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## A Study to Investigate the Perceptions of Students Regarding Teacher Absenteeism at Secondary Level

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### Abstract

*In the last few decades, developing nations have made so many efforts to put their children in schools. Having a basic education is known as the primary pillar to promote economic growth and raise living standards. However, a number of factors have contributed to the stagnation of educational achievement, one of which is teacher absenteeism. This study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of students regarding teacher absenteeism at secondary level. It may be helpful to understand the effects of teacher absenteeism on students' achievement. Survey research method was used in this study. A self-developed close-ended questionnaire was used and data was collected from 120 participants from two secondary schools (1 public & 1 private) using convenience sampling technique. Descriptive statistics seeking help of SPSS software was used to analyse the collected data. The study concluded that students in public sector schools experience less academic impacts from teacher absenteeism compared to those in private sector schools, as teachers' absenteeism is less prevalent in public sector schools.*

### Keywords

Student's Perception, Teacher Absenteeism, Secondary Level.

### Introduction

One major problem that impacts educational systems around the world, especially in developing nations, is teacher absenteeism. Consistent instructor presence is essential for secondary education because it promotes student engagement, academic success, and overall learning quality (Shafqat & Amjad, 2024). But children commonly experience disruptions in their education when professors are absent, which can result in knowledge gaps and poor academic performance. Many developing countries have concentrated on expanding educational opportunities in recent years in an effort to raise living standards and encourage economic growth. Even with these initiatives, certain regions of education continue to lag behind due to things like teacher absenteeism, which can lower educational standards.

Pakistan and other developing countries have worked hard in the last few decades to broaden access to education (Amjad et al., 2023, a, b, c). But even with these improvements in educational accessibility, a number of issues still stand in the way of educational advancement, with teacher absenteeism being the most critical. The problem is a reflection of deeper problems like poor working conditions, a lack of support for teachers, and inconsistent school administration techniques, in addition to systemic problems facing the education sector. Students suffer the most from absence because they have to deal with the emotional and academic fallout from missing out on important classroom interactions.

According to Oghuvbu's (2010) study of secondary school students' attendance and academic performance in Delta State, Nigeria, there is a somewhat favourable association between academic

achievement and attendance. It was also shown that attendance in secondary schools in the research area has an impact on academic achievement. Similarly, Miller (2012) has confirmed that, of all the variables influencing education, instructors are the most significant school-based predictor of students' academic success.

Research indicates that, in comparison to insecure teacher-student connections, secure interactions predict higher test scores, more academic motivation, less retentions, and fewer referrals for special education (Ong et al., 2024; Qureshi et al., 2023). This begs the crucial question of how educators might create stronger bonds with their pupils (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Additionally, studies reveal that students' learning is affected when a teacher is not present in the classroom.

As noted by Sawada and Ragatz (2005), absence has significant monetary consequences. There is evidence to support the claim that absent teachers have impacts on student attendance, which in turn has a significant impact on grade point averages. However, attendance in class is a predictor of far more than simply academic achievement for both teachers and students; in fact, some of these occurrences can have a lasting impact on a student's life and future.

Numerous approaches, such as pay, training, the school environment, and parent-teacher engagement, can be used to study the impact of teachers. But in this study, the researcher focused on students' perceptions of teacher absenteeism as well as actual teacher absences.

Chaudhury et al. (2006) stated that a variety of factors can contribute to absenteeism, such as personal illness, a sick relative that needs to be taken care of, family conflicts, low job satisfaction that lowers morale, a lack of personal competence, a lack of friendly work group norms, poor leadership at the workplace, ineffective supervision and inspection of employees, assigning other duties outside of the workplace, inclement weather, union organizations, and employee challenges that differ from one organization to the next (Tabbasam et al., 2023; Tabassum et al., 2024).

School districts nationwide suffer financially as a result of teacher absenteeism. More significantly, student attendance has a detrimental impact on school environment and culture, while teacher absence has a poor impact on student accomplishment (Hess & Copeland, 2001).

Furthermore, Bruno (2002) makes the case that initiatives to improve fairness and excellence in educational settings should concentrate on the variations in teacher absenteeism rates among school sites as well as the effects of school site location on educational opportunity access. The study specifically looks at the relationship between teacher absence rates at the school site for all high schools situated in a large urban area and the quality of the environmental and geographical backdrop of the school setting. Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that the study only partially supported the idea that teacher absence has an effect on the dual issues of school district resources and increased student risk.

