

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ABSENTEEISM AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS DURING CHRISTIAN
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LESSONS. A CASE OF SELECTED
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KEUMBU DIVISION, KISII
COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

Performance in CRE by students has been poor (Agarib,2006). This study sought to investigate the factors leading to secondary school students' absenteeism during CRE lessons. Further, the study sought to establish the factors that contribute to students' absenteeism during CRE lessons. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study which targeted a population of 520 respondents which comprised of 240 CRE students, 45 teachers, 15 head teachers and 240 parents of which 20% in each case was used as a sample size. The data for the research was collected using questionnaires for all categories. Stratified and random sampling procedures were used. The study took place in Keumbu division, Kisii County; this is because this is the area affected by students' absenteeism during CRE lessons and it is home to one of Kenya's largest and busiest temporary market centres.. The Division comprises three educational zones with 15 secondary schools namely; Amasago, Birongo, Boruma, Gianchere, Ibeno, Irondi, Irungu, Keoke, Kirwa, Nyabiosi, Nyamware, Nyansira, Riondong'a, Taracha and Torori. The findings showed that there are a number of factors that lead to student absenteeism during CRE lessons and some of them included: teachers non-attendance of lessons, teachers' poor teaching methods especially lecture method which is passive, lack of motivation from parents and teachers as a whole, just to mention a few. Ultimately the study concludes that all contributing factors leading to student absenteeism during CRE lessons contribute a lot to poor performance in this subject; and for this reasons, the government should try its best to provide human resources needed, teaching materials, motivation from teachers and parents and above all guidance and counselling to be conducted by teachers to change the negative attribute towards the subject.

Keywords: Absenteeism, public schools, Christian Religious Education, lesson

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education is key to change and progress, therefore; the Government of Kenya has adopted this sector as one of the pillars for poverty reduction and the benefit of the masses. Education is one of the Big Four projects in the current Jubilee administration. Government is fully committed to providing the best Educational Facilities to its citizens within the minimum possible time. The reasons for Kenya's low educational status are varied but one important factor is that Kenya's educational system has been highly fragmented and segmented. It has, therefore, created some intractable problems in the optimal utilization of human resources under the given labour market condition. The existing National Education Policy 1998-2010 was formulated in line with the prevailing problems in the society. The Government has initiated major administrative reforms, such as Devolution of Power and Education Sector Reforms. Moreover, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFAs) are the International policy concerns announced in 2000, which need to be properly reflected in our Policy. As such, the government through the Ministry of Education has taken in hand an exercise to review the National Education Policy and introduced free secondary school to all students to ensure Education for All. Despite that many secondary school students of Keumbu division Kisii county are absent from schools making them perform poorly in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education. They absent themselves from school, frequently with no major reason. Many students are seen in the market places hawking, loitering, and selling agricultural goods such as sugarcane, sweet potatoes and iris potatoes while boys act as touts on matatus. Christian religious education is an important subject as it helps students develop good moral behavior; it can be used to enhance discipline among students and promoting the rules and regulations in schools. Students absenteeism does not only affect poor performance in CRE but also other subjects. Since this subject is allocated few lessons in teaching timetables. Absent students are victims of circumstances as they miss even a CRE single lesson.

According to (Brubacher (1962) he not only establishes the right of the state to make school attendance compulsory but also to do something more in order to carry out its social and political obligation. All involved in education should work together as a team to ensure that all students are present at school throughout the days and weeks. A major problem facing public secondary schools is that of chronic absenteeism among students. In Kenya through the underplayed rules and regulations are in place yet there are loopholes which are supposed to be curbed Keumbu Division and all Districts of Kisii County inclusive. Absenteeism often occurs in high numbers due to chronic illnesses and family crises, but these absences are not what offer the most concern to school systems. Unexcused absences are the core of the problem being addressed not only nationally, but also in our division Keumbu, it needs compulsory school attendance laws. The government has responded to the problems of absenteeism in secondary schools in various ways. Concerned stakeholders have aired their views regarding possible causes and also prescribed a number of solutions to the problem. The government has set up committees and commissions to investigate the causes of the problem of absenteeism in schools and various recommendations have been made. For example, the Sagini Report (Government of Kenya, 1991), absenteeism and indiscipline in secondary schools notes that the problem has not been restricted to public secondary schools but that the private secondary have also experienced their fair share of student absenteeism and indiscipline. See also Shitanda Report (Government of Kenya, 2000) and Wangai Report of (Republic of Kenya, 2001). For an example, the year 2008 there was a big drop in the performance of Christian religious education in the Kenya certificate of

secondary education due to high rate of absenteeism in public secondary schools. There was an outcry from the public regarding this perennial problem. The government responded by setting up yet another committee. There is reason for concern regarding this problem, particularly given the fact that it has persisted for the last 100 years and is growing in frequency and gravity of damage and long-term repercussions on all parties involved (<http://www.breakingnewskenya.com>). For one thing, the long-term goals of education and economic development could be undermined. The country has continued to lose much in terms of human resources and property due to immoral behaviors in schools. Quality education is also undermined, as valuable learning time is lost. Students' absenteeism during CRE in public schools is a major drawback to the goal of poverty eradication and moral building.

