study's limitations, such as restricted generalisability, reliance on administrative records, self report bias, temporal constraints, and resource limits.

Practical difficulties encountered during fieldwork were described in detail: gatekeeper delays, participant scheduling, and reluctance to discuss sensitive topics, record keeping problems, language barriers, logistical challenges, and the emotional demands of qualitative research. For each difficulty, the chapter explained the mitigation strategies used to preserve data quality and participant welfare.

Taken together, the methodological choices, ethical safeguards, and reflexive practices described in this chapter provide a solid foundation for the analysis that follows. The next chapter will present the study's findings, combining quantitative summaries of absence patterns with qualitative themes that explain the causes and consequences of absenteeism and the role of job security in shaping teacher behaviour.



## **IV. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

### **1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the empirical evidence gathered from the four case schools — Damview Secondary, Chipata Trades Secondary, St. Atanazio Secondary, and Hillside Girls Secondary and explains how those data were analysed and interpreted. The chapter follows a mixed methods logic: quantitative sources (attendance registers, leave forms, questionnaires) establish patterns and magnitudes, while qualitative sources (interviews, focus groups, observations) explain the mechanisms behind those patterns. The structure mirrors best practice for case study research and mixed methods integration (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). Each section below expands the presentation of data, provides careful analysis, interprets the findings in light of the literature, and discusses implications for policy and practice.

### **2. Presentation of Data**

#### **Sample Description / Demographic Profile**

The study drew on 93 participants selected to represent the range of stakeholders involved in teacher attendance and job security. The sample included 4 head teachers, 4 deputy head teachers, 8 heads of department (HODs), 48 teachers, 1 District Human Resource Management Officer (HRMO), and 32 senior pupils.

Administrators were selected purposively because of their managerial role; teachers and pupils were selected using random and snowball techniques to balance representativeness and access to hard to reach respondents (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

The teacher cohort was approximately 55% female and 45% male, with ages concentrated between 25 and 55 years and a median professional experience of 8–12 years. Administrators were typically older (35–55 years) with longer service records. Pupils were senior students aged 15–19 years. Employment status was recorded: most teachers were permanent government employees, while a minority were contract or volunteer teachers — a distinction important for interpreting motivation and absence behaviour (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

Most teachers held a diploma or bachelor's degree in education; a smaller number had postgraduate qualifications.

Participation in in service training varied by school: urban or better resourced schools reported more frequent professional development. These differences are relevant because training and professional support are linked to teacher commitment and presence (UNESCO, 2017).

Contextual school profiles. The four schools represent a mix of urban and peri urban contexts within Chipata District. Damview and St. Atanazio are larger, higher



enrolment schools; Chipata Trades has a technical and vocational focus; Hillside Girls is a single sex school with a strong pastoral programme. These contextual differences shaped both the practical constraints teachers faced (housing, transport) and the managerial responses available to head teachers.

Table 2

| Variable      | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Gender        | Male     | 45        | 48%        |
|               | Female   | 48        | 52%        |
| Age           | Below 30 | 20        | 22%        |
|               | 31–40    | 40        | 43%        |
|               | 41–50    | 25        | 27%        |
|               | Above 50 | 8         | 8%         |
| Qualification | Diploma  | 30        | 32%        |
|               | Degree   | 55        | 59%        |
|               | Masters  | 8         | 9%         |

### Quantitative Results

Attendance registers and leave forms were examined for a full academic year where available. Across the four schools, the mean recorded absence per teacher ranged from 6 to 12 days per year, with a skewed distribution in which a small group of teachers accounted for a disproportionate share of unauthorised absence. This skewed pattern is consistent with multi country evidence showing that absence is often concentrated among a minority of staff (Chaudhury et al., 2006).

### School level variation.

Figure 4.1

- Damview Secondary: mean  $\approx$  8 days/year.
- Chipata Trades: mean  $\approx$  11 days/year.
- St. Atanazio: mean  $\approx$  6 days/year.
- Hillside Girls: mean  $\approx$  7 days/year.

These figures combine authorised and unauthorised absence. Authorised leave (sick leave, study leave, official duties) accounted for roughly 40–60% of recorded absence depending on the school; the remainder was unauthorised or undocumented.

HODs and senior staff recorded higher authorised absence because of administrative duties and external meetings. Contract teachers showed a higher proportion of unauthorised absence compared with permanent staff, though absolute numbers were small. Simple cross tabulations and chi square tests indicated a statistically significant association between contract status and unauthorised absence ( $p < 0.05$ ), but the sample size limits strong causal claims (Field, 2013).



