

## Factors Affected to Poor Attendance of Advance Level Students

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research was to study the factors that affect for poor attendance of Advance Level students in 1AB schools. The study was focused to get an insight idea on school related factors for students' poor attendance and family related factors that caused for school absenteeism. Concurrent mix methodology was followed and the data was collected by survey questionnaires and by interviews. The questionnaires were given both students and parents who selected randomly for the samples. The survey samples were consisted of 92 Advance Level students and 46 of their parents. 8 Advance Level class teachers were selected purposively for interviews. Survey data was analyzed by descriptive statistical methods using tables, graphs and percentages and interview data was analyzed by thematic analysis. The study divulged the major school related factors that caused for school absenteeism as; unsuitable teaching methods, lack of school facilities and lack of enthusiasm for schooling. Other than that heavy work load, writing lesson notes, and non-conduct of practical tests were also caused in minor level. And also, parents' income, lack of parents' attention, helping to parents, failure to accept parental advices and educational level of parents were found out as major family related factors that caused for absenteeism. Look after younger siblings and broken families were also found out as the factors that caused for absenteeism in minor level.

**Keywords:** Absenteeism, Factors, 1AB Schools, Advanced Level.

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### Introduction

Literacy level of Sri Lanka is at a competitive level compared to developed countries. One of the major reasons for this is the well-structured free education system in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan students are given a traditional classroom experience through this free education system. Primary, junior secondary, senior secondary and collegiate stage (Advance Level) education is included to this free education system (Aturupane and Little, 2019). Among these, secondary education is building on primary education. It is in the position of in between primary education and tertiary education. Students receive their secondary education during their teenage years. Therefore, it is very important to handle them without troubling their personal character. Although high degree of school participation showed in primary education, when it comes to senior secondary level it can be observed a considerable dropout. The main reason for this is cost of schooling (Aturupane and Little, 2019).

Collegiate stage has two classes; grade 12 and 13. The students who passed from the General Certification of Education Ordinary Level examination can enter these grades and are able to continue studies. Students can follow any stream from Arts, Commerce, Science or Technological according to their preference. These 4 steams offer 33 subjects. Text books are not produced for this stage and only teacher manuals and practical manuals are available (Aturupane and Little, 2019). It is also necessary to manage linguistic, communicative and social aspects of classrooms and this can be done by planning lessons, syllabus, techniques and teaching methods and instructional supervision (Kumari, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022b and 2022c). Then only the quality of Advance Level education is increased.

There are several types of schools in Sri Lanka; Type 1AB, Type 1C, Type 2 and Type 3. Among these, some of Type 1AB and Type 1C schools are National schools (Dorabawila *et al*, 2002). Type 1AB schools are offering education from grade 1 to 13 or grade 6 to 13 and General Certification of Education Advance Level in all streams. Arts, Commerce, Science and Technological streams are available in Advance Level education (Aturupane and Little, 2019). And also the facilities in 1AB schools are comparatively higher than that of others (Kumari, 2002a, 2002e, 2022d.). Although quality schools are available, there is a problem of poor attendance of students.

Absenteeism can be defined as a student being absent from school. It can be happened motivationally based or structurally based (Birioukov, 2016). There are many factors that directly and indirectly influenced for the attendance of the school in the secondary school level. Student attendance is one variable that has a significant impact on student achievement (Demir and Karabeyoğlu, 2016). Absenteeism interrupts the learning process and it reduces the success because, students miss their education time. And also it indirectly makes a difficulty to solid foundation of discipline.

There are some personal factors which cause for the school absenteeism. They are; interest in subject, motivation, influence of peers and social life (Conaty *et al*, 2008). Conaty and colleagues further mentioned that the course related factors such as time of class, difficulty of materials, quality and style of teaching, availability of course notes and stage of year also could cause for absenteeism.

Some socioeconomic factors also caused for school absenteeism such as family annual income of the student, family job status and parents' educational level of the students (Vidyakala and Priya, 2017; Balkis *et al*, 2016). Not only that but electronic media also has a huge impact on the students' attendance. It is very important if the parents always aware of the classes missed by their child (Balkis *et al*, 2016).

Z generation students are engaging in their Advance Level learning process at present. They also referred as Millennium generation that defined children born after 2000. They also named as internet kids or digital generation. They have advance skills of using technology (Gurcuoglu and Celik, 2016). They are highly attached with technological devices and methods than their teachers. Therefore, teachers better to be more technological enough to handle well these Z generation students.