2.0 INFORMATION ON RESPONDENTS

This section presents data analysis, presentation, interpretation and discussions of student absenteeism in Christian Religious Education in Keumbu Division in Kisii County. The study targeted 140 respondents, 64 students, 64 parents, 3 head teachers and 9 CRE teachers.

2.1 Distribution of respondents by age

The respondents were asked to state their gender and their views reflected the following information in table 1. below

2.2 Distribution of Respondents by gender

The respondents were asked to state their gender and their views reflected the following information in table 2.

Table 1: Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Females	100	71.14%
Males	30	21.43%
No comment	10	7.14%
Total	140	100

The result in table 1 shows that the majority of respondents 100 (71.14%) were females and 30 (21.43%) were males. 13 respondents (7.14%) never commented. This result indicates that there was a fair distribution in terms of respondents, though the females outnumbered the males by 70 (50%.)

2.3 Distribution of respondents by the level of education

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of education as it is an important factor in curbing absenteeism and improving performance. It was therefore important to determine the level of education of the stakeholders who contributed so much to the performance. The responses were summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by the level of education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage %
Primary	70	50.00%
Secondary	20	14.23%
College (tertiary)	30	21.23%
University	15	10.71%
No comment	5	3.57%
Total	140	100

The result in table 2 indicated that the greatest number of respondents which was 70 (50.00%) had primary education, 20 (14.23%) respondents had secondary education, 30 (22.23%) respondents had a college education, 15 (10.71%) had a university education and 5 (3.57%) never commented. Therefore absenteeism and poor performance in Keumbu Division has a challenge as many members need to be educationally informed, to motivate their children to attend school. This information sets a clear base as to why absenteeism and poor performance is rampant in Keumbu Division, Kisii County as the greatest majority level of education is low in the primary level and may not understand the impact of absenteeism and poor performance in CRE examinations.

2.4 Distribution of respondents by occupation

The data for education from respondents was also collected from the 140 respondents. Table 3 depicts the responses.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage %
Farming	57	40.71%
Teaching	15	10.71%
Business	48	34.29%
Carpentry	15	10.71%
No comment	5	3.35%

Total	140	100
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From the information above respondents with a farming occupation were 57 (40.71%), where business, 48 (34.29%), teaching 15 (10.71%), carpentry 15 (10.71%) and 5 (3.35%) never commented.

The information above it showed that farming business activities prevail in Keumbu Division, Kisii County making student absenteeism and poor performance rampant because most students get involved in these activities and absent themselves from school.

2.5 Distribution of respondents by marital status

The respondents were asked to indicate their marital status and their views are shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by marital status students exclusive

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage %
Married	60	42.86%
Single	70	50.00%
No comment	10	7.14%
Total	140	100

The information above showed that 70 (50.00%) were singles, 60 (42.86%) were married and 10 (7.14%) never commented. The majority being single parents is a clear indication that bringing up children is a problem to single parents thus absenteeism and poor performance cannot be avoided to some parents.

3.0 DETERMINANT FACTORS FOR ABSENTEEISM DURING CRE LESSONS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Distribution of respondents on determining classroom instruction related factors leading to secondary school students' absenteeism affecting CRE performance in KCSE revealed a variety of factors as discussed below.

3.1 School-based factors

The questionnaire asked the respondents about school-based factors which lead to the absenteeism of students from school affecting performance in CRE in KCSE. Table 5 shows the distribution.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents on determining school-based factors leading to secondary school students' absenteeism during CRE.

School factors	environmental	Frequency	Percentage %
Curriculum design and delivery		97	69.29%
Poor teacher-learner relationship		40	28.57%
Un qualified teachers		3	2.14%
Total		140	100

From the item above 97 (69.29%), noted that curriculum as a factor affects contribution to absenteeism because of few lessons allocated to this subject. 40 (28.57%), commented that bad relation makes them absent from CRE lessons and 3 (2.14%), commented that nothing. From the above analysis, the curriculum in school needs to be improved and CRE subject is added more lessons.