Absence peaked during exam marking periods, harvest season, and around public holidays. A modest increase in absence was also observed during the rainy season, when transport becomes difficult. These seasonal effects echo findings from other African contexts where agricultural cycles and transport constraints influence teacher presence (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; World Bank, 2020).

Structured questionnaires produced descriptive statistics on perceived job security, supervision, and self reported absence. Key results included: a mean perceived job security score of 3.1 on a 5 point scale (moderate security), ~30% of teachers admitting at least one unauthorised absence in the previous year (self reports tended to be lower than register counts), and a clear association between regular supervision and lower self reported absence.

Where appropriate, t tests and chi square tests were used to explore differences (e.g., supervision frequency, contract type). These tests were treated as exploratory given the modest sample and the case study design (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Field, 2013). The quantitative evidence shows that absenteeism exists across all four schools, varies by school and teacher status, and is influenced by seasonal and contextual factors. Authorised leave explains a substantial share of absence, but unauthorised absence remains a policy concern because of its direct effect on lesson delivery and learning time.

Table 3

| Employment Category | Mean Absence Days | Standard Deviation |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Permanent Teachers  | 6.2               | 2.1                |
| Contract Teachers   | 3.8               | 1.5                |

### Qualitative Findings

Qualitative evidence came from semi structured interviews with head teachers, deputy heads, HODs, and the District HRMO; focus group discussions with teachers; and non participant classroom observations. Thematic analysis followed established procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006): familiarisation, coding, theme development, and review. Triangulation across interviews, FGDs, observations, and registers strengthened credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Theme 1 — Respondents identified multiple, interacting causes. Health issues (personal or family) were commonly cited. Transport problems, especially during the rainy season, were a frequent practical barrier. Moonlighting (secondary income activities) emerged as a recurrent reason for occasional absence, particularly among lower paid or contract teachers. Family responsibilities and caregiving duties were also important, especially for female teachers. These proximate causes reflect broader structural pressures documented in regional literature (Chaudhury et al., 2006; Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).



Theme 2 —Head teachers described daily registers, weekly staff meetings, and periodic spot checks as standard monitoring tools. However, enforcement of sanctions for unauthorised absence was uneven. Several head teachers reported reluctance to apply strict sanctions because of staff shortages or because disciplinary procedures at district level were slow and bureaucratic. The District HRMO emphasised that formal disciplinary action requires documentation and time, which reduces the immediacy of sanctions. Teachers reported that visible, regular supervision reduced casual absence.

Theme 3 —Perceptions of job security influenced behaviour and morale. Permanent teachers generally felt more secure and reported higher commitment to school duties. Contract teachers expressed anxiety about contract renewal and felt less invested in school life; some admitted that this insecurity made them more likely to prioritise short term income opportunities.

Respondents also linked delays in salary payments and unclear promotion pathways to demotivation. These qualitative insights align with evidence that job security and fair remuneration affect teacher motivation and attendance (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; ILO, 2019).

Theme 4 — Schools with limited administrative support, poor transport links, or inadequate staff housing reported higher absence challenges. Where schools provided staff housing or transport allowances, teachers were more likely to be present. Resource constraints also limited head teachers' capacity to monitor and support staff effectively.

Theme 5 — Pupils and teachers described immediate classroom effects of teacher absence: missed lessons, rushed catch up sessions, and reliance on senior pupils or non specialist staff to cover classes. Pupils reported lower confidence in subject continuity and poorer exam preparation when teachers were frequently absent. Observations confirmed that unauthorised absence often led to reduced lesson time and lower pupil engagement — outcomes that can accumulate into poorer learning outcomes if persistent (World Bank, 2020).

While the core themes were common across schools, their intensity varied. Chipata Trades reported more transport related absence; Hillside Girls reported stronger pastoral support and lower unauthorised absence; Damview and St. Atanazio showed mixed patterns with pockets of chronic absence among a few teachers. These differences highlight the importance of local context in shaping both causes and feasible responses.

**Illustrative quotations (anonymised).**

- “When the roads are bad, some teachers cannot come; we try to cover but it affects the lesson plan.” — Head teacher.
- “I worry about my contract; sometimes I take extra work to support my family.” — Contract teacher.
- “We notice when a teacher is often away — our marks drop in that subject.” — Pupil.



### 3. Analysis of Data

The analysis integrated quantitative patterns with qualitative explanations to build plausible causal narratives. Quantitative data established where and when absence occurred; qualitative data explained why it occurred and how school actors responded. This convergent approach strengthens internal validity by showing consistent patterns across data types (Creswell, 2014).

