



UNRAVELING THE CRUCIAL REASONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL ABSENTEEISM: PARENTAL INSIGHTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the variables that influence student absenteeism, with an emphasis on participation from parents. A survey of 475 parents was undertaken to investigate three major variables: personal, parental, and school-related factors. Personal variables refer to individual student behaviors, parental variables indicate parental involvement, and school-related variables to institutional factors influencing the reduction of student absenteeism. To confirm the results' validity, the methodology involves regression analysis, correlation matrix, factor analysis, and reliability analysis. The findings indicate that the model explains a considerable percentage of absence variations, with each predictor having a significant relationship with absenteeism. Personal variables are adversely associated with absenteeism, but parental and school factors have a favourable impact on their attendance. These results emphasise the significance of focused interventions that address personal behaviors, increase parental participation, and develop school support structures to minimize absenteeism and improve student performance.

Keywords: Absenteeism, parental involvement, student behaviors, school support.

INTRODUCTION

School absenteeism, which happens when learners miss lessons while being present at school, is a serious problem that is often connected to disruptive behavior and alienation (Kearney et al., 2022; Özcan, 2022; González et al., 2020; Evans & Acosta, 2023; Kearney, 2021). Absenteeism includes partial-day absences, tardiness, and a variety of psychiatric and family-related issues that interfere with continuous school attendance (Li et al., 2021; Brouwer-Borghuis et al., 2019; Keppens, 2022). Numerous studies have demonstrated that missing school significantly impairs learning, academic performance, and overall educational results. (Keppens, 2023; Keppens & Spruyt, 2017; Gershenson et al., 2017; Hancock et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2022; Finning et al., 2019; Bowen et al., 2022). Child learning is negatively impacted by absenteeism, according to a wealth of K–12 studies (Balfanz, 2016; Temte et al., 2022; Eklund et al., 2022; Islam & Shapla, 2021; Gottfried & Kirksey, 2017; Gubbels et al., 2019; Rasasingham, 2015). Aucejo and Romano (2016) found, for example, that skipping just 10 days of school can result in a 0.03 SD drop in English Language Arts (ELA) and a 0.06 SD drop in math test scores. These effects are more pronounced in upper elementary grades and among students who perform poorly (Gottfried, 2009, 2014; Gershenson et al., 2017). Similar to this, Arbour et al. (2023) discovered that in Chile, skipping more than 10% of prekindergarten and kindergarten classes might seriously impair skill development and negate the advantages of high-quality early education. Because absenteeism has a substantial impact on student achievements, policymakers and education professionals in many industrialised countries have given it a lot of attention (Askeland et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2023; Sainz et al., 2019; Ingul et al., 2019; Kalil et al., 2021; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018; Robinson et al., 2018). As a result, previous researchers have attempted to differentiate between various types and causes of absenteeism (Rasasingham, 2015; Kearney et al., 2020; Kearney et al., 2022; Melvin et al., 2019; Gottfried & Gee, 2017; Bamgboye et al., 2017; Corcoran & Kelly, 2023).



Numerous factors have been identified by research, such as socioeconomic status, sickness, absence of parental supervision, school distance, hunger, personal, school community, and harassment (Bamgboye et al., 2017; Corcoran & Kelly, 2023; Kearney et al., 2022; Melvin et al., 2019). Additionally, Kearney (2008) found important risk variables such as lack of parental participation, homelessness, poverty, and school violence. More than 700 possible risk factors for absenteeism have been identified by studies like those by Gubbels, van der Put, and Assink (2019). These include drug misuse, mental health issues, and unfavourable school views. Furthermore, Balkis, Arslan, and Duru (2016) showed that absenteeism is significantly predicted by both personal and familial characteristics, which in turn affects academic results.