3.1.1 Distribution of respondents on whether teachers and students attend their lesson promptly

The item sought to ask whether teachers attend their lessons promptly. The responses were summarized as per table 6 below.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents whether teachers and students attend their lessons promptly

Teachers table 6.

Teachers	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	6	66.67%
No	2	22.22%
No comment	1	11.11%
Total	9	100

From the above item, 6 (66.66%) teachers attend their lessons, 2 (22.22%) never attend their lessons and 1 (11.11%) never commented. This shows that despite the teacher's effort to attend lessons, the student absentee themselves from lessons.

Table 7 Students' table

Students	frequency	percentage
Yes	20	31.25%
No	30	46.88%
No comment	14	21.88%
Total	64	100

From the student table above, 30 (46.88%) CRE lessons are not attended promptly thus absenteeism. 20(31.25%) attend the lessons and 14(21.88%) never commented. From the above analysis, most students never attend CRE lessons thus poor performance.

3.1.2 Distribution of respondents on enough reference materials

The questionnaire asked respondents whether there were enough course books and reference materials for the CRE subject. The responses were summarized in table 8.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents on the availability of enough reference materials Teachers' table

Reference materials	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	7	77.78%
No	1	11.11%
No comment	1	11.11%
Total	9	100

From the above item, 7 (77.78%) teachers commented that there are enough reference materials, 1 (11.11%) commented that there are not enough reference materials while 1 (11.11%) did not comment. Though enough reference materials, students absent themselves from school not to attend the CRE lessons.

Table 9 Students table

Reference materials	frequency	Percentage%
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Yes	6	9.38%
No	50	78.13%
No comment	8	12.50%
total	64	100

From the above item, 6 (9.38%) students commented that there are enough reference materials in school while 50(78.13%) commented that there are enough reference materials and 8(12.50%) did not comment. Due to this most students do not attend CRE lessons due to this leading to absenteeism.

3.1.3 Distribution of respondents on the teacher's workload

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they are overloaded with the CRE lessons. Responses were summarized in table 10 below.

Table 10: Distribution of respondents on the teacher's workload

Overloaded with lessons	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	2	22.22%
No	2	22.22%
No comment	5	55.56%
Total	9	100

Out of 9 respondents 2(22.22%) answered yes, 2 (22.22%) answered no and 5 (55.56%) no comment. This shows that CRE teachers are overloaded with a number of lessons leading to poor performance. This advocates that the government should employ more teachers to relief this overloaded area; to improve CRE performance in Keumbu Division Kisii County in the KCSE, internal and external examinations.

3.2 Social Economic and Cultural Factors

Kindly, circle the number of the response on the right hand side which reflects your opinion. Circle only one number.

- 5 Strongly Agree (SA)
- 4 Agree (A)
- 3 Undecided (U)
- 2 Disagree (D)
- 1 Strongly Disagree (DA)

Table 11: Socio-economic and cultural factors

Aspect	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Being provided with the basic learning material in CRE	90 (62.94%)	20 (13.99%)	2 (1.4%)	8 (5.59%)	20 (16.08%)
Motivation by CRE parents	85 (59.44%)	42 (29.37%)	4 (2.80%)	6 (4.20%)	3(4.20%)
Monitoring by parents	78 (54.55%)	35 (24.48%)	20 (13.99%)	2 (1.40%)	5 (5.59%)
Some time spent before and after school for household chores	80 (55.94%)	20 (13.99%)	11 (7.69%)	18 (12.59%)	11 (9.79%)

From the above table the study shows that most respondents who were 90 (62.94%) strongly agreed CRE can be performed well by the provision of basic materials, 20 (13.99%) agree, 2 (1.4%) undecided, 8 (5.59%) disagreed and 20 (16.08%) strongly disagreed. This shows that the Keumbu division secondary schools can perform well in CRE if provided with the basic materials needed in the subject.

In attending church every week it shows that most respondents 92 (64.34%) strongly agreed, 17 (11.89%) agreed, 2 (1.4%) undecided, 8 (5.59%) disagreed and 20(16.08%) strongly disagreed. This shows that Keumbu division secondary schools students can perform well if they attend church every week.

In reading the bible always shows that 60 (41.96%) strongly agreed, 40 (27.97%) agreed, 15 (10.49%) undecided, 5 (3.5%) disagreed and 20 (16.09%) strongly disagreed. The data above this showed that most respondents read the bible, which is all about the exam surprisingly they fail in the CRE exam in KCSE.

In motivation by CRE teachers then it shows that 85 (59.44%) strongly agree, 42 (29.37%) agreed, 4 (2.80%) undecided, 6 (4.20%) disagreed and 6 (4.20%) strongly agreed. This shows that if the students are motivated by teachers they can perform well in the CRE subject and due to lack of motivation they perform poorly in CRE subject.