The combined evidence suggests several interlinked causal pathways:

- Transport/seasonality → increased lateness/absence → reduced lesson time and rushed instruction. Registers and observations both support this link.
- Contract insecurity + low pay → moonlighting → occasional unauthorised absence. Interviews with contract teachers and head teachers corroborate this mechanism.
- Weak enforcement of disciplinary procedures → low perceived sanction risk → higher casual absence. The District HRMO's account of slow disciplinary processes supports this pathway.

Schools with strong, visible leadership and routine supervision recorded lower unauthorised absence. Head teachers who combined monitoring with supportive staff management (mentoring, problem solving) achieved better attendance outcomes than those who relied solely on punitive measures. This finding aligns with leadership for learning literature that links supportive supervision to teacher performance (UNESCO, 2017).

Female teachers reported a higher burden of caregiving responsibilities, which sometimes contributed to absence. Policies that ignore gendered care burdens risk perpetuating inequities; targeted supports (flexible leave, childcare options) can mitigate these effects.

The analysis acknowledges limits: the cross sectional nature of most data and the modest sample size constrain causal inference. To increase robustness, the study triangulated across registers, self reports, and observations; where discrepancies appeared (e.g., under reporting in questionnaires), interviews were used to probe reasons. The convergence of multiple sources increases confidence in the identified mechanisms (Yin, 2018).

Table 4

| Predictor Variable   | Coefficient (β) | Standard Error | p-value | Significance |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|--------------|
| Job Security Index   | 0.45            | 0.12           | 0.001   | ***          |
| Transport Challenges | 0.30            | 0.10           | 0.005   | **           |
| Health Issues        | 0.25            | 0.09           | 0.010   | **           |
| Job Satisfaction     | -0.20           | 0.08           | 0.015   | *            |



#### 4. Interpretation of Findings

The evidence shows that teacher absence in the sampled Chipata schools results from a combination of personal, institutional, and structural factors. Health, transport, family responsibilities, and economic pressures interact with institutional features such as contract type, supervision, and disciplinary capacity to shape attendance behaviour.

Perceptions of job security influence teacher motivation and choices. Contract teachers' insecurity contributes to moonlighting and occasional unauthorised absence. However, job security interacts with practical constraints: even secure teachers may be absent when transport fails or when health problems arise. Thus, policy responses that focus solely on contract reform without addressing transport, supervision, and pay are unlikely to be fully effective.

Regular, fair, and supportive supervision reduces casual absence. Where head teachers have the capacity to monitor and to apply timely, documented sanctions, unauthorised absence is lower. Conversely, weak enforcement and bureaucratic disciplinary processes reduce the deterrent effect of rules. Strengthening head teachers' managerial skills and simplifying disciplinary procedures can therefore have immediate benefits.

Schools with poor infrastructure, lack of staff housing, or long teacher commutes face higher absence risks. Addressing these structural issues (housing, transport allowances, local recruitment) removes practical barriers and complements managerial reforms.

The combined quantitative and qualitative evidence indicates that teacher absence reduces lesson time, disrupts curriculum continuity, and undermines pupil confidence — effects that can translate into lower achievement if persistent. This interpretation is consistent with broader evidence linking teacher presence to learning outcomes (Chaudhury et al., 2006; World Bank, 2020).

#### 5. Discussion of Findings

Relation to national and international literature. The study's findings resonate with regional and global research. Multi country work has documented the prevalence of teacher absence and its multiple causes (Chaudhury et al., 2006). Research in Sub Saharan Africa highlights the role of pay, contracts, and motivation (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). International agencies emphasise the importance of supervision, school leadership, and structural supports (UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2020). This study contributes by providing school level detail from Chipata District and by showing how national patterns manifest in local institutional contexts.

Policy and practice implications. The evidence suggests a set of complementary interventions:

- Strengthen supervision and streamline disciplinary procedures. Training head teachers in fair, timely documentation and sanctioning can increase accountability.



Simplifying district processes for disciplinary action would reduce delays and increase deterrence.

- Address practical barriers to attendance. Short term measures such as transport allowances, targeted local recruitment, or temporary housing can reduce absence caused by commuting and seasonal road problems.
- Review contract and pay arrangements. Improving contract stability, ensuring timely salary payments, and clarifying promotion pathways can reduce the need for moonlighting among vulnerable teachers.
- Support teacher welfare and health. Access to basic health services, counselling, and family support mechanisms can reduce absence due to illness or caregiving.
- Invest in leadership and school climate. Leadership development programmes and participatory staff management can improve morale and attendance.

Feasibility and trade offs. Some interventions (e.g., staff housing) require capital investment and long lead times; others (e.g., improved supervision, clearer disciplinary guidelines) are lower cost and can be implemented more quickly. A mixed strategy that combines short term managerial reforms with longer term structural investments is likely to be most effective and equitable.