While most of the study has focused on absenteeism's causes, effects, and solutions, there is still a considerable vacuum in understanding the significance of parental insights, especially in the Bangladesh setting. However, there has been inadequate study on parental attitudes and their influence on absenteeism in Bangladesh. Evans and Acosta (2023) pointed out that parent-reported absence rates are often lower than those reported by students or schools, emphasizing the significance of parental viewpoints. This study intends to address a research vacuum by investigating parents' perspectives and providing significant insights into the particular causes leading to absenteeism in English medium schools in Bangladesh. The results will help to shape focused interventions and measures to minimize absenteeism, especially by considering family perspectives on the problem.

Conceptual Framework

Absenteeism is directly linked to several detrimental outcomes in behavior, health, academic achievement, cognitive development, and even long-term economic and judicial prospects (Ansari & Purtell, 2018; Ansari et al., 2020; Rumberger, 2020; Kearney et al., 2022; Monahan et al., 2014; Rocque et al., 2017; Hiliya et al., 2022; Mauro & Machell, 2019). A comprehensive strategy is necessary to address the complex problem of school absenteeism, as shown by the conceptual framework (Figure 1) below, which highlights the main variables impacting this phenomenon.

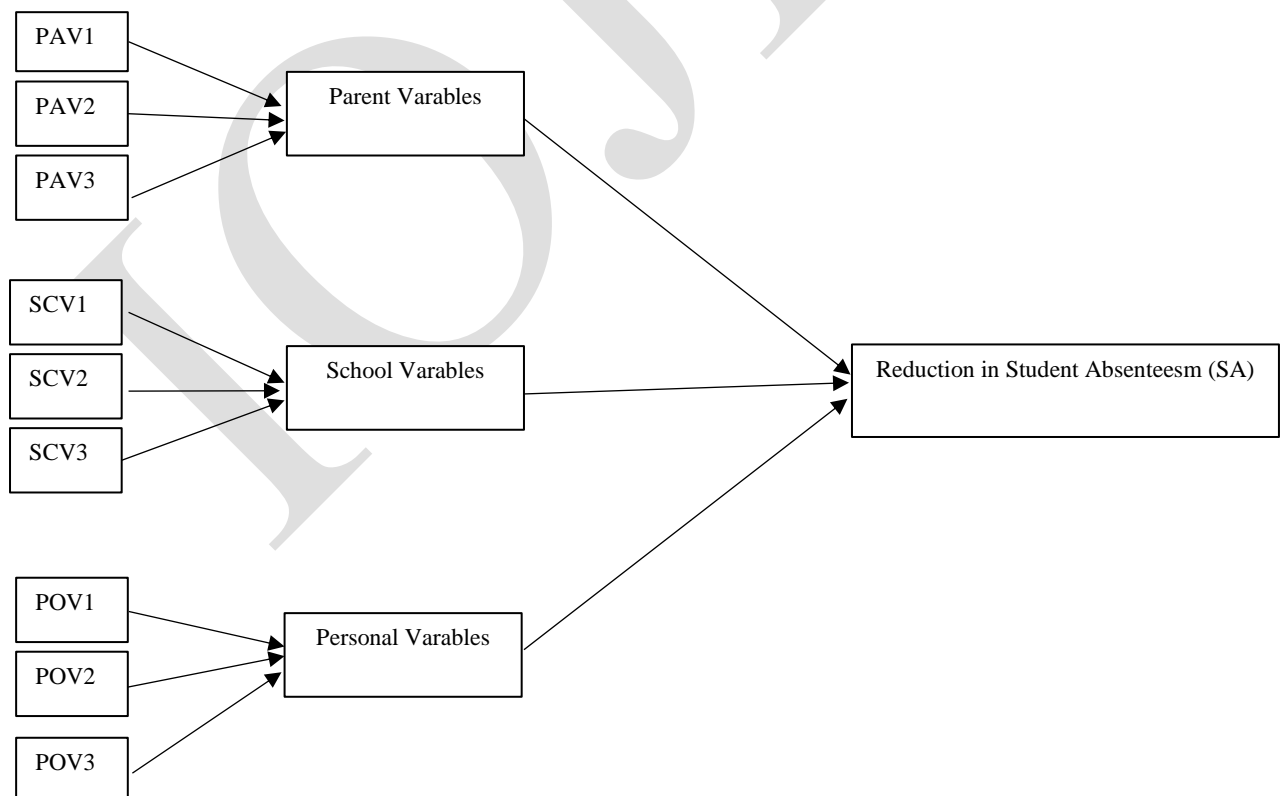


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Parentals Variables

Involving parents is crucial for student attendance, as both past and present absenteeism is highly predicted by wider family characteristics, including family care and views (Balkis et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2018; Hiliya et al., 2022; Kearney, 2008). Particularly, parental involvement—which is characterised by how frequently parents participate in school events and interact directly with their kids—is essential for improving student outcomes because low parental involvement frequently results in inconsistent discipline and low attendance (Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Chung et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019; Moroni et al., 2015). To emphasise the diversity of parental engagement, Ren et al. (2024) distinguished four main categories of parenting behaviors: warm participation (52.6%), disregarding noninvolvement (21.4%), rejecting noninvolvement (21.4%), and rejecting involvement (4.6%). In light of this, Islam and Shapla (2021) found that some aspects of parental engagement significantly impacted K–12 student