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**A Research on the Reasons for Absenteeism of Students in Primary Schools**

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**Abstract**

Education is the whole of the processes of directly or indirectly contributing to the knowledge and skills needed for people to have their place in their social life lives, to increase their personality traits, outside or inside school. In the education system, schools are educational institutions that provide students with the targeted knowledge and skills with scientific methods and techniques in the light of their specific and general goals and the most central principles. Primary education is the institution that provides the foundations for the person to be ready to present our duties at the age when we will stage our social responsibilities. Entering primary education life is one of the most important turning points in a child's life. For this reason, students should spend their primary education period to the fullest. In order to provide this occupancy, we encounter the issue of continuity, which is needed wherever there is education. The condition of continuous attendance in order for the individuals who receive education to achieve the goals in the education they receive is one of the basic principles of many educational institutions. This basic principle is most valuable in primary schools. Because an expected continuity here is one of the most important basic elements in achieving corporate and personal goals. In this study, the processes of primary school students' attendance or non-attendance will be examined and the reasons for absenteeism of these absent students will be examined. In addition, what needs to be done about the issues to be considered in student attendance in primary schools will be discussed and examined. In the aim of our study, a qualitative research method will be used in order to reveal absenteeism, which is a factual issue in society.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is necessary to ensure that each student benefits from the most appropriate educational approaches according to their individual situations and differences. This is one of the most fundamental tasks of a school in a student-centered approach. Ensuring the attendance of students is one of the prerequisites for the school to institutionally protect these basic functions and put them into practice. In order to ensure that individuals are present in a certain region or place, the needs and requirements of that individual must be met. This situation is even higher in students studying in primary school. In other words, considering the age group and the education received, it is known that schools must meet the needs of the students in line with the expectations of the students in order to ensure the continuation of primary school students in education.

Unlike all stages of education, primary education is the part where the attendance requirements of the students should be the highest with legal rules. In order to benefit from all educational activities in such schools, the most basic element in achieving the goals for this age group should be the compulsory attendance. The fact that the students, who are the target audience, are not in the right place at the right time in the time allocated for the learning processes will disrupt the institutional goals and will not be able to reach these goals for the absent individuals. In this context, the primary concept in achieving the policies created for students in primary schools and the goals that schools strive for students is the issue of the student's attendance at school without absenteeism.

### **Purpose and Sub-Objectives**

The main purpose of this study is to determine the reasons for absenteeism of primary school students and to develop suggestions based on the findings.

Depending on the main purpose, the sub-questions to be answered are:

Absences in students; What are the physical causes?

Absences in students; What are the emotional causes?

### **The Importance of the Study**

The implementation of many goals of education depends on the effective participation of children in the process. It is unlikely that these children who receive education will fully realize the targeted behaviors on an educational platform where they are not active. Children who study on educational platforms based on the principles of active participation also have a high level of encouragement. Otherwise, children run the risk of absenteeism by moving away from schools, which are education and training centers. This research determines the effects that may cause absenteeism in students and eliminates these effects; It is thought that it can transform the education process into an effective one and provide views that will help children to attend school in order to achieve the goals of the education system. In the planning and management of the research, a number of counts were used.

- a. It will be ensured that the answers to the interview questions to be prepared are within the scope that will lead to the determination of the existing situation.
- b. Arrangements will be made for the reliability and validity of the questions to be prepared.
- c. It will be ensured that the answers to the interview questions to be prepared are their own impartial thoughts.
- d. It will be ensured that teachers answer the questions completely, accurately and sincerely.

### **Scope and Limitations**

The data collected within the scope of the study will be limited to the opinions of teachers in primary schools in Çorum province. This research, in terms of data collection tools; It will be limited to the literature review study in the preparation of the problem and the questionnaire and the questions, and the interview questions in taking their opinions.

### **Literature**

When we look at the fate, it will be seen that many researches have been carried out on the reasons for absenteeism of primary school students. Relevant research emphasizes that in order to eliminate absenteeism, it is necessary to first determine the causes.