### **Statement of the problem**

Free education is for everyone but, only 93% of enrolment could be observed in 5 to 14 years age group in 2000 (Arunatilake, 2006). Although primary education enrolment of Sri Lanka is at a satisfactory level, when it comes to the secondary and collegiate stage, it can be observed considerable dropouts. It is highly observable the attendance of students of Advance Level classes gets decrease with the time. Almost all types of schools in Sri Lanka are facing this problem and they are seeking a better solution for this problem. Ministry of Education has published a circular indicating a compulsory requirement of 80% of student attendance for sitting the General Certification of Education Advance Level Examination. But with the problem of absenteeism, a reasonable doubt has arisen about fulfilling this 80% school attendance requirement. Student achievement level declines with the increment of absenteeism as they are failing to cover the subject matters and practical sessions. On the other hand, teachers also face problems of continuing subject matters with poor attendance of students as the students those who absent are missed the previous lessons. Because of all of the above reasons there is a necessity to look deeply into this matter and find the most practicable and suitable solutions to overcome this problem. Therefore, the study focused to identify the factors affect for poor attendance and to recommend suggestions to overcome that problems.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The primary objective of this research was to identify the factors that affect to poor attendance of

Advance Level students. On that account, the specific objectives of the study were to;

1. To identify school related factors for students' poor attendance
2. To examine the family related factors for poor attendance of students

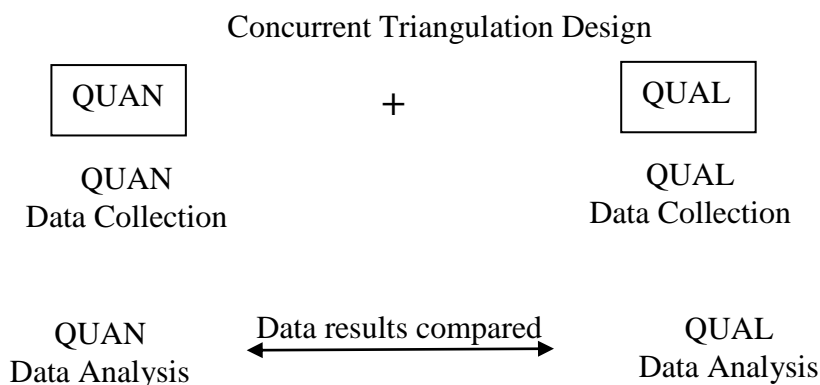
### Research questions

The following research questions were developed to direct the study.

1. What are the school related factors for students' poor attendance?
2. What are the family related factors for poor attendance of students?

### Methodology

The study was laid on mix method research approach. The research employed descriptive surveys which consisted of both quantitative and qualitative data and interviews.



*Figure 1: Concurrent Triangulation Design- Adapted from Creswell 2008*

### Study Sample

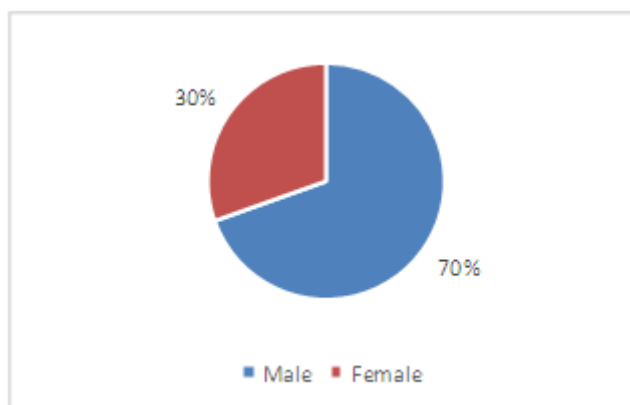
The population of the study was the students who attended school less than 80% in Mulatiyana education zone, Southern province, Sri Lanka. There were nine 1AB schools in Mulatiyana education zone. 119 of Advance Level students of 4 randomly selected 1AB schools were noticed as showing poor school attendance during a 3 months period of time. 92 students among them were selected randomly as the study sample. 46 parents of that students were selected randomly (during parents' meetings) as respondents of parents' questionnaire and 8 of Advance Level class teachers were purposively selected for interviews.

The sample was consisted as shown in table 1 and table 2.