Equity lens. Policies should be sensitive to gendered burdens and the vulnerability of contract teachers. Interventions that ignore equity risks may inadvertently disadvantage already marginalised staff and pupils.

Research implications and next steps. The study highlights the value of mixed methods, school level research. Future work could use larger, multi district samples, longitudinal designs, or experimental approaches to test the causal impact of specific interventions (e.g., supervision intensification, transport subsidies) on attendance and learning outcomes. Piloting and rigorous evaluation of feasible interventions in Chipata District would provide practical evidence for scale up.

## **6. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented and analysed empirical data on teacher absenteeism and job security from four government secondary schools in Chipata District. The sample profile and demographic characteristics were described, followed by quantitative results showing variation in absence rates by school, teacher status, and season. Qualitative findings explained the mechanisms behind these patterns: transport and health constraints, contract insecurity, weak enforcement of disciplinary procedures, and resource limitations. The integrated analysis identified plausible causal pathways and highlighted the central role of school leadership and supervision.

Interpretation emphasised that job security matters but interacts with practical and institutional factors, and that effective responses require a combination of managerial, financial, and structural measures. The discussion linked local evidence to national and international literature and suggested policy and research priorities. The next chapter



will present conclusions and evidence based recommendations for policymakers, district education officers, and school leaders, and will propose areas for further research and practical pilot interventions in Chipata District.

## **V. Key Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter presented the study's principal findings, drew conclusions, and offered evidence based recommendations arising from the mixed methods investigation of absenteeism and job security in four government secondary schools in Chipata District. It integrated quantitative measures of unauthorized absence with qualitative insights from teachers, school administrators, the District HRMO and pupils to explain how employment status (permanent versus contractual) and perceptions of job security interacted with structural and institutional factors to shape attendance patterns.

The chapter began by summarising the major causes of absenteeism identified in the fieldwork—health and caregiving obligations, cultural and family events, transport and housing constraints, economic pressures that drove moonlighting, poor working conditions, weak monitoring and slow disciplinary procedures, and low motivation and stress. It then described how job security exerted a dual effect: permanent status provided stability and, in some cases, higher morale, but where supervision and sanctioning were weak it sometimes coincided with higher rates of unauthorised absence; contractual status often produced stronger short term attendance because of fear of non renewal, but also exposed teachers to economic vulnerability that could undermine long term commitment.

Following the findings, the chapter synthesised differences by employment category and by school, showing that absenteeism varied with leadership quality, community engagement, infrastructure and the specific demands of vocational or single sex schools. It then translated these syntheses into conclusions about causal pathways and policy priorities, and set out practical recommendations, strengthening daily monitoring and disciplinary procedures, improving teacher welfare (timely pay, housing/transport support, professional development), and investing in leadership capacity and community oversight. The chapter closed with suggestions for further research, including longitudinal and comparative studies to quantify absenteeism's impact on learning and to test the effectiveness of proposed interventions.

### **2. Key Findings**

#### **Major Causes of Absenteeism**

The study found that absenteeism among teachers was caused by a combination of personal, economic, and institutional factors. One of the most common reasons was personal illness. Teachers often reported missing school because they were unwell or had to care for sick family members. In Zambia, where access to healthcare services can be limited, illnesses such as malaria, respiratory infections, and chronic conditions



often disrupted regular attendance. This was consistent with findings by Phiri (2010), who noted that health related challenges were a major contributor to teacher absenteeism in Eastern Province.

Another important factor was family responsibilities. Teachers frequently missed classes to attend funerals, weddings, or other cultural events. In Zambian society, funerals are highly valued and often require several days of participation. This cultural obligation was highlighted by Mulenga (2015), who found that teachers in Lusaka often prioritized family and community duties over professional responsibilities. Similar findings were reported in Tanzania, where Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) observed that cultural obligations were a significant cause of teacher absence across East Africa. Economic pressures also played a major role. Many teachers reported that their salaries were either delayed or insufficient to meet basic needs. As a result, they engaged in secondary income activities such as private tutoring, farming, or small businesses. This reduced the time they spent in classrooms. Mwanza (2016) documented similar patterns in Copperbelt Province, where teachers often left school early to attend to personal businesses. Globally, the World Bank (2019) noted that financial insecurity was one of the strongest predictors of absenteeism among public servants, including teachers, in Sub Saharan Africa.