Jain & Jain (2023) In their research, they conducted a study that considered the intuitive connection between students' attendance and achievement. In their study, they investigated the events and causes of chronic absenteeism while examining the differences in primary school students' attainment of basic skills. As a result of the research, they found that a student's health conditions are not productive, distance from school, extra school working hours, teaching factors and harsh punishments are among the main factors leading to chronic absenteeism among students.

The fact that students are not involved in the school climate can hinder their development (Carroll, 2010). According to Gentle-Genitty (2009), students who show interest and value in education are less likely to be absent.

A tiered approach can play an important role, especially in interventions in education and strategies implemented to improve students' achievement. Kearney's (2016) study suggests that this approach can provide a wide range of benefits. This approach aims to offer customized support to each student, focusing on their individual needs and strengths. Cook & Ezenne (2010) found that the causal factors of absenteeism occur not only in the family, but also in schools, communities, and students themselves.

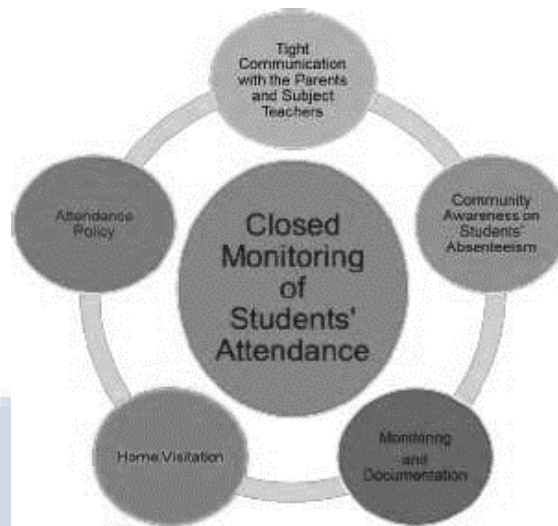
Jennings & Cook (2015) study examined parents' views on the reasons for absenteeism of students at the secondary level, using a sample of 221 parents from nine schools in Jamaica. The research stated that among the reasons for absenteeism, there are factors such as low value given to education and lack of resources. The study underlines improvements in the school environment, as well as the need

to provide employment-creating opportunities for parents to ensure they are able to meet the needs of their children. These results highlight the need for the education system to take into account not only the school environment, but also the environment in which the children live and the economic situation of the families.

In their study, Kearney et al. (2023) considered a historical perspective in which school attendance problems or absenteeism were associated with unhealthy functioning. School attendance and related problems are often considered a complex system and there are many factors in this system. First of all, school attendance problems and absenteeism can affect students' academic, social-emotional, mental and physical health status. In summary, the study examines how these factors interact with each other and how school attendance issues are processed at both an analytical and systemic level. In addition, the use of early warning systems is emphasized, suggesting potential strategies for early detection and prevention of school attendance problems. In this way, it is tried to prevent school attendance problems and absenteeism from turning into unhealthy functioning situations. Absenteeism rates can also point to school climate issues as well as community barriers to school attendance (Raviola et al., 2019).

In their study, Epstein & Sheldon (2002) examined the impact of certain partnership practices in schools to reduce daily student attendance and chronic absenteeism. In the study, data were collected showing that school-family-community partnership practices are effective in increasing or maintaining student attendance. The results show that various family-school-community partnership practices lead to an increase in daily attendance, a decrease in chronic absenteeism rates, or both. These data suggest that schools can increase student attendance in primary school by implementing specific family and community engagement activities.

It was stated that the fact that parents are behind the economic competence to meet the basic needs of their children and their social life needs and that they need their children to work in business life for economic reasons cause the continuous absenteeism of the students. It should provide financial support to parents so that they can cover their own expenses and their children's expenses. Children's health-related conditions should be closely monitored and necessary support should be provided to them in order to have a healthy physical development.