In teaching methods, 78 (54.55%) strongly agreed, 35 (24.48%) agreed, 20 (13.99%) were undecided, 2 (1.40%) disagree and 5(5.59%) strongly disagreed. This is a clear indication that if teachers apply relevant teaching methods the students can perform well in CRE but it is the opposite.

In participation of inning and outings 81 (56.64%) strongly agreed, 25 (17.48%) agreed, 5 (3.50%) undecided, 17 (11.89%) disagreed and 12 (10.49%) strongly disagreed. This shows that if the students participate in CRE symposiums, this can make them pass in their CRE

exam. In curbing biasness in denominations among students and teachers, 80 (55.94%) strongly agreed, 20 (13.99%) agreed, 11 (7.69%) undecided, 18 (12.59%) disagreed and 11 (9.79%) strongly disagreed. This shows that if the teachers and students do not look into their denominations aspect and accept each other the students will do well in CRE in KCSE.

3.2.1 Distribution of respondents on whether parents monitor their children as they go to school.

The respondents were asked to state whether children go to school always. Table 11 shows the responses.

Table 12: Distribution of respondents on whether parents monitor their children as they go to school

Children attendance	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	9	14.06%
No	25	39.06%
No comment	30	46.88%
Total	64	100

From analysis 9 (14.06%) answered yes, 25 (39.06%) answered no and 30 (46.88%) no comment. From the above analysis, most parents do not monitor their children as they go to school and whether they attend lessons.

3.2.2 Distribution of respondents on whether parents attend educational day and motivate their children

The respondents were asked whether they attend an educational day and motivate children. The responses were summarized in table 12.

Table 13: Distribution of respondents on whether parents attend educational day and motivate children

Attending educational day and motivation	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	20	31.25%
No	36	56.25%
No comment	8	12.50%
Total	64	100

From the above table, 20 (31.25%) answered yes, 36 (56.25%) answered no and 8 (12.50%) never commented. From the above information, clearly shows that parents contribute to the poor performance of CRE as they do not attend educational days in their children's school when arranged for.

3.2.3 Distribution of respondents on whether there are learning materials for improving CRE subject.

The respondents were asked to tick whether enough learning materials can improve the CRE subject. The responses were summarized in table 15.

Table 14: Distribution of respondents on whether enough learning materials can improve CRE subject

Aspect	Frequency	Percentage %
Enough learning materials	100	69.93
Having positive attitude	82	57.34
Motivation from government and community	103	72.02
Attending all lessons	127	88.81
Remedial work for time wasted	95	66.43
Enough staffing to pursue subject	130	90.90
Total		

Table 15 shows that the majority of respondents 100(69.93%) answered that enough learning materials can improve CRE subject in KCSE, 82(57.34%) said that having a positive attitude can also improve CRE performance, 103(72.02%) said that government and community motivation can also improve CRE performance while 127(88.81%) acknowledged that by attending all CRE lesson can lead to improvement of the subject. 95(66.43%) answered that remedial time for time wasted can improve CRE performance and lastly 130(90.90%) answered that enough human resource o teach the subject can improve CRE performance if all these factors are put in place. It is assumed that CRE performance can be improved in Keumbu division Kisii County Kenya.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The summary investigated four main aspects that were hypothetical to investigate student factors leading to absenteeism from Christian Religious Education in Public schools, in Keumbu Division in Kisii County. The first objective was to determine the factors leading to

absenteeism in CRE in public schools. The distribution was evidenced by the respondents through a variety of reason. The attendance of CRE lesson by teachers thus assuming that CRE is a simple subject and students can study it by themselves, lack of enough course and reference materials. The respondents also attributed that poor teaching methods also contributed to absenteeism from CRE lessons in Keumbu Division Kisii county-Kenya.

The study also sought to establish whether absenteeism from CRE lessons can affect their performance in the subject in KCSE and other examinations. The finding showed that the aspect of students absenting themselves from school make them loose many concepts in CRE and may not do well in their examinations. Absenteeism or irregular student attendance makes it hard for a student to understand on his own after missing the CRE lessons. Chronic absenteeism results in the loss of CRE content and knowledge according to (ubogu, 2004). Assignments and exercise could not be properly done hence poor performance. The more a student missed school over the course of several subjects' lessons in class the more he or she declined and the further behind he became in all subjects leading to poor performance. This finding showed that student lacks motivation from parents and teachers which make them fail their examinations. The students advocate for the teaching method in CRE to be modified to improve the CRE subject.

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