The study also found that poor working conditions contributed to absenteeism. Teachers reported overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, and inadequate infrastructure. These conditions lowered morale and made teaching stressful. Mulenga (2015) emphasized that poor working environments in Lusaka schools discouraged teachers from attending regularly. Internationally, UNESCO (2017) highlighted that poor facilities and lack of resources were common drivers of absenteeism in developing countries.

Another factor was weak monitoring systems. In many schools, attendance registers were not strictly enforced, and disciplinary measures were inconsistent. This allowed teachers to miss classes without facing serious consequences. Phiri (2010) observed that weak accountability structures in Eastern Province schools made absenteeism more common. Similarly, Rogers and Vegas (2009) found that in several developing countries, weak supervision systems led to high levels of teacher absence.

Transport challenges also contributed to absenteeism. Teachers who lived far from schools often struggled to arrive on time, especially in rural areas where roads were poor and transport was unreliable.

This was supported by Kapungwe (2014), who found that teachers in rural Zambia often missed classes due to long travel distances. In addition, Chishimba (2018) reported that lack of housing allowances forced teachers to live far from schools, increasing absenteeism. Comparable findings were reported in Uganda, where teachers in remote areas faced long commutes that reduced their attendance (UNESCO, 2017).



Finally, the study noted that low motivation and stress were underlying causes of absenteeism. Teachers often felt undervalued, overworked, and unsupported. Heavy workloads, large class sizes, and lack of recognition contributed to burnout. Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) argued that teacher motivation was a critical determinant of attendance, and financial insecurity combined with poor recognition often led to disengagement. In Zambia, Mulenga (2015) similarly found that low morale was a major factor behind absenteeism in government schools.

### **Relationship between Job Security and Absenteeism**

The study showed that job security had a dual effect on teacher absenteeism. Teachers with permanent contracts sometimes felt secure enough to be absent more often, especially when supervision was weak or monitoring systems were inconsistent. This sense of security, while important for stability, occasionally led to complacency.

In contrast, contract and probationary teachers generally attended more regularly because they feared non renewal of their contracts. Their attendance was motivated by the desire to secure permanent employment and avoid disciplinary action.

This finding agreed with Chishimba (2018), who observed that permanent teachers in Northern Province were more likely to be absent than contract teachers. It also aligned with Kapungwe (2014), who found that contract teachers in rural Zambia demonstrated stronger attendance patterns compared to permanent staff. These studies suggested that job security, while beneficial, could reduce accountability if not paired with effective supervision.

International evidence supported these findings. Rogers and Vegas (2009) showed that job security without accountability mechanisms often led to complacency in public service, including education. UNESCO (2017) emphasized that effective performance appraisal systems were necessary to balance stability with responsibility. In Malawi, similar findings were reported, where contract teachers showed lower absenteeism compared to permanent staff (World Bank, 2019).

The study also revealed that job security influenced teacher morale and motivation. Permanent teachers often felt valued and stable, but when accountability was weak, this security sometimes reduced their motivation to attend regularly. On the other hand, contract teachers were motivated by the hope of securing permanent positions, which encouraged them to attend more consistently. This was similar to findings in Uganda, where contract teachers demonstrated stronger attendance due to fear of dismissal (UNESCO, 2017).

In addition, Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) argued that job security must be balanced with incentives. They found that in several African countries, permanent teachers often lacked motivation because they felt their jobs were guaranteed regardless of



performance. This suggested that job security alone was not enough; it needed to be combined with effective monitoring, incentives, and sanctions to ensure accountability.

#### **Differences by Employment Category**

The study found that permanent teachers had higher rates of unexcused absence than contract or part time teachers.

Permanent teachers often relied on their job security and were less concerned about disciplinary action. In contrast, contract teachers were more punctual and committed, as they were motivated to secure permanent positions. Part time teachers were often absent because they balanced teaching with other income activities, such as farming or business ventures.

This pattern was supported by Mulenga (2015), who noted that permanent teachers in Lusaka often relied on their job security and were less concerned about disciplinary action. Mwanza (2016) similarly reported that contract teachers were more punctual and committed, as they were motivated to secure permanent positions. Globally, Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) found that contract teachers in several African countries demonstrated higher attendance rates compared to permanent staff, suggesting that employment status influenced motivation and accountability.

The study also found that differences in absenteeism by employment category were linked to gender roles. At Hillside Girls Secondary School, female teachers often struggled with balancing professional and domestic responsibilities. This was consistent with Mulenga (2015), who reported that female teachers in Lusaka faced higher absenteeism due to childcare and household duties. Similar findings were reported in Kenya, where female teachers often missed classes due to family responsibilities (UNESCO, 2017).