**Figure 1. Monitoring Student Absences**

**Source:** (Zonio, 2012, p. 7)

In the event that students' absences are monitored in a closed manner, the school administration should maintain close communication with the parents, take into account and implement the absenteeism policies. Students' activities should be monitored regularly and appropriate actions should be taken. It should be ensured that the policy on absences is implemented correctly (Zonio, 2012). In line with the policy for students, it should be stated that absences will be monitored objectively and students will be informed about the results of absenteeism. In addition, school activities should preferably be scheduled on weekends, especially on Saturdays. In this way, students' participation in activities will be encouraged and will help prevent absenteeism. Coordinators should support students' success by implementing these policies effectively (Zonio, 2012).

### **Reasons for Family Absenteeism**

At the root of the problems related to the student's school absenteeism, family situations should be examined. In this case, the solution can be sought in situations in the family environment. If the direct obstruction of the family that causes absenteeism is the family, family-school relations can be examined and a tendency towards cooperation methods can be achieved. In general, for children with limited absenteeism, we come across parents who have weaker communication with the school in the examinations in their families. In such cases, the situation encountered in parallel with the student's absenteeism is the low academic achievement of the student, and this academic failure gains momentum as the second reason that prevents the family from communicating with the school.

Vanden Heuvel (1997) presented the findings of the first comprehensive study on the determinants of absenteeism due to family responsibilities. Based on data from 2,642 Australian employees, it found that absences due to familial illness varied by gender, were associated with absenteeism due to illness, and found that children were absent for their parents due to family illness.

The study Moonie et al. (2006) examined the relationship between school absenteeism and asthma. According to the results of the study, school-age children with asthma show more absenteeism than their healthy peers. This suggests that asthma can adversely affect children's school attendance. Symptoms or treatment needs caused by asthma can affect children's school attendance and sometimes lead to early dropout.

Regarding health problems that cause school absenteeism, it is important for parents and school staff to cooperate. Monitoring children's health status and providing appropriate support and treatment when necessary can help them both protect the child's health and continue their education effectively.

### **Reasons for Student Absenteeism**

The most important purpose of educational institutions is to meet the educational needs of children and to try to develop them in areas where they are more competent. Students want to be in areas where their individual needs are met and this need to be met is maintained thanks to various variables. If the environment of the children outside of their school life prevents them from coming to school, the school administration has to take the necessary measures earlier. Schools are a social environment where children continue their education with different people. It is related to the basic needs of children that need to be met socially in this environment, to feel belonging, respected, accepted, and to feel love and respect. If students are deprived of these feelings in the school environment, the problem of absenteeism will arise in a student-centered way.

### **Reasons for School Absenteeism**

School is a student's home of education, and students should consider it their second home. In this case, students look at the facilities of the school as well as factors such as the social environment and employees in the school. Even students who do not have the status and desire to come to school will see a decrease in absenteeism problems if they reach a physical environment that can make them comfortable in the school environment.

### **Reasons for Absenteeism Caused by Friends**

When students come to school, they do not come only to receive academic information, there is no other environment where they can meet their peers in such large numbers, and this creates a circle of friends for students. If the student is accepted by his friends, the desire to attend school will increase continuously, but if the student has a shortage of friends in the school environment, this will create a cooling of the student towards the school.

### **Effects of Absences**

There may be different reasons for absences. These reasons are seen as belonging to different effects on students. When we look at these situations, the lack of preparation for the lesson and the lack of



motivation cause reluctance to attend school. This situation, which creates problems such as getting used to and adapting, can become chronic after a while and this can lead to serious and dangerous absences.

### **Ways to Prevent Absences**

First of all, when a student who is absent is encountered, this situation should be analyzed in detail and the roots of the problem should be addressed. In order to ensure that students attend school, it should be set out with the cooperation of school, family and child in order to solve problems. There may not be a situation that can be solved with a single formula for absent students. Since it is seen that absent students are absent due to the reasons mentioned above, sometimes but often due to more than one reason, it is necessary to reveal the reason or reasons in the form of a complete report card, not by focusing on a single point, but by calculating and investigating all possibilities.

### **METHOD**

In this section, the model, universe and sample selected as the design of the research, the means and ways of collecting the data, and how to do it from analyzing to interpreting these data are included.

#### **Data Collection**

The data collection processes of the study to be carried out will be followed in the following order.

A literature review will be conducted on the definition, importance, content and causes of absenteeism, and the concepts will be examined, and their classification and definition will be made.