absences, corroborating recent research on the importance of family involvement in reducing absenteeism (Gubbels et al., 2019; Rasasingham, 2015).. One of the most important factors contributing to school absenteeism is low parent-school involvement, according to Kruithof and Keppens (2024), who claimed that parents who avoid working with the school or who frequently keep their kids at home develop a pattern of absenteeism (Gubbels et al., 2019).

School Variables

School can be a difficult environment for students who are lonely, anxious, or have strained relationships, resulting in lower motivation, a dislike of school, and increased absenteeism (Finning et al., 2020; Kohli et al., 2017; Sanders, 2022). A negative or moderate school climate has been related to greater rates of absenteeism, truancy, and other behavioral difficulties, with chronic absenteeism more common in such circumstances (Bradshaw et al., 2014; Kearney, 2008; Van Eck et al., 2017). According to Benoit et al. (2022), students may doubt the usefulness of attending schools that fail to address significant issues such as climate change, which might lower their enthusiasm to attend. Additionally, Jacobs and Collair (2017) discovered that students' expectations for their careers were severely impacted by schools' inability to provide them with job-related abilities, even when they felt welcomed by their classmates and instructors. The lack of consistency and support at school was also highlighted by parents of kids who refused to attend, according to Havik, Bru, and Ertsevag (2013), underscoring the need for a stable and encouraging atmosphere. As shown by several studies, absenteeism is influenced by school-related variables (Klein et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Miya et al., 2023; Hiliya et al., 2022; Evans & Acosta, 2023; Gubbels et al., 2019; Özcan, 2022). According to Miya et al. (2023), teacher shortages, inadequate supervision, and insecurity all contribute to high absenteeism in Sokoto East, Nigeria, which lowers academic performance, restricts access to higher education, and raises dropout rates. In addition, Gubbels et al. (2019) observed that absence rates are often greater in schools with poor instruction, subpar infrastructure, strained student-teacher relationships, higher grade levels, inadequate attendance monitoring, and a lack of parent outreach programme. Evans and Acosta (2023) highlighted that under-resourced schools, teacher absence, and poor teaching quality further impede student learning, while Hiliya et al. (2022) noted corruption and inadequate monitoring by school heads as additional causes of increasing absenteeism.