As noted by Chaudhury et al. (2006), governments wishing to address the issue must determine which instructors are absent and adjust their policies accordingly if a small percentage of teachers are the cause of the majority of the absences. The answer will probably involve removing the absent teachers from the system if it comes out that they are "ghosts," in the sense that they either do not exist or are only listed to receive a paycheck.

In the event that teachers' absences are due to prolonged illness rather than misconduct (Amin et al., 2024), as is the case in the nations most affected by the HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) pandemic, educational institutions may need to concentrate on ensuring that other teachers cover classes as soon as possible. One could argue that there are two reasons why teacher absences do not warrant much attention. First, the expense of being absent might not be very high. After all, there are many other issues plaguing education systems in underdeveloped nations besides teacher absenteeism.

It is the responsibility of education leaders to establish and maintain learning-engaged schools (Amjad et al., 2022, a, b). A supportive learning environment at school has a direct impact on students' capacity and desire to acquire the skills needed to succeed in life. Teacher absences disrupt the culture and atmosphere of the school. It has an impact on both the professional and classroom environments among employees. Research has shown that the atmosphere and customs that administrators create have an impact on teacher absences. Instructor attendance is higher than absence in schools where the focus is on formal ethics or caring for students (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2010).

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how secondary school students in district Lahore's public and private schools perceive teacher absenteeism. Since students' academic achievement, level of involvement with the learning process, and overall educational experience are all directly impacted by their teachers' absence, it is imperative to comprehend their viewpoints on this matter. This study compares the experiences of students in public and private schools in an effort to find any appreciable variations in the incidence and consequences of teacher absenteeism between the two educational sectors. Private schools, while more autonomous, may struggle with teacher retention and workload, which could result in higher absenteeism rates. In contrast, public schools frequently benefit from more structured administrative systems and government oversight, which could help to reduce absenteeism rates.

**Significance of the Study**

The research will be important because it investigates the perceptions of students regarding teacher absenteeism at secondary level. It will assist the school principals and Ministry of Education officials to put in place measures to reduce teacher absenteeism at secondary level. The research findings will assist the School Education Department (SED) to formulate future policies aimed at combating teacher absenteeism at secondary level.

Once that factors leading to teacher absenteeism have been identified, it will help in providing quality education thereby enhancing student achievements. The study findings will be used by researchers to carry out further investigation of perception of students regarding teacher absenteeism at secondary level.

**Objective of the Study**

1. To investigate the perceptions of students regarding teacher absenteeism.

**Research Question**

1. What are the perceptions of students regarding teacher absenteeism?

**Research Design and Methodology**

The study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of teacher absenteeism at secondary level. According to the nature of study, survey research was conducted. The research design of this study was descriptive in nature. Secondary school students of all public and private sector of district Lahore were the population of the study. Data was collected from girls. The study was narrowed to one public and one private sector schools. 120 participants were selected using convenience sampling technique.

A five-point Likert-type scale was developed by the researcher which was given to the participants to collect quantitative data. The instrument was validated by two experts. Pilot testing was also done to ensure the reliability of the instrument. The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.810 which showed the instrument is reliable. The collected data was then analyzed by using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage).

**Findings of the Study**

**Table 1**

*Academic Performance and Achievement*

Statements	Public Sector (Frequency & Percentage)				Private Sector (Frequency & Percentage)					
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1) Student academic performance is suffering because of teacher absenteeism.	10 17%	6 10%	4 6%	15 25%	25 42%	22 36%	10 17%	10 17%	6 10%	12 20%
2) Teacher absenteeism is one of the primary causes of student academic failure.	9 15%	6 10%	8 13%	24 40%	13 22%	6 10%	8 13%	4 7%	32 53%	10 17%
3) Teacher absenteeism has a negative effect on student achievement.	11 18%	10 17%	12 20%	15 25%	12 20%	10 17%	9 15%	10 17%	6 10%	25 41%
4) High rate of teacher absenteeism, lower student test scores.	3 5%	12 20%	19 32%	19 32%	7 11%	3 5%	12 20%	19 32%	19 32%	7 11%
5) Teacher absenteeism lowers the student	3 5%	7 12%	15 25%	21 35%	14 23%	9 15%	23 38%	4 7%	19 32%	5 8%