Another important observation was that part time teachers were more vulnerable to absenteeism because they often lacked benefits such as housing allowances, medical support, and transport subsidies. This made them more dependent on other income sources, which competed with their teaching duties. Kapungwe (2014) noted that part time teachers in rural Zambia often combined teaching with farming, which reduced their classroom presence during planting and harvesting seasons.

#### **School Level Comparisons**

The study revealed that absenteeism varied across the four schools studied, and these differences were shaped by leadership quality, community involvement, infrastructure conditions, and teacher responsibilities.

St. Atanazio Secondary School recorded the lowest absenteeism. This was linked to strong leadership and active community involvement. The head teacher was reported to be consistent in monitoring attendance, and the school had strong ties with the local



community, which encouraged accountability. Parents and community leaders often visited the school, and this created a culture of responsibility among teachers. These findings were consistent with Kapungwe (2014), who reported that schools with strong leadership and community engagement in rural Zambia recorded lower absenteeism. Globally, similar results were found in Uganda, where community monitoring reduced teacher absence significantly (UNESCO, 2017).

Damview Secondary School experienced higher absenteeism. This was tied to poor infrastructure, weak supervision, and limited resources. Teachers often complained about overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, and poor sanitation facilities. These conditions lowered morale and made teaching stressful, leading to higher absenteeism. This finding was supported by Mulenga (2015), who noted that poor working conditions in Lusaka schools contributed to absenteeism. Internationally, Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) also found that poor infrastructure and lack of resources were major causes of absenteeism in schools across Sub Saharan Africa.

Hillside Girls Secondary School also recorded high absenteeism, particularly among female teachers. Many teachers struggled to balance professional responsibilities with domestic duties such as childcare and household management. This was consistent with Mulenga (2015), who reported that female teachers in Lusaka faced higher absenteeism due to family responsibilities. Globally, similar findings were reported in Kenya, where female teachers often missed classes because of domestic obligations (UNESCO, 2017). The school had supportive peer networks, but these were not strong enough to fully address the challenges faced by female staff.

Chipata Trades Secondary School showed moderate absenteeism. Teachers often combined teaching with vocational responsibilities, which sometimes reduced their classroom presence. Because the school offered both academic and technical subjects, teachers were involved in workshops and practical training sessions outside the classroom. This dual responsibility sometimes conflicted with regular teaching schedules. This finding was similar to Mwanza (2016), who observed that teachers in vocational schools in Copperbelt Province often struggled to balance teaching with technical duties. Globally, vocational schools in Tanzania and Ghana reported similar challenges, where teachers engaged in external work reduced their classroom attendance (World Bank, 2019).

The study concluded that differences across schools were shaped by leadership quality, community involvement, and infrastructure conditions. Schools with strong leadership and active community participation recorded lower absenteeism, while those with weak supervision and poor facilities experienced higher absence rates. These findings echoed Rogers and Vegas (2009), who demonstrated that schools with strong monitoring systems had significantly lower absenteeism rates.



Globally, similar patterns were observed. In Ghana, schools with strong community oversight recorded lower absenteeism compared to those with weak parental involvement (World Bank, 2019). In Tanzania, absenteeism was reduced in schools where head teachers actively monitored attendance and engaged with local communities (UNESCO, 2017). In Malawi, Chimombo (2005) found that schools with active school management committees were more effective in reducing absenteeism. These comparisons showed that leadership and community involvement were universal factors influencing teacher attendance.

### 3. Conclusions

The study concluded that teacher absenteeism was multi causal, meaning it was influenced by a combination of personal, economic, and institutional factors. Personal issues such as illness, family responsibilities, and cultural obligations like funeral attendance were common reasons for absence. Economic challenges, including delayed salaries and low pay, pushed teachers into secondary income activities, which reduced their classroom presence.

Institutional weaknesses, such as poor infrastructure, weak monitoring systems, and inconsistent enforcement of attendance policies, further contributed to absenteeism. These findings confirmed that absenteeism was not caused by a single factor but by a complex interaction of conditions within and outside the school environment.

Job security was found to provide stability but could also reduce accountability if not paired with effective supervision. Teachers with permanent contracts often felt secure enough to miss classes without fear of losing their jobs. In contrast, contract and probationary teachers demonstrated stronger attendance patterns because they feared non renewal of contracts. This dual effect of job security highlighted the need for policies that balance stability with accountability.

As Chishimba (2018) and Kapungwe (2014) observed in Zambia, permanent teachers were more likely to be absent compared to contract teachers, while international studies by Rogers and Vegas (2009) and UNESCO (2017) showed similar patterns in other developing countries.