Personal Variables

Personal factors that contribute to school absenteeism include academic performance, health problems, mental anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues (Finning et al., 2019; Piovesan et al., 2012; An et al., 2017; Ingul & Nordhal, 2013; Gubbels et al., 2019; Gottfried, 2009; Balkis, Arslan, & Duru, 2016). Learning challenges, negative school attitudes, higher levels of internalising behaviors, and, for younger children, a lack of prior experience with non-kinship care are among the characteristics of children that have been linked to absenteeism (Gottfried & Gee, 2017; Gubbels et al., 2019). Students who miss too many school days are more likely than their classmates to have anxiety, emotional problems, disruptive behaviors, or even drug misuse (Kearney, 2008; Gubbels et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2023; Özcan, 2022). According to Heyne et al. (2019), there are also personal variables that contribute to absenteeism, such as a general dislike of getting out of bed in the morning, harsh consequences at school, staying up late, and incomplete assignments. Similar findings were made by Vervoort et al. (2014), who discovered



that greater pain levels were linked to worse academic results, such as more absenteeism. As noted by Özcan (2022), school absenteeism is mostly caused by low academic performance, health concerns, and a lack of social activities, highlighting the complex interaction of personal challenges that can interrupt regular attendance.

METHOD

A survey of 475 primary-section parents was used to undertake a quantitative investigation of the reasons for student absence. The survey was developed using a comprehensive literature study and expert interviews, ensuring that significant variables impacting absenteeism, such as family, individual, and educational institution characteristics, were addressed. To guarantee the findings' reliability and validity, the survey was carefully designed to reduce bias. Strong privacy safeguards were put in place to protect the names of the parents and ensure ethical research standards. Parents' perceptions of their children's absenteeism were acquired using an online survey disseminated via Google Forms, which used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (7). Of the 500 parents who got the survey, 20 were unable to complete it, and 5 replies were invalidated, resulting in a final sample of 475 legitimate respondents. This sample size surpasses the minimal requirement for the planned statistical analysis. The sample size of 475 is appropriate for all planned analyses (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970; Cohen, 1992) since it surpasses the minimal requirement of five times the number of observed variables, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Participants were chosen using convenience sampling, a non-random selection technique, with an attempt to include schools from various geographic areas to provide a representative sample. To find important patterns and associations, several statistical tests were conducted once the data was collected. These included regression analysis, correlation matrix, Fornell-Larcker test, factor analysis, and reliability analysis. From the standpoint of the parents, this technique offered a thorough grasp of the variables influencing student absence.

RESULTS

Parents Demographics Details

The demographics of primary section students' parents, including gender, age, marital status, employment position, and educational level shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of primary section students' parents.

Gender	Frequency	Per cent
Female	298	63%
Male	177	37%
Age		
18–25	79	17%
26–35	318	67%
36–45	61	13%
46–55	17	4%
Marital Status		
Divorced	45	9%
Married	404	85%
Single	10	2%
Widowed	16	3%
Employment Status		
Employed	205	43%
Other	98	21%
Self Employed	123	26%
Student	15	3%
Unemployed	34	7%
Education		
Graduate	230	48%
HSC	48	10%
Post-Graduate	197	41%



Bangladeshi parents' demographic profile concerning their children's enrollment in English medium schools was significantly female (63%) compared to male (37%). Most parents were 26–35 (67%). Married (85%) and employed (43%), most individuals have graduate (48%) or post-graduate (41%) degrees. This profile shows a diverse group of parents who are involved in their children's education, likely meaning they value academic performance and future chances. Understanding this demographic mix is essential for tailoring educational assistance and interventions to individual parent and student needs.

Reliability Analysis

The factor and reliability analysis are shown in Table 2, where the data presented includes factor loadings, average factorial loads, Cronbach's Alpha, and Kaiser-Meyer for items that represent various latent constructs in the model, namely Parent Variables (PAV), Personal Variables (POV), Student Absenteeism (SA), and School Variables (SCV).

Table 2. Factor and reliability analysis.