According to the data to be obtained from the literature review, primary school teachers will be interviewed.

The sample group to be interviewed will be determined. The universe of this research will be composed of teachers working in primary school institutions in Çorum Province in the 2016-2017 academic year. The sample of the study will consist of teachers working in primary schools to be selected randomly.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Personal Information**

The participants of the study consist of 10 teachers of students between the ages of 7-14 in primary school. Answers were received to the questions posed in line with the prepared interview questions. The school is located in a region with a low socio-economic level and heavy migration from the village.

#### **Reasons for Absenteeism**

The reasons for students' absenteeism are divided into 4 main themes: physical reasons, mental reasons, social reasons and emotional reasons.

## Physical Causes

The answers to the questions asked to the teachers about the reasons for absenteeism are given below.

T1: Students are most absent when they are sick.

T2: The most common reason for absenteeism is health problems.

T3: Family problems can cause students to be absent.

T4: Some students may not be able to cope with academic difficulties and may be absent.

T5: Students' circle of friends and social interactions at school can affect absenteeism rates.

T6: Students may be absent due to reasons such as family migration and relocation.

T7: Students' ability to take personal responsibility and develop discipline can affect absenteeism rates.

T8: Traumatic events or crises experienced by students in the family can cause them to be absent.

T9: Negative teacher-student relations or lack of communication at school can affect students' absenteeism.

T10: Homework burden can reduce students' desire to go to school.

Due to the fact that the primary education institution is located in a neighborhood that receives immigrants from the villages, the fact that the families of the students frequently go to the village for reasons such as weddings, funerals, family visits, etc. constitute the basis of absenteeism based on social reasons.

## Emotional Causes

The answers to the questions asked to the teachers about the reasons for absenteeism are as follows:

T1: Students' absences are based on reasons such as difficult lessons, not liking school, not wanting to be separated from their mother.

T2: One of the emotional reasons why students are absent is the stress and pressure they experience at school.

T3: Family conflicts and problems can cause students to lose emotional balance.

T4: Students' inadequate ability to cope with emotional difficulties can lead them to absenteeism.

T5: Some students may be absent due to difficulties in their social relations at school.

T6: Excessive stress or anxiety can prevent students from focusing on lessons, which can increase the tendency to be absent.



T7: The illness or loss of a family member to whom students are emotionally attached can increase their tendency to be absent from school.

T8: When students feel worthless or unsuccessful, it can reduce their motivation for school and increase the tendency to be absent.

T9: Some students may be absent due to neglect in the family.

T10: Separation from or problems with students' emotionally attached friends can cause them to be absent

In the research, the emotional reasons for students' absenteeism are quite diverse. These reasons include factors such as separation anxiety, feelings of loneliness, fear, depression, anger, stress, insecurity, shyness, lack of self-esteem, attachment problems, feelings of loss, learning difficulties, feeling threatened, values mismatch, and personal crises. These emotional challenges can reduce students' willingness to go to school and lead to absenteeism. Therefore, it is important that students' emotional needs are understood and supported in this regard.

### **Result**

In the research, it was understood that the relationship between absenteeism and economic status was quite low. Although research was conducted in an environment with a low socio-economic level, it was understood that economic status was not effective on absenteeism in line with the opinions of teachers. Teachers' opinions listed the most important reasons for absenteeism as physical, social, emotional, and mental reasons, while students listed them as social, physical, emotional, and mental. Teachers emphasized the influence of the family in absenteeism.

### **Suggestions**

- School entry-exit times can be adjusted in accordance with the development of students
- Recess times can be adjusted.
- Increasing social activities that will connect students to school and develop positive attitudes will reduce the student's desire to meet their social activity needs outside of school.
- The fact that teachers are more understanding and do not create pressure will increase teacher-related absenteeism.
- Solving hygiene problems in schools will reduce absenteeism due to the disease.
- One-on-one interviews should be conducted with children with these problems in order to understand the reasons for absenteeism.
- Schools should go beyond being institutions where education and training are carried out, and guidance should be made to skill lessons.

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