

Journal of Religion & Society (JR&S)

Available Online:

<https://islamicreligious.com/index.php/Journal/index>

Print ISSN: 3006-1296 Online ISSN: 3006-130X

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)

Underlying Institutional Factors Affecting Student's Absenteeism in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Student's' absenteeism remains a major issue in higher education that has serious implications for student engagements, academic achievement, and institutional effectiveness. While in Pakistan, contemporary researchers highlighted socioeconomic factors, limited empirical attention has been given to institutional factors of absenteeism at university level; this study will help to address this gap by investigating the association between the institutional factors and student absenteeism in public sector educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan. The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between student's absenteeism and the institutional factors like teaching methods, classroom environment, academic organization, assessment process, accessibility of learning materials and the practicality of implications. Study adopted the quantitative research design. A survey was conducted with 374 respondents of Bacha Khan University in Charsadda using a well-structured Likert-scale. To establish the relationship between student's absenteeism and institutional factor, chi-square test was employed. The results showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between student absenteeism and various institutional factors like lack of clarity in the explanation of lessons, ineffective teaching method, ineffective classroom discipline, dull and overly theoretical learning, schedule clashes, large class sizes, and slow feedback on homework, insufficient laboratory facilities, and lack of extracurricular academic support. The study recommended that universities should adopt interactive and student's centered approaches in teaching methodologies, smooth academic schedule, improve academic support services, increase learning facilities, and create good learning environments to promote attendance and academic success.

Keywords: *Student Absenteeism, Institutional Factors, Teaching Methodologies, Academic Environment, Student's*

Introduction

One of the serious problems faces by the higher education institution throughout the world is student absenteeism that has important consequences on student engagements and institutional performance. Regular attendance plays a pivotal role in academic integration and engagements among student's, and its absence frequently leads to underlying institutional issues rather than lack of personal interest (Tinto, 1993; Finn & Voelkl, 1993).

In developed countries like United State, Canada, United Kingdom, and Europe, the institutional factors contributing towards absence rate have been well documented. Ineffective teaching methodologies, lack of pedagogy, large class sizes, and poor faculty-student's interaction all these factors contribute to student's' absenteeism (Kuh, 2009; Gottfried, 2014).

Likewise, poor feedback assessment and restricted access to academic assistance services have been recognized as institutional hurdles that impair student's' academic commitment (Astin, 1984). Additionally, institutional structure barriers to student's participation, like inflexible schedules, courses overlapping schedules, and inadequate learning resources have been shown to contribute to increase absenteeism rate among student's (Reid, 2013; Attwood & Croll, 2015; Hutchinson et al., 2018).

In under develop countries like Pakistan, institutional factors of absenteeism are frequently more notable due to systemic weaknesses in higher educational institutions. University student's are more likely to absent from classes due to abstruse institutions, old teaching techniques, lack of timely feedback, lack of learning resources and overloaded classrooms (Rauf, 2023; Shah et al., 2020).

Despite increasing awareness of the effects of institutions on absenteeism, a crucial research gap persists. Previous research studies epically in Pakistan focused on education at the school level, but the institutional factors contributing to absenteeism at the higher education or university level have not been sufficiently explored especially using quantitative methodologies. That's why the present study was designed to observe at how institutional methods, academic structure, and institutional support systems all work together to influence absenteeism in Pakistani higher education institutions. It is vital that this issue to be addressed in order to inform institutional reforms that aim to raise student's participation, and attendance.

Literature review

Student absenteeism is a global problem that has detrimental effects on the efficiency of an institution, academic achievement, and involvement of student's. It has significantly been shown through research that the quality of teaching, curriculum design, classroom climate, academic support, and organizational structures can be used as important predictors of attendance behavior alongside individual and socioeconomic indicators (Tinto, 1993; Haq et al., 2025; Finn & Voelkl, 1993).

The institutional factors of absenteeism have been well known in developed countries. Huge class sizes, inefficient teaching and learning, and lack of interaction with the faculty are greatly related to higher rates of absenteeism in the United States (Kuh, 2009; Gottfried, 2014). Similarly, the ineffective academic engagement systems decrease a sense of belonging and commitment to attending classes among student's in Canada because of inflexible course schedules, a lack of academic counseling, and insufficient learning materials (Credé et al., 2010; Hutchinson et al., 2018).