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achievement in mathematics.										
6) The momentum of learning decreases and productivity is lost, when teachers are absent.	8	9	6	23	14	29	15	6	8	2
	13%	15%	10%	38%	24%	49%	25%	10%	13%	3%

Table 1 shows the comparison of perceptions of students regarding teacher absenteeism between public and private sector schools based on six statements. Each statement reflects a different aspect of how teacher absenteeism impacts students’ academic performance. As regards statement 1, about 53% of the students of private schools were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about one-fourth of the public schools which means students’ performance is more affected due to teachers’ absenteeism in private schools.

As regards of statement 2, which is, teacher absenteeism is one of the primary causes of student academic failure, about 23% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 25% of the students of public school.

In statement 3, teacher absenteeism has a negative effect on student achievement; about 32% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 35% of the students of public school.

In statement 4, high rate of teacher absenteeism, lower student test scores; about 25% of the students of both public and private schools were either strongly agreed or agreed from it.

As regards of statement 5, teacher absenteeism lowers the student achievement in mathematics; about 53% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 17% of the students of public school.

In statement 6, the momentum of learning decreases and productivity is lost, when teachers are absent; about 74% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 28% of the students of public school.

Overall the public sector tends to have more students who disagreed with the idea that teacher absenteeism severely impacts their academic performance. In contrast, private sector students exhibit stronger agreement with the statements about teacher absenteeism leading to academic issues, particularly in mathematics and overall learning momentum.

**Table 2**

*Classroom Environment and School Culture*

Statements	Public Sector (Frequency & Percentage)				Private Sector (Frequency & Percentage)					
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1) Teacher absenteeism is contributing to a lack of motivation among other teachers.	6 10%	20 33%	6 10%	18 30%	10 17%	29 48%	24 40%	3 5%	3 5%	1 2%
2) Teacher absenteeism is contributing to students' disciplinary issues.	12 20%	20 33%	2 3%	16 27%	10 17%	22 37%	22 37%	4 7%	7 11%	5 8%
3) Teacher absenteeism upsets school climate and culture that administrators established.	7 12%	20 33%	9 15%	13 22%	11 18%	35 58%	10 17%	4 7%	9 15%	2 3%
4) The absence of a regular classroom teacher slows academic and emotional growth of students.	1 2%	11 18%	14 23%	18 30%	16 27%	28 47%	25 42%	3 5%	2 3%	2 3%

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5) Teacher absenteeism threatens the regularity of the classroom, that students are accustomed to when their teacher is present.	10 17%	19 32%	8 13%	14 23%	9 15%	30 50%	10 17%	10 17%	7 11%	3 5%
6) Teacher absenteeism leads to student absenteeism.	16 27%	12 20%	11 18%	13 22%	8 13%	17 28%	10 17%	24 40%	7 12%	2 3%

This table shows the comparison of classroom environment and school culture between public and private sector schools based on six different statements. As regards of statement 1, teacher absenteeism is contributing to a lack of motivation among other teachers ; about 88% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 43% of the students of public school.

As regards of statement 2, teacher absenteeism is contributing to students' disciplinary issues; about 74% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 53% of the students of public school.

In statement 3, teacher absenteeism upsets school climate and culture that administrators established; about 75% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 45% of the students of public school.

As regards of statement 4, the absence of a regular classroom teacher slows academic and emotional growth of students; about 89% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 20% of the students of public school.

As regards of statement 5, teacher absenteeism threatens the regularity of the classroom, that students are accustomed to when their teacher is present; about 67% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 49% of the students of public school.

In statement 6, teacher absenteeism leads to student absenteeism; about 45% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 47% of the students of public school.

Public sector students provided more divided opinions, with a significant portion disagreeing with the statements, indicating less concern about teacher absenteeism influence on these factors. Whereas, private sector students generally stronger agreement with the negative impacts of teacher absenteeism across all six statements. They particularly emphasize its effects on teacher motivation, student discipline, school culture, and academic/emotional growth.