**Table 1. Study Sample of Students**

	Advance Level Subject Stream					
	Arts	Commerce	Mathematics	Biology	Technical	Total
Frequency	21	35	13	18	05	92
Percentage	22.8%	38%	14.1%	19.6%	5.4%	100%

The gender distribution of the study sample of students is briefly presented in the following figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Gender distribution of the sample of students

**Table 2.** Study Sample of Parents

	Occupation				Total
	Government	Private	Self employed	Missing	
Frequency	14	18	13	01	46
Percentage	30.4%	39.1%	28.3%	2.2%	100%

### Data collection instrument

All of the data collection instruments were developed by the researcher. In order to achieve the specific objectives of the study, a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview protocol were used to collect the necessary information from the sample. Two questionnaires were separately used for students and parents. It is important to understand that the questionnaire is a tool and it is important to be able to use it so that the reader can easily understand, interpret and complete it. This increases the accuracy of responses. Concerns about reliability and validity are essential in designing a questionnaire as a research tool (Adams and Cox, 2008). Likert scales can be considered as one of the primary and widely used psychometric tools in educational and sociological research questionnaires (Joshi *et al*, 2015). Therefore, two questionnaires were used separately for students and parents which consisted of five sections. Five-point scale with a response mode of Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Uncertain (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point) was used to measure the item responses.

One of the most common format of data collection in research is interview. In such cases, semi-structured interviews are very important. Semi-structured interviews are a format with broad and in-depth open-ended questions which prepared before eliciting responses (Jamshed, 2014). The interview protocol of the research consisted of 4 open ended basic questions and some unstructured questions were asked during the period of interviewing. Purposively selected 8 teachers were interviewed. All the instruments were pilot tested in order to make sure about the validity and reliability. The exercise was completed within one and a half month.

### Data analysis

Data analysis is basically done to quantify the evidence in the data. Appropriate methods, computational tools and languages should be used to assess the strength of evidence for specific hypotheses (Stephanie and Roger, 2019). As this research was based on concurrent mix methodology, both the data that collected from surveys and interviews were analyzed at same time and summarized, as summary statistics and tabulations. For analyzing quantitative data, frequency distributions and percentages which come under descriptive statistics were mainly used and also cross-tabulation, histograms and pie charts were used to show the analyzed results. And also thematic analysis was used for analyzing data that gather from semi structured interviews.

## Findings

Several school related factors could be found out which highly caused for school absenteeism of Advance Level students as unsuitable teaching methods, lack of school facilities, dissatisfaction of schooling and heavy work load.

**Table 3**

School related factor	Percentages			Total
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	
Satisfying with school facilities	32%	25%	43%	100%
Satisfying with teaching methods	24%	22%	54%	100%
Satisfying with schooling	22%	11%	67%	100%
Heavy work load	64%	15%	21%	100%

When analyzing the data which collected by interviews, 75% of teachers accepted that the students cannot be understand properly the subject matters and therefore, teaching methods are not appropriate them. They claimed that it should be changed and teachers are better to knowledgeable about the best teaching technique for the particular lesson. As these students are more familiar with technological devices, they are tending to blend it with their learning process. And also, 63% of teachers mentioned that Advance Level students are not satisfying with schooling. They further explained that students do not like to wear a uniform and also do not like to the rules and regulations of the school. 50% of teachers claimed that heavy work load is caused for the absenteeism as the time is a critical factor for Advance Level students. 38% of teachers highlighted that students do not like to write notes and they wish to have printed notes. 13% of purposively selected teachers mentioned that lack of school facilities is also caused for the absenteeism of students.

Several family related factors which caused for school absenteeism also uncovered through the study. Accordingly, monthly income of parents, educational level of parents, number of elder siblings, helping parents, lack of parents' attention were the prominent factors that caused for school absenteeism of Advance Level students.

**Table 4**

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than Rs. 30,000	4	8.70%
Rs. 30,000- 50,000	14	30.40%
Rs. 50,000- 80,000	18	39.10%
Rs. 80,000- 110,000	8	17.40%
More than Rs. 110,000	1	2.20%
Missing	1	2.20%
Total	46	100.00%

According to the table 4, 39.1% of the parents of the sample of students earned Rs. 50,000 to 80,000 per month. And also, 30.4% of parents earned Rs. 30,000 to 50,000 monthly. Therefore, many students were belong to middle class families. During the interviews, teachers claimed that as the students of the parents belong to the middle level families, they face economic difficulties and therefore, the students were not attended to the schools everyday. And also according to them, as the number of the children of the families arises, this problem get worse.

Another fact that found out by the study was the educational level of nearly 39% of the parents of the sample of students were only upto Advance Level education. According to the table 5,

although 30.4% of parents were graduated by universities, the children of them were not attended the school regularly. Teachers explained even some educated parents want just a pass mark for the Advance Level examination and they wish to admit their children to private universities.