	Item	Loadings	Average Factorial Loads	Kaiser-Meyer	Cronbach's Alpha
School Variables (SCV)	SCV1	.83	.84	.77	.93
	SCV2	.80			
	SCV3	.90			
Personal Variables (POV)	POV1	.97	.92	.71	.92
	POV2	.86			
	POV3	.95			
Student Absenteeism (SA)	SA1	.75	.87	.73	.97
	SA2	.90			
	SA3	.96			
Parent Variables (PAV)	PAV1	.89	.93	.78	.91
	PAV2	.92			
	PAV3	.97			

School Variables, Personal Variables, Student Absenteeism, and Parents Variables have respective average factorial burdens of .84, .92, .87, and .93. According to these values, the items comprising each factor make a satisfactory contribution to the definition of their respective constructs, on average. Therefore, their constituent parts adequately represent the factors. Each of the constructs has the following KMO values: .77, .71, .73, and .78. Although these are acceptable values, they do not stand out as exceptionally high. Nevertheless, they suggest that the data remain adequately adequate for the implementation of factor analysis. The respective Cronbach's alpha values are .91, .93, .92, and .97. All of these values surpass the widely acknowledged threshold of .70, which signifies a substantial degree of internal consistency or dependability among the components comprising each factor (Hair et al., 2017, 2019; Hayes et al., 2017; Deng et al., 2017). Hence, the constructs that are evaluated by these factors exhibit robust internal consistency. In general, the metrics suggest that the factors are clearly defined, as evidenced by the robust interrelationships and internal consistency of their constituent elements. The data are sufficiently suited for factor analysis, and the factors that have been identified offer dependable depictions of the fundamental constructs.

Discriminant Validity Analysis

The Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity analysis is shown in Table 3, which also displays the inter-construct correlations and the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct.

Table 3. Fornell-larcker condition.

	POV	PAV	SA	SCV
POV	.9			
PAV	.02	.9		
SA	.03	.9	.9	
SCV	.5**	.7	.7	.8



To prevent shared variance from surpassing the AVE, Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended that the square root of a construct's AVE be higher than its strongest correlation with any other construct. But Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) found that when indicator loadings are similar (e.g., .65 to .85), the Fornell-Larcker criterion does not perform well. The Fornell-Larcker criterion demonstrates that Personal Variables (POV), Parents' Variables (PAV), Student Absenteeism (SA), and School Variables (SCV) each have square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) that are higher than their correlations with other constructs, as required by the criterion. POV exhibits an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of .9, which exceeds all the correlations (.02, .03, and .5) linked to it. Similarly, the PAV demonstrates an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of 0.9, which surpasses its correlations of .02, .9, and .7. SA has an average value of .9, which is higher than its correlations of .03, .9, and .7. Finally, SCV has an average value of .8, which is higher than its correlations of 0.5, .7, and .7. It was confirmed that the discovered components, namely POV, PAV, SA, and SCV, do represent distinct dimensions and have individual contributions to the model outcomes. As a result, stakeholders can have increased assurance in the model's conclusions and use them efficiently for decision-making.

Correlation Matrix Analysis

The results of the correlation matrix analysis are shown in Table 4, which also depicts the Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients between student absenteeism and school, parental, and personal factors.

Table 4. Correlation matrix analysis output.

Variables	Personal Variables		Parents Variables		Student Absenteeism		School Variables	
	Pear	Spear	Pear	Spear	Pear	Spear	Pear	Spear
Personal Variables	1	1	.015	.028	.033	.011	.456**	.435**
Parents Variables			1	1	.893**	.916**	.667**	.722**
Student Absenteeism					1	1	.695**	.735**
School Variables							1	1