Likewise, monotonous lecture and poor assessment practices cause the absences in the university setting (Reid, 2013; Attwood & Quin, 2017; Martin & Bolliger, 2018). The study in the United Kingdom indicates that institutional culture, which encompasses faculty expectations; feedback mechanism and academic support facilities significantly affect the patterns of attendance (Yorke, 2000; Kember, 2008). Additionally, integrating online learning without sufficient support has been associated with increased absenteeism because it lowers classroom participation (Murphy et al., 2014). While, institutional reasons are more severe in developing countries, particularly Pakistan. Inadequate facilities, unclear instruction, outdated teaching methods, and weak institutional support systems are shown in studies to contribute to increased absenteeism

among college student's (Shah et al., 2024; Rauf, 2023; Haq et al., 2025; Khan & Ali, 2021). Overcrowded classrooms, insufficient academic counseling, and a lack of instructor accountability also discourage regular attendance (Mahmood & Hussain, 2022). Poor curriculum alignment and assessment overload on lower classroom attendance Ahmed et al., 2020).

Theoretical Background

The study based on the Student Integration Theory of Tinto that is the most successful theory to describe the relationship between the institutional factors and student absenteeism. Tinto (1993) opined that the attendance of a student is determined by the level of academic integration as determined by the quality of the teaching, classroom atmosphere, the relevance of the curriculum, the way the assessment is done, the quality of feedback and the support systems in an institution. Consecutive classes, size of classes, insufficiency of learning materials, clashing schedules, and insufficiency of academic support are all factors that lead to academic integration challenges among the student's, which are reflected in a lack of engagement behavior like absenteeism.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a quantitative research methodology, to examine the relationship between institutional factors and student's' absenteeism, using statistical techniques (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The study was conducted in District Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study area was purposively selected because it mainly includes rural people that face socioeconomic instability and financial challenges, which may influence student's' educational experiences. A multi-stage random sampling technique was adopted for the selection of the respondents. Firstly, the universe was set as District Charsadda, followed by the random selection of Government Post Graduate College Charsadda and Bacha Khan University Charsadda. In stage third a sample of 374 student's was drawn using Slovin's (1960). Data were collected using a well-structured Likert-scale prepared in the light of study objectives. The collected data were entered, coded, and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Bivariate analysis using the Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between institutional factors and student's' absenteeism.

Results and discussion

Association between institutional factors and student's' absenteeism

Institutional factors play a critical role in determining student's' academic engagement and regular attendance. Student's desire to attend classes is all impacted by the quality of instruction, the classroom atmosphere, the availability of learning materials, and the institutional support mechanisms. Student's are more inclined to stick to their coursework if they have a strong academic integration via positive classroom relationships and helpful institutional practices. Student's are more likely to disengage when there is poor integration, leading to greater rates of absence (Tinto's Student Integration Theory, 1993). Below table provides an overview of respondents' perceptions on institutional reasons and student absenteeism.

The findings show a significant association between student's absenteeism and teachers' poor explanation of lessons ($\chi^2=14.459$, $P= 0.006$). 64.2% of the respondents agreed that teachers do not explain lesson clearly while (35.3%) have no issue with lessons explanation. The findings suggested that unclear instruction or explanation of lesson reduce the student's attendance in classrooms. Poor academic integration such as unclear instructions reduces student's' sense of belonging and academic confidence, ultimately discouraging class attendance (Tinto, 1993). Similarly, a significant association ($\chi^2=54.237$, $P= 0.000$) was observed between student's' absenteeism and effective teaching methodologies. Majority (67.4%) of the respondents showed that student's absent from classes due to lack of effective methodology adopted by the teachers,

while small portion (32.0%) of student's had no such issues. These findings recommended that effective methodology and pedagogy are essential for engaging student's in classrooms and reducing their absenteeism. From the perspective of Student Engagement Theory, active learning strategies and interactive pedagogy are essential tools for sustaining attention and motivation. Passive and outdated teaching approaches weaken engagement and increase withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism (Kuh, 2009).

Further, a highly significance association was found between teachers lack of authority, maintaining classroom discipline and student's absenteeism ($\chi^2=32.763$, $P= 0.000$). It was agreed by the majority (69.3%) of respondents that they remained absent from classroom because of teachers weak classroom management, while (30.1%) of the respondents have no issue with classroom managements skills of teachers. Organized learning environments foster student participation whereas, disorganized classrooms decrease meaningful participation and weaken academic commitment (Astin, 1984).

Results further show that timetable overlaps with other courses had a significant association with student's absenteeism ($\chi^2=25.800$, $P= 0.001$). Respondents who were facing timetable clashes stated higher absenteeism rate (71.0%) than their counterparts. The findings show that poor scheduling affect the student's absenteeism rate. These findings are in line with the earlier research which states that institutional barriers such as poor scheduling weaken student's' capability to participate academically, increasing the possibility of disconnection (Tinto, 1993).