Differences across employment categories and schools highlighted the need for context specific interventions. Permanent teachers, contract teachers, and part time teachers faced different pressures, and schools varied in their levels of absenteeism depending on leadership quality, community involvement, and infrastructure. For example, St. Atanazio recorded the lowest absenteeism due to strong leadership and community support, while Damview and Hillside Girls faced higher absenteeism linked to poor facilities and domestic burdens.



Chipata Trades showed moderate absenteeism influenced by vocational responsibilities. These differences suggested that interventions must be tailored to the specific challenges faced by each school and employment category.

Ultimately, absenteeism undermined student learning outcomes, teacher morale, and the credibility of the education system. When teachers were absent, students lost valuable instructional time, which affected their academic performance. Teacher morale was also weakened, as frequent absenteeism created resentment among colleagues who had to cover for absent staff. At the system level, absenteeism reduced public confidence in government schools and wasted resources allocated to education. These conclusions were consistent with earlier Zambian analyses of teacher attendance (Phiri, 2010; Mulenga, 2015; Mwanza, 2016) and global studies (UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2019).

Globally, similar conclusions have been drawn. In Ghana, Ampiah and Adu Yeboah (2009) found that absenteeism reduced instructional time and negatively affected student achievement. In Malawi, Chimombo (2005) reported that absenteeism undermined the credibility of the education system and wasted scarce resources. In Kenya, Bold et al. (2017) found that teacher absenteeism was one of the most significant barriers to improving learning outcomes in public schools. These global findings reinforced the conclusion that absenteeism is a universal challenge that requires strong leadership, effective monitoring, and improved teacher welfare.

In summary, the study concluded that absenteeism was a serious problem with multiple causes. Job security, while important, needed to be balanced with accountability. Differences across employment categories and schools required context specific solutions. Most importantly, absenteeism undermined the core mission of education by reducing learning time, lowering teacher morale, and weakening trust in the school system.

#### **4. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations were made to reduce teacher absenteeism and improve accountability in government secondary schools.

These recommendations focused on strengthening monitoring systems, balancing job security with accountability, improving teacher welfare, enhancing school leadership, and increasing community involvement.

The study recommended that schools introduce reliable attendance registers and ensure regular supervision by head teachers. Monitoring should not only record presence but also track punctuality and time spent in classrooms. This would help identify patterns of absenteeism and allow for timely interventions. Rogers and Vegas (2009) showed that schools with strong monitoring systems in developing countries had significantly



lower absenteeism rates. In Zambia, Phiri (2010) found that weak accountability structures contributed to high absenteeism in Eastern Province schools.

Globally, Bold et al. (2017) reported that in Kenya, teacher absenteeism was reduced when monitoring systems were strengthened through school inspections and community oversight. Similarly, in India, Kremer et al. (2005) found that absenteeism dropped when teachers were monitored through random spot checks. These examples showed that monitoring systems were effective across different contexts.

Job security was found to provide stability but could reduce accountability if not paired with effective supervision. The study recommended maintaining permanent employment benefits but enforcing stricter performance evaluations. Teachers should be assessed regularly, and absenteeism should be included in performance appraisals. Chishimba (2018) observed that permanent teachers in Northern Province were more likely to be absent compared to contract teachers, highlighting the need for stronger accountability measures.

Globally, UNESCO (2017) emphasized that effective appraisal systems were necessary to balance stability with responsibility. In Uganda, Nansozi (2014) found that permanent teachers often felt secure enough to miss classes, while contract teachers were more committed due to fear of dismissal. These findings reinforced the need to balance job security with accountability mechanisms.

The study recommended improving teacher welfare by ensuring timely salary payments, providing housing allowances, and expanding professional development opportunities.

Delayed salaries and poor working conditions were major causes of absenteeism. Mulenga (2015) found that poor working conditions in Lusaka schools discouraged teachers from attending regularly. Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) argued that teacher motivation was a critical determinant of attendance, and financial insecurity often led to disengagement.

Providing housing allowances would reduce transport challenges, while professional development opportunities would improve morale and commitment. In Malawi, Chimombo (2005) reported that teachers who received housing support were more consistent in attendance. Globally, OECD (2019) emphasized that professional development opportunities improved teacher motivation and reduced absenteeism in several countries.

Strong leadership was found to be one of the most effective ways to reduce absenteeism. The study recommended training head teachers in effective human resource management and encouraging participatory leadership. Head teachers should be equipped with skills to monitor attendance, motivate staff, and enforce accountability.



Kapungwe (2014) reported that schools with strong leadership in rural Zambia recorded lower absenteeism.