**Table 3**  
*Student Behaviour and Motivation*

Statements	Public Sector (Frequency & Percentage)				Private Sector (Frequency & Percentage)					
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1) Teacher absenteeism directly affects students' motivation to learn.	13 22%	14 23%	13 22%	11 18%	9 15%	10 17%	28 47%	4 7%	17 28%	1 1%
2) Student may not view school attendance as important if their classroom teacher is absent from class regularly.	12 20%	6 10%	11 18%	16 27%	15 25%	7 12%	19 32%	2 3%	6 10%	26 43%
3) When students see a substitute teacher, they have a reason to misbehave.	5 9%	8 14%	15 25%	20 35%	10 17%	22 37%	18 30%	8 13%	3 5%	9 15%
4) The dropout rates are increasing due to the increase in teacher absenteeism.	13 22%	11 18%	14 23%	16 27%	6 10%	15 25%	4 7%	7 12%	12 20%	22 36%

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This table shows the comparison of student behaviour and motivation between public and private sector schools based on four different statements. As regards of statement 1, teacher absenteeism directly affects students' motivation to learn; about 64% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 45% of the students of public school.

As regards of statement 2, student may not view school attendance as important if their classroom teacher is absent from class regularly; about 44% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 30% of the students of public school.

In statement 3, when students see a substitute teacher, they have a reason to misbehave; about 67% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 23% of the students of public school.

As regards of statement 4, the dropout rates are increasing due to the increase in teacher absenteeism; about 32% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 40% of the students of public school.

Public sector students gave mixed or balanced opinions, with a notable portion who disagreed with the statements, particularly regarding teacher absenteeism's impact on misbehaviour and dropout rates. While private sector students agreed more strongly that teacher absenteeism negatively affects students' behaviour, motivation, and attendance.

**Table 4**

*Substitute Teaching and Instructional Continuity*

Statements	Public Sector (Frequency & Percentage)				Private Sector (Frequency & Percentage)					
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1) The student's performance in the classroom does not change when taught by either a substitute or a regular classroom teacher.	1 2%	11 18%	14 23%	18 30%	16 27%	25 42%	9 15%	9 15%	13 22%	4 6%
2) Teacher absenteeism creates difficulty in finding a substitute teacher for the students.	2 3%	9 15%	13 22%	24 40%	12 20%	21 35%	13 22%	7 11%	10 17%	9 15%
3) After using a substitute, teachers have to re-teach material and rebuild relationships with students.	19 32%	12 20%	14 23%	9 15%	6 10%	14 23%	34 57%	4 7%	3 5%	5 8%
4) Instructional intensity is reduced when a regularly assigned teacher is replaced with an unqualified substitute.	10 17%	10 17%	4 6%	21 35%	15 25%	30 50%	8 13%	4 7%	4 7%	14 23%

The last table shows comparison of substitute teaching and instructional continuity between public and private sector schools based on four different statements. . As regards of statement 1, the student's performance in the classroom does not change when taught by either a substitute or a regular classroom teacher; about 57% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 20% of the students of public school.

As regards of statement 2, teacher absenteeism creates difficulty in finding a substitute teacher for the students; about 57% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 18% of the students of public school.

In statement 3, after using a substitute, teachers have to re-teach material and rebuild relationships with students; about 80% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 52% of the students of public school.

As regards of statement 4, instructional intensity is reduced when a regularly assigned teacher is replaced with an unqualified substitute; about 63% of the students of private school were either strongly agreed or agreed in comparison to about 34% of the students of public school.

The students of both sectors showed concern about impact of teacher absenteeism and the use of substitute on instructional quality and student performance.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of students regarding teacher absenteeism at secondary level in both public and private sector schools. The findings provide insights about how teacher absenteeism affects students' academic experiences and how the results are different in both private and public sector.

The issue of teacher absenteeism has a significant impact on the general atmosphere of the school as well as the individual student outcomes. According to the current study teachers who miss a lot of class cause more disturbances for students, especially those in the private sector. This lowers students' academic performance and motivation. Similar findings were revealed in a previous study conducted by Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, (2010) in which it was found that teacher absenteeism creates disturbance in school climate and culture.

