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A Study on Student Absenteeism in Colleges with Special Reference to Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract:

Absenteeism is the most common problem that most of the educational institutes are facing in today's time. Most of the students just take admission for the sake of their degrees and to be tagged as the graduates/post graduates after the completion of the time of their respective degrees. This is certainly a loss for the country because it never fruits out the learned human resource to work for the industry. This exploratory paper tries to find out the factors responsible for the absenteeism in the colleges. It is also an attempt to suggest some of the better ways to encourage the improvement in the strength of the classes so that education can be justified as the learning for life not just mere degree.

Keywords: Absenteeism, graduates, learned human resource, strength of the class

1. Introduction

Absenteeism is defined as remaining constantly absent from the workplace/ class/college without having any good and appropriate reason. Absenteeism is a habit of a student of escaping out from the responsibilities and obligations or it can be said that it is a tendency of not to show up for the scheduled work due to various factors affecting their grades.

More recent scholars seek to understand absenteeism as an indicator of psychological, medical, or social adjustment to work. This study is all about those factors which affect the absenteeism among the students of all demographics like age, gender etc and the 'cause and effect relationship' of these factors.

Questions may arise like whether absenteeism is because of the poor infrastructure of the school/ the college, discomfort of students with the facilities provided at their educational institution, wrong teaching strategies and not according to the feasibility of the students. Why are teachers or mentors not able to attract students about the "goods" of the subjects? All these questions and how these issues have to be addressed are thoroughly discussed in this study. To fix this, plenty of methods like making the classrooms attractive, rewarding the students for their maximum attendance or in the proportions of their being present in the class, better infrastructure, maintaining a healthy environment for studies by introducing interesting activities for students, motivating them towards their goals, will all tend to increase the attendance of a scholar and to reduce absenteeism.

Student absenteeism to lectures and tutorials has become one of the greatest encumbrances of college success. It refers to the conduct of students not attending scheduled meetings in terms of classes, lectures, tutorials, workshops or seminars without prior permission from the faculty or against default college policy on absenteeism (Nasir Nordi et. al, 2002)

A major problem faced by colleges nowadays is how to effectively deal with student absenteeism and truancy. When a student does not come to college for a lengthy period of time, one may assume these students are learning elsewhere, but unfortunately in most circumstances this is not the case but may be whiling away their time futilely.

Truancy is like absenteeism, but truancy is an unexcused absence from college or classes about which parents typically do not know (Courtney Hocking 2008) Students start truanting in primary college, and often continue through secondary college and so on. Truancy in students has been found to stem from an influence of peers, relations with teachers, the way the curriculum is delivered to the student, family aspects, bullying and others.

2. Literature Review

Newman Wadesango and Severino Machingamb (2011) concluded from their study that the factors that give rise to absenteeism are poor teaching strategies by lecturers, unfavorable learning environments or poor socio-economic background. This is a social and political issue with huge social costs therefore, this study advocates that in order to address the problem in any meaningful way, efforts should be directed not only at the student or university but also at the broader socio-economic and political environments in which universities are located.

R.L.N.Pradeep Kumar et al. (2012) suggested three major reasons why students stayed away from their respective institutions. They were poor infrastructure, involvement of parents and peer pressure.

Courtney Hocking (2008) stated various methods to solve the problems related to absenteeism. He suggested that there should be parents' and faculty interaction in colleges and colleges so that parents come to know why his/her child is not attending the classes in college. This research study examined whether the implementation of a perfect attendance award incentive would increase college attendance, and it was found that the perfect attendance award showed an increase in students' motivation to attend college every day of the month in order to receive the certificate.

Sheldon Rothman (2003), According to her survey/study where she examined student absenteeism in South Africa revealed that they absent themselves or skip their classes due to part-time jobs and also reported that approximately 30 per cent of the 17-year-old or above students held regular part-time jobs during the college year and they worked eight to nine hours.

P. Kousalya et al. (2006) stated in their study about the absenteeism of students in engineering colleges. Here the author prefers punishment for absenteeism, less peer pressure, awards for, more attendance, involvement of parents, better infrastructure and making teaching more attractive- as measures to attract students to educational institutions.

David Romer (1993) conducted a study on students in an economics class. He divided the students into 2 groups. One whose grading was based on part of attendance and a second control group, whose grading was not. He concluded that the student absenteeism in economics classes was because they were not interested in theoretical subjects.

3. Objective

1. To find the various causes behind the absenteeism of students in college.
2. To suggest some ways to improve the class attendance in colleges.

4. Methodology

This paper is an attempt to find out the various reasons for students of not attending the college or classes during the academic year. The paper is exploratory in nature. The data has been collected through primary as well as secondary sources. A predefined semi-structured questionnaire was formed and 52 students were interviewed of different graduate and postgraduate colleges of Gwalior who generally don't like to go to college.

The data also been gathered through secondary sources like various research papers, magazines, web articles etc.

5. Discussion and Results

Students were interviewed for finding the factors of their absenteeism from the colleges and following studies have been figured out:

1. Students find the curriculum to be weak or boring enough which actually does not allure them to attend the classes.
2. Many of the students are involved in the preparation of the competitive exams which they are intended to give just after their graduation/post graduation which results lack of their attendance in the classes.
3. Some of the students from various colleges claim that the classes of their colleges are not regular, due to lack of teachers or teacher's lack of interest in teaching.
4. Some of the students have indulged themselves in some other activities like NSS, NCC and NGOs.
5. Some of the students are involved in the family business or jobs to earn because of their personal or family reasons.
6. Students find the studies less of practical exposure and concentrated to theory only which makes the classes less interesting.
7. Students find it difficult to cope up with the peer pressure, which includes language problem, living style, etc., which certainly takes them away from the regular classes.
8. Many colleges don't offer a transport facility, which works as a hurdle to go to college everyday and attend the classes.
9. Problem of infrastructure has also been reported by many respondents. They don't find the appropriate infrastructure/facilities to cater their needs.

6. Suggestion and Implications

After the strong study many factors came out as the problem of student's continuous absenteeism in the college. Following are the suggestions which will surely improve the attendance of the students in their respective colleges-

1. There is a vast requirement of changing pattern in teaching pedagogy in order to make it enough alluring to bring the students in their classes and learn with enthusiasm.
2. Practical exposure toward the subject is the dire requirement today as this will create a working environment of the theoretical concepts.
3. There should be regular classes in each and every institute. The problems of the number of teachers or interest of teachers should be sorted out by the respective organization so that this problem can be eliminated.
4. Proper counseling should be given to students and to their parents for encouraging them to attend the classes and force their children to go to college respectively. This will enable the students to divert their mind from the other activities at the time of their classes.
5. The studying environment should be so healthy, so that no student should feel underestimated in terms of their language or living style.

6. Every college should offer the transport facility for the students coming far places. This will help in eliminating the problem of the transport and hence the students will come to college.
7. There is a need for proper infrastructure development in every college so that proper facilities can be provided to every student and increase its content level toward the college and its environment.

7. Conclusion

Absenteeism is the result of changing priorities of the students. Once the priorities are channelized in the correct direction, this will surely bring the change in the education field. There is need to take the suggestions quoted above into consideration so that it helps in the upliftment of the education and make it more thoughtful than just the mere formality.

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