Moreover, the highly significant association was noted between lack of practical application of knowledge and student's absenteeism ($\chi^2=19.490$, $P= 0.001$). Majority (65.5%) of respondents stated that student's absenteeism occurs due to absence of practical work. The results suggested that practical classes are very important for student cognitive and behavioral engagement which develops their interest in classes. Theory of Student Engagement proposes that experimental and practical learning supports cognitive and behavioral engagement, while abstract instruction reduces perceived relevance and attendance (Kuh, 2009).

Likely, a significant association ($\chi^2=14.714$, $P= 0.005$) was found between student's absenteeism and monotonous and unengaging nature of classes. Respondents, who found classes were boring, reported higher absenteeism rate (66.8%). This result aligns with Astin (1984) work which suggests that student learning declines when opportunities for active participation are limited.

Moreover, a significant association was found between student's absenteeism and explanations are not understandable to the student's ($\chi^2=28.703$, $P= 0.000$). Among these respondents, 67.7% defined absenteeism. The result suggested that fellow or institutional support is necessary for the students to reduce the rate of absenteeism. Academic problems without passable instructional support decline integration and contribute to separation behaviors (Tinto, 1993).

Furthermore, the results show a significant association between student's absenteeism and lack of timely feedback on assignments ($\chi^2=23.305$, $P= 0.000$). Respondents who did not receive quick feedback revealed a high absenteeism rate (61.0%) as compared to those who timely feedback (36.4%) which revealed that timely feedback is necessary to reduce absenteeism rate. According to Student Engagement Theory, feedback is a critical component of effective learning environments, as it reinforces effort, clarifies expectations, and sustains motivation (Kuh, 2009).

Also, a significant association ($\chi^2=24.455$, $P= 0.000$) was found between student's absenteeism and lack of access to well-equipped laboratories. 69.8% of affected respondents reporting absenteeism because they lack laboratories for practical and experimental works. The findings reveled that supportive learning environment involve the student's and connected to the

universities. Supportive learning environments and adequate resources enhance student's involvement and persistence (Astin, 1984).

Likewise, the results show a significant association between student's absenteeism and the large class size that limit their participation during classes ($\chi^2=44.614$, $P= 0.000$). A large proportion (71.9%) of respondents who found class sizes was unmanageable and they found no chance for interaction, reported higher absenteeism compared to their counterparts. The results suggested that large class size or constriction of class effect the student attendance rate. Large classes reduce interaction and personal attention, which as essential for sustaining academic integration (Tinto, 1993).

Finally, a highly significant association was found between student's absenteeism and lack of extracurricular academic support ($\chi^2=48.694$, $P= 0.000$). Among student's who observed lacking academic support, (70.7%) reported absenteeism. The results recommended that institutional support fosters student engagement in academic activities. These findings are aligning with Astin (1984) study, which highlighted the importance of institutional mechanisms in fostering student's retention and engagement in classrooms.

Overall, the results visibly show that institutional factors have significant association with student's absenteeism rate, which approving key propositions of Tinto's Student Integration Theory. When teaching methodology is ineffective, delayed of feedback, resources are insufficient, and academic support is imperfect, student's experience weak academic integration and reduced involvement, ultimately leads to higher absenteeism. The findings highlight that improving institutional quality, pedagogy, and support systems is important for improving attendance, engagement, and student maintenance.

Table 4.1. Association between institutional factors and student absenteeism

Institutional factors	Responses	Student's Absenteeism			Total	Chi-Square (P-Value)
		Yes	No	Don't Know		
The teachers do not explain lessons clearly.	Yes	129 (64.2%)	71 (35.3%)	1 (0.5%)	201	$\chi^2=14.459$ $P=(0.006)$
	No	94 (64.4%)	50 (34.2%)	2 (1.4%)	146	
	Don't Know	10 (37.0%)	15 (55.6%)	2 (7.4%)	27	
Teachers do not use effective teaching methodologies.	Yes	196 (67.4%)	93 (32.0%)	2 (0.7%)	291	$\chi^2=54.237$ $P=(0.000)$
	No	33 (48.5%)	35 (51.5%)	0 (0.0%)	68	
	Don't Know	4 (26.7%)	8 (53.3%)	3 (20.0%)	15	
Teachers lack authority and classroom discipline.	Yes	113 (69.3%)	49 (30.1%)	1 (0.6%)	163	$\chi^2=32.763$ $P=(0.000)$
	No	111 (64.9%)	58 (33.9%)	2 (1.2%)	171	
	Don't Know	9 (22.5%)	29 (72.5%)	2 (5.0%)	40	