According to the study, pupils attending private schools are more sensitive to the effects of teacher absences. There are multiple possible explanations for this. One theory is that teacher absence causes large gaps in the learning process because private schools may have more demanding curricula and higher academic standards. Strong replacement procedures may be absent from private schools, which could result in inadequate classroom management and continuity. Additionally, children in private schools may find it more challenging to adjust to the unpredictability caused by teacher absences because they are used to higher standards. A study conducted by Mary (2009), revealed similar findings that student performance is negatively affected when a teacher is absent from the classroom repeatedly. Her study showed that the more days a teacher is absent, the more students' test scores are affected.

However, pupils in the public sector felt that the impact of teacher absenteeism on their academic performance was less noticeable. Numerous variables, such as a more accommodating school schedule or perhaps a greater acceptance of substitute teachers, could be to blame for this. Another reason might be because structural measures like substitute pools, which reduce learning disruptions for students, have made teacher absenteeism in public schools less common or better controlled. More seasoned teachers or well-planned, less susceptible to disruption curricula might also be advantageous for public schools.

The correlation between teacher and student absenteeism is an intriguing discovery. Many pupils in both sectors stated that their own attendance habits are badly impacted by teachers' frequent absences. Students may absorb the idea that attending class is not important if they see their teachers missing it frequently. This might cause more disengagement, which would therefore increase absenteeism and lower academic performance. It is important to recognize the psychological effects of teacher absences on pupils since they can negatively impact their motivation, self-control, and general interest in their academics. Similar findings were revealed in a previous study conducted by Sawada and Ragatz (2005), in which it was found that teacher absenteeism have impacts on student attendance, which in turn has a significant impact on grade point averages.

In addition, the disruption caused by teacher absenteeism impacts the continuity of instruction and the relationships between teachers and students in the classroom. Because there is a lack of consistency brought about by frequent teacher absences, pupils must adjust to the different teaching philosophies and skill levels of substitute teachers. Since the relationship between teachers and students is an essential component of a helpful learning environment, this inconsistency might impede students' academic and emotional development. Frequent absences cause teachers to have to make up lost time and lower classroom productivity as they have to re-establish rapport with students and constantly re-teach materials to ensure that learning objectives are reached.

The study also emphasizes how important it is for students and school administrators to communicate effectively when it comes to teacher absences. When absenteeism happens, students feel stressed about how important it is to be informed and have their issues handled. Furthermore, private schools might adopt some of the public sector's best practices, like putting in place more transparent policies and accountability systems to better control absenteeism. Although the study presents

valuable insights, the small sample size and emphasis on student viewpoints necessitate additional investigation, incorporating feedback from educators and school officials, to create all-encompassing approaches to tackle absenteeism in both domains.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of students regarding teacher absenteeism at secondary level. There is a negative impact of teacher absenteeism to student's academic achievements. This paper is to say that teacher absenteeism is affecting the quality of education. Teacher absenteeism, as this work explains, is affecting educational quality. Teacher absenteeism is affecting student's academic achievements and also is affecting teacher's performance. Policies are needed to reduce this behaviour and to motivate teachers to give them the confidence that they have a real impact on student's academic achievements. The study concludes that the students of government sector have lesser effects of teacher absenteeism on students' academic performance than private sector students because teacher absenteeism is less in government sector.

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, following recommendations are put forwarded.

1. To make sure that teachers follow their allotted schedules, schools—especially those in the private sector—should put in place more strict monitoring methods. To lower absenteeism, regular systems for tracking attendance and reporting should be implemented.
2. Professional development programs should be offered to teachers to improve job satisfaction and commitment in both public and private sector schools. This can include workshops and trainings to reduce teacher absenteeism. Schools should provide mental and physical wellbeing programs to teachers in order to address any personal or health-related issues that may contribute to their absence from the classroom.
3. Administrators of schools should create explicit procedures for teacher absences. In order to minimize the interruption to children' learning when instructors are absent, these policies should contain procedures for substituting teachers and backup plans.
4. Best practices can be shared between public and private schools. Public schools are claimed to have reduced teacher absenteeism. Working together, the sectors may develop effective plans to lower absenteeism in every school.
5. The primary causes of teacher absenteeism in private sector schools should be further investigated, with an emphasis on elements like work environment, job satisfaction, and school management procedures. This will assist in identifying focused remedies for particular problems experienced by teachers in the private sector.

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