**Table 5**

Educational level of parents	Frequency	Percentage
Ordinary Level	4	8.70%
Advance Level	18	39.10%
University	14	30.40%
Post graduate qualifications	9	19.60%
Missing	1	2.20%
Total	46	100.00%

Number of siblings also found out as a family related factor that caused for absenteeism. When increasing the number of children, the parents' attention on each and every individual is considerably decreased. Number of siblings of the sample of the students could be found out as mention in table 6.

**Table 6**

Number of siblings	Frequency	Percentage
1	19	41.20%
2	13	28.30%
3	13	28.30%
Missing	1	2.20%
Total	46	100.00%

According to the table 6, 56.6% of sample of students have indicated that they have 2 or 3 siblings in their families (Totally 3 or 4 children were included a family). Therefore, this could be considered as a critical factor for absenteeism. 13% of teachers also voiced that some students absent in school due to look after of their younger siblings. And also, they mentioned that some parents mostly pay their higher attention on elder children's education as they wish to handover the family to the elder child of the family.

Parenting styles of the sample also studied as parents' attention on children is very important. Sometimes students do not accept parents' advices and neglect them. This causes for the imbalance of the family and lower school achievement of students (Talib *et al*, 2011).

**Table 7**

Parenting style	Frequency	Percentage
Permissive	17	37%
Authoritative	5	10.80%
Neglectful	19	41.30%
Authoritarian	4	8.70%
Missing	1	2.20%
Total	46	100.00%

According to the table 7, 41.3% of parents were neglectful and they did not pay a considerable attention on their children. And also, 37% of parents were permissive type parents and they allow their children to do the things as their desire. Authoritative parents were only 10.8% of the study sample. This situation was highly impact for the absenteeism of students. This situation was proved by the teachers also. 75% of teachers mentioned that parents' attention on the children was very poor and 63% of teachers claimed that students were not accepting their parents' advices.

During the interviews, 50% of teachers highlighted that the lower educational level of parents causes for the lower attendance in school. Other than that, 63% of teachers explained, as some students are helping their parents for household courses, they are unable to attend to school.

## **Discussion**

Findings of the study revealed that both school related factors and family related factors were caused for the absenteeism of Advance Level students. The most prominent school related factor for absenteeism was unsuitable teaching methods. Both students and teachers were highlighted it in high percentages. Therefore, it is important to select the most suitable lesson delivery pattern. For an example, there is a necessity of doing practical tests to understand some subject lessons better. Students do not attend school when they cannot understand the subject matters. Some students were not attended to school as they did not like schooling. They did not like the uniform and rules of the school. It is important to minimize this situation and minimize the dropouts. Although 43% of students were not satisfied with the school facilities, the study was conducted in IAB schools where the facilities are comparatively in a higher level than other schools. The reason for this could be lower maintenance of schools. Another major family related factors which caused for absenteeism were parents' income and parents' attention on children. Poor parents were unable to maintain a heavy family and wealthy parents were seeking paid higher education for their children. Both of these situations were caused for lower the attendance of school. As most of the parents of the sample were permissive and neglectful, students were not guided properly. The students did not get proper advices for making their discipline and for planning their future targets. As the students were aimless, they did not attend the school properly.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Based on the results of this study, it was evident that there are certain school related and family related factors which highly cause for school absenteeism. It is important to give the knowledge of teaching methods and technique to the teachers. This can be done through workshops and modules easily.

As the students get absent as they loss the enthusiasm of schooling, it is necessary to motivate them for schooling. For doing that, co-curriculum activities, field trips and other motivational programs should be conducted by the school. Although these students are learning in Advance Level classes, as they are still children, the above types of programs are important to their lives. And also, it is very important to maintain the learning environments of Advance Level sections better. Learning environment always impact on students' achievement and classrooms, laboratories, library etc. should maintain well. It directly motivates the students to attend school regularly.

It is not suitable to give more after-school work for Advance Level students as most of them are attending tuition classes. They need to relax their brains. They should be advised to follow medication programs during their leisure time. It would help to increase the mental health of them.

If the schools are able to give funds for students those who are attending from low income families, the attendance of them could be increased. Schools can find the persons and institutions who willing to give funds. And also, it is important to inform the parents to send their child to the school regularly. This can be done through the parents' meetings and by meeting the selected parents personally. Besides that, the parents should be informed the importance of schooling; adding value to ones' life, inculcating good habits, developing the interpersonal skills and so on which cannot be taken into the life by any other way.

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