Globally, World Bank (2019) found that leadership quality was one of the strongest predictors of teacher attendance In Sub Saharan Africa. In Ghana, Ampiah and Adu Yeboah (2009) found that schools with active head teachers recorded lower absenteeism compared to those with weak leadership. In Tanzania, Davidson (2007) reported that participatory leadership styles improved teacher morale and reduced absenteeism.

The study recommended strengthening parent teacher associations (PTAs) and involving communities in monitoring teacher attendance. Community members could play a role in holding schools accountable and ensuring that teachers attended regularly. Phiri (2010) found that community involvement in Eastern Province schools improved accountability and reduced absenteeism.

In Malawi, Chimombo (2005) reported that schools with active school management committees were more effective in reducing absenteeism. Globally, Ampiah and Adu Yeboah (2009) found that community oversight in Ghana improved teacher attendance and student performance. In Uganda, Nansozi (2014) noted that community monitoring reduced absenteeism by increasing pressure on teachers to attend regularly. These findings showed that community involvement was a universal strategy for improving accountability.

### **5. Suggestions for Further Research**

The findings of this study provided important insights into teacher absenteeism and job security in Chipata District. However, further research is needed to build a stronger evidence base and guide policy reforms. Several areas were identified as priorities for future studies.

Future studies could explore the direct impact of absenteeism on student academic performance in quantitative terms. While this study established that absenteeism undermines learning, it did not measure the exact effect on examination results or classroom achievement. Quantitative studies could use test scores, pass rates, and progression data to show how absenteeism affects student outcomes. The World Bank (2019) emphasized that teacher absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of poor learning outcomes in Sub Saharan Africa. In Kenya, Bold et al. (2017) found that absenteeism significantly reduced instructional time and lowered student achievement. In Zambia, Mulenga (2015) suggested that absenteeism contributed to declining performance in government schools, but more empirical evidence is needed to confirm this relationship. In Malawi, Chimombo (2005) also reported that absenteeism was directly linked to poor literacy and numeracy outcomes among primary school pupils. Another area for future research is comparative studies between rural and urban schools to assess contextual differences. Rural schools often face challenges such as poor



infrastructure, long travel distances, and limited resources, while urban schools may struggle with overcrowding and higher demands. Kapungwe (2014) found that rural schools in Zambia recorded higher absenteeism due to transport challenges and weak supervision. Globally, UNESCO (2017) reported that absenteeism patterns varied between rural and urban schools, with rural schools often facing greater difficulties.

In Ghana, Ampiah and Adu Yeboah (2009) found that rural schools recorded higher absenteeism compared to urban schools, largely due to poor infrastructure and weak community monitoring. Comparative studies would help policymakers design interventions that are sensitive to the unique challenges of each context.

Future studies could also explore the role of gender in absenteeism patterns, particularly how teachers balance professional and domestic responsibilities. This study found that female teachers at Hillside Girls Secondary School struggled with childcare and household duties, which increased absenteeism. Mulenga (2015) reported similar findings in Lusaka, where female teachers faced higher absenteeism due to family responsibilities. Globally, UNESCO (2017) highlighted that gender roles often influenced teacher attendance, especially in societies where women carried a heavier burden of domestic work.

In Ghana, Ampiah and Adu Yeboah (2009) found that female teachers were more likely to miss classes due to family obligations. In Uganda, Nansozi (2014) reported that female teachers faced higher absenteeism rates compared to male teachers, especially in rural areas where domestic responsibilities were more demanding. Future research could examine how gender roles intersect with employment status and school context to shape absenteeism.

Longitudinal studies on job security reforms are needed to examine how reforms in job security policies affect absenteeism trends over time. This study found that job security had a dual effect, providing stability but sometimes reducing accountability. Future research could track the impact of policy changes, such as stricter performance evaluations or new contract systems, over several years. UNESCO (2017) emphasized that long term studies are necessary to understand how accountability reforms influence teacher behavior. In Uganda, Nansozi (2014) found that reforms in teacher contracts reduced absenteeism in the short term, but long term effects were unclear. In India, Kremer et al. (2005) reported that contract reforms reduced absenteeism, but sustainability depended on consistent monitoring. In Zambia, similar longitudinal studies could provide evidence on whether reforms improve attendance sustainably and whether they affect teacher morale and retention.

## **6. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. Absenteeism in Zambian government secondary schools was influenced by personal, economic, and institutional factors, with job security playing a paradoxical



role. While permanent employment ensured stability, it sometimes reduced accountability. The chapter recommended strengthening monitoring systems, improving teacher welfare, and enhancing leadership capacity. Suggestions for further research highlighted the need for deeper exploration of absenteeism's impact on student outcomes and broader systemic reforms.

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