The data indicates a significant positive correlation (Pear: .893**, Spear: .916**) between parental variables and student absenteeism. This suggests that higher levels of parental involvement are associated with lower rates of student absence. This suggests that promoting parental participation in education has the potential to decrease rates of absenteeism, therefore improving overall student engagement and academic achievement. This outcome is consistent with the findings of the regression analysis. Moreover, based on a weak positive correlation (Pearson: .033, Spearman: .011), it may be concluded that there is a weak positive relationship between personal variables and student absence. Furthermore, there is a strong positive association (Pearson's correlation coefficient: .695**, Spearman's correlation coefficient: .735**) between student absenteeism and school variables such as problems with teaching quality or the school atmosphere. This highlights the need to tackle the variables that contribute to absence, such as student involvement, school atmosphere, and support services, to enhance educational outcomes and decrease student absenteeism. Furthermore, a moderate positive correlation (Pearson's $r = .456^{**}$, Spearman's $\rho = .435^{**}$) has been found between personal variables and school variables, emphasizing the crucial role of individual student behaviors in educational institutions. Student counselling is necessary to ensure consistent academic outputs that are aligned with the formal education system. The researcher has observed modest positive correlations (Pearson: .667, Spearman: .722) between the variables of parents and school, indicating that parental engagement may influence multiple facets of school performance or the overall setting.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 5 presents the regression summary output, detailing the unstandardized and standardized coefficients, significance values, and collinearity statistics for personal, parental, and school variables concerning the reduction of student absenteeism.

**Table 5.** Regression summary output

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta		Tolerance	VIF
Personal Variables	-.081	.021	-.094	.000	.641	1.56
Parents Variables	.650	.026	.725	.000	.449	2.23
School Variables	.264	.034	.254	.000	.356	2.81

Dependent Variable: Reduction of Student Absenteeism

The coefficients for Personal Variables (-.081), Parents Variables (.650), and School Variables (.264) indicate the estimated influence of each set of variables on the dependent variable. All coefficients are statistically significant ($p < .001$). The beta coefficients, which quantify the standardized effect size, indicate that Parents Variables have the highest standardized effect (.725), followed by School Variables (.254) and Personal Variables (-.094). It emphasizes the significance of parental support and involvement in student absenteeism. If the tolerance values are greater than .3 and the VIF values are less than 5 for all sets of variables, it suggests that there is minimal multi-collinearity among the predictors (Hair et al., 2017, 2019, 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2019, 2021). In addition, the standard errors of .021, .026, and .034 indicate that the coefficient estimates are likely to be quite near to the actual population values.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

Similar to earlier research, school-related variables have been shown to significantly influence in the variation of student absenteeism (Klein et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Miya et al., 2023; Hiliya et al., 2022; Evans & Acosta, 2023; Gubbels et al., 2019; Özcan, 2022). English-medium schools in Bangladesh may use contemporary technology, including daily attendance tracking, which has been shown to enhance attendance results, to combat absenteeism (Childs & Lofton, 2021). Furthermore, establishing a connection of trust and support with kids and their families is essential to lowering absenteeism. Strategies that help identify and assist children who have lost considerable learning time, such as early interventions and continuous monitoring, may help accomplish this (Keppens & Spruyt, 2020; Klein et al., 2022). Additionally, schools must make educators responsible for both actively monitoring student attendance and classroom attendance (Odeniyi & Adeyanju, 2020). By encouraging more student participation and support, teacher-student mentorship programmes and skills development activities have also been shown to dramatically lower absenteeism (Mazerolle et al., 2017; Moore McBride et al., 2016; Reissner et al., 2015). Through the use of real-time data monitoring and a collaborative approach to problem-solving, educational institutions may guarantee long-lasting gains in absence reduction (Keppens et al., 2019; Chu et al., 2019; Cook et al., 2019; Lyon et al., 2019).

Parents' variables have a significant and strong positive impact on reducing absenteeism, as demonstrated by significant research findings (Gubbels et al., 2019; Rasasingham, 2015; Kruithof & Keppens, 2024; Hendron & Kearney, 2016; Chung et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019; Moroni et al., 2015). Research suggests that parents who spend more time with their children have a favourable impact on educational results, such as decreased absenteeism (Lui et al., 2020; Lv et al., 2018, 2019; Yap & Baharudin, 2016; Rahman et al., 2023; Özcan, 2022). To combat absenteeism in Bangladesh's English-medium schools, educational authorities may increase family participation by collaborating with organizations to execute targeted interventions and region-specific initiatives. This may enhance parental involvement in their children's school, which reduces absenteeism (Rasasingham, 2015; Mazerolle et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2023). Furthermore, using text-based and mail-based intervention treatments to offer frequent updates on kids' progress has been shown to successfully decrease absenteeism and improve communication between schools and families (Kalil et al., 2021; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018; Robinson et al., 2018).