The class timetable overlaps with other courses.	Yes	149 (71.0%)	59 (28.1%)	2 (1.0%)	210	$\chi^2=25.800$ P=(0.001)
	No	64 (59.8%)	42 (39.3%)	1 (0.9%)	107	
	Don't Know	20 (35.1%)	35 (61.4%)	2 (3.5%)	57	
Classes are overly theoretical and lack practical application.	Yes	206 (65.8%)	105 (33.5%)	2 (0.6%)	313	$\chi^2=19.490$ P=(0.001)
	No	18 (54.5%)	13 (39.4%)	2 (6.1%)	33	
	Don't Know	9 (32.1%)	18 (64.3%)	1 (3.6%)	28	
Classes are monotonous and un engaging.	Yes	185 (66.8%)	89 (32.1%)	3 (1.1%)	277	$\chi^2=14.714$ P=(0.005)
	No	29 (48.3%)	31 (51.7%)	0 (0.0%)	60	
	Don't Know	19 (51.4%)	16 (43.2%)	2 (5.4%)	37	
Explanations are not adapted to my level of understanding.	Yes	212 (67.7%)	98 (31.3%)	3 (1.0%)	313	$\chi^2=28.703$ P=(0.000)
	No	15 (38.5%)	22 (56.4%)	2 (5.1%)	39	
	Don't Know	6 (27.3%)	16 (72.7%)	0 (0.0%)	22	
Teachers do not provide timely feedback on assignments.	Yes	129 (72.1%)	49 (27.4%)	1 (0.6%)	179	$\chi^2=23.305$ P=(0.000)
	No	72 (61.0%)	43 (36.4%)	3 (2.5%)	118	
	Don't Know	32 (41.6%)	44 (57.1%)	1 (1.3%)	77	
Lack of access to well-equipped laboratories or resources discourages attendance.	Yes	180 (69.8%)	77 (29.8%)	1 (0.4%)	258	$\chi^2=24.455$ P=(0.000)
	No	36 (51.4%)	32 (45.7%)	2 (2.9%)	70	
	Don't Know	17 (37.0%)	27 (58.7%)	2 (4.3%)	46	
The size of the class makes it difficult to participate or ask questions.	Yes	182 (71.9%)	68 (26.9%)	3 (1.2%)	253	$\chi^2=44.614$ P=(0.000)
	No	42 (52.5%)	36 (45.0%)	2 (2.5%)	80	
	Don't Know	9 (22.0%)	32 (78.0%)	0 (0.0%)	41	
The lack of extracurricular	Yes	123 (70.7%)	50 (28.7%)	1 (0.6%)	174	$\chi^2=48.694$

academic support (e.g., tutoring, workshops) contributes to absenteeism.	No	96 (69.1%)	41 (29.5%)	2 (1.4%)	139	P=(0.000)
	Don't Know	14 (23.0%)	45 (73.8%)	2 (3.3%)	61	

Conclusion & recommendations

Student absenteeism continues to be a big issue in higher education especially in public universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region in Pakistan. The increasing absenteeism rate among university student's and lack of inadequate research focusing on institutional factors this trend was the issue that this study sought to address. The finding indicated a strong relationship between several institution factors such as, unclear lesson explanations, poor teaching methodologies, inappropriate classroom management, tedious and overly theoretical lessons, schedule conflict, large classes, late feedback, inadequate learning resource provision, and the absence of extra-curricular academic assistance and student's absenteeism. These findings support the assumption of Student Integration Theory of Tinto that absenteeism is an indicator of institutional deficiencies that inhibit the student academic integration, rather than individual preferences. The conclusion of this study supports the theoretical point of view and proves that the main cause of absenteeism is the institutional inadequacies which worsen the state of connecting students with the educational system, and not a personal choice. Thus, Theory shows that institutional processes and organizational failures would decrease student attendance and increase absenteeism and show the institutional responsibility of enhancing attendance and student retention.

Future implications of study

The study has important implications for the policies and practices of higher education. Improving institutional quality, timely feedback to student's queries, reinforcement of academic support programs, and matching curricula with the reality may all help to improve student's participation and engagement and attendance rate.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study, however, are that it is only focused on two institutions of the same district and the data used is self-reported and it can have a bearing on its universal applicability. In order to learn more about the impact of institutional and contextual variables on absenteeism, an intervention of future research must rely on multivariate analysis, mixed-method methods, and multi-institutional samples.

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