Personal factors have a slight yet statistically significant effect on absenteeism, which is consistent with other research (Finning et al., 2019; Piovesan et al., 2012; An et al., 2017; Ingul & Nordhal, 2013; Gubbels et al., 2019; Gottfried, 2009; Balkis, Arslan, & Duru, 2016; Kearney, 2008; Rahman et al.,



2023; Özcan, 2022; Heyne et al., 2019). Low-income students, students with disabilities, homeless children, and foster children are among the vulnerable groups that suffer more from absenteeism and more severe learning losses, which can have long-term effects on their academic performance, social standing, and financial stability (Santibañez & Guarino, 2021; Arbour et al., 2016; Mejia & Filus, 2018). To properly address this problem, Bangladesh's education system should adopt early warning systems that integrate information from different sources to offer real-time attendance data, allowing for prompt interventions (Childs & Grooms, 2018; Kearney & Childs, 2023). Furthermore, focusing on growth metrics such as school climate, academic progress, and student engagement can assist in identifying at-risk students and promoting a shift from punitive measures to more supportive, proactive strategies for reducing absenteeism (Zaff et al., 2017; Spruyt et al., 2017; Keppens & Spruyt, 2020).

The study found a statistically significant association between personal, family, and school-related characteristics and absenteeism in Bangladeshi English medium. The regression analysis yields an R-value of .906, demonstrating a substantial positive association between these variables and reduced student absence. Furthermore, the R-squared value of .820 indicates that the model accounts for 82% of the variability in absenteeism decrease, indicating its robustness. The model's statistical significance is supported by an F-statistic of 717.303 and a p-value of .000, indicating that the predictors play an important role in explaining absenteeism variance. This study emphasises the necessity of treating personal difficulties, increasing parental participation, and improving the school environment to minimise student absenteeism. In light of these results, Bangladeshi English medium schools must take a coordinated, multifaceted, and data-driven strategy to address absenteeism. According to Eklund et al. (2022), Kearney & González (2022), Chu et al. (2019), Keppens et al. (2019), Keppens et al. (2019) and Heyne et al. (2019), a collaborative, team-based approach is required for effective absence reduction. Schools may create policies and procedures that promote a positive learning environment by concentrating on the major elements revealed in this research. This could involve incorporating design features like artwork and natural light, which not only improve academic achievement but also promote emotional health and foster constructive relationships between students (Ferreira, Martinsone, & Talić, 2020; Ghaziani, 2021; Manca et al., 2020; Van Dijk-Wesselius et al., 2018; Lindemann-Matthies et al., 2021).

However, this research on student absence has few limitations. The sample size may not accurately reflect the larger population, limiting generalizability. The use of convenience sampling and self-reported data involves possible biases, such as social desirability or a misinterpretation of absentee reasons. Furthermore, concentrating primarily on English-medium schools in Bangladesh limits its application to other settings. Excluding students' and teacher perspectives restricts insights into the fundamental reasons for absenteeism and possible remedies.

Therefore, to improve generalizability, future research on student absenteeism should address the limitations of this study by using a larger, more diverse sample of parents from different demographics, geographic regions, and school types, such as public and private institutions or rural and urban schools. Integrating survey data with information from other sources, such as teacher interviews or attendance records at school, may provide a more accurate picture while accounting for self-reporting biases. External validity may be enhanced by expanding the study to include a range of educational contexts, such as Bengali-medium schools alongside English-medium ones. Last but not least, including the perspectives of educators, parents, and children would provide a more complete picture of absenteeism and help find better solutions.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

Throughout the study, all ethical guidelines were followed. The author claims that she followed ethical guidelines during all phases of the study.

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